Security Council strongly condemns escalating Boko Haram attacks, warns of ‘crimes against humanity’

19 January - The United Nations Security Council today condemned in the ‘strongest terms’ the recent escalation in attacks conducted by Boko Haram, and expressed its deep concern that the activities of the Islamist extremist group, including a spate of shocking suicide bombings across northern Nigeria, are undermining the peace and stability of the West and Central African region.

“The Security Council demands that Boko Haram immediately and unequivocally cease all hostilities and all abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law and disarm and demobilize,” declared Cristián Barros Melet, Chile’s Permanent Representative to the UN and President of the Council for the month of January, reading out an approved statement during a formal meeting.

In the statement, the Council also strongly condemned and deplored all abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law by the terrorist group Boko Haram, since 2009, “including those involving violence against civilian populations, notably women and children,” and demanded “the immediate and unconditional release” of all those abducted by the group, including the 276 schoolgirls kidnapped in Chibok northern Nigeria last April.

The UN body’s condemnation of the terrorist group follows Boko Haram’s recent suicide bombings on 10 and 11 January in the towns of Maiduguri and Potiskum as well as attacks in Baga which resulted in the “massive destruction of civilian homes and significant civilian casualties.”
Initial accounts from the field indicate that girls, possibly one as young as 10, were forced to carry out the suicide attacks at marketplaces in Maiduguri and in Potiskum, drawing condemnation from both UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Anthony Lake, Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

The UN human rights office emphasized last week that the use of a child to detonate a bomb was “not only morally repugnant but constitutes an egregious form of child exploitation under international law.”

Moreover, earlier today, the top UN envoy for Central Africa Chad’s decision to send soldiers to Cameroon to help in the fight against Boko Haram, after several assaults on cross-border villages in northern Cameroon, which have raised fears that the insurgents are expanding their attacks.

According to media reports, some 80 people – many of them said to be children – were abducted yesterday in Cameroon in one of the biggest Boko Haram kidnappings to take place outside of Nigeria.

The Council statement also cited increasing attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region along Nigeria’s borders and noted overall that some of Boko Haram’s acts “may amount to crimes against humanity.”

Meanwhile, the surge in violence caused by Boko Haram has also unleashed a wave of fear across Nigeria and the wider region. In northern Nigeria alone, over 900,000 people, many of them women and children, have fled their homes. More than 300 schools have been severely damaged or destroyed and hundreds of children have been killed, injured or abducted from their homes and schools, according to a recent assessment by Leila Zerrougui, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

In addition, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) recently reported that the number of Nigerian refugees seeking safety in Chad due to the dire security situation had almost quadrupled over the past few weeks. Most of the refugees, the agency added, were forced into western Chad, where many are now staying with local communities in villages around 450 kilometres north-west of the capital, N’Djamena.

In his statement, Mr. Barros Melet said that the Security Council expressed its concern at the scale of the growing humanitarian crisis enveloping the region due to Boko Haram’s operations which, he added, had “resulted in the large-scale displacement of Nigerians within the country into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.”

Moreover, the Council welcomed plans for the meeting to be held tomorrow in Niamey, Niger, in which the threat posed by Boko Haram would be discussed by regional actors. In that regard, the Council noted the decision of the Lake Chad Basin Commission Member States and Benin to operationalize the Multinational Joint Task Force, “including through the establishment of a joint Headquarters and the deployment of national contingents, to conduct military operations against Boko Haram.”

“The Security Council underlines the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice in accordance with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions,” the Security Council President concluded.
Central African Republic: UN mission captures militia leader in high-profile arrest

19 January - The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) has announced the capture of Rodrigue Ngaibona, leader of the anti-Balaka militia, in what is being hailed as the Mission’s first high-profile arrest of 2015.

Addressing the daily press briefing at UN Headquarters in New York, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters that peacekeepers serving with the integrated stabilization Mission, known by its French acronym, MINUSCA, apprehended Mr. Ngaibona in the town of Bouca following an arrest warrant issued by the country’s Public Prosecutor.

Mr. Ngaibona, who also goes by the *nom de guerre* ‘General Andilo,’ was then brought to Bossangoa by the ‘blue helmets’ who subsequently handed him over to the authorities.

More than two years of civil war and sectarian violence have displaced thousands of people in the CAR amid continuing clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka alliance and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian.

According to UN estimates, nearly 440,000 people remain displaced inside the country while some 190,000 have sought asylum across the borders. At the same time, more than 36,000 people – including the Peuhl ethnic group – remain trapped in enclaves across the country, hoping to find asylum in neighbouring States.

Since September 2014, MINUSCA has arrested over 200 individuals in its support to the CAR authorities to maintain rule of law. Nonetheless, the situation in the country remains tenuous, with Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, recently warning that the atmosphere in the Central African Republic was potentially explosive.

No new Ebola cases reported in most of Liberia counties over past week – UN

19 January - The United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) today welcomed encouraging statistics recently released by Liberia’s Minister of health and Social Welfare that reported that 12 of the country’s 15 counties have had no new cases within the past seven days.

The three regions that are still reporting new cases in Liberia include Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Montserrado, a UN spokesman told reporters in New York this afternoon.

Farhan Haq also said that according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone all reported their lowest weekly total of new cases in months.

Guinea reported its lowest weekly total of new cases since 17 of August 2014, Liberia has had no confirmed cases nationally for the final two days of the week ending the 11th of January 2015. And Sierra Leone has recorded its lowest total of new cases since 31 August 2014.

The spokesperson also said that UNMEER was welcoming these new developments as ‘very good’ progress but was also cautioning all involved in the fight against the virus to remain on high alert and continue the high intensity of response efforts.
Additionally, over the weekend, WHO, UNMEER and the Malian Government declared Mali free from active Ebola transmission.

**Top UN officials welcome negotiations as Member States discuss new sustainability agenda**

19 January - Senior United Nations officials underlined the importance of the intergovernmental negotiations that got under way at UN Headquarters in New York today aimed at finalizing the post-2015 development agenda, as they addressed the General Assembly this afternoon.

“Today marks the beginning of critical intergovernmental negotiations to finalize the post-2015 development agenda,” said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who spoke alongside the President of the General Assembly, Sam Kutesa, and the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Martin Sajdik. “The world is watching and expectations are high.”

Stressing that Member States have the “extraordinary opportunity – and the responsibility” to adopt an inspiring set of sustainable development goals, ensure their adequate financing, address climate change and rigorously monitor progress leading to the planned-for transformation, Mr. Ban encouraged the Assembly to take advantage of a ‘seminal year’ to kick-start a new era of global sustainability.

He said it was time to realize the promise of the UN Charter: “to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” and drew attention to his synthesis report, The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet designed to help guide negotiations by framing and bringing clarity to the post-2015 development agenda through six essential elements: dignity, people, prosperity, planet, justice and partnership.

The Secretary-General looked ahead to meetings in Addis Ababa to pave the ground for bold actions on financing and the global partnership for sustainable development, in New York to adopt the post-2015 development agenda and sustainability goals, and in Paris to adopt a legal framework for a climate change agreement.

As States embarked upon negotiation of the agenda’s final parameters, Mr. Ban said it was clearly necessary that it should include a compelling and principled narrative, based on human rights and human dignity, and that the Sustainable Development Goals should be at its core. Robust global partnership was needed to mobilize financing and other means of implementation and monitoring should be central.

“Let us demonstrate global citizenship, foresight, moral courage and political leadership as we reach final agreement on plans to support people, communities, societies and our beautiful planet,” he said, promising the support of the whole United Nations system throughout the process.

Mr. Kutesa, who opened the meeting, said the meeting was a chance to exchange views on the inputs for the negotiations, including that synthesis report and the proposal on the Sustainable Development Goals.

“With the proposed [sustainable development goals], it is now clear what Member States would like the post-2015 development agenda to achieve,” he said, adding that the focus on poverty eradication indicated that the agenda could be truly transformative. “In the coming months, Member States and stakeholders will consider how they intend to achieve these ambitious goals and targets.”

One aspect that will clearly differentiate the post-2015 development era centred on the sustainable development goals from the MDG era is that the newer targets are designed to be holistic and universal. States would have to ensure mobilization of adequate means of implementation, in the form of financial resources, technology development and transfer, and capacity building.
“The agenda we formulate should put people at the centre,” said Mr. Kutesa. “It should be responsive to and meet people’s needs and aspirations. It should preserve our planet for the present and future explanations.”

Mr. Sajdik said ECOSOC and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development would work to promote an integrated approach to implementation of the post-2015 agenda. In particular, the Forum would provide political leadership, follow-up and recommendations on sustainable development commitments, notably the relevant goals, at the highest level.

“Let’s not forget one undisputable fact: from January 1, 2016 it is all about implementation!” he said, adding that the unprecedented scale of financing and other means of implementation needed for that implementation would require a renewed partnership for development.

In addition, he stressed that it was down to Government delegates to produce an agenda that can be communicated and re-communicated over the whole 15 years of its lifespan.

“Let us be strategic and visionary, capturing all the right elements and fitting them together effectively to holistically advance the post-2015 development agenda,” he said. “But let us also be realistic, building on what we already have and not trying to reinvent the wheel.”

**UN health agency urges greater government action against non-communicable diseases**

19 January - The international community has an opportunity to reverse the global epidemic of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and prevent the grim annual toll of 16 million people who die of heart and lung diseases, strokes, cancer and diabetes before the age of 70, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) revealed today.

Speaking at the launch of the WHO’s Global status report on noncommunicable diseases 2014, the agency’s Director-General, Dr. Margaret Chan, announced that by investing anywhere from $1 to $3 per person per year, countries could dramatically reduce illness and death from NCDs.

“In 2015, every country needs to set national targets and implement cost-effective actions. If they do not,” Dr. Chan said, “millions of lives will continue to be lost too soon.”

According to the report, nearly half of premature NCD deaths are preventable. In fact, 16 million of the 38 million lives lost to NCDs, or 42 per cent, could be saved through ramped up government policies targeting tobacco use, the harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, and providing universal health care.

In Brazil, the report notes by example, the NCD mortality rate is dropping 1.8 per cent per year due, in part, to the expansion of primary health, in direct contrast to the global trend, which saw the rate of NCD deaths rise by 9.6 per cent between 2000 and 2012.

Despite Brazil’s successes in reducing NCD mortality, however, the WHO is calling for more action to be taken to reduce the epidemic which is particularly widespread in low- and middle-income countries where NCD deaths are overtaking those from infectious diseases. In addition, the rate of premature deaths is especially impacting those countries’ efforts to alleviate poverty and achieve specific development goals. From 2011 to 2025, cumulative economic losses due to NCDs for low- and middle-income countries are estimated at $7 trillion.

As a result, the UN agency has outlined a nine-point voluntary action plan which, it says, would address key NCD risk factors including tobacco use, salt intake, physical inactivity, high blood pressure and harmful use of alcohol and seek to reduce the number of premature NCD deaths by 25 per cent by 2025.

“Our world possesses the knowledge and resources to achieve the nine global NCD targets by 2025,” explained Dr. Oleg Chestnov, the WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. “Falling short of the
targets would be unacceptable.”

Among its suggestions, the report also provides so-called ‘best buy’ or cost-effective, high-impact interventions which encompass all forms of tobacco advertising, the replacement of trans fats with polyunsaturated fats, restricting or banning alcohol advertising, preventing heart attacks and strokes, promoting breastfeeding, implementing public awareness programmes on diet and physical activity, and preventing cervical cancer through screening.

“If we miss this opportunity to set national targets in 2015 and work towards attaining our promises in 2025, we will have failed to address one of the major challenges for development in the 21st century,” concluded Dr. Chestnov.

**Marking international year, UN chief celebrates role of light in boosting sustainable growth**

19 January - The role light-based technologies play in spurring sustainable development can help the international community tackle the challenges of the 21st century, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared today as he unveiled the International Year of Light – the United Nations effort showcasing light’s vital contribution to issues related to energy, education, agriculture and health.

In a message delivered to the Year’s opening ceremony held at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris, the Secretary-General explained that light science has already revolutionized medicine, agriculture and energy while today’s optical technologies has become the lynchpin to the basic infrastructure of modern communications.

Moreover, he added, by technologically harnessing the power of light, the international community has become better armed in its battle against the most pressing existential threats facing humanity.

“As we strive to end poverty and promote shared prosperity, light technologies can offer practical solutions to global challenges,” said Mr. Ban.

“They will be particularly important in advancing progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, achieving the future sustainable development goals and addressing climate change.”

Proclaimed by the UN General Assembly’s in 2013 following the body’s adoption of a resolution on the UNESCO-led initiative, the International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies was mandated to boost public awareness on the influence of photonics – or, the science and technology of generating, controlling, and detecting photons, or light particles – on everyday life.

In fact, according to UNESCO, photonic technologies, which already make vital contributions towards energy generation and energy efficiency, have a “major impact” on the world economy with a current global market of almost $350 billion and a projected market value of over $700 billion in 2020.

In addition to the economic benefits, however, advancements in research now mean photonic technologies can significantly contribute to global efforts towards developing an energy efficient future which would both mitigate the effects of climate change and increase development.

To that point, Mr. Ban cited his Sustainable Energy for All initiative which, he said, aimed to dramatically increase energy access, energy efficiency and the use of renewables by the year 2030 – a move that would bring more light to homes, hospitals and enterprises and translate into “a safer, healthier and more productive future.”

“The International Year of Light can be used to expand scientific cooperation, especially in developing countries, advance education in the basic sciences, and engage talented young minds in our efforts to build lives of dignity for all,” the
Secretary-General concluded, in his message.

‘Wake-up call’ data shows 63 million adolescents out of school – joint UN agency report

19 January - One in five adolescents worldwide is not in school, which means that some 63 million young people between the ages of 12 and 15 are denied their right to an education, mainly because they are marginalized and poor, a joint United Nations agency report has found as pressure mounts to include universal secondary education in the post-2015 global development agenda.

“This report serves as wake-up call to mobilize the resources needed to guarantee basic education for every child, once and for all,” said Ms. Irina Bokova, Director General at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a co-facilitator of the findings.

Speaking at last Thursday’s Education World Forum in London, Ms. Bokova advocated targeted interventions to reach the families displaced by conflict, “girls forced to stay home”, children with disabilities and the millions obliged to work.

The new joint report Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children was produced by UNESCO and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

The data found that as children get older, the risk that they will never start school or will drop out increases. One in ten children of primary school age is out of school compared to one in five adolescents. The study also found that in total, 121 million children and adolescents have either never started school or dropped out despite the international community’s promise to achieve Education for All by 2015.

UNICEF’s Executive Director, Anthony Lake, participating at the Forum, said that fixing the problem required the global commitment to invest in three areas: getting more children into primary school; helping children – especially girls – stay in school through the secondary level; and improving the quality of learning.

“There should be no debate among these priorities,” he stressed, emphasizing that “the success of every child – and the impact of our investment in education – depends on all three.

Echoing that innovative approach, UNESCO’s Director-General said: “Business as usual strategies based on more teachers, more classrooms and more textbooks are not enough to reach the most disadvantaged children”.

Indeed, “business as usual” has not worked. Data show that there has been almost no progress in reducing the number of adolescents out of school since 2007. Children living in conflict, child labourers and those facing discrimination are most affected. And without major shifts in policies and resources, previous education gains may erode.

If current trends continue, 25 million children – 15 million girls and 10 million boys – are likely to never set foot inside a classroom.

The highest out-of-school rates are in Eritrea and Liberia, where 66 per cent and 59 per cent of children, respectively, do not go to primary school. In many countries, the rates of exclusion are even higher for older children, especially girls. In Pakistan, 58 per cent of adolescent girls roughly between the ages of 12 and 15 are out of school compared to 49 per cent of boys.

Poverty is the greatest barrier to education, the report found. In Nigeria, two-thirds of children in the poorest households are not in school and almost 90 per cent of them will probably never enrol. In contrast, only 5 per cent of the richest children are out of school.

For a concrete policy shift, the study calls on governments to provide robust information on marginalised children. Many of
these children remain invisible within current data collection methods. Children with disabilities are amongst the least visible – reliable data simply don't exist – and they are being overlooked in national responses to out-of-school children.

**UN agency stresses need for genetic diversity in agriculture to combat climate change**

19 January - Knowledge of agricultural genetic resources needs to grow more quickly because of the critical role they have to play in feeding the world as climate change advances faster than expected, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

As the FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture starts its biennial meeting today, the Organization has sounded a warning that much more must be done to study, preserve and use the biological diversity that underpins world food production.

“In a warmer world with harsher, more variable weather, plants and animals raised for food will need to have the biological capacity to adapt more quickly than ever before,” said FAO Deputy Director-General Maria Helena Semedo. “Preventing further losses of agricultural genetic resources and diverting more attention to studying them and their potential will boost humankind's ability to adapt to climate change.”

During its meeting, the Commission will consider adopting guidelines for integrating genetic resources into climate change adaptation plans that the FAO has developed in line with guidance from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The draft guidelines argue for an increased and explicit use of genetic resources as a part of overall adaptation measures needed to assure food security – in recognition of the critical role that genetic diversity must play there – and contain a range of recommendations aimed at helping countries implement policies and strategies for studying, preserving, and utilizing genetic resources to adapt to climate change.

The aim is to support Governments' use of genetic resources – ranging from seed varieties of major staple crops to the millions of microbes living in the soil, an area where expertise is relatively thin – in their national plans for coping with climate change. Micro-organisms are often decried as agents of disease in crops and livestock but actually perform myriad functions and protect their hosts from myriad threats.

“We need to strengthen the role of genetic resources and help farmers, fishers and foresters cope with climate change,” says Linda Collette, Secretary of the Commission and lead editor of a book released by the FAO on the subject of genetic resources.

The book, *Coping with climate change: the roles of genetic resources for food and agriculture*, says it is vital for the world to build its knowledge of genetic resources for food and agriculture and their characteristics such as resistance to drought or disease. Documentation of locally adapted varieties and breeds of crops and livestock are poorly documented and may be lost before their potential roles in climate change adaptation are recognised.

“Time is not on our side” it argues. “In the coming decades, millions of people whose livelihoods and food security depend on farming, aquaculture, fishing, forestry and livestock keeping are likely to face unprecedented climatic conditions.”
UN chief alarmed by ‘severe escalation’ of fighting at Donetsk airport

18 January - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has today said he is alarmed by the severe escalation of fighting for control of Donetsk airport in eastern Ukraine and implored all sides to make good on their commitments under the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, with the first step being an immediate and full cessation of hostilities.

In a statement delivered by his Spokesman, the Secretary-General noted that fighting around the airport had already caused numerous casualties and threatened to completely unravel a hard-won September 2014 cease-fire.

The statement continued, stressing that further deterioration of a situation that has led to heavy loss of life and civilian suffering must be avoided at all costs, adding that the UN stands ready to support all efforts toward de-escalation and the resumption of a genuine peace process to restore Ukraine's stability and territorial integrity.

Remembrance vital to disaster management, senior UN official tells Kobe earthquake memorial

18 January - Twenty years after 6,434 lost their lives in the Kobe earthquake, the Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Margareta Wahlström, took part yesterday in the official commemoration of the disaster in Japan.

“It is important to remember distant events because a short memory is the enemy of disaster management,” Ms Wahlström said as she congratulated the Japanese people and government for their steadfast remembrance of those who died during an earlier event.

The Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake struck at 5.46 am local time on 17 January 1995 and in 20 years since, earthquakes have killed more people than any other natural hazard, with almost half of the two million deaths from major reported disasters occurring in earthquakes.

“Five of the most deadly earthquakes of the last 100 years have occurred in the last ten years,” said Ms Wahlström, describing how the 2010 Haiti earthquake destroyed the capital, Port-au-Prince, how the Indian Ocean tsunami affected 14 countries, while the 2008 Szechuan earthquake in China and the 2005 Muzaffarabad earthquake in Pakistan, took over 80,000 lives each.

“These four earthquakes alone had a combined death toll of some 500,000, injured many more and disrupted the lives of millions,” she said. “In addition, the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011 taught us a lesson about seismic risk in the nuclear age. These five catastrophic events over a short period of time convey a strong message about risk and exposure in the 21st century driven by population growth and urbanization. Proper land use and building codes are key to reducing risk.”

During her trip, Ms. Wahlström will be meeting with Japanese officials to discuss the agenda and arrangements for the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which will take place in Sendai, Japan, from 14-18 March.

Seismic risk will be an important feature of the Conference which will adopt a new framework for disaster risk reduction, updating the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted in January 2005 in Kobe, which provided the world's first comprehensive blueprint for disaster risk reduction.
Senior UN official in Afghanistan condemns killing of civilian family in bomb blast

18 January - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has today condemned the killing yesterday of a family, as well as the driver of the taxi they were travelling in when the vehicle hit a pressure-plate improvised explosive device planted on a road in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

"The use of indiscriminate, victim-activated bombs in civilian populated areas is an outrage," said the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, Nicholas Haysom. "The use of indiscriminate weapons must stop immediately."

The family group was composed of a husband and wife, as well as two sons and a daughter aged between 4 and 12 years-old.

Next month, UNAMA will release its annual report on the Protection of Civilians, including detailed reporting on civilian casualties. Improvised explosive devices were the second largest cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan during 2014, with numbers up from 2013.

Mr. Haysom stressed that international humanitarian law explicitly prohibits the use of weapons whose effects may not be limited and attacks which are not directed at a specific military objective.

UNAMA extends its condolences to the families of all of those killed in the explosion.

Libya: UN Mission welcomes ceasefire announcements, commitment to dialogue process

18 January - Three days after the end of the first round of talks under the Libyan political dialogue process, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has today welcomed the unilateral announcements by the parties in Libya of a ceasefire in order to resolve the conflict peacefully through dialogue and the decision announced in Tripoli by Spokesman Omar Humeidan to join the second round of talks.

"The Mission calls on the parties to work with UNSMIL on the specific elements of the ceasefire, including the mechanism to ensure compliance with it," said a press statement released by UNSMIL on the ceasefire, adding that the move was an encouraging sign that made a significant contribution to creating the conducive environment for the ongoing dialogue.

The ceasefire comes after a first round of intensive talks, hosted by UNSMIL in Geneva last week, in which participants agreed upon an agenda for talks going forward, with the aim of reaching a political agreement to form a consensual national unity government, and making security arrangements necessary to end fighting and ensure the withdrawal of armed groups from Libyan cities.

As well as discussing confidence-building measures to safeguard Libya's national unity and to alleviate the population's suffering, participants also agreed to hold another round of talks in Geneva next week and strongly urged all relevant Libyan stakeholders to attend.

"UNSMIL is calling for an end to the fighting to spare Libyan blood, stop the destruction and pave the way for a peaceful search for solutions to Libya's political and security crisis through dialogue," the Mission's statement said. "A truce will also allow humanitarian aid to flow to the displaced and the needy in affected areas and will encourage international
organizations to resume full operations in the country.”

The Mission urged parties to ensure that the ceasefire applies to ground, sea and air operations as well as movement of armed personnel and vehicles. Committees from both sides will coordinate with UNSMIL regarding tackling any breaches.

In a separate press statement released after Mr. Humeidan's announcement, the Mission said growing support for the dialogue process was proof that all sides were ready to sit down and discuss and end to the conflict.

“This step broadens the base of support for the process aimed at restoring security and stability to Libya.” The statement said. “UNSMIL stresses the importance of the Libyans coming together to decide on how best to build a peaceful and democratic Libya based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Mission believes that Libyans should not miss this opportunity if they want to save their country from further destruction, and that they need to expedite the convening of the next round of dialogue.”

The Mission also took note of the proposal to hold the talks in Libya, noting that doing so was a priority, if the logistical and security conditions were met. The statement said consultations were underway to find an acceptable venue with maximum security for participants.

**Security Council welcomes first round of Libyan talks, commends participants in dialogue**

17 January - The United Nations Security Council has today commended participants in the Libyan dialogue, which aims to find ways to end the political, security and institutional crisis in the country.

Also commending the personal mediation efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary General Bernardino León, Council Members released a press statement this afternoon in which they welcomed the first round of talks that took place between 14 and 15 January, hosted by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in Geneva, and supported resumption of another round of talks in Geneva next week and strongly urged all relevant Libyan stakeholders to attend.

Council Members reaffirmed that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Libya and called on all parties to cease hostilities to create a peaceful and conducive environment for an inclusive dialogue. In that regard, Council members welcomed announcements of a ceasefire on 16 January.

In light of the talks proceeding in Geneva, the members of the Security Council recalled resolution 2174 (2014) and emphasized that the Sanctions Committee is prepared to sanction those who threaten Libya's peace, stability or security or that obstruct or undermine the successful completion of its political transition.

Members also reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya.
At NY synagogue, UN deputy chief says uprooting seeds of racism, hatred vital to prevent genocide

17 January - During a memorial service in honour of victims of the Holocaust at the Park East Synagogue in New York today, Deputy-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said that preventing genocide required efforts to understand the forces behind it.

“The Holocaust did not start with Auschwitz,” said Mr. Eliasson in his speech. “It started with bias, discrimination, looking down on people, the anti-Semitic slogans and laws that preceded Kristallnacht, and with rallies which provided both an identity and a cause, however perverted, for people who evidently needed both.”

Mr. Eliasson related his own experience as a child seeing images from Nazi death camps and responding with the thought that such suffering should never be allowed to happen again.

The same “Never Again” response to the horrors of the Holocaust was a major part of the UN’s formative experience, paying tribute to all Holocaust survivors, including those present at the memorial.

“We are grateful and humble, and we are inspired by your example of the resilience of the human spirit,” he said, adding that “disbelief and incomprehension” surround the Holocaust and genocides committed since, including those in Rwanda and Srebrenica.

“Every time we say ‘never again,’ we are in fact admitting failure to prevent,” he said, noting that a gap remained between international rhetoric and action and point to “terrible acts of inhumanity” in Iraq, Syria, the Central African Republic and Nigeria.

“The seeds of discrimination, racism and hatred are planted and often allowed to grow. People too often turn away instead of up-rooting these seeds,” he said calling for earlier action to prevent situations escalating to violence and the point of no return. “Preventing genocide must not begin when we are witnessing atrocities that fit the definition of genocide.”

Stressing the importance of vigilance, the Deputy-Secretary-General underlined the importance of trying to understand the forces behind genocide. He said that was a major component of the UN’s important and demanding mission on genocide prevention, adding that the Secretary-General appointed a Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng of Senegal to assist him in the work.

The UN was determined to prevent genocide and other atrocity crimes and doing so was a key objective of the Human Rights Up Front initiative, launched by the Secretary-General in 2013 to ensure a system-wide approach to protection. The initiative is based on responding to early warning signs of human rights violations that can turn into atrocities, aiming to reinforce the centrality of human rights in the UN’s work.

“Human Rights Up Front has begun to make a difference,” Mr. Eliasson said. “One example is South Sudan, where the initiative provided the basis for the decision by the leadership of the mission to open the gates of UN premises to protect some 75,000 civilians who were desperately seeking safety in December 2013.”

Alongside that initiative, he said the UN used its Outreach Programme to reach teachers and students around the world, warning about the Holocaust and other genocides, and against discrimination, while the Alliance of Civilizations, which the UN launched 10 years ago, also promoted tolerance and reconciliation.
Stressing the need to face up to the past to learn lessons to apply in the future, he called for decisive action to prevent genocide and other atrocity crimes in the future.

“It is time for us all to stand up proudly and unfailingly for our common values and our common humanity,” he said.

**Afghanistan: UN Mission welcomes civil society efforts to promote sustainable peace**

17 January - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has today welcomed a recent national conference during which local road maps for achieving sustainable, inclusive and just peace in the country were presented to participants.

The Mission said in a statement that the conference, held in Kabul on 15 January, saw presentation of 12 out of the 34 local road maps developed by Afghan civil society organizations and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and provided an important chance for those involved to develop advocacy strategies so that provincial and national policy makers act upon their findings.

“The national conference was a unique opportunity for civil society to develop their advocacy plans to ensure that the voice of the Afghan people is heard,” said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom, promising that the United Nations would support those efforts in any way it could. “This advocacy could not be more important or timely.”

Development of the local road maps was part of the civil society-led Afghan People's Dialogue for Peace initiative, conducted over the past three years. Some 6,000 Afghans from all walks of life took part in the Dialogue, sharing their grievances and aspirations, and identifying the main drivers of conflict and proposed solutions.

Conference participants highlighted the need to strengthen security institutions, promote responsive State institutions and end corruption among the main priorities for addressing the root causes of the conflict and achieving durable peace. They also stressed the need to promote human rights and women's rights, along with the rule of law, and to tackle impunity. Illegal armed groups needed to be disarmed and employment opportunities were needed, especially for young people.

The work builds on a June 2014 report on the national findings of the second phase of the Dialogue process. The UN Mission's statement welcomed the 10-point national road map to peace contained within the June report, which calls for advocacy efforts with Governmental authorities and anti-Government elements.

“In peace and reconciliation processes, UNAMA is firm that human rights must not be sacrificed and that women must play a strong and active role in any peace negotiations - both are critical for a sustainable peace,” said Mr. Haysom. “The youth of Afghanistan are the country's future and their views must also be heard.”

**UN strongly condemns deadly terrorist attack on Mali peacekeepers**

17 January - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has today strongly condemned a terrorist attack on a UN base in the town of Kidal, which killed a Chadian peacekeeper and wounded four others.

“These attacks will not alter the determination of the United Nations to support the Malian people in its search for peace,” said a statement released by the Spokesman for Secretary-General following the latest in a series of armed assaults against UN personnel and contractors in the Kidal and Gao Regions. “This latest attack only highlights the urgency of reaching a political settlement to end the conflict and enable the full restoration of State
authority across the entire Malian territory.”

The Deputy Special Representative in Mali, Arnauld Akodjenou, echoed Mr. Ban’s sentiments, stressing that the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) would remain determined to fulfil its Security Council mandate.

“Such violence against the UN peacekeeping forces is a serious crime and those responsible will be brought to justice,” he said. A press statement agreed upon by the Members of the Security Council also underlined that attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law.

MINUSMA’s press release said the base was attacked shortly before 7.00 am, when a suicide vehicle was detonated near a MINUSMA checkpoint about a kilometre away, killing a peacekeeper and wounding another from the Chadian contingent.

A second vehicle then exploded at one of the base’s entrances, while the camp was simultaneously bombarded with at least eight rockets or mortars, two of which landed inside the camp, causing significant damage.

The Mission said it would continue to monitor developments in close cooperation with Malian security forces and Forces working under Operation Barkhane, adding that it would support regional and local authorities in their response to the attack, in line with its mandate to protect populations.

The Security Council Members’ press statement reaffirmed the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, stressing that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed, calling on the Government of Mali to swiftly investigate the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice, stressing that those responsible for the attack should be held accountable.

Council Members reminded States that they must ensure that measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

The full support of the Council for MINUSMA and the French forces supporting it was reiterated in the Members’ statement, which also urged the Secretary-General to swiftly undertake appropriate steps to enhance the safety and security of MINUSMA’s personnel and to allow MINUSMA to implement its mandate in its entirety and counter asymmetric threats the Mission is facing. In that regard, Members called on Member States to enhance their support to MINUSMA in this regard, including by providing technical expertise and logistical support needed.

Reiterating their support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Mali and MINUSMA to assist the Malian authorities and the Malian people in their efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to their country, as mandated by the Security Council in resolution 2164 (2014), Council Members also called on the Malian parties to reach a comprehensive and inclusive peace agreement without delay to help restore security in Mali.
UN Daily News - 19 January 2014

UN must boost links among development, security, human rights, Ban tells Security Council

19 January - Stressing that the United Nations is built around the three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, today underlined the need to pay attention to their interdependence, during an address to the Security Council.

“The founders of the United Nations well understood that if we ignore one pillar, we imperil the other two,” said Mr. Ban during today’s Security Council debate on inclusive development for the maintenance of international peace and security, which was chaired by Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile, which holds the 15-member body’s presidency for the month.

“The post-2015 sustainable development agenda is an important opportunity to reinforce the interdependence of development, peace and security, and human rights,” he told the Council debate, which coincides with the opening of the General Assembly’s three-day informal ‘stock-taking’ in the process of intergovernmental negotiations on that future agenda.

The Secretary-General said he was encouraged that during debates so far held about completing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the end of this year, launching a post-2015 sustainability agenda, and reaching an agreement on climate change, Member States had paid considerable attention to peace and security and to human rights.

The General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals had discussed the importance of inclusive growth and decent work, called for reducing inequality and ensuring universal access to basic services, including health care and education, had explicitly linked peace with social inclusion and access to justice for all, and had called for inclusive, representative decision-making.

In the so called ‘synthesis’ report he presented to the General Assembly last month – The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet – Mr. Ban underscored the importance of justice to building peaceful and inclusive societies, emphasising the need for strong and responsive institutions.

“With the full membership of the United Nations beginning its negotiations later this morning, we now have an important opportunity to broaden the development agenda and highlight the fundamental importance of inclusive societies in building a more peaceful world,” he said.

Every country could benefit from sustainable and inclusive development, tackling persistent exclusion and inequality, ensuring that the most vulnerable have access to basic services and can participate in political dialogue, tackling the “blatant injustice” of discrimination against women and girls, and extending social security provision to the world’s population still lacking a safety net for times of illness or unemployment.

Post-conflict societies in particular need to prioritize social, economic and political inclusion in order to rebuild trust between communities. Women’s participation in reconciliation and reconstruction also depended on gender equality and women’s empowerment, he said.

“The Peacebuilding Commission provides coordinated international support targeted at countries emerging from conflict,” continued Mr. Ban. “The current review of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture should help to make that support more robust and flexible.”

Even in countries at peace, governments, the private sector and civil society must demonstrate commitment to inclusive development in education, health and job creation. It is also necessary to strengthen institutions of governance and political representation as they were some of the most crucial determinants of inclusive development.
“People need effective, responsive channels for voicing their views and addressing their grievances and concerns,” he said.

During the meeting, Security Council members adopted a Presidential Statement reaffirming the body’s commitment to sustainable peace and underlining the close linking and mutually reinforcing relationship between security and development, and the importance of that relationship to sustainable peace.

Supporting countries in efforts to emerge from conflict requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, Council members reaffirmed in the Statement, adding that such an approach should incorporate and strengthen coherence between political, security, development, human rights and rule of law activities, and addressed the root causes of each conflict.

The Council also reaffirmed the importance of national ownership and national responsibility to establishing sustainable peace, and underlined the need for coordination of integrated action on the ground by security and development actors with national authorities.

Also included in the Statement was the Council’s encouragement to Member States to develop a UN common approach to inclusive development as a key for preventing conflict and enabling long-term stability and sustainable peace. In that regard, identifying and addressing exclusion, intolerance and violent extremism were important.

The Council also recognized the continuing need to increase women’s participation and the consideration of gender-related issues in all discussions, and called upon Member States to take concrete measures to further assist youth.

Central Africa: UN envoy urges regional response to combat ‘dangerous cancer’ Boko Haram

19 January - The senior United Nations envoy in Central Africa today welcomed Chad’s decision to send soldiers to Cameroon to help in the fight against Boko Haram, on the heels of several assaults on cross-border villages in northern Cameroon, which have raised fears that the insurgents are expanding their attacks.

According to media reports, some 80 people – many of them said to be children – were abducted yesterday in Cameroon in one of the biggest Boko Haram kidnappings to take place outside of Nigeria. Some of those abducted are believed to have been freed by the Cameroon’s army today.

“I deplore this situation. It shows the need for greater efforts to support Cameroon’s commendable efforts in the fight against Boko Haram,” said Mr. Abdoulaye Bathily, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

Calling Chad’s decision to deploy troops to Cameroon a ‘remarkable initiative,’ the Special Representative said it was also important for Chad whose economy and security continue to be threatened by repeated attacks by Boko Haram.

“I congratulate the Chadian authorities for their strong commitment in the fight against terrorism in Central Africa and beyond,” he said in a statement from his office in Gabon’s capital of Libreville.

Mr. Bathily commended the international community and countries in Africa that are supporting the fight against Boko Haram militants. He encouraged all States in the Lake Chad Basin and Central Africa to strengthen their cooperation, especially with Nigeria, to provide a regional and coordinated response to this ‘dangerous cancer.’

In addition, Mr. Bathily expressed support for the steps taken by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), in particular its actions ‘to seize the high authorities’ of the Council of Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) to support Cameroon and eliminate the threat of Boko Haram.

“Boko Haram is a serious threat to peace, security and stability in West Africa and Central regions, but also against the economy and social basic services in the affected areas,” reiterated the Special Representative.
As for Boko Haram, Mr. Bathily urged the extremists to immediately cease their attacks and release all those they have kidnapped. He expressed particular concern for the plight of women and children who have been ‘unjustifiably abducted.’

Thus far, Boko Haram’s ‘criminal activities’ have caused some 36,000 Nigerians to flee to Cameroon’s far north region.

**Radical shift in agriculture critical to making future food systems smarter, more efficient – UN**

19 January - Climate change and increasing competition for natural resources have essentially rendered the agriculture model of the past 40 years unsustainable, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has stressed, calling for a ‘paradigm shift’ in food production.

Food systems need to become smarter and more efficient if they are to feed the future, urged FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture this past Friday as part of ‘Green Week’ held in Berlin.

The topic of this year’s forum was ‘The Growing Demand for Food, Raw Materials and Energy: Opportunities for Agriculture, Challenges for Food Security?’

“Business as usual would mean a huge and simultaneous increase in the need for food, energy and water in the next decades: 60 percent more food, 50 per cent more energy and 40 percent more water by 2050,” Mr. Graziano da Silva said in a statement from his Office.

FAO estimates that food production will have to increase by 60 percent by 2050 to feed a population expected to top nine billion. To address this challenge, concerted efforts and investments are needed to support a globe-spanning transition to sustainable farming systems and land management practices.

“But it is important not to forget that biofuel emerged with strength as an alternative energy source because of the need to mitigate fossil fuel production and greenhouse gases – and that need has not changed,” said Mr. Graziano da Silva.

The FAO chief argued for a practical approach to the issue.

“We need to move from the ‘food versus fuel’ debate to a ‘food and fuel’ debate. There is no question: food comes first. But biofuels should not be simply seen as a threat or as a magical solution. Like anything else, they can do good or bad.”

The FAO Director-General noted that thanks to experience gained in recent years, and new biofuel production technologies, countries today are better positioned to evaluate the opportunities and risks of biofuel production and to use it when it pays off socially, environmentally and economically.

He also stressed that in order to avoid conflicts with food production, biofuel policies must be flexible and ‘adjusted according to the reality, the ongoing balance of production, and stocks of the different products used.’

Speaking more generally on the contributions a shift to sustainable agriculture can make, he said the world’s food systems must achieve much greater efficiencies in their use of natural resources, in particular water, energy and land – including reducing food waste.