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Ban stresses UN’s impact in past 70 years, urges States to recommit to collective security, rights

23 February - In a Security Council meeting today in which Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations Charter, the Secretary-General said the UN was an Organization with major achievements to its credit, multiple crises on its agenda, and tremendous opportunities ahead.

“The United Nations was founded to prevent another world war, and it has succeeded in that,” said Ban Ki-moon. “Despite the recurrence of genocide and repeated outbreaks of armed conflict, the past seven decades would surely have been even bloodier without the United Nations.”

As well as making a major contribution to peace and security, the UN was directly involved in helping people to live longer, healthier lives, in empowering women, in advancing international law and democratic governance and improving collective well-being.

Mr. Ban described how the world had “starkly” changed since the Charter was drafted and how those changes were reflected within the UN, with four times as many Member States and new items, such as climate change, on the international agenda.

Despite those changes, the aspirations contained within the Charter remained “valid, valuable and vital”, especially the commitment to prevention of armed conflict through the peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection of human rights.

“The Charter is a living document, not a detailed roadmap,” he explained. “It is our compass, enshrining principles that have stood the test of time.”
Despite that flexibility, he noted that UN Member States needed to fortify a sense of unity on the meaning of the term ‘collective security’, which he stressed was the core purpose of the Organization.

“We no longer have a full meeting of minds,” he observed. “We need to reflect on what has changed.”

States were also falling short in their personal responsibility to prevent conflict, something about which the Charter was very clear, and he stressed that the collective work of the UN was based on consent and respect for the sovereign equality of all members.

UN human rights action often caused concern among Member States because of fears such action could harm national sovereignty, he said, stressing that in fact, early action to prevent conflict and protect human rights helps to strengthen sovereignty, rather than challenge or restrict it, and that serious violations of human rights that weaken sovereignty.

“In today’s world, the less sovereignty is viewed as a wall or a shield, the better our prospects will be for protecting people and solving our shared problems,” he said, stressing that the goal of UN human rights action is to support government officials, parliamentarians, civil servants, judges and others who lead national institutions that are essential to sovereignty.

Human rights abuses also killed and displaced people, divided communities, undermined economies and destroyed cultural heritage and he called for “a conceptual shift” in international understanding of UN human rights action in order to transform the Security Council’s role in peace and security.

“We must ask whether, for example, earlier efforts to address human rights violations and political grievances in Syria could have kept the situation from escalating so horrendously,” he said. “We must be willing to act before situations deteriorate. This is both a moral responsibility and critical for the maintenance of international peace and security. We cannot afford to be indifferent.”

Noting that the distinctions between national and international were beginning to disappear, Mr. Ban cited commerce, communication, public health and climate change as areas of transnational concern. Terrorism and extremism were also serious issues and he highlighted the need to respond decisively, and to combat extremism without multiplying the problem and with full respect for human rights.

On many other such issues of international concern, the UN’s 70th anniversary should serve as a chance to seriously reflect on States’ common enterprise and to take transformative action on issues including sustainable development and climate change.

“Let us reaffirm our commitment to each other in the great cause of living together with dignity and peace for all,” he concluded.

**UN health agency urges global switch by 2020 to ‘smart’ syringes that disable after single use**

23 February - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) today called for all countries to switch by 2020 to new ‘smart’ syringes that cannot be used more than once as an “absolutely critical” stop to protect millions of people from deadly infections acquired through unsafe injections.

“A adoption of safety-engineered syringes is absolutely critical to protecting people worldwide from becoming infected with HIV, hepatitis and other diseases. This should be an urgent priority for all countries,” Dr. Gottfried Hirnschall, Director of the WHO HIV/AIDS Department, said in the announcement by the UN health agency.

A 2014 study sponsored by WHO, which focused on the most recent available data, estimated that in 2010, up to 1.7 million people were infected with hepatitis B virus, up to 315,000 with hepatitis C virus and as many as 33,800 with HIV through an unsafe injection.
“The new ‘smart’ syringes WHO recommends for injections into the muscle or skin, have features that prevent re-use,” according to the announcement. “Some models include a weak spot in the plunger that causes it to break if the user attempts to pull back on the plunger after the injection. Others have a metal clip that blocks the plunger so it cannot be moved back, while in others the needle retracts into the syringe barrel at the end of the injection.”

The new WHO injection safety guidelines with support from the IKEA Foundation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, also provided recommendations highlighting the value of safety features for syringes, including devices that protect health workers.

“Syringes are also being engineered with features to protect health workers from ‘needle stick’ injuries and resulting infections,” WHO said. “A sheath or hood slides over the needle after the injection is completed to protect the user from being injured accidentally by the needle and potentially exposed to an infection.”

WHO said it is urging countries to transition, by 2020, to the exclusive use of the new “smart” syringes, except in a few circumstances in which a syringe that blocks after a single use would interfere with the procedure.

Syringes without safety features currently cost 3 to 4 cents when procured by a UN agency for a developing country and the new smart syringes cost at least twice that much, but WHO said it is calling on donors to support the transition, anticipating that prices will decline over time.

Noting that injections are one of the most common health-care procedures used around the world, WHO stressed the need to reduce the number of unnecessary injections as a critical way of reducing risk.

“There are 16 billion injections administered every year” but only some 5 per cent of these injections are for immunizing children and adults, and 5 per cent are for other procedures like blood transfusions and injectable contraceptives,” the WHO press release said.

The remaining 90 per cent of injections are given to administer medicines, according to WHO.

Finally, WHO said “unsafe injection practices would logically impact on other blood borne diseases transmitted through the reuse of injection equipment e.g. haemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola and Marburg viruses, malaria, and others.”

**Technology boost for UN peacekeepers ‘essential’ in rapidly evolving, complex world – UN experts**

23 February - From the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to the Central African Republic (CAR), United Nations’ peacekeeping missions must make greater use of technological advances in order to better confront the dynamic challenges of the 21st century, according to a group of UN experts.

The findings of the five-member Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation, led by peace and security expert Jane Holl Lute and published in a report released today, include a number of practical recommendations that call on the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support to keep pace with innovation and take full advantage of readily available and existing technologies that are considered essential to success in the field.

“Every peacekeeping mission in the field ought to have at least the same level of technology that Member State militaries and polices now consider operationally imperative – whether it’s command and control, communications, mobility, shelter, the provisioning of essential supplies,” Ms. Lute explained in an interview with UN Radio.

“All of these things which are now standard in the operation of many organizations around the world need to be brought to peacekeeping.”
Scattered across vast countries and forbidding territories, UN peacekeeping missions frequently encounter challenges in executing their mandates. Over the past year, however, the UN has steadily ramped up its use of technology in the field in order to assist its missions with monitoring efforts.

In the DRC, where unwieldy terrain, dense forests and vast distances can debilitate the UN’s response time to an emergency, the introduction of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has had an immediate impact. In one instance last year, a UAV detected a ferry accident in Lake Kivu, in the country’s east, instantly prompting the UN peacekeeping mission in the country to dispatch its speedboats and helicopters to the scene. The ‘blue helmets’ quick response led to the rescue of 15 people.

UAVs are “a good example of one technology of which a lot of organizations around the world are making increasing use,” Ms. Lute continued. “We think this is a capability missions ought to be able to take greater advantage of.”

“The ability to visualize your operating area of responsibility from the air is an essential capability for every mission, really with only a few exceptions,” she added.

The panel’s findings were based on several field visits and interviews with Member States, partner organizations, and partner organizations with similar field operations.

Along with the critical upgrade of field technology, UN blue helmets are also aiming to ‘go green’ through the responsible use of limited resources, in a bid to leave mission areas in better shape than when they arrived. Among other steps, GIS data is being used to help find water sources for missions so as not to compete with the local water supply.

Missions are also including waste water treatment plants designed to drastically reduce the need for water and generation of disposable waste, as well as exploring alternative sources of energy such as solar panels.

Nonetheless, while technology moves quickly, the Organization’s lumbering procurement systems may sometimes cause unexpected and unwanted delays for the introduction of critical technologies into the field.

“The UN needs to construct the kinds of support systems necessary to facilitate greater use of technology so we need procurement systems that can identify and acquire capabilities in not more than 18 months because longer than that technology has already changed and moved on,” Ms. Lute noted.

In a separate note to UN correspondents released last Friday, the lead expert admitted that as UN peacekeeping missions continue to face down “rapidly evolving and complex environments,” the Organization’s “blue helmets” would be increasingly pressured to transition to a culture that values innovation.

“UN peacekeeping must be ready to respond to a vast array of challenges,” said Ms. Lute. “No advantage should be withheld for those working for peace.”
Iraq: UN documents rights violations of increasingly sectarian nature

23 February - A United Nations report released today details widespread human rights violations of an increasingly sectarian nature in Iraq, as well as a deterioration of the rule of law in large parts of the embattled country.

The report, produced jointly by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), covers the period from 11 September to 10 December 2014.

Members of Iraq’s diverse ethnic communities, including Turkmen, Shabaks, Christians, Yezidi, Sabaeans, Kaka’e, Faili Kurds, Arab Shi'a, and others, have been intentionally and systematically targeted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in what appears as a deliberate policy aimed at destroying, suppressing or expelling these communities permanently from areas under their control, the report documents.

“I continue to be deeply shocked by the gross human rights violations committed by ISIL and associated armed groups. The targeting of civilians based on their faith or ethnicity is utterly despicable and we must not spare any effort to ensure accountability for these crimes,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, reiterating his call for Iraq to join the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court or to accept the exercise of its jurisdiction with respect to the current situation facing the country.

The report documents serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross abuses of human rights perpetrated over a three month period by ISIL. These include killings of civilians, abductions, rapes, slavery and trafficking of women and children, forced recruitment of children, destruction of places of religious significance, looting and the denial of fundamental freedoms.

The report also details the murder of captured members of Iraqi security forces and of people suspected of being associated with the Government by ISIL. Individuals suspected of being disloyal to ISIL, including religious, community and tribal leaders, journalists, doctors as well as female community and political leaders have been particularly targeted. During the reporting period, at least 165 executions were carried out following sentences by so called “courts” in ISIL-controlled areas.

“Many of the violations and abuses perpetrated by ISIL may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and possibly genocide,” the report notes.

Furthermore, it documents violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law reportedly committed by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). “Armed groups claiming to be affiliated to or supporting the Government also perpetrated targeted killings, including of captured fighters from ISIL and its associated armed groups, abductions of civilians, and other abuses,” the report says.

In an interview with UN Radio, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Nickolay Mladenov, said: “What really shocked me is that most of it is not news any more. In the beginning when we did our first report soon after the ISIL takeover of Mosul, the world was shocked at the atrocities that this group was committing. It’s been now about nine months since then. We have done a number of these reports and we continue in them to register day after day horrible, horrible atrocities.”

“To me this is perhaps the most shocking thing. The world has gotten used to the violence and atrocities and this should not be the case. We should stand up every occasion that we can.”

At least 11,602 civilians have been killed and 21,766 wounded from the beginning of January until 10 December 2014. Between 1 June and 10 December 2014, when the conflict spread from Anbar to other areas of Iraq, at least 7,801 civilians...
were killed and 12,451 wounded.

The report also notes that the number of civilians, who have died from the secondary effects of violence, including the lack of access to food, water or medical care, remains unknown. Large numbers remained trapped or displaced in areas under the control of ISIL during the reporting period, with limited access to humanitarian assistance. Children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and elderly people proved particularly vulnerable in these difficult circumstances.

2015 pivotal for finalizing universal climate change agreement, Ban tells Member States

23 February - This year is pivotal for global action on climate change, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today in New York, emphasising that all the major advances of 2014 have set the stage for success in 2015.

“Our challenge now is clear: to finalize a meaningful, universal agreement on climate change,” Mr. Ban told Member States at a briefing on relevant progress as momentum builds towards a meeting to be held in Paris this December, when leaders are expected to reach a landmark treaty.

“Addressing climate change is essential for realizing sustainable development. If we fail to adequately address climate change, we will be unable to build a world that supports a life of dignity for all,” the Secretary-General warned.

Joining Mr. Ban at the briefing was President of the UN General Assembly, Sam Kutesa, as well as the Permanent Representatives of Peru and France, who organized the gathering.

Today's briefing follows the 20th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC), held in Lima, last December where Member States reached the “Lima Call for Climate Action”, paving the way for a new, ambitious and universally-binding climate agreement to be adopted in Paris (COP21) this December.

Talks in Lima are also said to have contributed to furthering negotiations during last week's Geneva Climate Change Conference, where Parties also delivered a comprehensive and balanced text.

“Recent months have seen strong progress on climate change. At the Climate Summit I convened last September, I said we needed ‘all hands on deck.’ I am pleased to say that this is indeed what happened: Governments, along with leaders of finance, business and civil society, came together to announce significant new actions that can reduce emissions and strengthen resilience,” said Mr. Ban.

The Secretary-General’s September Summit also catalyzed “much-needed momentum” on climate finance. Public and private sector leaders pledged to mobilize over $200 billion by the end of 2015 to finance low-carbon, climate-resilient growth. And in Lima, in December, Parties built on earlier announcements by the European Union, China and the United States to reduce their emissions. They also launched the Lima Paris Action Agenda and pledged the $10 billion needed for the initial capitalization of the Green Climate Fund.

The Secretary-General underscored that 2015 is particularly crucial for several landmark meetings: COP21 in Paris in December to adopt a universal text on climate change; UN special summit in September to adopt a global development agenda; financing for development conference in July in Addis Ababa, to renew commitment to global development; and next month’s gathering in Sendai, Japan, to strengthen framework on disaster risk reduction.

To that end, Mr. Ban urged all pledging countries to deliver their contributions as soon as possible. “Climate finance is critical, not only for catalyzing action, but for building the political trust needed to reach a universal agreement in Paris,” he said, emphasizing that developed countries need to set out a clear trajectory for achieving the goal of mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020. And resilience must be strengthened, especially in the small island states and least developed countries.
“We have no time to waste, and much to gain by moving quickly down a lower-carbon pathway. All countries must be part of the solution if we are to stay below the 2 degrees Celsius temperature rise threshold,” the Secretary-General said.

Also delivering remarks today, Assembly President Kutesa called on Member States to build on the “constructive spirit” that prevailed in Lima and Geneva to reach consensus on both the content and the legal nature of the final agreement.

“To successfully reach this objective, strong and sustained political will is of vital necessity,” he added, reiterating that climate change is one of the key priorities of his 69th General Assembly: a session which is striving to shape the post-2015 development agenda, financing for development, as well as a new global framework on disaster reduction.

Negotiations for all these pertinent issues must be “mutually reinforcing,” Mr. Kutesa explained, noting that his high-level event on climate change to be held on 29 June is an opportunity to ensure the necessary focus and momentum are maintained. “I encourage Member States to participate in this event at the highest political level to convey a strong message on the critical importance of the negotiation process.”

The international community must demonstrate its commitment toward delivering a final agreement in Paris that improves lives, promotes achievement of sustainable development, protects the environment and preserves our planet’s integrity, he added.

“As we make the final push toward Paris, it is abundantly clear that expectations are high. The world is watching with great anticipation to see how we respond to this historic opportunity to shape the future of our planet.” Mr. Kutesa emphasized.

UN chief discusses Ukraine, other key issues with senior regional officials

23 February - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met today with the Foreign Minister of Russia to discuss among other issues, the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, expressing his expectation that all concerned parties would live up to their commitments to the truce agreed in Minsk on 12 February.

Mr. Ban reiterated to Sergey Lavrov that all parties must comply with the unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 2202 (2015).

Last week, the Council unanimously adopted a resolution endorsing the 13-point accord on ending the Ukraine crisis agreed in Minsk – including a cease-fire – and called on all parties to the conflict to fully implement that cessation of hostilities, as the UN human rights office expressed concern over reported shelling and trapped civilians in the country’s east.

Through the resolution, the 15-member Council endorsed the ‘Package of measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements,’ which was adopted and signed in Minsk on 12 February. That agreement was annexed to the resolution. It stated that the immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions went into effect on 15 February, 12 a.m. local time Sunday, 15 February.

Measures outlined in the text also included Measures also included the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under the monitoring of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as the disarmament of all illegal groups.

Today, the Secretary-General and Foreign Minister Lavrov also discussed the situations in Libya and Yemen, as well as the need for a comprehensive international response to the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Mr. Ban and Mr. Lavrov also exchanged views on Syria and compared notes on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2199 (2015).

Also today, Mr. Ban met with Ivica Dacic, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
Mr. Ban and Mr. Dacic discussed the UN-OSCE partnership as well as the situation in Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Balkans. During those talks, the UN chief expressed his commitment to supporting the OSCE’s efforts in Ukraine and to strengthening the UN-OSCE partnership.

Mr. Dacic is expected to brief the Security Council tomorrow on the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship’s priorities and the OSCE’s cooperation with the United Nations.

**Top officials say UN development system must adapt to challenges posed by post-2015 agenda**

23 February - Top United Nations officials today underlined the importance of ongoing review and reform of the Organization’s development system as Member States met to begin the UN Economic and Social Council’s (ECOSOC) Operational Activities Segment.

Joining ECOSOC Vice-President María Emma Mejía Vélez at the podium, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson looked forward to a year of milestones, while pointing to the breadth of engagement of a wide range of actors in preparing for the post-2015 development agenda.

“We have set the bar high this year,” he said, noting the plans in place for 2015, including agreeing an ambitious sustainable development agenda and a climate change treaty. “We have already broken new ground getting to this point. We have brought an unprecedented range of views into our preparations for the post-2015 agenda.”

Mr. Eliasson emphasized the wide spectrum of participants, including millions of citizens worldwide, and the ambitious proposal that resulted from consultations in the form of the proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs). It was that engagement, he said, that helped produce a set of goals that reflected such an integrated, universal and potentially transformative agenda.

Underlining the changes that had taken place in the world since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set, he said the new agenda would have major implications for the UN’s operational activities for development. In that regard, he welcomed the ECOSOC dialogue on the long-term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, and he said the Secretary-General’s report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) showed encouraging progress in making this system work in ways suited for the SDGs.

The Vice-President of ECOSOC, María Emma Mejía Vélez stressed the importance of the QCPR, the objective of which was to strengthen the system-wide character of operational activities of the UN system at a time when such activities accounted for two-thirds of all of the UN’s work.

“The primary objective was to ensure that the Organization as a whole could operate at a higher level of effectiveness and efficiency in this important policy area,” she said. “Over the last 30 years, the QCPR resolution of the General Assembly has been the most important instrument at the intergovernmental level in fostering system-wide coordination.”

Calling for examination of the paradox that so much of the UN’s work was focused on operational activities for development but 95 per cent of that work was funded voluntarily, she said addressing the issue was essential in order to truly strengthen the strategic positioning of the UN development system as a whole in the post-2015 era.

Ms. Mejía Vélez outlined six priority areas for focus, which included the need to improved efficiency, lower transaction costs and greater use of national capacities and systems at the country level, the greater competition from other development cooperation actors, providers and modalities, and the growing realization that many global issues cannot be effectively tackled without a collaborative and multi-stakeholder approach.

The Deputy Secretary-General also emphasised the importance of building a stronger UN development system that better delivered the new agenda. Improved governance, coherence and flexibility were needed and Mr. Eliasson said that making
that system ‘fit for purpose’ would require a three-pronged approach.

“First, we need differentiated responses to respond to differentiated needs and capacities,” he said, calling also for improved capacities in supporting governments to leverage partnerships, and strengthening of coordination and collaboration within the UN system and between the system and other actors.

“We have to be prepared for implementing the agenda which will be decided by Member States this year,” he said. “Already, the majority of partner countries – 86 per cent – consider the UN development system a more relevant partner than two years ago.”

Mr. Eliasson underlined the unique core strengths held by the UN, including its universal presence, legitimacy and convening power, as well as its depth and breadth of experience and its ability to support partner countries as they translate global norms and standards into national policy and action. That put the Organisation in a unique position to confront modern challenges.

“We intend to build on our strengths,” he said. “But we are also working to ensure that the UN development system functions more coherently as one, making its component parts work better as a whole.”

**As Malawi reels from devastating floods, UN food agency delivers vital supplies**

*23 February* - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has announced the delivery of a first round of emergency supplies to more than 288,000 people in flood-affected Malawi, providing much needed relief amid continuing rains.

The UN food agency explained in a press release that it had distributed more than 2,700 metric tons of food to 12 districts late last week and delivered more than 200 metric tons of relief items by air to thousands of people cut-off by flood waters.

Incessant rains have severely affected the African country as flood waters have destroyed roads and rendered some areas entirely inaccessible by land.

Malawi is regularly hit by floods and droughts, requiring emergency responses of varying size each year. This year, flooding has caused displacement of over 170,000 people, while an estimated 116,000 households have lost their crops and livestock. In Nsanje district alone, 79 people are confirmed dead with another 153 people still missing.

Moreover, this year’s rains have come ahead of their usual schedule, repeatedly bursting the banks along the Shire and Ruo rivers, and warnings of flash floods remain in place, with more rain forecast for the country’s North. With 86 per cent of the population living in rural areas and engaged in farming and livestock rearing, long-term watershed management infrastructures are urgently needed so that even intense flooding is less damaging than this year.

In addition, the press release noted, WFP is currently participating in a joint rapid food security assessment “in order to understand the latest needs on the ground and the required duration of the emergency response” while also providing recommendations on the duration of the ongoing lean season food insecurity response which has already identified nearly 700,000 people in need of food assistance.

Despite the United Nations’ intensive efforts to reach those affected by the devastating flood waters, the WFP continues to face a funding gap of $3.3 million to cover the outstanding food requirements and logistics services to support the entire humanitarian community.
**Photo competition shines spotlight on ‘family meal’ in achieving UN zero hunger goal**

**23 February** - Scenes of families eating together in Burundi, Laos and the Philippines today won a photo competition judged by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver aimed at demonstrating “the simple yet powerful role provided by sitting tougher and eating as a family,” the World Food Programme (WFP) announced.

Speaking at the opening of the photo exhibition at the European Parliament in Brussels titled: *The Family Meal – What brings us together?*, WFP Executive Director Ertharin Cousin praised the photographers for highlighting the importance of food and nutrition in everyday life and the role families play in achieving Zero Hunger.

“These photographs inspire because they demonstrate the simple yet powerful role provided by sitting together and eating as a family in every country and all cultures around the world,” Ms. Cousin said.

“No one in the world can share this opportunity – 805 million people don’t have enough nutritious food to live a healthy and productive life. For this reason WFP and our partners are working together with the EU [European Union] to end hunger and chronic malnutrition around the globe,” she said.

The exhibition and the competition are part of a campaign launched last year by WFP and funded by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO). The aim is to raise awareness among Europe’s citizens about the food assistance WFP and the EU provide to vulnerable families around the world and to highlight the fact that hunger can be eliminated in our lifetime.

The competition’s three winners are Ari Vitikainen, for *Khauchi Papa, a special meal in the highlands of Laos*, Breech Asher Harani’s *Candlelight Supper*, from the Philippines, and Darine Ndihokubwayo, whose picture of street children in Burundi enjoying a Sunday meal received 175 online votes. The winners can be viewed [here](#).

In a statement made after he judged the competition Jamie Oliver said: “Ari’s colourful shot from Laos is a fantastic example of how important and fun it can be to prepare and share a meal with your loved ones. A family meal might seem like one of the most basic things in the world, but it's easy to forget that this isn't a given, and there are many people that struggle to do this. It's a big issue, and I hope this competition will help to raise awareness of that.”

The winner of the public vote, Darine Ndihokubwayo, sent in her response: “This nomination will go to all the orphan children in Burundi, who are not lucky enough to have a family to share their daily meal with.

WFP is the world’s largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. According to WFP, it assists annually some 80 million people in around 75 countries.
UNICEF condemns abduction of children by armed group in South Sudan

23 February - The United Nations children's fund has condemned in the strongest terms the abduction of scores of boys, some as young as 13, by an armed group near Malakal in the north of South Sudan.

“The recruitment and use of children by armed forces destroys families and communities,” said Jonathan Veitch, UNICEF’s Representative in South Sudan, on Saturday.

“Children are exposed to incomprehensible levels of violence, they lose their families and their chance to go to school,” he added, urging the group to immediately release the children.

A UNICEF education team reported that 89 children were abducted in the community of Wau Shilluk in Upper Nile State, where thousands of people have been internally displaced by the ongoing conflict. The actual number could be higher.

According to witnesses, armed soldiers surrounded the community and searched house by house. Boys older than 12 years of age were taken away by force.

UNICEF reminded all parties involved in the conflict that the recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups is a grave violation of international law.

On Mother Language Day, UN spotlights role of native tongue in education

21 February - Mother tongue education is not only a force for quality learning, it is also essential to bolster multilingualism and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity at a time when societies are transforming quickly and many languages are under threat, the United Nations agency mandated with promoting education said today.

Marking International Mother Language Day, celebrated annually on 21 February, the head of UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), emphasized that the post-2015 development agenda must focus on advancing quality education for all and that includes promoting the preservation of language.

"2015 marks the 15th anniversary of International Mother Language Day – this is also a turning point year for the international community, as the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals, when countries will define a new global sustainable development agenda.” UNSECO Director-General Ms. Irina Bokova said in a statement.

“Education in the mother language is an essential part of achieving these goals – to facilitate learning and to bolster skills in reading, writing and mathematics,” she added, noting that taking this forward will require a sharper focus on teaching training, revisions of academic programmes and the creation of suitable learning environments.

More than 50 per cent of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken in the world are likely to die out within a few generations, and 96 per cent of these languages are spoken by a mere 4 per cent of the world's population, according to UNESCO. Only a few hundred languages have genuinely been given a place in education systems and the public domain, and less than a hundred are used in the digital world.

“International Mother Language Day is a moment for all of us to raise the flag for the importance of mother tongue to all educational efforts, to enhance the quality of learning and to reach the unreached. Every girl and boy, every woman and man

Languages connect the world. Source: UNESCO

The recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups is a grave violation of international law - UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0116/Porter
must have the tools to participate fully in the lives of their societies – this is a basic human right and it is a force for the sustainability of all development,” Ms. Bokova said.

Through its programmes worldwide, namely its 'Education for All' initiative, UNESCO aims to promote inclusive education through bilingual intercultural approaches, in order to include both native and non-native cultures. In Thailand, for example, UNESCO is working to deepen understandings of multilingual education based on the mother tongue.

International Mother Language Day has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The date –proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999–represents the day in 1952 when students demonstrating for recognition of their language, Bangla, as one of the two national languages of the then Pakistan, were shot and killed by police.

Languages with their unique ability for communication, social integration, education and development, are of strategic importance for people and planet. Yet, due to globalization processes, they are increasingly under threat, or disappearing altogether.

According to UNESCO, when languages fade, so does the world's rich tapestry of cultural diversity. Opportunities, traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking and expression — valuable resources for ensuring a better future — are also lost.

**Security Council condemns ‘heinous’ bomb attacks in Libya**

21 February - The United Nations Security Council has strongly condemned yesterday's deadly bomb attacks in al-Qubbah, Libya, claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known by its Arabic acronym, Da'esh.

According to reports, the Friday morning attack which came in three separate waves, killed at least 45 people and injured scores of others. It started when one bomber detonated his vehicle near a gas station and was followed by two car explosions near the home of Libya's Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Government's security headquarters.

In a statement to the press this morning, the 15-member Security Council expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims of “this heinous act” and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

Council members stressed again that ISIL must be defeated and that the intolerance, violence and hatred it espouses must be stamped out. Perpetrators of these reprehensible acts of terrorism must be brought to justice, they emphasized.

Such “acts of barbarism” by ISIL do not intimidate Council members but rather stiffen their resolve, members emphasized as they pledged support to global and regional effort to counter ISIL, Ansar Al Sharia entities, and other groups associated with Al-Qaida. This resolve is already stated in Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2199 (2015), they noted.

All those responsible for such attacks must be held accountable, the Security Council stressed, as it urged all States, in accordance with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with Libya and all other relevant authorities.

Council members further recalled that ISIL is included on the Al-Qaida Sanctions List and is thus subject to the asset freeze and arms embargo, as stated in resolution 2161 (2014). Hence, any individual or entity that provides financial and material support to the group, including the provision of arms or recruits, is eligible to be subject to sanctions measures.

To that end, members underscored the need for full implementation of resolution 2199 (2015), adopted on February 12, to cut off ISIL’s support networks.

Lastly, the Council reaffirmed the need to combat, in accordance with the UN Charter and international law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of...
motivation, members concluded.