'Status quo simply cannot continue in Syria' – UN humanitarian chief

16 November - More than five years since the unrest in Syria began, senior United Nations officials today stressed to the Security Council that the status quo in the war-torn country cannot continue, highlighting the effects of the conflict on civilians, especially women and children.

“The Syria crisis is a chronicle of missed opportunities by the Security Council, Member States with influence on the parties, and the broader international community to bring the conflict to an end,” Stephen O’Brien, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told the 15-member Council.

The meeting, which opened with a moment of silence in honour of the victims of the terrorist attacks Friday in Paris, also heard from UN special representatives dealing with sexual violence in conflict and children and armed conflict.

Welcoming the recent international talks in Vienna, Mr. O'Brien said “this momentum must be seized to leave no stone unturned to put an end to this horrendous war that has cost an estimated 250,000 people their lives, given rise to extremist and terrorist groups, and reduced much of the country, a middle-income country, to rubble.”

He recalled that the fighting has propelled the world's largest humanitarian crisis of the twenty-first century, with some 13.5 million people in Syria in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, including six million children, and driven over four million people to seek safe refuge outside their home country.
“Security Council members and the international community must also redouble their efforts to oblige the parties to finally comply with the demands made by this Council in resolutions,” the Emergency Relief Coordinator insisted, noting that attacks on civilian infrastructure continue unabated, including “relentless attacks” against health care facilities and personnel across the country.

He called upon the Syrian authorities to urgently approve the 46 currently pending inter-agency requests and allow convoys previously agreed in principle, which are awaiting their clearance, to proceed. He also called on non-State armed opposition groups as well as listed terrorist groups to allow the deliveries they are preventing.

“Despite all the challenges, the United Nations and partners continue to reach millions of people in need through all modalities,” he stated. In the past month alone, the UN and its partners reportedly delivered food aid to over four million people; water, sanitation and hygiene support to over 3.5 million; and medicines and supplies for 717,000 treatments.

Earlier today in a press release, Mr. O’Brien welcomed a joint announcement by leaders of the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the United Nations of a “Syria Crisis Conference” to be held in London next February.

"This conference in London will be a critical opportunity to remind the world of the suffering Syrian civilians are going through,” he underlined.

“As the brutality and violence in their country intensifies it is our job to appeal on their behalf for essential and sustained aid and protection. The humanitarian appeals for Syria and neighbouring countries are alarmingly underfunded. I look forward to working with the UK, Germany, Norway and Kuwait to make this event a success. Concrete pledges of financial support will allow us and our humanitarian partners to help families in dire need.”

In her remarks to the Council, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, said sexual violence has been a characteristic of the Syrian conflict, and has been perpetrated by “most of the belligerent parties” as a tactic of war.

“Since returning from my scoping visit to the region this May, I have focused considerable energy on raising the level of awareness and understanding of the sexual violence crimes that are occurring,” said Ms. Bangura. “At the same time, we have been working to formulate a response strategy.”

This seven point strategy includes: mobilizing political commitment, support and resources; ensuring that protection and empowerment of women is consistently includes as a central consideration in all efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism; enhancing protection, early-warning and risk mitigation; and strengthening the support and services to survivors of sexual violence.

Turning to the plight of children in the conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, said five years of intensifying hostilities and violence in Syria have taken an unacceptable toll on the lives of boys and girls.

During her presentation, Ms. Zerrougui detailed how children continue to be killed, maimed, recruited and used by parties to the conflict. She also highlighted how the future of millions of children is jeopardized by attacks on schools and education.

“Aerial bombardments of civilian areas by Syrian Government Forces have continued to cause a significant proportion of the verified cases of child casualties in 2015,” Ms. Zerrougui said.

She added that the indiscriminate shelling of densely populated areas by all parties to the conflict is another major cause of child casualties. She also underlined how the alleged mass execution of 200 children by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is another “tragic” example of the brutality faced by boys and girls in the country.
El Niño on track to be among worst ever, but world better prepared for fallout – UN

16 November - The current El Niño, a weather pattern of devastating droughts and catastrophic floods that can affect tens of millions of people around the globe, is expected to strengthen further by year's end, on track to be one of the three strongest in 65 years, according to the latest update from the United Nations weather agency.

But the world is better prepared than ever to deal with the phenomenon, caused by the cyclical warming of the Equatorial Pacific Ocean, even though global warming has added a wild card to forecasting the severity of its impact, UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Michel Jarraud told a news conference in Geneva today.

“It’s not entirely clear how El Niño interacts with the changing climate,” he said, warning that it is playing out in uncharted territory due to global warming. “Even before the onset of El Niño, global average surface temperatures had reached new records. El Niño is turning up the heat even further.”

Based on advice from National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, the worst affected countries are already planning for the impact on agriculture, fisheries, water and health, and implementing disaster management campaigns to save lives and minimize economic damage and disruption, he added.

“Severe droughts and devastating flooding being experienced throughout the tropics and sub-tropical zones bear the hallmarks of this El Niño, which is the strongest for more than 15 years,” he said, noting that peak three-month average surface water temperatures in the east-central tropical Pacific Ocean will exceed 2 degrees Celsius above normal.

But, he stressed: “We are better prepared for this event than we have ever been in the past.”

Various UN agencies have already issued warnings about the current El Niño, in which oscillation of the ocean-atmosphere system significantly impacts global weather, from increased rain and flooding in the southern United States and Peru to drought in the West Pacific and devastating brush fires in Australia.

Last week the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned that 11 million children are at risk from hunger, disease and lack of water in eastern and southern Africa alone, while the UN World Food Programme (WFP) said 2.3 million people in Central America will need food aid as El Niño exacerbates a prolonged drought.

Mr. Jarraud released the update on the eve of an international scientific conference in New York, co-sponsored by WMO, which seeks to increase scientific understanding of El Niño the event and its impact, and boost resilience to anticipated global socio-economic shocks.

“Our planet has altered dramatically because of climate change, the general trend towards a warmer global ocean, the loss of Arctic sea ice and of over a million square kilometres of summer snow cover in the northern hemisphere. So this naturally occurring El Niño event and human induced climate change may interact and modify each other in ways which we have never before experienced,” he warned.

El Niño has already been associated with a number of major impacts, including coral bleaching hitting US coral reefs disproportionately hard, and tropical cyclones in the Western and Eastern North Pacific basins, such as last month’s Hurricane Patricia in Mexico, reportedly the most intense tropical cyclone in the western hemisphere.

In South East Asia, El Niño is typically associated with drought and has helped fuel wildfires in Indonesia, among the worst on record, causing dense haze there and in neighbouring countries, with significant repercussions for health.

In South Asia, it is believed to have played a key role in a shortfall in rain and Southern Africa countries also report below average rainfall, drought conditions and fears of food insecurity.
In South America, El Niño tends to increase rainfall. In 1997-98 rains in central Ecuador and Peru were more than 10 times the normal, causing flooding, extensive erosion and deadly mudslides, destruction of homes and infrastructure, and damage to food supplies.

**Widespread misunderstanding about antibiotic resistance threatens public health – UN health agency**

16 November - A recent multi-country survey revealed that people are confused about the rising threat of antibiotic resistance to public health and are unclear about how to prevent it from growing, World Health Organization (WHO) said today at the launch of a global campaign at the initiation of the first World Antibiotic Awareness Week.

The campaign, ‘Antibiotics: Handle with care,’ is a global initiative to improve understanding of the problem and change the way antibiotics are used, to avoid the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance, said WHO in a news release.

“The rise of antibiotic resistance is a global health crisis, and governments now recognize it as one of the greatest challenges for public health today. It is reaching dangerously high levels in all parts of the world,” says Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General at the opening of the World Antibiotics Week, which begins today and runs through 22 November.

Antibiotic resistance is a phenomenon that happens when bacteria change and become resistant to the antibiotics used to treat the infections they cause, WHO said.

The survey points out that over-use and misuse of antibiotics increase the development of resistant bacteria and certain practices, gaps in understanding and misconceptions contribute to this phenomenon.

According to WHO, the multi-country survey included 14 questions on the use of antibiotics, knowledge of antibiotics and of antibiotic resistance, and used a mix of online and face-to-face interviews, which were conducted in 12 countries, namely, Barbados, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Serbia, South Africa, Sudan and Viet Nam.

The study found that nearly 60 per cent of 10,000 people who were surveyed across 12 countries acknowledge that antibiotic resistance is an issue that can affect their families, but they are unsure of how it affects them.

Among the surveyed, nearly 64 per cent respondents believe antibiotics can be used to treat colds and flu, despite the fact that antibiotics have no impact on viruses, and an about 32 per cent of people believed they should stop taking antibiotics when they feel better, rather than completing the prescribed course of treatment.

Further, the survey revealed that nearly 76 per cent respondents thought that antibiotic resistance happens when the body becomes resistant to antibiotics, where in fact bacteria, and not humans or animals, become resistant to antibiotics and their spread causes hard-to-treat infections.

Additionally, nearly 66 per cent believed that individuals are not at risk of drug-resistant infection if they personally take their antibiotics as prescribed and nearly half the people surveyed thought that antibiotic resistance is only a problem for people who take antibiotics regularly, whereas in reality anyone, of any age, in any country can get an antibiotic-resistant infection.

The survey also found that more than half the respondents felt there is little to be done to stop antibiotic resistance and about 64 per cent believed medical experts can stop the problem if it becomes too serious and an additional 73 per cent of the respondents said that farmers should give fewer antibiotics to food-producing animals.

At the same time, the survey also found that people did not receive antibiotics prescriptions directly from a medical practitioner. For instance, about five per cent of the respondents in Nigeria got their antibiotics from a hawker or a stall and five per cent of respondents in China got their antibiotics from the internet.
“The findings of this survey point to the urgent need to improve understanding around antibiotic resistance,” says Dr. Keiji Fukuda, Special Representative of the Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance.

“This campaign is just one of the ways we are working with governments, health authorities and other partners to reduce antibiotic resistance. One of the biggest health challenges of the 21st century will require global behaviour change by individuals and societies,” Mr. Fukuda added.

Warring factions in Libya show little regard for civilian life, says UN, reporting 'gross' rights abuses

16 November - Libya continues to be embroiled in political strife and deadly violence – with all parties committing possible war crimes amid multiple armed conflicts affecting several regions and contributing to a general breakdown of law and order, according to a new United Nations human rights report released today.

All parties in Libya “appear to be committing violations of international humanitarian law, including those that may amount to war crimes” as well as “gross violations or abuses of international human rights law,” said a press release on the report, which was published jointly by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Between 1 January and 31 October, the report documented serious abuses and violations of international law that included indiscriminate shelling, abduction of civilians, torture and executions as well as deliberate destruction of property. In particular, it laid bare the abuses faced by vulnerable civilians, such as internally displaced people, human rights defenders, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

“Across Libya, warring factions showed little regard for avoiding or minimizing loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects,” said the report. In several regions of the country, the violence led to hundreds of deaths, mass displacement and humanitarian crises.

In what seemed to be retaliation for owners' actual or perceived political allegiances, rival armed groups looted, burned or otherwise destroyed homes and property. They also continued to abduct civilians, based on family links, origin or political affiliation.

Detainees were vulnerable to torture and other ill-treatment, which sometimes led to death in custody – carried out with impunity. Documented methods of torture included beatings, suspension in stress positions, electric shocks and sleep deprivation, said the report, adding that abductees were frequently denied contact with their families.

Against the backdrop of infighting and the breakdown of law and order, groups that pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) committed gross abuses over swathes of territory it controlled, including public summary executions based on religion or political allegiance. The report also documented cruel punishments carried out by these groups, such as amputations and flogging.

Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, were increasingly vulnerable to killing, inhumane detention, torture, kidnapping and exploitation. Some were taken by armed groups in apparent retaliation for actions taken by the governments of their countries of origin.

“Many migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees become victims of brutal violence, coercion and abuse perpetrated by smugglers along smuggling routes, as well as in so-called 'connection houses', where they await departure to Europe. Many reported torture intended to extract more money from their families, in what appeared to be coordinated action from criminal gangs based in countries of origin as well as transit,” said the report.

“A number of migrants and asylum seekers who remained in 'connection houses' said they were given little food for the purpose of making travellers lose weight… Some also reported that women were taken away at night and sexually abused.”
Due to ongoing fighting and insecurity, the justice system continued to be severely hampered. The report noted that thousands of individuals were held in prisons and other detention centres under the oversight of the Ministries of Justice, Defense and Interior as well as in facilities run directly by armed groups – amid frequent reports of torture or other ill-treatment.

“The justice system, where it was functioning, failed to ensure accountability, while abuses by armed groups continue to take place with impunity,” noted the report, adding that in several parts of the country, judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials faced threats and attacks in relation to their work, including detention and assassination.

As intolerance for criticism of those in de facto control of a region grew, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society activists were targeted, assaulted, abducted and threatened with death. In the past two weeks, some eight media workers were attacked, as at least one remained in arbitrary detention.

The report also documented the shelling of medical facilities, with medical professionals caught up in the violence, abducted or detained by different actors. Some were allegedly tortured and ill-treated. For instance, on at least four occasions between April and July, the Benghazi Medical Centre, the largest functioning hospital in city, was shelled.

“Medical professionals and other hospital staff across Libya complained of a general climate of insecurity, with armed men forcibly entering and engaging in armed skirmishes inside hospital premises, as well as threatening staff,” the report stated.

The report called on all those with effective control on the ground to immediately take action to stop acts in breach of international human rights and humanitarian law, stating that those involved in such infractions were criminally liable, including before the International Criminal Court, under which the situation in Libya continued to be investigated.

The report also warned that abuses and violence would continue unless a political settlement based on respect for human rights and the rule of law was reached without delay.

'Tolerance must be taught, nurtured and defended,' says Ban on International Day

16 November - Tolerance is much more than passively accepting the “other;” it brings obligations to act, and must be taught, nurtured and defended, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, calling on the world to recognize the mounting threat posed by those who strive to divide, and pledge to forge a path defined by dialogue and mutual understanding.

“People are more connected – but this does not mean there is more understanding. Societies are ever more diverse – but intolerance is growing in many places,” said Mr. Ban in his message to mark the International Day for Tolerance, marked each year on 16 November.

The UN chief said that sectarian tensions can be found at the heart of many conflicts, with the rise of violent extremism, massive human rights violations, and cultural cleansing. Moreover, the biggest crisis of forced displacement since the Second World War has spawned hatred and xenophobia against refugees and others.

Emphasizing that tolerance requires investment by States in people, and in the fulfilment of their full potential through education, inclusion and opportunities, Mr. Ban called for building societies founded on respect for human rights, “where fear, distrust and marginalization are supplanted by pluralism, participation and respect for differences.”

“This is the message of the International Day of Tolerance – reflected in the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted in 1995, the Secretary-General said, adding that the same idea animates the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), which is being led forward by UNESCO across the world.

He also emphasized that the call “to practice tolerance” was written into the identity of the UN 70 years ago. “Today, in a
world buffeted by turbulence and change, the Charter's summons remains a vital touchstone for our work,” declared Mr. Ban.

Echoing many of those sentiments, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova stressed: “Tolerance is a new idea, one which we need now more than ever. It leads us to respect cultural diversity, ways of life and expressions of our own humanity. It is a necessary condition for peace and progress for all people in a diversified and ever-more connected world.”

UNESCO was founded 70 years ago on this very day on the basis that wars could be avoided if people learned to get to know each other better and understood that, “in the fertile diversity of their cultures, that which unites them is stronger than that which divides them,” emphasized Ms. Bokova.

She said that tolerance is a means of constructing peace; it accelerates innovation and creation, opening peoples' minds to other ways to view the world.

“When violent extremism spreads messages of hate and intolerance, both on the ground and on social media; when human beings suffer persecution, exclusion or discrimination on the basis of their religion or background; when economic crises accentuate social divides and stand in the way of acceptance of others, such as minorities, foreigners or refugees; we must offer up a different discourse, an open message which calls for tolerance,” Ms. Bokova declared, adding that lessons of the past must be more visible and people must be reminded of the extreme situations which can result from rejection of others, racism and anti-Semitism.

“Diversity is a reality, calling us to adapt our policies and act appropriately, for which tolerance is key,” she said, stressing that today's world presents considerable opportunities to better understand each other, share stories, create a public space on a global scale.

### Major spike in number of refugee and migrant children on the move in Europe – UNICEF

16 November - With record numbers of child refugees and migrants – 700 a day seeking asylum in Europe – the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said it has identified five groups of vulnerable children and is mobilizing tailored actions to meet their needs.

These include babies and small children, children with disabilities and special needs, lost children, children who have been left behind, and unaccompanied adolescents on the move.

“These young people are determined to make a better life for themselves, but their futures hang in the balance as they make their way through Europe. We cannot let them down.” said Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe, in a news release.

“The big question for us is: Are we ready for this, is Europe fit for purpose; will we be able to give these children the future that they are risking their lives for?” she asked.

According to UNICEF, the numbers of children and women have steadily increased in the past several months, with no end in sight as winter approaches. The agency stressed that not only is the total number of children seeking asylum in the European Union unprecedented in recent history – 214,000 in total from January to September this year according to the latest data from Eurostat – but so, too, is the number of children on the move.

In June, just 1 in 10 refugees and migrants reportedly registered crossing the border from Greece into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia through Gevgelija was a child. By October, children accounted for 1 in 3 refugees and migrants registered at the same border.

In Sweden alone, UNICEF reported that the total number of unaccompanied children claiming asylum is more than the total of last year for all of Europe, with 24,000 unaccompanied minors having claimed asylum there.
Meanwhile, actions are already being carried out by government authorities, UNICEF, the UN refugee agency, the Red Cross, humanitarian protection workers and national social workers, but UNICEF says this needs to be stepped up urgently.

“When countries progress and become EU members with a strong GDP [gross domestic product], there is a notion that they no longer need help, but the refugee and migrant crisis is changing Europe and it is changing the way we operate,” Ms. Poirier. “Refugees and migrants, all children need protection. UNICEF is ready to step up its partnership with governments at their request as we adapt to this fast moving and unpredictable crisis.”

**Israeli punitive demolitions of Palestinian homes violates international law – senior UN relief official**

16 November - While recognizing Israel’s “serious security challenges,” a senior United Nations official today called its punitive demolition of the homes of alleged attackers “inherently unjust” and against international law, noting that 20 Palestinians, eight of them children, were made homeless in the past three days.

“I am distressed by reports of punitive demolitions carried out by Israeli security forces of five homes in the Jerusalem, Nablus, and Ramallah governorates in the last few days,” Robert Piper, the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said in a statement, noting that two Palestinians were reported killed and nine others injured in clashes today protesting against the demolition.

In operations to “deter others,” the family homes of five alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israelis in 2015 have been demolished by Israeli security forces since 14 November. At least nine additional adjacent apartments have been damaged and rendered unsafe. The deaths and injuries occurred during the most recent operation this morning in Qalandiya refugee camp.

“We recognize Israel’s serious security challenges today, but any law enforcement response must be consistent with international law,” Mr. Piper said. Punitive demolitions are inherently unjust, punishing innocent people for the acts of others.”

According to the statement, punitive demolitions are a form of collective penalty as they effectively punish not only the alleged perpetrators but also relatives, neighbours for acts they have not committed. Collective penalties are prohibited under international law.

The policy was suspended by the Israeli Government in 2005 after a military committee deemed it ineffective as a deterrent. Such actions have restarted since mid-2014, with the exception of one case in 2009.

Since 1 June 2014, the Israeli authorities have demolished, sealed or destroyed with explosives 16 structures, displacing 90 Palestinians, including 51 children, according to UN. In addition, at least 12 adjacent apartments were damaged, temporarily displacing at least 55 people.

In a related development, two UN experts today voiced grave concern over continuing violence in the Occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, noting individual Palestinian attacks against Israelis and reported excessive force by Israelis when apprehending Palestinian suspects “including some which appear to amount to summary executions.”

They called on Israeli authorities to carry out “independent, thorough, prompt and impartial investigations into all suspected cases of extra-judicial, arbitrary and summary executions, and to provide compensation to the victims or their families.”

Since the beginning of October over 80 Palestinians and some 15 Israelis have reportedly been killed, while thousands of Palestinians and more than 100 Israelis have been injured.

Makarim Wibisono and Christof Heyns, UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and on summary executions respectively, called for strict compliance with international law, noting the
alleged shooting death of a Palestinian during an undercover arrest operation in a Hebron hospital last week.

“The current escalation of violence with individual attacks by Palestinians against Israelis, excessive use of force by Israeli forces when apprehending Palestinian suspects of alleged attacks and in the context of clashes, as well as violent attacks by settlers against Palestinians, is occurring within the existing context of policies and practices under the longstanding Israeli occupation which entail violations of Palestinian human rights and raise tensions,” the experts noted.

“In such a climate one would expect the leaders to make public calls to stop the carnage.”

Mr. Wibisono voiced particular concern at the high level of clashes in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron, where Palestinians live in close proximity to a large settler population.

“It is sadly a predictable flashpoint, but I strongly reiterate that Israeli security forces must abide by international standards on use of force,” he stressed. “In addition, there must not be impunity for settler violence”.

The experts welcomed the reported clarification by Israeli Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein to the effect that Israeli security forces are prohibited from firing at a suspected assailant unless an immediate danger to human life cannot otherwise be prevented and that the use of fire must be proportional to the threat.

“This is an important statement as the rhetoric used by certain Israeli politicians and senior members of the police seems to suggest otherwise,” Mr. Heyns said. “International law allows the use of lethal force only where it is absolutely necessary - a last measure - to protect life. All uses of firearms should be considered potentially lethal.”

'No turning back in Myanmar,’ says UN human rights expert in wake of historic elections

Welcoming the recent elections in Myanmar as ‘a new chapter in the country’s history,’ United Nations Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee today reaffirmed her commitment to work with all parties in the country to improve the human rights situation there, saying “the people have expressed the will for change. There is no turning back now.”

“In the new post-election environment, respect for human rights and democratic space must be ensured to protect and support those wishing to work with the new government in furthering democratic transition, national reconciliation and sustainable development and peace in Myanmar,” said Ms. Lee.

Noting that many people voted for the first time during the elections held on 8 November and ‘it was truly heartening to see thousands flock to the polls,’ she said: “The people have clearly expressed their wish for a free and democratic nation. These elections also demonstrate just how far the country has come in a few short years.”

However, Ms. Lee highlighted the human rights concerns that arose in the run-up to polls, including, the disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of people, including from minority communities, the disqualification of many Muslim candidates, as well as continuing restrictions in the exercise of the rights to freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

“These concerns are symptomatic of broader human rights challenges that will require the urgent attention of the new government. Now is the perfect time to recognize the situation and to chart the way forward to address them,” Ms. Lee said.

The expert stressed that discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, including the Rohingya in Rakhine state, as well as prevalent hate speech and incitement to hatred and violence against minority communities, should be addressed as a matter of priority.

In addition, she called for further reforms to fully guarantee the rights to freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association and to reform numerous laws that do not comply with international human rights standards.
Ms. Lee urged the immediate cessation of arrests, convictions and harassment of civil society and journalists and called for the release of all remaining political prisoners.

“I look forward to working closely with all stakeholders in the coming months to address these and other important human rights challenges,” said Ms Lee reiterating her willingness to “work constructively and cooperatively” with all parties to improve human rights situation in Myanmar.

**Ethiopia: UN warns of deepening food insecurity, allocates emergency funds to tackle severe drought**

*16 November* - With Ethiopia experiencing its worst drought in decades the United Nations is reporting deepening food insecurity and “severe emaciation and unusual livestock deaths” as the Organization’s humanitarian wing has allocated $17 million in emergency funding to help the Government tackle climate challenges and ensure timely food relief.

A recent report published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that severe drought, driven by the El Niño phenomenon, has not only caused livestock deaths especially in pastoral areas, but it has also deteriorated food security conditions in recent months, as food insecure people have almost doubled from August to October this year.

While cereal prices dropped last month thanks to the carryover stocks from previous year, the report also indicated the soaring prices of dairy and vegetables, as a result of food inflation.

Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) allocated $17 million last week from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), aiming to reach those in the areas hard hit by the drought with immediate food assistance and relief.

“A timely response to the emergency is critical,” said Stephen O’Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, warning that “if we don't act today, we face an even graver situation tomorrow, with more immense needs in 2016.”

This emergency funding will be provided to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), for supporting some 1.37 million Ethiopians with food, and providing specialized nutritional supplements to 164,000 malnourished women and children.

Some 8.2 million people currently need emergency food assistance – up almost 3 times compared to last year – and the number will likely double at the start of 2016, according to the Ethiopian Government.

The CERF pools donor contributions in a single fund so that money is available to start or continue urgent relief work anywhere in the world. Since its inception in 2006, 125 UN Member States and dozens of private-sector donors and regional Governments have contributed to the Fund. In 2015, CERF has allocated over $27 million to support humanitarian operations in Ethiopia.
At G20 Summit, Ban says response to terrorism 'needs to be robust, always within rule of law'

15 November - While the G20 Summit opened today in the Turkish city Antalya, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he will stress to world leaders that the global response to terrorism needs to be robust, but always within the rule of law and with respect for human rights.

“Let me start by reiterating my profound condolences to the people of France following the barbaric terrorist attacks in Paris on Friday night,” Mr. Ban told reporters at a press conference on the margins of the Summit.

Warning that terrorism is a threat to all humankind, the UN chief recalled that in the past four days alone, “horrendous” terrorist bombings have also killed dozens of people in Beirut and Baghdad.

“We will be discussing terrorism at this Summit,” he noted. “We also need to address the underlying drivers of violent extremism. I will soon present to the Member States of the United Nations a comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.”

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General pointed out that the Summit is taking place as the global community approaches the end of “what has been a watershed year for international cooperation,” with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Governments will soon meet in Paris to finalize a global climate change agreement,” Mr. Ban highlighted. “One hundred and sixty-one countries representing more than 90 per cent of global emissions have now submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions or INDC. These plans will bend the emissions curve downward, and move us in the right direction.”

But the Secretary-General warned they will not keep the world “under the dangerous 2-degree Celsius threshold.” He said the global community will have to go “much further and faster.”

To this end, he underlined four essential elements for success in Paris at the COP21 conference. “First, durability,” he explained. “Paris must send a clear signal to markets that the low-carbon transformation of the global economy is inevitable and beneficial.”

“Second, flexibility,” he continued. “The agreement must be able to accommodate changes in the global economy while striking balance between the leadership role of developed countries and the increasing responsibilities of developing countries.”

He said the third point is solidarity. “Developed countries must keep their pledge to provide $100 billion a year by 2020 for both adaptation and mitigation,” he stressed, calling, as a fourth point, for credibility through strong monitoring mechanisms.

Turning to the refugee crisis, the UN chief said he also counts on G20 leaders for support. “This is not only a crisis of numbers; it is a crisis of global solidarity.”

Paying tribute to Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon for hosting four million Syrian refugees, he strongly appealed to European nations coping with mass forced displacement not to reduce development assistance to finance the cost of refugee flows.

“Helping people in need should not be a zero sum game,” he stated, further urging G20 leaders to heed the growing global call for a recovery plan for the region, “perhaps akin to the Marshall Plan in scale.”
Concluding his remarks, he said reaching a political settlement in Syria should be a top priority.

“I welcome the renewed sense of urgency that the International Syria Support Group is bringing to these efforts, and I commend the leadership of U.S. Secretary of State Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and others involved in the talks yesterday in Vienna,” he told the press, urging participants to move beyond their differences so they can push further for a nationwide ceasefire, combat terrorism and address key governance and constitutional issues.

**Ban arrives in Turkey ahead of G20 Summit, meets with Turkish President**

14 November - Meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ahead of the G20 Summit in Antalya, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the annual event was “happening in somber times that required unity of action.”

A readout issued by the UN spokesperson noted that the two leaders condemned in the strongest terms the attacks in Paris and stressed the need for the international community to address terrorism "in a determined and unified way."

“The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the Turkish presidency of the G20,” the readout underlined, adding that Mr. Ban reiterated that he will present in a few months his comprehensive Plan of Action Against Violent Extremism.

Mr. Ban and President Erdoğan exchanged views on the way forward to resolve the situation in Syria. The UN chief also warmly thanked Turkey for hosting such a large number of refugees from that country.

In addition, the two leaders discussed the situation in Palestine, Libya and Cyprus, as well as issues related to climate change. The Secretary-General highlighted the importance to mobilize the G20 countries in order to achieve a meaningful and ambitious climate agreement at the conference (COP21) in Paris at the end of the month.

**UN Internet Governance Forum closes, highlights linkages with sustainable development**

14 November - Consensus at the closing 10th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Brazil today underscored the contribution of Information Communications Technologies (ICTs) and the Internet to the achievement of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations announced.

Goal 9 of the agenda sets an ambitious target to “significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.”

“In keeping with the IGF inclusiveness, this gathering in Joao Pessoa addressed both opportunities and challenges under the following sub-themes: Cybersecurity and Trust; Internet Economy; Inclusiveness and Diversity; Openness; Enhancing Multi-stakeholder Cooperation; Internet and Human Rights; Critical Internet Resources and Emerging Issues,” said UN Assistant Secretary-General Lenni Montiel in a press release.

According to the UN, the three-day Forum “became the Mecca center for vibrant discussions about internet governance in the context of sustainable development.” Annually convened by the Organization, the 2015 event reportedly succeeded in giving some 4,000 online participants, from 116 developed and developing countries, the opportunity to engage directly with 2,400 on-site attendees in debates that addressed the challenges, as well as opportunities for the future of the internet.

In addition, over 150 thematic workshops at the 10th IGF focused on a diverse range of topics spanning from zero rating and
network neutrality to freedom of expression online, cybersecurity and internet economy. Many workshops also stressed the interrelation of human rights and fundamental freedom, both online and offline and how this related to the promotion of development.

Meanwhile, the Under-Secretary-General for the Environment, Energy, Science and Technology of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Ambassador José Antônio Marcondes de Carvalho, said the Forum could develop and produce “tangible contributions” and, thus, have more substantial impact on the evolution of the Internet, especially in terms of public policy.

“This Forum gives an unambiguous message of the importance of the IGF and the legitimacy and relevance of its continuity,” he stated.

'Rear moment of diplomatic opportunity to end conflict in Syria,' says Ban as talks in Vienna reconvened

14 November - While members of an international support group for Syria engaged in “constructive dialogue” in Vienna on how to end the five-year conflict, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today said he is encouraged by the stakeholders reconvening to address the “grave situation” and bring about a political settlement to end the violence as soon as possible.

“In follow-up to the last meeting, the Secretary-General has instructed the United Nations Secretariat to accelerate planning on modalities for supporting the implementation of a political process and of a nationwide ceasefire for further exploration with the relevant parties,” indicated a statement issued by his spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the UN spokesperson issued a separate statement by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) noting that members welcomed Mr. Ban's instructions on the ceasefire, and expressed a unanimous sense of urgency to end the suffering of the Syrian people, the physical destruction of Syria, the destabilization of the region, and the resulting increase in terrorists drawn to the fighting in Syria.

The group includes the Arab League, the European Union, the United Nations, and 17 countries.

“The ISSG acknowledged the close linkage between a ceasefire and a parallel political process pursuant to the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, and that both initiatives should move ahead expeditiously,” the statement noted, highlighting that the members also stated their commitment to ensure a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition.

The group agreed to support and work to implement a nationwide ceasefire in Syria to come into effect as soon as the representatives of the Syrian government and the opposition have begun initial steps towards the transition under UN auspices on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué.

Meanwhile, the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council pledged to support a resolution to empower a UN-endorsed ceasefire monitoring mission in those parts of the country where monitors would not come under threat of attacks from terrorists.

“All members of the ISSG also pledged as individual countries and supporters of various belligerents to take all possible steps to require adherence to the ceasefire by these groups or individuals they support, supply or influence,” the statement underlined, adding that the ceasefire would not apply to offensive or defensive actions against Da'esh or Nusra or any other group the ISSG agrees to deem terrorist.

In addition, the ISSG expressed concern for the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons and the imperative of building conditions for their safe return in accordance with the norms of international humanitarian law and taking into account the interests of host countries.

They also reiterated their agreement on the need to convene Syrian government and opposition representatives in formal
negotiations under UN auspices, as soon as possible, with a target date of 1 January.

“The group welcomed efforts, working with United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and others, to bring together the broadest possible spectrum of the opposition, chosen by Syrians, who will decide their negotiating representatives and define their negotiating positions, so as to enable the political process to begin,” the statement explained.

Furthermore, ISSG members affirmed their support for a Syrian-led process that will, within a target of six months, establish “credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance,” and set a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution.

“Free and fair elections would be held pursuant to the new constitution within 18 months,” the statement noted. “These elections must be administered under UN supervision to the satisfaction of the governance and to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability, with all Syrians, including the diaspora, eligible to participate.”

Regarding the fight against terrorism, the ISSG reiterated that Da'esh, Nusra, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the UN Security Council, must be defeated.

The participants expect to meet in approximately one month in order to review progress towards implementation of a ceasefire and the beginning of the political process.

**Despite improvements in road safety, world still facing 'shocking' fatality figures - Ban**

**15 November** - On the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is highlighting that despite improvements in road safety, the world still faces some shocking injury and fatality figures.

“I call on governments to tighten enforcement of laws on speeding, drinking and driving, and to mandate and enforce the use of seat-belts, motorcycle helmets and child restraints – all of which have been shown to save lives,” Mr. Ban said in a message.

The UN chief also stated that the international day “is a time to reflect on the needless tragedies that occur each day on the world's roads.”

According to the UN, road traffic accidents kill an estimated 1.25 million people each year – per cent of them in middle- and low-income countries. Such accidents are the leading cause of death among young people aged between 15 and 29. Almost half of all road traffic deaths are among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

Meanwhile, the Second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety, hosted by the Government of Brazil and supported by the UN World Health Organization (WHO), is being convened this week.

Some 1500 delegates from more than 100 countries – including ministers of transport, health and interior – are expected to find ways to halve road traffic deaths and injuries by 2020 – the target set forth in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by Member States in September.