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Sendai: UN conference adopts new, people-centred disaster risk reduction strategy

18 March - Death, destruction and displacement wrought by natural disasters would be significantly reduced by 2030 under a new framework adopted by countries attending the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, in Sendai, Japan, where they also affirmed the “urgent and critical need” to anticipate, plan for and reduce such risk to more effectively protect people, communities and countries, and to build resilience.

Adopting the Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 after days of discussions and a final 30-hour negotiating session, 187 UN Member States attending the Conference approved seven targets, four priorities and a set of guiding principles, underscoring that substantial reduction of disaster risk requires perseverance and persistence, “with a more explicit focus on people and their health and livelihoods, and regular follow up.”

Recognizing the increasing impact of disasters and their complexity in many parts of the world, the Member States in their Declaration called all stakeholders to action, “aware that the realization of the new Framework depends on our unceasing and tireless efforts to make the world safer from the risks of disasters in the decades to come for the benefit of present and future generations.”

Echoing the views of many speakers throughout the week, the Declaration also noted that Sendai, in the midst of what was hailed as a “vibrant recovery” following a massive 2011 earthquake and tsunami that triggered a nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, proved a well-timed location the Conference, which was devoted to updating the landmark disaster resilience agreement reached in 2005 in Hyogo, Japan.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), was itself crafted in the wake of the devastation of the Indian Ocean tsunami,
which claimed 227,000 lives. The HFA has since produced some important successes, including the reduction in the number of people directly affected by natural disasters in Asia – where most such disasters occur – by almost one billion.

Yet the Sendai outcome acknowledges that over the past decade, disasters had continued to take a heavy toll, killing more that 700,000 people, injuring 1.4 million, and leaving some 23 million homeless as a result. Overall, more than 1.5 billion people were in some way touched by disaster and worldwide economic losses topped $1.3 trillion.

With the world facing this stark reality, the new accord – the first intergovernmental agreement of the UN post-2015 sustainable development era – seeks to achieve, over the next 15 years, “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses communities and countries.”

The realization of this outcome, the Conference agreed, requires strong commitment and involvement of political leadership in every country in the implementation and follow-up of the new framework. As such, the Conference agreed on the need for focused action in four priority areas: understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster risk reduction and resilience; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to ‘build back better’ in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The seven Framework’s global targets to be achieved over the next 15 years: a substantial reduction in global disaster mortality; a substantial reduction in numbers of affected people; a reduction in economic losses in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP); and substantial reduction in disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, including health and education facilities.

The targets also increase in the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020; enhanced international cooperation; and increased access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments.

Margareta Wahlström, head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), said adoption of the new framework “opens a major new chapter in sustainable development” as it outlines clear targets and priorities for action which will lead to a substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health.

“Implementation of the Sendai Framework over the next 15 years will require strong commitment and political leadership and will be vital to the achievement of future agreements on sustainable development goals and climate later this year,” she said.

“As the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki moon] said here on the opening day, sustainability starts in Sendai,” she said, as the Conference had successfully kicked off a particularly crucial year for the United Nations, with world leaders set to meet in Addis Ababa in July to discuss development financing, then again in New York in September to adopt a new development agenda, and finally in Paris in December to forge a meaningful, binding climate change agreement.

The work of the Conference, which opened on 14 March, began on somber note, as a powerful cyclone was pummeling Vanuatu and distant neighboring islands in the South Pacific. Mr. Ban has pledged the support of the entire United Nations system as the extent of the devastation to the small island has slowly begun to emerge.

The World Conference was attended by over 6,500 participants including 2,800 Government representatives from 187 governments. The Public Forum had 143,000 visitors over the five days of the conference making it one of the largest UN gatherings ever held in Japan.
UN envoy Gordon Brown makes ‘plea from the heart’ to end child rights abuses, promote safe schools

18 March - The United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, called today for “fundamental changes” to strengthen the global commitment to defending the rights of schoolgirls and boys, as he said that 2015 should be the year to end violations of children’s rights.

“Today I am making a plea from the heart to the conscience of the world that we now wake up to the suffering faced by millions of children,” Mr. Brown said during a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York.

“It is time for us to end the shameful breaches of international law that violate the rights of millions of children by calling a halt to the militarisation of schools, stopping the now-growing abduction of school pupils as weapons of war and insisting – even in conflict zones – that properly resourced ‘safe schools’ enable children to enjoy their education in peace.”

He urged the international community to invest in making schools safer in the world’s most troubled and dangerous areas by agreeing the terms of a new Global Humanitarian Fund for Education in Emergencies; to commit $163 million at an upcoming conference on educating Syrian refugees in Lebanon; and by signing the international Safe Schools Declaration to protect schools from military use and attacks by giving the same protection as is afforded to the Red Cross.

Mr. Brown also announced a project in Pakistan under the Safe Schools Initiative, which was already operating in Nigeria, and he looked forward to extending the initiative to South Sudan, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“I can announce today a 1,000 school pilot in Pakistan in a partnership between the Government, UNICEF, and the Global Business Coalition for Education, spearheaded by a pro-bono technology contribution from Predictify.me, a US-based data sciences and predictive analytics firm,” he said. “The partnership will deliver state-of-the-art technology and simulation software to assess the levels of risk preparedness of schools and generate recommendations for school and community safety plans.”

Mr. Brown explained that the project, which is supported by Pakistani President Nawaz Sharif, follows the successful roll-out of a similar scheme in Nigeria, where 30,000 children displaced by Boko Haram were in double-shift schools and other children in at-risk areas were benefiting from school relocation and increased security measures.

“In Nigeria, the Safe Schools Initiative, established in response to the kidnapping of the Chibok schools nearly one year ago, has reached $30 million,” said Mr. Brown, adding that the most recent contribution had come from the United States Government’s Let Girls Learn initiative. “I am calling for the release of the more than 200 schoolgirls abducted in Nigeria before the one-year anniversary on April 14th.”

He also called for the release of 89 schoolboys who were sitting for exams in Wau Shilluk, South Sudan, adding that it was “sad” that the kidnappers were offering to return the children to sit their exams but then keep them in captivity to serve as child soldiers. The schoolboys were among 12,000 children abducted to serve as child soldiers and the practice had to be stopped.

“I am supporting the education campaigns of UNICEF to help 400,000 South Sudanese children go back to safe schools,” he said.

Mr. Brown said he had seen for himself how children had become “the silent, tragic victims of conflict” on a recent visit to South Sudan, as well as others to Nigeria, Pakistan and the DRC. This was illustrated by statistics such as the more than 10,000 attacks on schools in the last five years – the highest level recorded in the past 40 years – and the 28 million boys and girls who are not in school in areas of conflict or emergency worldwide.
“I look forward to this year’s Security Council report on children in armed conflict,” he said, noting that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict had given special attention to violations in South Sudan, and urging support for the new fund to prevent children from “falling through the cracks” by providing education in emergencies.

“We can no longer wait,” he said. “It is time for decisive action.”

**UN chief urges more global support to resolve Libya crisis as he meets with Italian leaders**

18 March - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today stressed the importance of international support as the United Nations seeks to promote dialogue to resolve the crisis in Libya, as he met with senior Italian officials in Rome.

“As my Special Representative Bernardino Léon works to promote dialogue between the Libyan parties, the support of the international community, particularly Italy, is essential,” Mr. Ban told a press conference with Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

Libya was among the issues Mr. Ban discussed in his meetings with the Italian leadership, including President Sergio Mattarella and Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

“We discussed the situation in Libya, where further armed conflict will only worsen the situation and provide space for extremist groups. I am very concerned about the increasing presence of the so-called Islamic State, or Daesh, in Libya,” said the UN chief.

Referring to the ongoing discussions between the various parties in Libya, Mr. Ban said he hoped they will work together to form a unity government and “stop this senseless violence,” adding that “time is of the essence” to bringing peace and stability to the country.

The violence continued on the ground with an attack on Zintan airport, which was strongly condemned by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

“Coming against the backdrop of repeated United Nations and international community calls for all parties to take no action that would risk escalating tensions at a time when Libya’s leaders are engaged in a dialogue process, the Mission regards this attack as wholly unjustified and reckless,” it stated in a news release.

The Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Bernardino Léon, said such attacks on key facilities represented “a deliberate attempt to undermine efforts to find a political solution to the Libyan conflict through dialogue,” and the Mission questioned the motives of those intent on military escalation, which it said could only serve to undermine efforts to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

On Syria, the Secretary-General voiced deep appreciation at the press conference for the work of his Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, to bring peace and stability to that country. “Global, regional and national divisions and rivalries have gotten in the way of helping the Syrian people. I urge the international community, and in particular the Security Council, to unite to end this barbarity,” he said.

Mr. Ban also noted the “strong partnership” between Italy and the UN, calling it “a cornerstone of regional and international peace and security.” He went on to highlight Italy’s important contributions to the UN, including in peacekeeping operations, as well as its support for the UN presence in Rome, Brindisi and Turin.

In particular, he noted that Italy is the largest Western troop- and police-contributing country to UN operations, and that its personnel are playing a crucial stabilizing role in Lebanon.

The issue of irregular migration was also highlighted, with Mr. Ban saying he was “horrified” by the unscrupulous actions
of smugglers who subject vulnerable migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees to abuse, and often abandon them to die at sea.

He commended rescue efforts made in particular by the Italian Navy and Coast Guard, while urging the European Union and other countries to do far more to address the challenge of irregular migration.

**Haiti making ‘measurable gains’ towards 2015 elections, UN envoy tells Security Council**

18 March - The Government of Haiti has made progress towards the holding of elections critical for the country’s stability and development, the top United Nations official in the Caribbean nation told the Security Council today.

Presenting the Secretary-General’s report on the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Sandra Honoré reported that the country had made “measurable gains towards the holding of long-overdue elections” by the end of 2015, despite the lingering “uncertainty” caused by the absence of a functioning Parliament.

The first-round vote has been scheduled for 9 August, setting the stage for legislative, presidential and local elections to be held this year.

“The prerequisites for the holding of elections this year have been established,” Ms. Honoré said, admitting that although some political parties had voiced discontent over the political calendar, most had signalled their intent to take part in the elections.

“I call on all political actors to continue a genuine dialogue and a transparent and consultative approach that contributes to building confidence among all stakeholders.”

As part of the UN’s wider efforts to assist the beleaguered country recover from the devastating 2010 earthquake, the Organization and Haiti’s international partners are working with the Haitian Electoral Council to organise fair, inclusive and transparent elections that will bring out the installation of the country’s 50th Legislature in January 2016 and a handover of power to a newly elected President in February 2016.

The UN mission is mandated by the Security Council to provide logistical support and technical expertise to assist Haiti’s Government to continue building the capacity of its rule of law institutions at the national and local level.

Ms. Honoré, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of MINUSTAH, observed that the country’s security situation had remained “relatively stable” during the reporting period despite a recent increase in certain crimes, gang-related violence and public unrest. At the same time, most public protests giving voice to socio-economic grievances have been small in size and had taken place “without major incidents.”

Nonetheless, she continued, the international community and the Haitian Government must sustain their commitment towards ramping up the development of the country’s national police in order to guarantee Haiti’s “enduring stability.”

On that note, the envoy remarked that recent developments in the area of rule of law were “reassuring” amid a push to reform Haiti’s 179-year-old criminal law framework and an initiative to decrease prolonged pre-trial detention.

The humanitarian situation, meanwhile, had registered a drastic reduction in the number of reported cholera cases, down from a peak of over 350,000 in 2011 to 27,753 in 2014. Moreover, the country continued to make progress in relocating those made homeless by the 2010 earthquake.

“However,” Ms. Honoré added, “the lingering epidemic and high levels of other water-borne and vector-borne diseases will persist until gaps in infrastructure and services are definitely closed.”
The massive earthquake which struck Haiti on 12 January 2010 and killed 200,000 people damaged much of the country’s infrastructure. Five years later, some three million Haitians still remain unsure about where their next meal will come from, according to the UN. Because of its geography, Haiti is highly prone to natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, landslides and droughts. Poverty means that even moderate shocks can push people into hunger.

To that point, she cautioned, that drought in some areas of the country had resulted in reduced crop production in 2014, impacting 600,000 people with severe food insecurity and that UN humanitarian efforts would continue in order “to strengthen the continuum from recovery to development.”

**UN officials condemn deadly attack on Tunisia’s Bardo Museum**

**18 March** - Senior United Nations officials have condemned today’s attack against the Bardo Museum in the Tunisian capital which resulted in a number of deaths, and voiced solidarity with the Government and people of the North African nation.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban conveys his deepest condolences to the families of the victims of what he called a “deplorable act.”

According to media reports, 19 people, including 17 foreign tourists, have been killed in the gun attack on the museum, located in central Tunis.

Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), spoke of the attack during a meeting with French President Francois Hollande at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The two leaders were addressing media on the destruction of cultural heritage by extremist groups.

“The Bardo Museum is a place open to all; a place of discovery and dialogue between cultures. This cowardly act is a denial of these principles and must unite us even more in the combat against extremism,” she stated in a news release.

“Confronted with those who seek to choke off human spirit by violence and terror, we must respond by dialogue, culture and respect for human rights,” she added.

Also speaking out was the Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Taleb Rifai, who said that this act of violence deserved the condemnation of the international community.

“As part of the global tourism family, we are shocked by these horrible attacks. The relatives and friends of the victims are in our thoughts and we once more convey our solidarity with the people and the Government of Tunisia,” he said in a news release.

“Tourism is a lifeline for the economy of Tunisia and we will continue our support to ensure that tourism continues to provide development opportunities to its people.”
In Nigeria, UN political chief hails ‘noteworthy’ progress as country prepares to vote

18 March - Nigeria has made “noteworthy” progress in the preparations for the upcoming elections, the top United Nations political official said today, as he wrapped up a visit to the country, whose citizens will head to the polls beginning on 28 March.

Speaking at a press conference in the capital, Abuja, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman lauded the efforts of Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), citing the distribution of Permanent Voters Cards and the testing of card readers, despite a tight schedule and logistical challenges.

“We believe that these efforts should help to build confidence in the electoral system among the Nigerian voters and pave the way for the holding of credible and inclusive elections.”

During the visit, during which he was accompanied by the Secretary-General's High-Level Representative to Nigeria, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Mr. Feltman met with key national, electoral and political officials to encourage them “to continue working together to creating an environment conducive to the holding of violence-free and credible elections and ensuring that all eligible Nigerians can freely exercise their constitutional right to vote including those displaced by violence in the northeast.”

The UN political chief commended President Goodluck Jonathan and the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Party (APC), Major General Muhammadu Buhari, for their commitment to the so-called Abuja Accord aimed at preventing election-related violence.

“Given the important role Nigeria plays in the region and globally, the international community is closely watching the elections in Nigeria and that any persons responsible for violence will be held accountable,” Mr. Feltman stated.

Turning to the situation in the country’s northeast, where Government forces are currently fighting the militant group Boko Haram, Mr. Feltman said he reiterated Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message that no cause or grievance can justify the insurgent group’s “continuing indiscriminate and brutal attacks” against the region’s civilian populations.

Moreover, he said that while Mr. Ban welcomed the positive military steps taken by countries in the region in countering Boko Haram, a more holistic approach would be required to foil any future threat by such extremist groups.

“While security measures are essential, an exclusive reliance on a military approach would not suffice to counter the Boko Haram insurgency,” he explained. “Countering Boko Haram effectively and permanently should be based on a multidimensional approach that addresses human rights concerns and promotes good governance and economic and social development.”
Mali: Security Council extends condolences over death of two UN peacekeepers

18 March - The Security Council expressed their regret at the death of two Dutch peacekeepers serving with the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali resulting from a helicopter accident in the region of Gao.

“The members of the Security Council extended their deepest condolences to the Government of the Netherlands and to the families of the two peacekeepers, who lost their lives in this tragic accident,” the 15-member body said in a press statement.

Council members also reiterated their full support for the Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Mongi Hamdi, and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to assist the Malian authorities and people in their efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to their country.

MINUSMA was established by the Council in April 2013 to support political processes in Mali and carry out a number of security-related tasks, including the protection of civilians and assisting in the reestablishment of State authority.

UN rights chief raises serious concerns about ‘rushed’ trial of former Maldives President

18 March - The United Nations human rights chief expressed strong concerns today about the hasty and apparently unfair trial of the former President of the Maldives, Mohammed Nasheed, who received a 13-year jail sentence for the unlawful detention of a criminal court judge in 2012.

High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein described Mr. Nasheed’s trial as “a rushed process that appears to contravene the Maldives’ own laws and practices and international fair trial standards in a number of respects.”

According to a news release issued by the High Commissioner’s office (OHCHR), the trial began one day after Mr. Nasheed’s arrest, which was made on the charge that Mr. Nasheed authorised the unlawful detention of Criminal Court Judge Abdulla Mohamed in 2012 when he was the country’s President. Having previously faced charges for the same complaint, which were withdrawn by the Prosecutor-General, Mr. Nasheed was arrested again under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

OHCHR noted that the trial did not follow stipulations in the Maldives’ Constitution, which states that anyone accused of a crime shall have the right to adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence, and did not follow international fair trial standards.

“The Government argues the new case against Nasheed was based on the same materials previously available to his legal team, but he should still have been given time to instruct his counsel and prepare a new defence,” the High Commissioner said, noting that Mr. Nasheed’s legal team recused itself after the sixth hearing, with the court failing to wait until he had new counsel before proceeding with the trial.

“The fact that judges in the case, as well as the Prosecutor-General, have also been witnesses in the investigation must raise serious questions about conflicts of interest,” he continued, pointing out also that Nasheed’s defence was prevented from calling witnesses.
“This trial began one day after the former President’s arrest and was completed after 11 hearings in 19 days. It is hard to see how such hasty proceedings, which are far from the norm in the Maldives, can be compatible with the authorities’ obligations under international law to conduct a fair trial.”

The High Commissioner noted that the courts refused requests by the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives and domestic as well as international observers to monitor the trial proceedings, saying Mr. Nasheed’s case was too important to have proceeded with so little attention to correct methods.

“Clearly no one should be above the law, and the trial of a former Head of State would be a major challenge for any government,” he stated. “But in a polarized context, and given the long-standing serious concerns about the independence and politicization of the judiciary in the Maldives, this case should have been handled with much greater care and transparency.”

He added that Mr. Nasheed would now be able to appeal to the High Court, but the statement also pointed out that new appeal procedures were introduced six weeks ago reducing the time allowed to lodge an appeal from 90 working days to just ten. On top of that, the court’s written justification for the conviction may take several days to become available.

“He must be given adequate time and the possibility to prepare and present his defence,” said the High Commissioner, adding that a “sharp spotlight” was now shining on the Maldives’ judicial processes. “The flagrant irregularities in this case can still be rectified in the appeal process, and I urge the authorities to restore domestic and international confidence in the legal system by enabling international jurists to observe the appeal process.”

**UN rights expert urges Myanmar authorities to address signs of backtracking**

18 March - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar today called on the country’s authorities to address ongoing challenges to the democratic reform process “before they undermine the success achieved so far.”

“I was very disturbed by reports on 10 March that excessive and disproportionate force had been used against students and other civilians and that 127 people were subsequently arrested,” Ms. Yanghee Lee said during the presentation of her first report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

She welcomed the release of some detainees but also called for the immediate release of all the others. Further, Ms. Lee drew attention to the pressure on human rights defenders, including prosecutions under outdated defamation and national security laws, which have a “chilling effect on civil society activities.”

“I am concerned journalists are still being interrogated and arrested, and that 10 journalists were imprisoned in 2014. This needs to stop if Myanmar wants to create a meaningful democratic space,” Ms. Lee said in a news release.

While noting that economic development had benefited some in the country, the expert urged the Government to ensure that “others are not left out” and called for “a human rights-based approach to development programmes.”

Ms. Lee also expressed concern over the alarming escalation of fighting in the Kokang region, where over 100 civilians are reported to have died and tens of thousands have been displaced.

“Even during a state of emergency, the Government has an obligation to strictly uphold fundamental human rights,” she reiterated.

More needs to be done to address the underlying issues at the heart of the conflicts, including discrimination against ethnic minorities. Four bills currently before Parliament risk increasing tension, she emphasized.
“During my last visit in January 2015, I witnessed how dire the situation has remained in Rakhine state. The conditions in Muslim IDP [internally displaced persons] camps are abysmal and I received heart-breaking testimonies from Rohingya people telling me they had only two options: stay and die or leave by boat,” she said.

The expert cautioned against any provision in the Rakhine Action Plan that would classify Rohingyas as ‘illegal aliens’ and subject them to possible prolonged internment in camps or removal from the territory. The expiry at the end of this month of the temporary white cards held by many Rohingyas as identity documentation “further increases their vulnerability,” she said.

Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. They are not UN staff, do not receive a salary for their work, and are independent from any government or organization.

**UN health agency: ‘Push back hard’ against tobacco industry to protect public health**

18 March - The head of the United Nations health agency today welcomed new data showing that non-smoking is becoming the new norm but urged global action to “push back hard” against the tobacco industry, saying: “We do not have the riches of the tobacco industry, but we are right and we are resolved.”

Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), made the call in a keynote address at the 16th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, which opened today and is focussing on tobacco control and non-communicable diseases, namely lung and heart diseases, cancers and diabetes.

Tobacco kills nearly six million people each year, according to WHO, and more than five million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use, while more than 600,000 are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. Nearly 80 per cent of the world’s one billion smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.

On the positive side, Dr. Chan noted that the proportion of male smokers is going down in 125 countries. “Non-smoking is becoming the norm,” she said.

But “in an ominous trend, in some countries the battle between tobacco and health has moved into the courts,” she noted.

Countries wishing to protect their citizens through larger pictorial warnings on packages or by introducing plain packaging are being intimidated by tobacco industry threats of lengthy and costly litigation, according to the UN health chief.

“This is an effort to deprive governments of their sovereign right to legislate in the public interest,” she said. “We will push back hard.”

Dr. Chan noted that in the Philip Morris challenge to Uruguay’s tobacco packaging laws, WHO has filed an amicus brief with the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

She also said Australia’s legislation that mandates plain packaging, designed to make tobacco products less attractive, is also being challenged in a dispute being considered at the World Trade Organization.

Following Australia’s lead, more than 10 countries are considering plain packaging, the WHO said. Ireland became the second country to introduce plain packaging as law. The United Kingdom, Burkina Faso and New Zealand are the next most advanced followed by Chile, Panama, France, Norway, and Turkey.

“Bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship are not comprehensive as long as colour logos and other branding continue to operate as silent salesmen,” she said.
WHO is co-sponsoring the conference in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

A new online WHO Global Report on Trends in Tobacco Smoking, launched today during the conference, finds that in 2010, there were 3.9 billion non-smokers aged 15 years and over in WHO member States (or 78 per cent of the 5.1 billion population aged 15 and over).

According to the report, the number is projected to rise to 5 billion (or 81 per cent of the projected 6.1 billion population aged 15 and over) by 2025 if the current pace of tobacco cessation continues.

“This trend indicates countries are making inroads, but much greater action is needed to curb the tobacco epidemic if the global target to cut tobacco consumption by 30 per cent by 2025 to reduce premature deaths from NCDs [non-communicable diseases] is to be met,” it said.