UN seeks common European strategy on health care for refugee and migrant influx

23 November - As the unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants into Europe strains host countries’ medical resources, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) opened a high-level meeting in Rome today to draft a common strategy on health care for the newcomers, ranging from prompt vaccination against measles and polio to dealing with childbirth complications.

“Health systems in the European Region, including those of countries that receive refugees and migrants, are well equipped to diagnose and treat common infectious and non-communicable diseases,” said Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, which includes Turkey and has received nearly three million refugees and migrants this year alone.

“But we, as a region, must seek to ensure that all countries are adequately prepared and organized to withstand the added pressures of supporting a mass influx of people, while at the same time protecting the health of their resident populations,” she told health ministers and high-level representatives from Europe and other WHO regions at the start of the two-day meeting.

The aim is to agree on a common approach and joint action as large-scale migration places immense and often unexpected pressure on the health systems of host countries, testing both their capacity and preparedness.

In 2015, nearly two million refugees and migrants have taken shelter in Turkey, and more than 700,000 in other countries of
the region. Up to five per cent of these need medical assistance for accidental injuries, hypothermia, burns, cardiovascular events, pregnancy- and delivery-related complications, diabetes and hypertension.

Mass population movements, water shortage and inadequate shelter and sanitation increase the risk of catching communicable diseases.

“A good response to the challenges of people on the move requires health system preparedness and capacity, including robust epidemiological data and migration intelligence, careful planning, training and, above all, adherence to the principles of equity, solidarity and human rights,” Dr. Jakab said.

“A common framework for joint action on refugee and migrant health in the WHO European Region is of urgent importance,” she added, stressing the need for collective actions.

Due to increased risk of communicable diseases, vaccination is high on the agenda, with UN agencies recommending immunization without delay according to the national schedules of any country where they may reside for more than a week.

In view of recent measles outbreaks, countries should prioritize vaccination against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and polio, but vaccination is not recommended at border crossings unless there is an outbreak in the host or transit country.

Many countries, particularly those on the front line, have already undertaken vaccination campaigns for new arrivals, but these groups still face many complex challenges, including limited access to health services, due to high cost, lack of information and administrative, cultural or language barriers.

**Mali: UN Police help Mali Government probe of deadly terrorist attack**

23 November - United Nations police are providing Mali with support and technical expertise in the investigation of Friday’s deadly terrorist attack on the Radisson hotel in Bamako, the West African country’s capital.

Already on the day of the “despicable terrorist attack,” a force from the security and safety section, the Quick Reaction Force, and police segment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was on site together with medical care personnel, ambulances and fire trucks to provide all possible aid, the Mission reported today.

“I am impressed by the good coordination with the Malian Defence and Security Forces,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative and MINUSMA head Mongi Hamdi said in a statement on the assault, in which at least 22 were killed – including the attackers – and dozens more were reportedly trapped for hours until the terrorists were overcome.

“I want to renew my appreciation to our police officers from UNPOL (UN Police), to the UN Security personnel, and to all firefighters and rescuers who have joined forces with our Malian and international partners with a great deal of passion and professionalism. I finally salute the composure and courage of hotel guests and staff who had to overcome this ordeal.”

In all, 45 UN Police Officers (UNPOL) and 14 UN Security Officers were involved and Mr. Hamdi stressed that UNPOL support is still continuing the in follow-up investigation.

MINUSMA strongly condemns any action aiming to jeopardize the peace process and remains committed to support the people and Government of Mali in their efforts to bring back lasting peace to the country, the statement added.

Set up in 2013 to carry out security-related tasks and help to stabilize the country and implement a transitional roadmap following a coup and separatist and Islamist takeover of the north, the Mission currently deploys more than 9,000 military personnel, some 1,180 police and an equal number of civilians on the ground.
UN report finds 90 per cent of disasters are weather-related

23 November - A new report issued today by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) shows that over the last 20 years, 90 per cent of major disasters have been caused by 6,457 recorded floods, storms, heatwaves, droughts and other weather-related events.

The report, entitled The Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters finds that the five countries hit by the highest number of disasters are the United States, China, India, Philippines, and Indonesia.

“Weather and climate are major drivers of disaster risk and this report demonstrates that the world is paying a high price in lives lost,” said Ms. Margareta Wahlström, head of UNISDR, in a press release.

“Economic losses are a major development challenge for many least developed countries battling climate change and poverty,” she continued.

The report and analysis compiled by UNISDR and the Belgian-based Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) demonstrates that since the first UN climate change conference (COP1) in 1995, 606,000 lives have been lost and 4.1 billion people have been injured, left homeless or in need of emergency assistance as a result of weather-related disasters.

The report also highlights data gaps, noting that economic losses from weather-related disasters are much higher than the recorded figure of US$1.891 trillion, which accounts for 71 per cent of all losses attributed to natural hazards over the twenty-year period. Only 35 per cent of records include information about economic losses. UNISDR estimates that the true figure on disaster losses – including earthquakes and tsunamis – is between US$250 billion and US$300 billion annually.

“In the long term, an agreement in Paris at COP21 on reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be a significant contribution to reducing damage and loss from disasters which are partly driven by a warming globe and rising sea levels,” Ms. Wahlström explained.

“For now, there is a need to reduce existing levels of risk and avoid creating new risk by ensuring that public and private investments are risk-informed and do not increase the exposure of people and economic assets to natural hazards on flood plains, vulnerable low-lying coastlines or other locations unsuited for human settlement.”

Ms. Wahlström recalled that the development year started last March with the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, a 15-year package endorsed by the UN General Assembly, which sets out clear targets for a substantial reduction in disaster losses, including mortality, numbers of people affected, economic losses and damage to critical infrastructure including schools and hospitals.

Meanwhile, Professor Debarati Guha-Sapir, the head of CRED, said climate change, climate variability and weather events are a threat to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals’ overall target of eliminating poverty.

“We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and tackle other risk drivers such as unplanned urban development, environmental degradation and gaps in early warnings,” she said. “This all requires ensuring people are risk informed and strengthening institutions which manage disaster risk.”

According to the report, Asia accounts for the “lion’s share of disaster impacts” including 332,000 deaths and 3.7 billion people affected. The death toll in Asia included 138,000 deaths caused by Cyclone Nargis which struck Myanmar in 2008.

In total, an average of 335 weather-related disasters were recorded per year between 2005 and 2014, an increase of 14 per

The extent of the toll taken by disasters on society is revealed by other statistics from CRED’s Emergency Events Data Base, or EM-DAT, which shows that 87 million homes were damaged or destroyed over the period of the survey.

The analysis also highlights that floods accounted for 47 percent of all weather-related disasters from 1995-2015, affecting 2.3 billion people and killing 157,000. Storms were the deadliest type of weather-related disaster, accounting for 242,000 deaths or 40 percent of the global weather-related deaths, with 89 per cent of these deaths occurring in lower-income countries.

Overall, heatwaves accounted for 148,000 of the 164,000 lives lost due to extreme temperatures, with 92 per cent of deaths occurring in high-income countries.

Finally, drought reportedly affects Africa more than any other continent, with EM-DAT recoding 136 events there between 1995 and 2015, including 77 droughts in East Africa alone. The report also recommends that there needs to be improved data collection on indirect deaths from drought.

**Armed robbery of UN-partner compound in South Sudan condemned by senior relief official**

23 November - The top United Nations relief official in South Sudan today strongly condemned the armed robbery in Juba of the compound of a UN-partner organization called Nile Hope.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), during last Friday’s robbery, aid workers were held at gunpoint and significant assets of the non-governmental organization (NGO) were taken.

“Violence and crime against humanitarian organizations in South Sudan are jeopardizing the ability of aid workers to provide assistance at a time when humanitarian needs are greater than ever,” said Eugene Owusu, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, in a news release.

“This is unacceptable and must stop. I call on all actors to respect and protect humanitarian staff and assets,” he continued.

In addition, OCHA said the robbery “is absolutely reprehensible and those responsible must be identified and held to account,” adding that the staff of Nile Hope and other humanitarian workers “work day in and day out in dangerous and difficult locations across South Sudan to help people in dire need.”

The Nile Hope compound robbery is reportedly the latest in a string of violent incidents affecting humanitarian partners operating in South Sudan. In the month of October alone, humanitarian partners reported 32 cases of attempted or successful robbery, burglary and looting affecting their operations, including 15 in Juba – and a humanitarian worker was killed during a compound robbery in September, OCHA indicated.

“I call on all relevant actors, including Government, to work together to strengthen our collective resolve to protect the safety and security of humanitarian workers,” stated Mr. Owusu.
Cambodia: political crackdown reaching a 'dangerous tipping point' warns UN rights expert

23 November - Expressing deep concern about the breakdown in the dialogue between Cambodia's main political parties, a United Nations expert today warned that any intensification of the current events could bring the country to a “dangerous tipping point,” especially for human rights of the Cambodian people.

“The past weeks have been marked by a number of worrying developments: increasing tensions between the two principal political parties; incidences of violence; intimidation of individuals; and resort to offensive language in the political discourse,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Rhona Smith in a news release.

Ms. Smith's warning comes in the wake reports that Sam Rainsy, leader of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), has been summoned to appear in court on 4 December for allegedly being complicit in the falsification of public documents, the use of false public documents, and incitement to cause serious chaos to security and social order in the capital, Phnom Penh.

According to the news release, issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), this follows the issue of an arrest warrant by the court on 13 November, on the basis of Mr. Rainsy's 2011 conviction for 'public defamation and instigation of discrimination,' and the removal of his parliamentary immunity by the National Assembly on 16 November 2015.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also called the issuance of arrest warrant against Mr. Rainsy a “worrisome development” and stressed on the need to resume dialogue and called on all political players to refrain from violence, intimidation and harassment.

Further, OHCHR said that on 30 October 2015, legislators voted to remove the Vice-President of CNRP, Mr. Kem Sokha, from his position as First Vice-President of the National Assembly.

“My interest is not in, and my role is not to interfere with, national politics. Neither do I wish to comment on the merits of the judicial actions against anyone, including Mr. Sam Rainsy, unless such acts infringe on the rights of the accused, including the rights to due process of law, including a fair trial and the rights of all accused persons,” said the Ms. Smith, who has been monitoring closely the situation of human rights in Cambodia since her appointment in March 2015 by the UN Human Rights Council.

She went on to express concern regarding multiple alleged violations of peaceful exercise of freedoms of opinion and expression, as well as the right to participate in political life, all of which are guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Cambodia is a party.

Ms. Smith sounded the alarm at the violent assault against two CNRP Parliamentarians on 26 October following a large-scale pro-Government protest outside Cambodia's National Assembly building in Phnom Penh allegedly amidst the presence of law enforcement officers, who apparently did not intervene to stop the assaults.

The independent expert recalled that the Cambodian Government is under international human rights obligations to guarantee the physical security of all persons under its jurisdiction, including parliamentarians.

All elected leaders have a responsibility to act in the interest of those whom they represent. With such power comes responsibility. Rather than resorting to divisive language and fuelling racist sentiments, political leaders have a responsibility to act to safeguard national peace and public order,” Ms. Smith emphasized.

Lastly, the Special Rapporteur said that she has appealed in private to both parties to abide by their May agreement, and to
demonstrate mutual respect by returning to the 'culture of dialogue' so that the people of Cambodia can continue to enjoy their human rights in an environment of political stability and peace.

Special Rapporteurs, who are not UN staff and are independent from any government or organization, are appointed by and report to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council.

**Recent floods damage supply routes, vital infrastructure in Somalia, UN relief wing warns**

23 November - The floods caused by recent heavy rainfalls in South Central Somalia have led to an interruption of humanitarian aid delivery, an escalation of local commodity prices, and an epidemic in water-borne diseases, the United Nations relief wing has warned in the latest situation update on the country.

“There is need to urgently repair main lifeline roads, bridges and airstrips. This will ensure supplies can reach the markets to stabilize the escalating food prices and enable humanitarian partners and aid supplies to reach those most in need of assistance,” stressed the latest humanitarian update issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which warns that even as the rains have slowed, the risk of flooding remains high.

Despite the worsening road situation, OCHA and relief partners are ramping up efforts to reach people in the flood-hit areas. For example, emergency relief and food such as high energy biscuits and cooked meals are being delivered to those displaced in South Central Somalia.

Moreover, water-borne diseases, such as Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) and cholera, have spiked in more than 2/3 of the South Central regions as a result of current rains and flash floods. Chlorine and hygiene kits, as well as essential drugs are either already distributed or being delivered to the outbreak-affected communities. Some water wells in affected locations will also be chlorinated for disinfection, according to OCHA.

“Disaster risk reduction therefore becomes an important element in protecting against secondary hazards and supporting durable solutions,” report also mentioned, while underscoring the significance of avoiding longer-term disruption of life caused by shorter-term displacement due to flooding or drought.

About 60,000 people have been internally displaced in South Central Somalia due to floods since the beginning of the rainy season, with Middle Shabelle accounting for the highest number, with more than 11,000 people displaced, mostly in Jowhar, Mahaday and Balcad districts.

**Amid violence, ‘glaring lack of hope,’ UN deputy chief urges action to break Israeli-Palestinian impasse**

23 November - Nearly 12 months after the launch of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People with the aim of generating global engagement on ‘the Question of Palestine,’ security and hope in Gaza and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remain at a “very low point,” observed UN Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson today.

“We continue to witness illegal settlement activities and settler-related violence. Demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures have continued, including punitive demolitions. Such policies and actions are directly contrary to the Government of Israel’s stated intention to pursue a two-State solution,” said Mr. Eliasson in his remarks to a special meeting of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People ahead of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, marked annually on 29 November.
Mr. Eliasson, who presented his statement on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, recalled that the International Year had been established in 2014 to focus on the Question of Palestine and on growing hopes at the time that the international community would engage in finally bringing to an end this long-standing conflict of such consequences to so many areas of the world.

However, he noted that today the region continues to witness illegal settlement activities and settler-related violence, including demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures have continued, including punitive demolitions.

“Such policies and actions are directly contrary to the Government of Israel’s stated intention to pursue a two-state solution,” said Mr. Eliasson who also warned against religious dimensions to the conflict, after tensions and violence related to the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem erupted in the recent weeks.

He stressed the need to preserve the status quo at the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount, in accordance with the agreements between Israel and Jordan and with the special role of the King of Jordan, as Custodian.

Further, Mr. Eliasson also welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the status quo and urged the Israeli leader to accompany this commitment by actions to defuse the situation and to restore confidence.

Additionally, he condemned the recent wave of “heinous attacks, stabbings, shootings and attacks causing immense suffering among Israelis and Palestinians alike.”

At the same time, he acknowledged the security problems Israel faces, but reminded the Israeli authorities that using excessive forces feeds anger and frustration and urged the security services of the country to exercise maximum restraint, particularly, for the use of lethal force.

“It is abundantly clear that Palestinians feel deep frustration over an occupation that has lasted nearly 50 years. Similarly, Israelis strongly fear for their security. The lack of a political horizon to achieve the two-state solution seriously increases the risk of the situation spiralling out of control,” said Mr. Eliasson.

He also called for greater participation of the international community to break the impasse and urged the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East peace process to continue its efforts to preserve the viability of a Palestinian State and establish conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations.

“On 29 November 2012, the State of Palestine joined the United Nations as a non-Member Observer State. Today, 136 countries recognize the State of Palestine and its flag flies at the United Nations next to those of Member States. However, these diplomatic advances are not felt by children in Gaza, or by the Palestinians of Nablus and Hebron,” said Mr. Eliasson.

The UN deputy chief added that the region is gripped with a “glaring lack of hope that their lives will change for the better and that they will be citizens of a State which will ensure their freedom and well-being.”

Lastly, ahead of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Mr. Eliasson urged all parties to reaffirm their commitment to bring about peace in the region, which can also contribute to international peace and security.

“Simply put, the Palestinian people have waited too long. On this Organization’s momentous 70th anniversary, let us recall the ideals of peace, unity and human rights at the heart of the UN Charter. And let us use those ideals to inspire new momentum to find a lasting solution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” said UN General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft in his remarks to the special meeting.

He noted that key UN principles, namely the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war; equal rights and self-determination of peoples, continue to be violated. In addition, the General Assembly had repeatedly affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

The General Assembly had also repeatedly affirmed the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory.
occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

“I am therefore gravely concerned by the continuing expansion of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the revocation of residency rights and the eviction and displacement of numerous Palestinian families from East Jerusalem in contravention of international law. Such actions do not contribute to peace. Rather they have become a major impediment and serve only to increase tension,” he stressed, calling on both parties to return to meaningful negotiations with a pre-established timeframe.

UN agency partners with IKEA to raise funds to ‘brighten lives' for refugees

23 November - Amid the deepening global refugee crisis, the IKEA Foundation will restart its ‘Brighter Lives for Refugees’ campaign between November 29 and December 19 in 40 countries, through which the Foundation will donate €1 to the United Nations refugee agency for every light-emitting diode (LED) product sold in all the big-box retailer’s stores and online.

“Finding innovative ways to help refugees is enormously important. The clean energy we’re able to provide with the support from the IKEA Foundation is a practical solution to an essential need and transforms the quality of life for many,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres in a news release on the effort to provide light and energy from renewable sources to refugee camps.

According to the High Commissioner’s Office (UNHCR), the funds generated through the campaign will help in provision of solar-powered street lights, lanterns and solar energy systems that will support energy self-reliance among refugees and host communities in UNHCR camps in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and fund improved access to primary education.

According to UNHCR estimates, there were 19.5 million refugees globally at the beginning of this year, with more than half that number being children.

“With the millions of people worldwide who are forcibly displaced today, the global context for our work is more challenging than ever,” said Mr. Guterres.

Further, the UN agency said that although war and persecution are primary reasons forcing people to flee, climate change and related drivers of displacement including natural disasters such as droughts, floods and diminishing natural resources are also causes for concern.

“Sadly, the escalating refugee crisis caused by protracted conflict situations around the world does not seem likely to calm down any time soon, and lesser-known factors, such as climate change-induced natural disasters, could force even more people to flee for a safe place to call home,” explained Per Heggenes, CEO of the IKEA Foundation.

UNHCR reported that the campaign, which started in 2014, will reach its final phase this year and added that a lot of progress has been marked since its initiation.

According to the news release, more than 284,000 refugees and members of host communities in Ethiopia and Jordan are able to live in greater safety at night after 56,000 solar lanterns and the installation of 720 solar street lights were provided to the region.

Additionally, funds generated by the campaign helped more than 37,000 refugee children to be enrolled in primary school in Bangladesh, Chad and Ethiopia, allowing them to pursue their education and also allowed more than 740 teachers to be trained in these countries.

The agency also said that 22 biogas plants were constructed in Bangladesh, allowing for 15 per cent of human waste to be
processed and generating green fuel for cooking.

Lastly, the news release also added that the Ikea Foundation, UNHCR’s largest private sector partner since 2010, believes that every child deserves a safe place to call home and the partnership has helped in providing shelter, care and education to families and children in refugee camps and surrounding communities in many parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

**Nigeria must halt evictions threatening tens of thousands with homelessness – UN expert**

23 November - A United Nations human rights expert today called on the Nigerian Government to immediately end unlawful large-scale evictions that are threatening tens of thousands of people with homelessness even as the rainy season rages on, voicing alarm at the violence sometimes used by police.

“There is no viable resettlement or alternative accommodation provided by authorities for affected individuals, and many fear further evictions as they lack security of tenure,” UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Leilani Farha, warned in a statement.

She referred specifically to large-scale demolitions and evictions in the Badia neighbourhood of Lagos, the country’s largest city, which rendered thousands of people homeless. More than 30,000 people will lose their homes, businesses and livelihoods, if demolitions here continue as planned, she noted.

“I am alarmed that over 10,000 people, including children, women and elders have been pushed out of their homes without prior notice in the middle of the rainy season, with police sometimes resorting to violence to carry out the evictions,” Ms. Farha said. “There was no consultation or discussion about alternative temporary housing options available to them.

“More troubling yet is that two months later there are still hundreds of people sleeping in makeshift shelters or churches, facing routine harassment, with the situation getting worse every day, and without any adequate response by the local or federal authorities in line with their international human rights obligations.”

She stressed forced evictions invariably lead to homelessness due to a lack of affordable and adequate housing, in particular for people living in poverty or who have moved to cities to escape violence.

Unlawful forced evictions already struck an adjoining Lagos area in February 2013, displacing over 9,000 people, with one out of every three persons still homeless more than two years later.

Two months after the latest evictions, neither the State or Federal authorities have responded yet to the concerns raised by those affected and their representatives even though the expert raised the issue with the Government last month.

“I urge all levels of Government in Nigeria to immediately halt these unlawful evictions which are causing massive homelessness and ensure that those affected have access to just and effective remedies, including compensation,” she concluded.

Special Rapporteurs, who are not UN staff and are independent from any government or organization, are appointed by and report back to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council.
Ban appoints veteran British political, peacebuilding adviser to head UN assistance mission in Somalia

23 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of Michael Keating of the United Kingdom as his new Special Representative for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

Mr. Keating will succeed Nicholas Kay of the United Kingdom who will complete his assignment at the end of the year. According to the Secretary-General’s spokesperson, Mr. Ban is grateful for Mr. Kay’s dedication, courage and excellent leadership of UNSOM over the past two and a half years, a critical period for Somalia’s political transformation.

According to a biographical note, Mr. Keating brings to this position extensive experience in supporting political and peacebuilding transitions, as well as leading complex humanitarian and recovery programmes in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa.

While Associate Director of Chatham House since 2012, he concurrently served as Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy to Syria. He was Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan from 2010 until 2012.

Having served as Executive Director of the Africa Progress Panel, a policy group chaired by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, his earlier career was divided between assignments with the United Nations, serving in Malawi, Gaza/Jerusalem, New York, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the private sector, working with companies and public sector bodies engaged in environmental, human rights and development issues.

In Malaysia, Ban calls for stronger cooperation from Southeast Asian countries to tackle global crises

22 November - Amid ‘grave global threats’ looming large, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon today called for stronger partnerships between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the UN to achieve sustainable development, tackle climate change and eradicate human rights violations.

"2015 is a momentous year for the United Nations, ASEAN and our partnership. The world has now adopted visionary Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty by 2030. In just eight days, the Climate Change Conference will open in Paris to adopt a meaningful new agreement. ASEAN is becoming one community,” Ban said in his remarks at the seventh ASEAN-UN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The UN chief underlined the role of Southeast Asia in helping build the recently adopted 'historic' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and congratulated the leaders on signing the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 earlier in the day.

“The Vision 2025 should be carried out in tandem with the SDGs. Action should be complementary to transform the lives of millions of people living in poverty. The United Nations expects each and every Member State to implement the SDGs through all possible domestic measures – legislative, administrative or economic development plans. This is fully in line with the ASEAN Community Vision,” said Mr. Ban.

Further, he applauded the goals of the new initiative which are to foster a 'truly people-oriented, people-centred and rules-based ASEAN' and stressed that to sustainable development can only be achieved with appropriate climate action is undertaken.
“Now the world has a chance to steer towards a low-carbon, climate resilient future. The Paris Climate Change Conference has already generated enormous momentum. More than 166 countries, including a majority of those in South East Asia, have submitted national climate plans. Their targets would keep temperature rise to 3 degrees Celsius,” said Mr. Ban applauding the progress and stressing on keeping global temperature rise below 2 degrees.

Additionally, he emphasized that to achieve successful results from the conference in Paris, also known as COP21, durability, flexibility, solidarity and credibility must be inculcated in the discussions.

The Secretary-General urged that the discussions must hold a long-term vision, balance the leadership role of developed countries and responsibility of developing countries, fulfill pledges and provide sufficient resources to the vulnerable communities and measure, monitor and report progress.

“I call on ASEAN leaders to play a major role in supporting global climate action. Your countries are facing significant environmental stress – but they can potentially realize massive benefits of a low-carbon economy. Tell your negotiators to compromise for consensus. Look beyond national horizons and work in the common interest for our planet and all people,” said Mr. Ban.

Speaking about human rights, Mr. Ban highlighted that a people-centred approach will aid in ending discrimination.

“This is especially true for the world's more than 60 million people who have been forced to flee their homes. Next year's World Humanitarian Summit will be an important milestone. It should generate strong global support for bold changes in humanitarian action,” said the UN chief.

Further, he announced his plans to convene a high-level summit on managing large-scale movements of migrants and refugees, a day before the opening of the General Debates in September 2016.

Mr. Ban spotlighted the situation of many in the world who are fleeing from terrorism and oppression and reaffirmed that the UN 'stands with the victims' and reiterated that the UN is doing everything possible to prevent and address conflicts caused by violent extremism.

“I am preparing a comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to present to the General Assembly early next year,” said Mr. Ban.

Additionally, he welcomed the advances made in recent years across Southeast Asia and added that open democracies, human rights for all people, including minorities and women, along with sustainable development will unleash the region's potential, underlining that 'human rights drive democracy and stability'.

He reiterated his appreciation for the peaceful elections conducted in Myanmar on November 8th and reaffirmed UN support to the country as it consolidates progress.

Mr. Ban noted that the region faces tensions over competing claims in the South China Sea and repeated his plea to all parties involved to 'exercise the utmost restraint and resolve their disputes in a peaceful manner, through dialogue and in conformity with international law'.

Further, Mr. Ban emphasized that the valuable experience of the ASEAN countries can help the world and encouraged the leaders to share their knowledge with other regional organizations and the international community, and expressed confidence of expansion of the ASEAN-UN relations under the chairmanship of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

At the same time, speaking at the ASEAN East Asia Summit (EAS) in Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Ban highlighted the connection between regional and global issues citing extreme poverty, nuclear-powered nations, competing territorial or maritime claims, communal tensions and oppressive governance as some of the other chief issues in the region.

“We can meet these threats, and seize the wondrous opportunities of our era, through dialogue, burden-sharing and adherence to the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,” said Mr. Ban in addition to welcoming the Trilateral
Summit held by China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

He also stressed that efforts made to enhance inter-Korean dialogue can lead to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and “pave way for peaceful” reunification.

Lastly, he highlighted the possession of remarkable technological capacities and economic dynamism of East Asia, which represents more than half the world's population.

“Progress in Asia is all the more critical now as the world copes with grave threats,” said Mr. Ban. “The United Nations will fully support you as we work for sustainable peace and prosperity in the region and beyond,” he concluded.

**Ban commends Bosnia and Herzegovina on peace and stability on twentieth Dayton Accords anniversary**

21 November - On the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, which ended the most devastating conflict in Europe since the Second World War, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today congratulated the people and Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the consolidation of peace and political stability, as well as on the socio-economic progress achieved during the past twenty years.

“On this momentous occasion, the Secretary-General encourages the people, Government and all institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue their efforts to strengthen rule of law and to lay the conditions for a lasting and meaningful reconciliation in the country,” said a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York.

Mr. Ban noted that on 21 November 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords laid the foundations for a sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina and added that the General Framework Agreement for Peace remains the foundation for the country's unity and territorial integrity.

Lastly, Mr. Ban said that the UN remains 'committed to continue supporting the people and Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their efforts to build a truly multi-ethnic society as well as a peaceful and prosperous future'.