Top UN officials mark ‘historic moment’ of UN’s 70th anniversary

23 October - As the United Nations prepares for the official celebration of its 70th anniversary tomorrow, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calling on the General Assembly to “unite our strength” and serve “we the peoples,” as the 193-member body adopted by consensus a resolution declaring a recommitment to the aims and principles of the UN Charter.

“Tomorrow, all around the world, iconic landmarks will be lit up blue for UN Day,” Mr. Ban told an informal commemorative meeting of the Assembly, referring to the global campaign that will see national buildings, monuments and landscapes illuminated in blue light, from the Empire State Building in New York to the Jordanian city of Petra.

Mr. Ban noted that the UN Charter was written “deliberately, in the voice, not of governments, but of ‘we the peoples,’” adding that it was a Charter for everyone, particularly the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized.

He also referred to his personal experiences with the UN when he was growing up in South Korea.

“I know first-hand the power and the value of the UN blue. When war came to Korea, I lost my home, my school, all I knew. But help came, bearing the United Nations flag.”

The Secretary-General said that the blue flag of the UN remained “a banner of hope.”
“We have brought freedom to millions, dismantling colonialism, defeating apartheid and defending human rights for all, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation,” he said.

He also sounded a note of caution, saying “Our enterprise is not perfect. Violence, poverty, ill-health and abuse plague far too many people, especially women and girls.”

“Conflict, oppression and despair has forced more people to flee their homes than at any time since the Second World War,” he continued. “But without the United Nations, our world would be a far bleaker place.”

Speaking of the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Secretary-General said that Member States had united, with “a promise to end poverty and provide a life of dignity for all on a healthy planet within a generation.”

To achieve the goals outlined in the new Agenda, Mr. Ban said that what was needed was “a strong UN for a better world,” and that UN day was a time to “reflect on the promise of the Charter, and the pledge of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

“This is a time of test but also of tremendous opportunity. We are the first generation that can end poverty and the last that can stop the worst effects of climate change,” he concluded. “As we shine a blue light on this milestone anniversary, let us reaffirm our commitment to a better and brighter future for all.”

In his remarks, the President of the General Assembly, Mogens Lykketoft, said that: “It is itself a unique achievement that the UN after 70 years still exists, that it has increased the number of members from 51 to 193 – and now represents almost all of humanity.”

“The UN has contributed immensely to advance human development, feed the hungry, educate children, prevent epidemic diseases and improve health,” he said. “Refugees have been supported and human rights promoted. And in the last fifteen years alone, the number of extremely poor people has been cut by half.”

But he also noted that the UN will “never be stronger than the resources and power that the membership of the General Assembly and the Security Council gives it.”

“For too long the negotiations on disarmament have been stalled, arms races restarted, terrorism and violent extremism and more armed conflicts have been ignited, causing immense human suffering,” he continued. “And global action against inequality, environmental catastrophes and climate change has been far too weak.”

Mr. Lykketoft said that the 70th anniversary of the UN could be “the defining hour” of the Organization, as well as the international community as a whole, noting the approval of the new 2030 Agenda and the importance of the upcoming climate change conference in Paris.

“The outcome of UN efforts here and now to reach out to the sixty million displaced inside and outside the worlds many conflict zones – with Syria as the single worst example – is a crucial test of our ability to mobilize global solidarity,” he said. “The outcome of efforts to end the conflicts that are the root causes of these humanitarian catastrophes is the crucial test of the UN’s credibility in ensuring global peace and security.”

The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Mr. Oh Joon, also spoke about the importance of the UN’s latest milestone.

“The 70th anniversary of the United Nations is a historic moment to reflect and build upon our collective action and achievements,” he said. “‘We the peoples’ of the United Nations were determined in 1945 to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

He also noted the role of ECOSOC as “the central platform of the UN to address international economic and social issues,” as well as setting priorities for international development cooperation and humanitarian action.
Mr. Oh went on to highlight the importance of the 2030 Agenda, which will, he said, “require that all countries and all stakeholders come together to make the goals a reality,” also noting that “ECOSOC is the only Charter body with a mandate to engage civil society.”

“Indeed, the vision and the goals of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda are the result of the most open and transparent consultation process in the history of the United Nations,” he continued. “The Council will ensure that these voices from around the world continue to be heard.”

ECOSOC, he said, had “evolved over the last 70 years to deal with the growing number of challenges,” adding that the Council “will also continue to work with Member States and other stakeholders to make ECOSOC more relevant to what is happening in the world.”

### United Nations remains ‘beacon for all humanity,’ says Ban ahead of 70th anniversary

**23 October** - Marking the 70th anniversary of the Organization ahead of UN Day on 24 October, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said there is only one flag that belongs to everyone – the blue flag of the United Nations.

“National flags are a mark of pride and patriotism in every country around the world. But there is only one flag that belongs to all of us,” Mr. Ban said in a message. “That blue flag of the United Nations was a banner of hope for me growing up in wartime Korea.”

The UN chief underlined that seven decades after its founding, the United Nations remains “a beacon for all humanity.”

“Every day, the United Nations feeds the hungry and shelters those driven from their homes,” he declared in his message on the Day.

“The United Nations vaccinates children who would otherwise die from preventable diseases. The United Nations defends human rights for all, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.”

He recalled that the UN’s peacekeepers are on the frontlines of conflict; its mediators bring warriors to the peace table; and its relief workers brave treacherous environments to deliver life-saving assistance.

“The United Nations works for the entire human family of seven billion people, and cares for the earth, our one and only home. And it is the diverse and talented staff of the United Nations who help bring the Charter to life,” he said, referring to the document adopted in 1945 in San Francisco, where the Organization was born.

Mr. Ban also highlighted that this 70th anniversary is a moment to recognize the dedication of those who serve the UN, and to honour the many “who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.”

Noting that “no single country or organization can address today’s challenges alone,” the UN chief stressed that the world faces many crises, and the limits of collective international action are “painfully clear.”

“The timeless values of the UN Charter must remain our guide. Our shared duty is to ‘unite our strength’ to serve ‘we the peoples’,” he continued.

To mark this anniversary, more than 300 monuments and buildings in more than 75 countries are being illuminated in UN blue from Australia to Azerbaijan, Indonesia to Iraq, Saudi Arabia to South Sudan.

The campaign, called ‘Turn the World UN Blue,’ includes New York City’s Empire State building, which Mr. Ban visited today for the lighting ceremony.
“The Empire State Building is one of the most important landmarks in the world,” he told New York City officials and other guests, including Chinese musician Lang Lang.

“The United Nations is the ‘Parliament of Humanity’. Today we come together,” he continued, noting that the Organization appreciates its “diverse, dynamic host city.”

“As a great New Yorker, Alicia Keys, once sang: “Big lights will inspire you – let’s hear it for New York, New York!” the UN chief exclaimed, adding that he hopes the blue lights will inspire the global community to “build a better future for all.”

**‘Yemen is ablaze,’ UN envoy tells Security Council, pressing for peace talks to end civilian suffering**

23 October - Citing the disastrous humanitarian consequences of the crisis in Yemen, the United Nations special envoy on the situation told the Security Council today that the ongoing violence has left the country “bleeding and its cities collapsing,” and he added that peace talks are the only way to restore the hope of Yemeni people “after all the suffering…crisis they have been victims of.”

In his briefing to the Council, UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said the ongoing fighting has levied a heavy toll on Yemen’s civilian population, which has been left with no access to even the basic necessities for survival.

“The last [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] report indicates that the majority of Yemenis need humanitarian aid. Twenty million Yeminis don’t have access to potable water. At least 500,000 children are suffering from malnutrition,” said Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

He informed Council members the recent deadly shelling of Taiz has left the highland city “in tatters” and has led to interruption of humanitarian services in many regions.

“Humanitarian aid, which is supposed to flow freely, is not reaching the people of Taiz leading to a grave crisis in terms of medicines. Today, a large majority of the inhabitants are left without potable water, which poses a threat to the safety and health of these people,” he added.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed further added that extremists groups are rapidly taking advantage of the situation. He pointed out that the groups have attacked Government headquarters in Aden and a mosque in the capital, Sana’a, during prayers for Eid, which have led to many civilian casualties.

The Special Envoy stressed that all parties to the conflict must return to the negotiating table towards reaching a peaceful solution, noting earlier efforts to allow a meeting between the conflict parties had not materialized.

“Excellent ideas were heard but they haven’t allowed us to put an end to the suffering of the Yemeni people. The Parties of the conflicts even failed to meet face-to-face. And it is very important to say here that the first attempt at talks took place nearly five months ago,” said Mr. Ismail.

He also pointed out that an initiative he had undertaken to convene consultations regarding Yemen was cancelled due to pre-conditions set.

“These missed opportunities weigh heavily on the well-being of the people of Yemen and their future is completely uncertain today,” said the Special Envoy.

However, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed informed the Council that he has been in conversation with both Houthis and the Yemini Government and added that both parties have reiterated their intention to abide by Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and to hand over their weapons.
“I trust that face-to-face discussions, which will be the first of the kind, will allow us to bring together the Government and the Houthis in order to pave the way to peace in Yemen and to open peaceful political dialogue to move into a new transitional state,” said Mr. Ismail.

He further added that, in a letter on 19th October, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, President of Yemen, informed the Secretary-General of his intention to send a delegation to participate in peace talks and negotiations in the frameworks stipulated by resolution 2216 (2015).

Further, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed added that he had recently travelled to Middle East to meet leaders from Saudi Arabia and Russia to inform them about the latest developments in Yemen, and his discussion with the Houthis.

He also spoke of his meeting with the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), whose initiatives to resolve the Yemeni conflict could bolster the conditions for national dialogue in Yemen.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed explained that the initiatives drawn by the GCC, along with his own proposals would include withdrawal of extremism from key cities, release of prisoners, return of weapons, improvements in humanitarian situation and the resumption of inclusive political dialogue.

“All this will mark a new page in Yemen’s history […] All parties today are aware that there can be no military solution to the conflict and that only peace talks works and dialogue will pave a road to a better future,” said Mr. Ismail.

Lastly, he appealed to the Council to support and protect the initiatives undertaken and to encourage all parties to move forward in order to put an end to this conflict.

Shortly after the briefing, the Security Council issued a press statement reiterating its demand for the full implementation of relevant Council resolutions, and reiterated its call from resolution 2216 (2015) on all Yemeni parties to resume and accelerate United Nations-brokered inclusive political consultations.

The members of the Council also reaffirmed their call on Yemeni parties to attend the announced talks and any such future talks and engage without preconditions and in good faith, including by resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations, rejecting acts of violence to achieve political goals, and refraining from provocation and all unilateral actions to undermine the political transition.

‘Still time to step back from brink,’ says Ban, returning from Israel, Palestine and Jordan

23 October - Upon his return from an emergency visit to the crisis-torn Middle East where he reported having “long and detailed” discussions with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian leaders, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today said “there is still time to step back from the brink,” despite anger and polarization in the region.

“All agreed on the urgent need to reduce tensions and avoid actions that would further fuel the violence,” Mr. Ban told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York.

“I was profoundly troubled by what I saw and I heard. People on both sides shared heart-breaking stories of violence against their loved ones,” he continued, while strongly condemning all acts of terror and violence and offering condolences to the families of those who have been killed or injured.

Mr. Ban further noted that the tensions around the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount have the potential to add a religious dimension to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that could be exploited by extremists on both sides, with potentially dangerous regional implications.

“I welcome the assurance of Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu that Israel has no intention of changing the status quo on
the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount, which many Muslims believe is under threat,” he declared, expressing his appreciation of the efforts of King Abdullah of Jordan, in accordance with Jordan’s special role as custodian of the holy sites.

Mr. Ban added that “the level of incitement is utterly unacceptable,” and that it is critical for all parties “to avoid provocative rhetoric and actions that can further inflame passions in an already overheated environment.”

In addition, the Secretary-General stressed that it is equally critical that Israel exercise maximum restraint and make sure that security measures are properly calibrated, “so that they do not breed the very frustrations and anxieties which perpetuate violence.”

“One killing or house demolition creates a whole family of angry people,” Mr. Ban insisted. “One neighbourhood closure creates a community of despair. One funeral can spread rage among thousands. Force should be a last resort, not a first resort.”

But security measures alone, he added, will not end the violence. “Only by [restoring] a political horizon can we hope to overcome today’s despair and focus on achieving long-term peace.”

Mr. Ban also urged Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas “to harness the energy and passion of the people, particularly young people, towards a peaceful direction – to realize their aspirations of peace and [make] stability a reality, rather than resorting to violent means.”

“This is at heart a political conflict that will require a serious negotiation process by two partners willing to make the necessary compromises to reach the long-desired goal of a two-state solution,” he said.

Meanwhile, the UN chief highlighted that the Middle East Quartet remains committed to working with all relevant parties – on the ground, regionally and internationally – to create the conditions for a return to “meaningful bilateral negotiations.”

He thanked the members of the Quartet for their efforts – including Secretary of State John Kerry, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and European officials, as well as the Arab leaders who are taking part in a meeting today in Vienna, Austria.

Following his briefing to reporters, Mr. Ban said he would be joining their discussions by video conference to discuss “the alarming escalation of violence in Israel, Palestine and particularly in Jerusalem.” He also noted that his Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, would be there to represent him in person.

Furthermore, he indicated that UN envoys plan to visit Israel and Palestine in the near future “to explore significant steps that each side can take to restore confidence and move towards an end to occupation and the establishment of a viable, sustainable Palestinian state, living in peace with Israel.”
UN refugee agency appeals for protection against sexual abuse of women and children on move in Europe

23 October - The United Nations refugee agency today expressed concern over the reported abuse of refugee and migrant women and children on the move in Europe, including “instances of children engaging in survival sex to pay smugglers to continue their journey,” appealing to all concerned to take measures to ensure their protection.

“Refugee and migrant children moving in Europe are at heightened risk of violence and abuse, including sexual violence, especially in overcrowded reception sites, or in many locations where refugees and migrants gather, such as parks, train stations, bus stations and roadways,” said Spokesperson Melissa Fleming for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“Unaccompanied children can be particularly vulnerable as they lack the protection and care of an adult,” Ms. Fleming told the regular Friday press briefing in Geneva, Switzerland.

According to UNHCR, more than 644,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe by sea so far this year, and of these, some 34 percent are women and children.

“In addition to the reported risks and abuse they face during the journey before arriving on Europe’s shores, women and children are also confronted with numerous risks in their onward movement through Europe,” the spokesperson said.

“From testimony and reports we have received there have been instances of children engaging in survival sex to pay smugglers to continue their journey, either because they have run out money, or because they have been robbed,” she said.

“UNHCR appeals to all concerned national authorities in Europe to take measures to ensure the protection of women and girls, including through providing adequate and safe reception facilities,” Ms. Fleming said.

On behalf of the refugee agency, she asked authorities, “as a matter of urgency,” to find alternatives to the detention of children.

“Together with partners we are also working with authorities to ensure access to information, to enhance the identification of persons with specific needs, including unaccompanied children, and their referral to appropriate services, to provide psychosocial support and to enhance reception areas, including through the provision of safe spaces,” the agency official said.
Burundi: UN warns of ‘rapidly worsening’ human rights and security situation

23 October - The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) today expressed its concern over the “rapidly worsening” security and human rights situation in Burundi, where at least 198 people have been killed since April, including the execution of at least nine civilians ten days ago.

“We are particularly shocked at the deadly incident which took place on 13 October in the Bujumbura neighbourhood of Ngagara,” said OHCHR Spokesperson Rupert Colville, speaking at a press conference in Geneva today.

“At least nine civilians were reportedly summarily executed by police forces belonging to the API Unit (Appui pour la Protection des institutions, the Police Unit in charge of protecting state institutions),” said Mr. Colville, “including a well-known cameraman of the National Radio and Television of Burundi (RTNB), Christophe Nkezabahizzi, his wife, their two children and an IOM staff member living in the same compound, Evariste Mbonihankuye.”

While police forces were searching houses in the area, members of the Nkezabahizzi family were reportedly called out of their home, lined up and shot in cold blood,” he continued. “Reports suggest the IOM staff member was wearing his UN-ID but was still shot dead.”

Mr. Colville also noted that, despite previous reports of attacks against humanitarian personnel, this is the first time a humanitarian worker has been killed by security forces since the beginning of the crisis.

The incident, he said, was apparently triggered by an attack on three API police officers by an armed youth. One officer was killed and another was injured. Four other people, including a minor, were also reportedly killed by the police in a separate incident at the same location on the same day.

“We welcome the establishment by the Attorney General of Burundi of a commission of enquiry to investigate the Ngagara incident and we call for this investigation to be transparent, impartial and in line with international and national human rights standards,” said Mr. Colville. “We urge the authorities to issue clear instructions to all members of their security forces that acts such as this will be punished with the full force of the law.”

Six months after earthquake, Nepal ‘racing against winter’ – UN relief official

23 October - As winter approaches, the top United Nations humanitarian official for Nepal today stressed that shelter and food remain top priorities six months after the devastating earthquakes that shook the country in April.

“While much has been achieved, the humanitarian community remains committed to meet remaining needs,” said Jamie McGoldrick, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal, in a press release.

“With the winter on the way, we must ensure adequate shelter and food security, particularly for more than 80,000 families.”

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), humanitarian partners, with the Government of Nepal, provided emergency shelter to over 700,000 families, but the effect of the coming harsh cold weather is a concern with many people still without permanent durable housing.

The April and May earthquakes left 8,891 people dead, destroyed more than 600,000 houses and damaged 290,000 houses,
OCHA estimates. During the height of the emergency, some 188,900 people were temporarily displaced.

Over the last six months, humanitarian partners provided food to over 1.4 million people, established temporary classrooms for 300,000 children and supported health authorities to restore all damaged health facilities by June. Concerted efforts reportedly ensured that there were no disease outbreaks.

Meanwhile, to reach remote and isolated villages, last mile logistics operations employed innovative and traditional methods of delivering assistance with 16,000 porters and hundreds of mules. Over 500,000 people received multi-purpose cash assistance, which helped them bridge the economic gap caused by devastated livelihoods.

“When faced with tough challenges like the monsoon season, landslides and difficult terrain, we are proud of how we have been able to support the Government and people of Nepal and respond to the challenges overall,” Mr. McGoldrick said. “But present conditions are a concern.”

Since the end of September, fuel in short supply has impeded progress, OCHA reports. The Humanitarian Country Team is urging a quick resolution to the fuel shortage so that winter goods can be quickly delivered to vulnerable households. This massive logistical undertaking can be achieved, Mr. McGoldrick said, but the lack of fuel is significantly affecting distribution of goods. He further noted that there is a brief window of fair weather in which humanitarian actors can respond before the snow.

The Humanitarian Country Team also underlined it is working very closely with the Government and other partners to ensure a smooth transition to recovery and reconstruction.

“The Humanitarian Country Team is looking forward to the establishment of the National Reconstruction Authority,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “Once it becomes operational, we anticipate that we will start to see the rapid expansion of reconstruction across the earthquake-affected areas.”

In Cameroon, top UN relief official calls for increased support to families fleeing conflicts

Nigerian refugees at Minawao refugee camp, northern Cameroon. Photo: OCHA/Ivo Brandau

23 October - The most senior UN relief official today urged the international community to increase their support for the humanitarian response in Cameroon, which is hosting more than 310,000 people who have fled conflicts in neighbouring Central African Republic and Nigeria.

“Deprived and traumatized families fleeing violence in the Central African Republic and Nigeria are being hosted by impoverished but generous communities, themselves facing daily hardship,” the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien, said in a press release.

“The Government of Cameroon and communities have been very generous in providing protection and assistance to the displaced. The international community must do more to help alleviate the suffering of thousands of families,” he added.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Cameroon has witnessed a four-fold increase in the number of displaced people hosted since early 2014. The unrest in the Central African Republic has led to the influx of 251,000 refugees into Cameroon’s eastern regions, while cross-border attacks and suicide bombings by suspected Boko Haram elements have triggered the recent displacement of more than 150,000 Nigerian refugees and internally displaced Cameroonians in the Far North, the country’s poorest region.

“The attacks in the Far North of Cameroon are increasing in frequency. Entire communities have been uprooted from their homes. Tens of thousands of people have lost access to their fields and grazing land due to insecurity. In addition to responding to the life-saving needs of the displaced, I am deeply concerned about a spike in food insecurity in the coming months,” Mr. O’Brien continued.
During his visit to Cameroon, Mr. O’Brien met with Government officials and the humanitarian community, to discuss ways of improving assistance to the 1.3 million people chronically vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, often due to the effects of hostile and changing climate.

“More than a million people across the country are food insecure; one in five of these families will go hungry without immediate food assistance.” said Mr. O’Brien. “I call on the international community to increase assistance to humanitarian organisations and the Government of Cameroon to better respond to the mounting needs. Refugees, internally displaced persons and their hosts all need more help to better cope with the extremely difficult circumstances. Women and children are particularly at risk.”

OCHA estimates that 1.8 million people across Cameroon urgently require the most basic assistance and protection. Meanwhile, the humanitarian community has appealed for $264 million, yet only 42 per cent of this has been received.

**Sounding alarm on widening crisis in Yemen, UN rights office says civilians paying ‘terrible toll’**

23 October - The United Nations human rights office said today that the humanitarian situation in Yemen’s highland Taiz governorate is deteriorating rapidly in the wake of a recent attack by members of the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis which targeted residential areas and left 15 civilians dead, injured 73 others and left homes, shops, a clinic and a school partially destroyed.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the indiscriminate shelling in Taiz is only the latest incident impacting the area.

“We are concerned at the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, which is being greatly exacerbated by checkpoints which were set up by the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis on the periphery of Taiz city in April. These checkpoints have been tightening their restrictions on the movement of the civilian population,” OHCHR Spokesperson Rupert Colville, told reporters in Geneva.

He further added that the members of the Houthi-affiliated Committees have taken control of the eastern route into Taiz and have blocked main supply routes from Sana’a, Aden, Ibb, Lahj and Hudaydah.

Mr. Colville detailed eyewitness accounts of the attacks, which began at around 4:15 in the evening, when shells fired from Houthis-controlled Al-Hawban area targeted a number of residential areas in the Al-Dhaboaha neighbourhood, hitting the Al-Mutahideen Clinic and five neighbouring homes.

Additionally, he said that the second round of shelling resumed later that night and that an estimated 18 shells were fired in same Al-Hawban area, targeting residential neighbourhoods in the city centre.

He further added that at least one shell hit the Hayel Saeed school, at least one shell landed near a mosque in Al-Awadhi Street, two shells struck a residential area near the fish market, and more shells hit shops in the city’s central market. A total of at least seven shells also struck the Al-Akhwah and the Al-Rawdha neighbourhoods.

Mr. Colville said that the civilians are currently struggling to meet even their basic needs such as potable water and added that the prices of water have increased by 300 per cent in the last week.

He also said that reports received by OHCHR indicate that members of the Popular Committees Affiliated with the Houthis and armed forces loyal to former President Saleh have prevented local traders and residents from crossing check points with water, fruit and vegetables and other essential goods.

Mr. Colville further said that the health system in Taiz is almost collapsing.

“At present, there are a total of six public and private hospitals that are partially functional in Taiz. Following the closure of
Yemen International Hospital, the largest hospital in the city, smaller private hospitals with limited capacity have been overwhelmed with casualties caused by the fighting,” he said.

Lastly, Mr. Colville added that the on-going armed conflict in Yemen is taking a terrible toll on civilians as nearly 7,566 civilian casualties have been recorded this year, including 2,577 killed and 5,078 wounded.

**Smugglers will adapt as long as there is a market to exploit, warn UN experts on migrant rights**

23 October - Two United Nations experts on the human rights of migrants today called on the European Union to open regular and safe channels for migrants, saying “attempting to seal borders and the over-emphasis on the securitisation of borders is not going to reduce irregular migration in the long run.”

“Smugglers will continue to skilfully adapt, as long as there is a market to exploit,” wrote UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, and the Chair of the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Francisco Carrión Mena, in an open letter released today.

According to the UN refugee agency, more than 644,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe by sea so far this year, and of these, some 34 percent are women and children.

In their open letter, the experts voiced their “deep concern” at a recent UN Security Council resolution allowing the European Union to inspect, possibly seize and use force against boats off the coast of Libya in cases where reasonable grounds exist to suspect that such boats are being used for the smuggling of migrants from that country.

“International cooperation is certainly needed to combat organized criminal enterprises from engaging in such activities, but the Security Council resolution and EU Operation Sophia miss the mark,” they said.

According to their letter, EU Operation Sophia allows for EU naval vessels to board, search, seize and divert vessels suspected of being used for migrant smuggling and is an example of the States' “naivety” in thinking that sealing borders can work.

Saying that this operation cannot succeed at reducing the smuggling activities, as long as prohibition policies and practices create a lucrative market for smuggling people, the experts noted that “what is likely to happen is that smuggling operations will simply be diverted to other borders.”

“Countries can only effectively tackle smuggling if they take over the market,” the experts wrote.

“They must urgently provide safe regular channels for migration and places for refugee resettlement,” they said. “Without a regular alternative available to reach safety and the opportunity of building a future for themselves and their children, people will continue to pay smugglers and risk their lives through dangerous journeys.”

The experts called for commitment by all EU member States to resettle over a number of years “a meaningful number of refugees”, most probably in the millions.

"Whether considered migrants, asylum seekers or refugees, all are entitled to a protection response based on international law, in particular the human rights law, humanitarian law, and refugee law treaty framework,” the experts noted.
Adopting new resolution, Security Council extends arms embargoes imposed on Somalia and Eritrea

23 October - The United Nations Security Council today extended the arms embargo on Somalia until 15 November 2016 while reaffirming the country’s sovereignty over its natural resources, while also reaffirming its arms embargo on Eritrea.

Adopting a new resolution by a vote of 14 in favour and 1 abstention (Venezuela), the Council also extended the mandate of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group until 15 December 2016, and reiterated its expectation that the Government of Eritrea would facilitate the Group’s entry into that country.

Reaffirming Somalia’s sovereignty over its natural resources, the Council underlined the vital importance of the Federal Government of Somalia putting in place a resource-sharing agreement to ensure that the national petroleum sector did not become a source of increased tension. The Council condemned the ongoing export of charcoal from Somalia in violation of the total ban on charcoal exports.

The Council expressed serious concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia and condemned in the strongest terms increased attacks against humanitarian actors. It also expressed concern about continued reports of corruption, diversion of public resources and financial impropriety involving members of the Federal Government Administrations and the Federal Parliament, underlining that individuals engaged in acts that threatened Somalia’s peace and reconciliation process might be listed for targeted sanctions.

Also by the text, the Council urged the Government of Eritrea to allow access or provide information, including to the Monitoring Group, on the Djiboutian prisoners missing in action since clashes between the two countries from 10 to 12 June 2008.

UN and Middle East partners express ‘grave concern’ over escalating Israeli-Palestinian tensions

23 October - Underscoring the urgent need to restore calm amid escalating Israeli-Palestinians tensions, the United Nations and its Middle East Quartet partners today encouraged Israel to work together with Jordan to uphold the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem.

“The Quartet expresses grave concern over the continuing escalation of tensions between Israelis and Palestinians,” said a statement statement issued in Vienna, Austria. “The Quartet condemns all acts of terror and violence against civilians.”

“Underscoring the urgent need to restore calm the Quartet reiterates its call for maximum restraint and avoidance of provocative rhetoric and actions,” the statement said.

The statement was issued after a meeting of the representatives of the diplomatic grouping – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State John Kerry, European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, and Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon represented by his Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov.

Meanwhile, at UN Headquarters, Mr. Ban, just back from the Middle East, joined their discussions by video conference and highlighted that the Quartet remains committed to working with all relevant parties – on the ground, regionally and
internationally – to create the conditions for a return to “meaningful bilateral negotiations.”

Today’s Quartet statement encouraged “Israel to work together with Jordan to uphold the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem in both word and practice, recognizing the special role of Jordan as per its peace treaty with Israel.”

It said Envoyos of the Quartet will travel to the region in the coming period and engage directly with the parties to encourage them to take concrete actions, consistent with prior agreements, that demonstrate their genuine commitment to pursuing a two-state solution.

“Recalling its previous statements and relevant UN Security Council resolutions and recognizing that security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence, the Quartet calls for significant steps to be taken, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and hope in the viability of a negotiated two-state solution that resolves the final status issues, including that of Jerusalem, and ends the occupation that began in 1967,” today’s statement noted.

The Quartet also reaffirmed its “strong commitment to act in coordination with regional and international stakeholders in an effort to stabilize the situation and to assure and actively support a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.”

As Côte d’Ivoire prepares for presidential polls, Ban urges peaceful, transparent process

23 October - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is closely following developments in Côte d’Ivoire ahead of this weekend’s presidential elections and has welcomed the commitment of national stakeholders to participate in the process in a peaceful and transparent manner.

A statement issued by his spokesperson said the Mr. Ban is closely following events in the lead-up to the 25 October polls and has noted that “a successful electoral process is the responsibility of all concerned.”

In this regard, the Secretary-General in the statement calls on all voters to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming election,” the spokesperson continued.

“He reminds all political leaders and their constituents to continue to address any outstanding disputes through peaceful means in accordance with the laws and Constitution of Côte d’Ivoire,” the statement continued, adding that Mr. Ban reaffirms the commitment of the UN to support the electoral process in Côte d’Ivoire.

Children's right to freedom of religion or belief must be protected, says UN expert

23 October - The United Nations expert on religious freedom is calling on all Governments represented at the UN General Assembly “to respect religious practices by children and their families and support families in fulfilling their role in providing an enabling environment for the realisation of the rights of the child.”

“Every individual child is a rights holder in his or her own capacity as recognised in Article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, recalled while presenting his new special report on the rights of the child and his or her parents in the area of freedom of religion or belief.

“Violations of freedom of religion or belief often affect the rights of children and their parents,” he said in a press release. “Children, typically girls, from religious minorities for example, are abducted and
forcibly converted to another religion through forced early marriage.”

The rights expert also urged religious communities across the world to ensure respect for the freedom of religion or belief of children within their teaching and community practices, bearing in mind the status of the child as a rights holder.

“Religious community leaders should support the elimination of harmful practices inflicted on children, including by publicly challenging problematic religious justifications for such practices whenever they occur,” he stressed.

With regard to possible conflicts, the Special Rapporteur stressed the need for due diligence by the State when dealing with conflicting human rights concerns, ensuring non-discriminatory family laws and the settlement of family-related conflicts, and combating harmful practices.

“While in many situations of violations the rights of the child and the rights of his or her parents may be affected in conjunction, it is not always the case,” Mr. Bielefeldt noted. “The interests of parents and children are not necessarily identical, including in the area of freedom of religion or belief.”

The expert highlighted that parents or legal guardians have the right and duty to direct the child in the exercise of his or her freedom of religion or belief. “Such direction should be given in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child in order to facilitate a more and more active role of the child in exercising his or her freedom of religion or belief, thus paying respect to the child as a rights holder from early on,” he said.

“Parents are also not obliged to provide a religiously 'neutral' upbringing in the name of the child's right to an 'open future,’” he added. “The rights of parents to freedom of religion or belief include their rights to educate their children according to their own conviction and to introduce their children to religious initiation rites.”

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Special Rapporteur's report also discusses issues related to religious socialization, religious instruction within the family, participation in religious community life, religious education in schools, the voluntary display of religious symbols in schools; respect for the evolving capacities of the maturing child, and non-discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.

Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, an independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanism that addresses specific country situations. They do not receive a salary for their work and are independent from any government.

**UN agencies boost aid efforts to flood-hit Southwestern Algeria, call for urgent funding**

23 October - The United Nations refugee agency and its partners are scaling up aid efforts after devastating floods widely damaged Sahrawi refugee camps in southwest Algeria, working to provide food and relief supplies, while urgently appealing for emergency funds to fill the 80 per cent gap in order to reach the most vulnerable.

“UNHCR [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugee] is playing a leading role in the humanitarian response, working with the Sahrawi refugee population, as well as UN agencies [World Food Programme] and [UN Children’s Fund] and other partners,” said Amin Awad, Director of the Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Refugee Coordinator for the Syria and Iraq situations., told journalists in Geneva during a briefing today.

This joint effort is delivering basic food and drinking water, as well as offering shelters to the homeless. Relief needs such as tents, bedding materials, and cooking tools will be airlifted over the next two days, according to UNHCR.

The rains, which began last Friday and are expected to last until Sunday, have flooded all five camps at Tindouf region completely or in part.
As a result, traditional Sahrawi tents and mud-brick homes, as well as other infrastructure, have been destroyed and damaged.

Rebuilding latrines and removing floodwaters, said Mr. Awad, is a priority to avoid water related diseases.

However, “UNHCR is urgently appealing to donors for emergency funds to respond to the flooding crisis,” he said, explaining that “UNHCR’s 2015 budget for the Tindouf operation is around just 20 per cent, leaving a huge funding gap and restricting operational activities.”

**UN Mission condemns terrorist attack against Benghazi demonstration**

23 October - The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) today strongly condemned the terrorist attack which targeted a peaceful demonstration in Benghazi, killing and injuring many civilians.

“UNSMIL calls on Libyans to reject violence as a means to settle political differences and stresses that peaceful expression of political views is one of the basic rights in a free society,” said a statement issued by the UN Mission.

The mission also expressed its condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

The statement also said that the stability in the eastern city of Benghazi is key to Libya’s overall stability and the latest attack stresses the urgent need to bring peace to the country.

“The shelling of the demonstration in Benghazi serves to show once again that the unending violence is claiming more and more lives, particularly in the city where fighting has raged for over a year and has caused unimaginable suffering to its residents, including displacing more than 100,000 people,” said the statement.

The mission also urged Libyans to set aside their differences, irrespective of their affiliations, and engage in efforts through dialogue to resolve the deepening crisis in the country.

“Their best response to the perpetrators of this ugly crime in Benghazi today is by working together to bring peace to Libya. Only through unity can terrorism be confronted and violence brought to an end,” the statement concluded.

Just two days ago, UN Special Representative for Libya Bernardino León stressed that the effort towards forming a unity government in Libya will continue, emphasizing that while a position had been announced that some parties had not voted for the UN-backed political agreement, “there is no chance for small groups or personalities to hijack this process.”

**Ban condemns terrorist attacks in Pakistan on religious holiday**

23 October - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned today's bombing of a procession of worshippers marking the Shia religious holiday of Ashura in Jacobabad, and the recent terrorist attacks in the Pakistani provinces of Balochistan and Sindh.

“The Secretary-General reiterates that nothing justifies terrorism. He urges the Government of Pakistan to take all necessary measures to bring to justice the perpetrators of these despicable acts and to do its utmost to protect its citizens, including all minorities,” said a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York.

The statement added that the attacks were carried out during the holy month of Muharram and have reportedly left over 40 dead, including many children.
The Secretary-General extended his condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured a swift recovery.

**Economic and Social Council President urges curtailing flow of illegal finances that cost Africa billions**

23 October - In a “timely and necessary” meeting on illicit financial flows and their impact on development in Africa, Oh Joon, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) today urged broader efforts to combat such flows, of IFFs from the continent could amount to a staggering $50 billion each year.

“Today’s deliberation on illicit financial flows in Africa is both timely and necessary. It is necessary because reducing illicit financial flows and their costs for African economies is a challenging task, calling for cooperation at all levels and among many different actors,” said Mr. Oh.

Addressing a joint meeting of ECOSOC and the General Assembly's Second Committee – which deals with economic and financial issues – he stressed that African countries will need international and regional support, including public-private dialogue, amidst the transformation of its economies and balancing critical economic needs with social and environmental sustainability.

He also added that African nations will need to finance a wide range of investment requirements in order to achieve the recently adopted 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and therefore, would require the biggest portion of financial resources.

“The UNCTAD World Investment Report of 2014 and other sources have highlighted that investment needs in developing countries alone range from 3.3 trillion dollars 4.5 trillion dollars per year, mainly for basic infrastructure such as roads, rail and ports, power stations, water and sanitation, food security, climate change mitigation and adaptation, health, and education,” said Mr. Oh.

He also said that according to UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), nearly $50 billion of illicit financial flows move from the continent, which represents an important loss of foreign exchange reserves, an erosion of their legal tax base, and bygone investment opportunities from natural resources rents.

He stressed that Africa have to mobilize its resources from within the continent and decide on how best to retain and utilize them effectively.