UN condemns escalated fighting in South Sudan, deplores deaths of civilians in UN camp

20 May - The United Nations has strongly condemned the escalation of hostilities in the past ten days between Government and opposition forces in Unity and Upper Nile States in South Sudan.

In a statement released by his spokesperson today, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon underscored that the renewed fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA in Opposition and allied groups is unacceptable, is part of a series of violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed by the parties on 23 January 2014, and undermines the ongoing Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) efforts to find a political solution to the conflict.

The statement said the Mr. Ban is appalled by the reports of human rights violations committed by the SPLA and their allied forces, including the burning of villages, and the killing and rape of civilians, in the course of their military operations in Unity State.

The Secretary-General called upon President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar to immediately cease all military operations and reminded them of their obligations to protect civilians under international human rights and humanitarian law, after two mortar bombs landed within the UNMISS compound yesterday evening, killing four people.

“He also deplores the death of four internally displaced persons (IDPs) caught in the cross-fire in the protection of civilians site within the UNMISS compound in Melut,” the statement said, reminding the parties of the need to respect the inviolability of UNMISS premises, including protection of civilian sites, which are now host to more than 120,000 IDPs.

“He demands that immediate national investigations be conducted so that those responsible for these crimes are held responsible.”
accountable by their respective leadership.”

As well as the four civilian deaths, eight civilians were injured and are currently receiving treatment for their wounds, according to a statement released by the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which also expressed deep concern about the disregard for civilian lives, UN personnel and facilities shown by combatants in the fighting.

“I want to remind the parties of their obligation to take all measures not to harm civilians and guarantee the safety of international aid organizations and United Nations personnel and assets,” said Ellen Margrethe Løj, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) and Head of UNMISS. “I call upon them to respect the sanctity of UN installations and staff, so the United Nations can continue to implement its activities and UNMISS its protection of civilians’ mandate.”

Until the outbreak of the recent fighting, UNMISS had been protecting almost 1,000 civilians on its base in Melut. A further 270 displaced persons arrived yesterday on the UNMISS base while another 250 to 350 are currently staying in an area adjacent to the compound.

**UNESCO chief urges ‘immediate’ cessation of hostilities at Palmyra world heritage site**

20 May - The head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) today called on all warring factions in Syria to immediately end hostilities within the archaeological site of Palmyra following reports that extremist groups had breached the ancient city’s perimeter.

“I am deeply concerned by the situation at the site of Palmyra. The fighting is putting at risk one of the most significant sites in the Middle East and its civilian population,” UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said in a press release issued today.

“It is imperative that all parties respect international obligations to protect cultural heritage during conflict, by avoiding direct targeting, as well as use for military purposes.”

Inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, the historic city of Palmyra contains the ruins of “one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world.”

From the 1st to the 2nd century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences. UNESCO created the idea of World Heritage to protect sites of outstanding universal value as part of its mandate to protect heritage and support for cultural diversity.

With conflict engulfing both Syria and Iraq and Islamist extremists fanning across a region rich in archaeological and cultural heritage, Ms. Bokova has increasingly voiced outrage over the practice of cultural cleansing which, she says, risks destroying millennia of history.

Reiterating her appeal for an “immediate cessation of hostilities” in Syrian city, the UNESCO chief called on the international community “to do everything in its power to protect the affected population and safeguard the unique cultural heritage of Palmyra.”

Despite the international community’s ongoing attempts to halt the violence, the situation in Syria continues its downwards spiral. Some 12.2 million people, including 5.6 million children, now need humanitarian assistance.

By conservative estimates, more than 220,000 Syrians have died in the conflict, but that number is likely much higher.
In Seoul, Ban spotlights role of young people and technology in future development agenda

20 May - Continuing his official visit to Republic of Korea, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at two forums today highlighted the importance of youth, education and information communication technologies (ICTs) in shaping the future sustainable development agenda.

“Data is the new oil. Data centres are the factories of the 21st century. Data is the lifeblood of decision-making. It provides the raw material for accountability,” Mr. Ban said in his remarks at the Seoul Digital Forum.

“The communications revolution touches every aspect of the UN’s work,” he told a conference on ‘Motivated curiosity- seeking new breakthroughs.’

“Our food agency uses mobile phones to help farmers set prices. Our relief operations communicate emergency information over online networks. And our messages go directly to the global public over Twitter and Facebook,” he explained.

Earlier this morning, Mr. Ban announced that he had been informed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had reversed its decision regarding his visit to Kaesong Industrial Complex, which is on the border between DPRK and the Republic of Korea. No explanation was given for this last-minute change.

“This decision by Pyongyang is deeply regrettable. However, I, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, will not spare any efforts to encourage the DPRK to work with the international community for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and beyond,” Mr. Ban said.

Back at the data Forum, the Secretary-General said: “Today, we are reaching out to the world to hear what people want for their future.”

Globally, six out of every seven people on earth have a mobile phone. There are three billion Internet users – and that number is increasing fast. In Africa, mobile broad-band penetration jumped from 2 percent in 2010 to 20 percent last year.

“But there is still a wide digital divide. Connectivity tends to be better in cities than the countryside. And more men have access to the Internet than women,” the UN chief said.

For every 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration in the developing world, gross domestic product (GDP) goes up by almost two percent on average. Advanced technologies are accelerating progress – but there are also emerging threats. Bullies hide behind screen names and troll innocent victims. Extremist groups are using social networks to spread their hateful ideologies. Entire governments and industries are vulnerable to attacks by hackers, Mr. Ban said.

Two years ago, some 600 million people were victims of cybercrimes. Experts estimate these crimes will cost the global economy about $400 billion every year.

“Trust is vital to digital transactions. People deserve to feel safe when they log on to their computers,” he emphasized. “In the last century, repressive States would check on who was buying typewriters. In today’s world, they shut down the Internet.”

Mr. Ban called for social networks that work for social inclusion and unity – around a common, global vision for a future of dignity and peace for all people.
“Inspired by this vision, let us harness the power of ICTs to create a new era of sustainable development,” he emphasized.

Also today, the Secretary-General, in remarks at the opening of Academic Impact Forum, that this is a very powerful era for youth.

“When I look at youth, I don’t see peril – I see potential. I see hope,” Mr. Ban said, calling on young people to raise their voices for peace.

“I ask them often why you don’t challenge your leaders, your professors, your congressmen and CEOs. Make this world sustainable. This is the world I will have to leave. Make this situation sustainable. And I am insisting that governments start to listen to the world’s youth – including giving them a place at the negotiating table,” he said.

What the terrorists fear most is not a weapon – what they fear most is girls and young people with textbooks.

“They tried to kill Malala and her friends – just because they were girls who wanted to go to school… Violent extremists kidnapped more than 200 girls in Chibok, Nigeria from their school. Scores of students were murdered in Garissa, Kenya and in Peshawar, Pakistan,” he added.

As the world prepares to adopt a bold new vision for sustainable development, Mr. Ban warned against there being too much emphasis on transferring knowledge without wisdom. Young people should challenge injustice. They should speak out for what they know is right.

“When you navigate down that difficult road and find your own way, you can open up a better future for all people,” he said.

At high-level energy forum, UN deputy chief says action on sustainability a 'moral and historical duty'

20 May - The world is facing complex challenges regarding the future of sustainable energy which demand comprehensive and immediate solutions, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson declared today as he delivered remarks to the General Assembly’s Global Energy Ministerial Meeting.

“All of us here today have a great responsibility. Future generations will judge us harshly if we fail to uphold our moral and historical duties in this year of action,” affirmed the Deputy Secretary-General as he spotlighted the importance of charting a new course for global sustainable development.

“Success depends on Governments, companies, investors, educators, scientists, civil society and citizens acting in concert,” he told the meeting, which is being held in connection with the second annual Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) Forum Forum, which opened Monday in New York and wraps up tomorrow. “Working together, we can light rural clinics, empower local businesses, invigorate economies and protect the environment.”

According to the World Bank’s recently released report, Progress Toward Sustainable Energy: Global Tracking Framework 2015, some 1.1 billion people in the world still live without electricity and almost 3 billion still cook using polluting fuels like kerosene, wood, charcoal and dung. And, while picking up steam, renewable energy generation and energy efficiency improvements will need to accelerate dramatically, it says.

Speaking to the gathered delegates, Mr. Eliasson underscored that 2015 would be “a milestone year” for the UN and the international community as it addressed these economic, social and environmental imperatives at three key meetings: in Addis Ababa in July, where UN Member States will work to agree a new forward-looking financing framework for development; in New York in September where they would seek to adopt “a bold universal new post-2015 development agenda” and in Paris in December where they would work to reach a robust universal climate agreement.

“Our aim is – and must be – to bring about transformative change across sectors and across societies,” he added. “We need
new approaches that go to the heart of unsustainable production and consumption patterns – across agriculture, industry, infrastructure and transport, and from factories to offices, from homes to market places.”

The Deputy Secretary-General observed that more than 80 developing countries had already joined the SE4All initiative, making commitments worth billions of dollars and taking ambitious actions on the ground. In one particular instance, he said, the UN-backed Zero Routine Flaring by 2030 initiative had brought 18 countries, oil companies and development institutions into the fold to scale up energy efficiency efforts.

At the same time, much remains to be done to help close the remaining gap. According to the World Bank report – which was presented to the opening of the SE4All forum on 18 May – global policy makers must work to triple energy investments from the current level of roughly $400 billion to $1.25 trillion and to adopt modern methods of measuring energy access to replace more traditional measures, such as presence of a household electricity connection, which mask vast differences in the quality of energy services.

The report also calls for transfer of knowledge and technology for sustainable energy and for increased effort to address the linkages between energy and other development sectors, including water, agriculture, gender and health. Better understanding those linkages will be critical to achieving SE4All and other development goals.

“Member States have already indicated that energy will be part of this new generation of development goals,” Mr. Eliasson concluded. “Now we must ensure that means of implementation are equal to the task.”

Also, addressing the ministerial meeting Acting President of the General Assembly, Kaha Imnadze, explained that by ensuring access to “affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all,” the international community would “greatly contribute” to the world's economic transformation, improving people’s livelihoods, addressing climate change and protecting our planet.

“It is essential that governments continue to prioritize energy access, higher energy efficiency and cleaner energy in national development plans and strategies,” he added.

“We need appropriate policy and institutional frameworks to encourage investment in the energy sector and spur further advances in the development of clean-energy technology.”

The SE4All Forum will conclude on 21 May.

Mali: UN Mission condemns attack against staff compound amid uptick in violence in country’s north

20 May - The United Nations mission in Mali strongly condemned today an attack against a residential compound housing its military personnel in the country capital of Bamako, a spokesperson for the Organization confirmed today.

At a press briefing in New York, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters that an unidentified armed assailant shot and wounded a local security guard last night during an attempt to set fire to a UN vehicle parked outside the compound. Two grenades were later found on site.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, also known by its French acronym, MINUSMA, stressed that attacks against UN staff and premises is a serious crime and reminded Malian authorities that they remain responsible for the security of UN personnel.

The situation in Mali has remained a challenge. The country’s Government has been seeking to restore stability and rebuild following a series of setbacks since early 2012, including a military coup d'état, renewed fighting between Government forces and Tuareg rebels, and the seizure of its northern territory by radical Islamists.
Throughout much of this time, Mali’s north has remained restive and, in recent months, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) and its “blue helmets” have come under repeated violent attack.

Mr. Haq also noted that MINUSMA remains very concerned by the outbreak of violence across Mali’s north and has intensified its contacts with all parties to restore calm and continue to advance the peace process.

**Ban announces ‘inclusive consultations’ on Yemen; urges good faith engagement**

20 May - The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said today that he is pleased to announce the launch of inclusive consultations aimed at restoring momentum towards a Yemeni-led political transition process, according to a statement released by his Spokesman.

“The Secretary-General urges all the participants to engage in these United Nations consultations in good faith and without preconditions,” said the statement. “The only durable resolution to the crisis in Yemen is an inclusive, negotiated political settlement.”

The consultations, which begin on 28 May in Geneva, will bring together a broad range of Yemeni Governmental and other actors, and follow extensive consultations by Mr. Ban’s Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, together with strong expressions of support by the Security Council in several resolutions seeking a peaceful and Yemeni-led political transition process.

In the most recent, Resolution 2216 (2015), members emphasized the need for a return to the application of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and of the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference. They also reaffirmed full support for, and commitment to, UN efforts to relaunch the political dialogue.

The statement described how the different political and social constituencies of Yemen came together to chart a course for democratic change and a new vision for the country during the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference.

“Tragically, Yemen has now slid into a conflict that risks spilling across its borders and that is having a dramatic impact on civilians, who are paying the highest price,” said the Spokesman. “The United Nations has worked closely with Yemenis since 2011 to support national aspirations for change. With this experience and coupled with Yemen's tradition of dialogue, the Secretary-General hopes these consultations will help Yemen re-launch the political process, reduce the levels of violence and alleviate the intolerable humanitarian situation.”
UN health agency responds to Ebola spike by deploying team on Guinea-Guinea Bissau border

20 May - The World Health Organization (WHO) today reported “a substantial increase” in the weekly total of new Ebola cases in Guinea and Sierra Leone and deployed a response team to the border with Guinea Bissau because of its proximity to a recent cluster of cases in a neighbouring Guinean prefecture.

Also in health news, WHO announced that its governing body meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, today agreed a new global malaria strategy for 2016-2030 to reduce the global disease burden by 40 per cent by 2020, and by at least 90 per cent by 2030. It also aims to eliminate malaria in at least 35 new countries by 2030.

“Between 2000 and 2013, the global malaria mortality rate dropped by 47 per cent,” according to the WHO announcement. “Nevertheless, millions of people are still unable to access malaria prevention and treatment, and most cases and deaths continue to go unregistered and unreported.” In 2013, malaria killed more than 580,000.

WHO member States also approved the health agency’s budget for 2016-17. The budget of nearly $4.4 billion includes a $236 million increase over the current programme budget requirement to meet the needs of countries; leverage the experience gained during the Ebola outbreak; and address emerging priorities such as antimicrobial resistance, health and the environment.

In its latest update outbreak in West Africa, which has affected nearly 27,000 people with more than 11,000 deaths, WHO reported that the week ending on 17 May saw the highest weekly total of confirmed cases of Ebola in over a month, with 35 cases reported from Guinea and Sierra Leone. Guinea reported 27 cases, compared with seven the previous week.

“This is a substantial increase compared with nine cases reported the previous week,” the update said.

“The geographical area of transmission has also expanded compared with recent weeks, with a total of six districts reporting cases (three in Guinea, three in Sierra Leone), compared with three the previous week (three in Guinea, one in Sierra Leone),” it said.

And “because of the proximity to Guinea-Bissau of the recent cluster of cases in the Guinean prefecture of Boké, a response team from Guinea-Bissau has been deployed to the border to assess points of entry,” WHO reported. “An epidemiological investigation team has also mobilized to ensure any contacts who cross the border are traced.”

Guinea Bissau has so far not reported any Ebola cases.

“The cases in Boké were tightly clustered in the coastal sub-prefecture of Kamsar, and initial investigations suggest they may have originated from a chain of transmission in Conakry,” according to the update.

WHO said although the exact origin of the cluster in Boké is unknown, an investigation has linked most of the confirmed cases to four probable cases who attended a funeral of another probable case in mid-April, which may have been the source of the outbreak.

“Difficulty engaging local communities has made case investigation and contact tracing in the area challenging,” it noted.
UN officials urge Israel to halt plans to transfer Palestinian Bedouins, expand settlements

20 May - Two United Nations humanitarian officials with responsibilities in the occupied Palestinian territory have today expressed their grave concern over the Government of Israel’s “rapidly advancing plans” to transfer Palestinian Bedouins in the central West Bank from their current communities.

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, James W. Rawley, and the Director of Operations in the West Bank for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Felipe Sanchez, released a joint statement that recalled a report of the UN Secretary-General from March this year, drawing a link between the proposed transfers and illegal settlement expansion and warning that the move would breach the Fourth Geneva Convention and violate human rights.

“History has shown us that these transfers have not proven to be in the interests of the Bedouin communities,” said Mr. Sanchez. “This would represent a continuation of developments that commenced in 1997 when Palestine refugees were loaded on trucks and taken to the same urban site in Eizariya, after which an illegal settlement was constructed on their former land.”

On 28 April, residents of Abu Nwar, in Area C of the West Bank, where Israel retains control over security, planning and building, were informed that some families would have to move to the Al Jabal area outside of East Jerusalem. Area C accounts for over 60 per cent of land in the West Bank and is home to an estimated 300,000 Palestinians.

According to the joint statement, the plan to move the families comes amid a discriminatory zoning and planning regime that facilitates the development of illegal Israeli settlements at the expense of Palestinians, for whom it is almost impossible to obtain permits for construction. A total of 70 per cent of the land is off-limits to Palestinian construction, with heavy restrictions on 29 per cent and just one per cent zoned for Palestinian development by the Israeli Civil Administration.

“Israeli practices in Area C, including a marked increase of demolitions and confiscations of donor-funded structures in the first quarter of 2015, have compounded an already untenable situation for Bedouin communities,” said Mr. Rawley.

The Bedouins currently living in Abu Nwar are one of 46 Palestinian Bedouin communities – most of whom are refugees – who are slated for transfer to three proposed “relocation” sites, with the Israeli authorities claiming that Bedouin communities lack title over the land and that “relocation” will improve their living conditions.

The communities are subject to eviction and home demolitions as the area in which they live has been allocated for the expansion of the Ma’ale Adumim settlement – the so-called “E1 Plan” – and the joint statement warns that the forced urbanization of Bedouin communities in the three relocation sites would destroy their culture and livelihoods.

“There is also concern over the strategic implications of these plans,” said Mr. Rawley. “Many of the communities are located in areas slated for further Israeli settlement, including the E1 plan, which has long been viewed as an obstacle to the realization of a two-state solution.”

Mr. Sanchez stressed the obligations held by Israel as occupying power to ensure the wellbeing of such communities and to respect international law.

“We are fast approaching the point of irreparable damage,” he said. “I strongly urge the Israeli authorities to halt all plans and practices that will directly or indirectly lead to the forcible transfer of the Bedouin and call on the international
community to support the Bedouins’ wish to remain where they are, pending their return to the Negev, and prevent this transfer from occurring.”

**Health services for Palestine refugees extended despite regional turmoil – UN agency**

20 May - A newly published report by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) spotlights improved health services being delivered to millions in five fields across the Middle East, despite pronounced challenges in the region.

Indicators include a decrease in the average number of daily medical consultations per doctor, an increase in consultation times and decrease in antibiotics prescription rates.

“The indicators are impressive and show that the ‘Family Health Team’ model which our reforms have established in 99 or our 115 health centres (86 per cent) are having a real impact on the health of our beneficiaries,” said Akihiro Seita, Director of Health Department at UNRWA.

However, ongoing conflicts in Syria and Gaza and their spillover into Lebanon and Jordan have been a prominent challenge for UNRWA health workers.

“I’d like to pay tribute to the extraordinary efforts of the UNRWA health teams, working in some of the most challenging environments today,” said Dr. Seita.

Another highlighted indicator, for example, is maternal and child health. According to UNRWA’s Health Department Annual Report 2014, vaccination coverage, early registration to preventive care and percentage of pregnant women attending at least four antenatal care visits remain at a high level.

“The total number of maternal deaths among the Palestine refugee population was reduced,” explained Dr. Seita, adding that “immunization coverage rates for different target populations continued to be around 99 per cent, leading to zero percent outbreaks of immunization-preventable communicable diseases.”

The report also highlighted that diabetes campaigns have had positive results in reducing participants’ body measurements and improving blood pressures.

Despite these significant efforts, however, UNRWA continues its uphill battle to tackle conflict-related trauma and non-communicable diseases caused by unhealthy lifestyles and diets.

“These challenges exist in the face of the grim reality that our financial resources are never sufficient, and in fact are shrinking every year,” Dr. Seita commented, adding that “we will expand existing relationships with our national and international partners and donors.”

Family Health Team (FHT) is a person-centred, holistic, primary health care model designed to improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness of health services, particularly targeting non-communicable diseases.
UN agency welcomes ‘important initial step’ on migration by Southeast Asian governments

20 May - The United Nations refugee agency welcomed today the commitment announced by the Foreign Ministers of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand to resolve the issue of the thousands of refugees and migrants stranded in boats in the Bay of Bengal and off the coast of Southeast Asia.

“This is an important initial step in the search for solutions to this issue, and vital for the purpose of saving lives,” said a statement released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). “It is now urgent for people to be brought ashore without delay, and that immediate first aid and other care is provided for all who are in need. We look forward to seeing this happen without delay.”

The statement said that the refugee agency agrees with the Ministers' acknowledgement that further action would be needed, including addressing the root causes of the migration issue. Further action will need to work properly at the needs of those in need of international protection.

“As with other regions of the world where we are seeing large movements of people by sea, countries in the region will need to work together for this to be addressed meaningfully and successfully,” the statement said. “UNHCR itself is ready to work with countries in the region to find solutions to the plight of these people. These ultimately may include returning people to their home countries voluntarily and once conditions allow.”

Expert urges UN health agency to do more to protect people from toxic substances

20 May - The UN independent expert on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes today urged the World Health Organization to “play a much larger, more active role” in protecting people from the negative impacts of toxic pollution.

“Far more effort and resources should be devoted worldwide to protect people from the negative health impacts of toxic pollution,” said Baskut Tuncak, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and hazardous substances and wastes.

Mr. Tuncak’s call comes as the WHO’s governing body, the World Health Assembly, is meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

“WHO can play a much larger, more active role in preventing adverse health effects from pollution,” he said. “A tiny fraction of WHO’s proposed budget for the next two years is for environmental health, despite clear evidence of large-scale harm today and the likelihood of increased harm in the coming years.”

According to a press release, issued by his office, “an estimated 13 million deaths per year and about one quarter of global burden of disease, namely, the impact of health problems, are caused by environmental determinants of health such as pollution of air, water, land and others. Pollution is the leading cause of death in low- and middle-income countries and poor women and children who live and work in the world’s most polluted environments are most affected.”

The Special Rapporteur reminded WHO member States that “nearly all countries have a legal obligation to realize the right of children to the highest attainable standard of health,” saying that environmental pollution has a disproportionate effect on children and the future generations.
“Despite increasing risk of negative health impacts from pollution, and global calls for increased resources, only 2.5 per cent of WHO’s proposed program budget for 2016-2017 is dedicated to ‘Health and Environment’ sub-category,” he said. “The amount of work WHO dedicates to monitoring and preventing harm from toxic pollution is disproportionately low, given the impacts of pollution on human rights.”

UN human rights experts are part of what it is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, the general name of the independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. The experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work.

Republic of Korea’s foreigners-only HIV test violated New Zealand teacher’s rights – UN experts

20 May - A New Zealand woman’s rights were violated when her employers in the Republic of Korea demanded that, as a foreign English teacher, she undergo HIV/AIDS and drug tests as a condition of having her contract renewed, United Nations experts have found.

The Geneva-based Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) was considering the case of the woman, whose contract was not renewed in 2009 after she refused to undergo a secondary mandatory HIV test required only of foreigners, arguing it was “discriminatory and an affront to her dignity.”

In a statement released by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) today, CERD members noted that the Republic of Korea did not provide any reasons to justify the mandatory testing, from which Korean and ethnic Korean teachers were exempt.

They also noted that, during arbitration proceedings, the woman’s employers, the Uslan Metropolitan Office of Education (UMOE), said that HIV/AIDS tests were viewed as a means to check the values and morality of foreign English teachers.

The testing policy, the Committee wrote in its findings, “does not appear to be justified on public health grounds or any other ground, and is a breach of the right to work without distinction to race, colour, national or ethnic origin.”

The Committee called on the Republic of Korea to grant the woman adequate compensation for the moral and material damages she suffered. The Committee also urged the authorities to take steps to review regulations and policies related to the employment of foreigners and to abolish, in law and in practice, any legislation which creates or perpetuates racial discrimination.

“The Committee recommends the State party to counter any manifestations of xenophobia, through stereotyping or stigmatizing, of foreigners by public officials, the media and the public at large,” members wrote. The Committee has asked the Republic of Korea to inform it within 90 days of the steps it has taken.

In its submission to the Committee, the Republic of Korea said that, since 2010, its guidelines on the employment of foreign teachers do not specify that they have to submit results of HIV/AIDS and drugs tests to have their contracts renewed, and that mandatory testing is no longer required by the UMOE.