Injured civilian needs mount in Yemen as medical supplies dwindle – UN health agency

24 August - Lifesaving medicines, trauma kits and blood bank supplies are urgently needed in war-ravaged Yemen, where nearly half the country’s health facilities have shut down, leaving thousands of injured civilians with fewer and fewer places to seek emergency assistance, according to the UN health agency.

“In Taiz, the ongoing crisis has led to the closure of many health facilities and access to health facilities for the injured civilians and doctors is almost becoming impossible; shortages of basic and lifesaving medicines, medical supplies, laboratory reagents in the health facilities are fast dwindling with limited access for replenishing,” said Dr. Ahmed Shadoul, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) Representative for Yemen.

In response to the growing humanitarian crisis in Tiaz and Hodeida governorates and the rising number of civilian injuries in the southern governorates of Yemen, WHO is coordinating a rapid response to provide emergency health access to the injured, internally displaced persons and host communities.

But to date, the response to the escalating needs to support life-saving health interventions has been inadequate.

Of $132 million requested for Yemen in 2015, WHO said it has only received $25 million, leaving a funding gap of 8 per cent.
In a press release issued in the Yemeni capital, Sana’a, WHO said thousands of people have been injured in Taiz since the start of March 2015 with over 350 casualties recorded in the last one week alone.

“The escalating crisis in the governorate has seen a breakdown in the health system; health facilities have been damaged, close to half of the health facilities have closed down and medical supplies are quickly being depleted,” the health agency said.

Over the weekend, WHO donated 2 trauma kits sufficient to conduct 1,000 surgeries, one surgical supply kit, 15 dressing kits, 40 first aid bags and anaesthesia to treat the increasing numbers of injured patients in Tiaz.

And in Hodeida governorate and Tehama region, where the crisis has equally escalated, WHO has donated emergency trauma kits and other medical supplies sufficient to treat over 4,500 patients at a hospital and a renal dialysis centre to address immediate health needs. Shortly after the delivery of the supplies to the hospital, 25 major surgeries were carried out as a lifesaving intervention.

“WHO is committed to ensuring that all Yemenis continue to have access to health services, including those in the hardest to access areas through the provision of emergency lifesaving medicines, trauma kits, interagency emergency health kits, diarrhoeal disease kits and blood bank supplies which currently are urgently needed,” the WHO representative said.

But in the coming month, the health situation is expected to deteriorate further among the displaced people and host communities due to the continued crisis and escalating needs.

**Ban welcomes agreement to resume regular inter-Korean dialogue, hopes for talks on nuclear issue**

24 August - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the news of the agreement reached between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea today.

“In particular, I highly appreciate the agreement to hold regular inter-Korean dialogue, and hope that this will serve as a mechanism to effectively manage any problems that may arise on the Korean Peninsula”, Mr. Ban said in a statement issued by the UN spokesperson.

The Secretary-General strongly encouraged humanitarian measures such as reunions of separated families to be regularized without being subject to political and security considerations. “I further hope that this hard-won momentum for inter-Korean dialogue will lead to the resumption of talks for addressing the nuclear issue,” he added.

Stressing the importance of the full implementation of the agreement for the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, the UN chief assured that he stands ready to support inter-Korean cooperation.
After weekend ‘chaos,’ UN assists refugees at former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece border

24 August - The United Nations refugee agency is assisting refugees and migrants amid chaotic scenes over the weekend as thousands of people tried to cross into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) from the Greek border.

In a press release, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said the situation was “noticeably calmer and more orderly” on Sunday and Monday, as almost 2,000 individuals crossed from Greece into former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, fleeing the war in Syria. The majority of people – including many young families with small children – said they had passed through Turkey and travelled by boat to Greece.

According to UNHCR, More than 10,000 people had reached Serbia since Saturday night after crossing from Greece to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and take a train or bus at the town of Gevgelija.

In Serbia, UNHCR has been supporting the authorities and non-governmental organizations in receiving and assisting new arrivals at the Presevo transit centre, in the south. The agency has released limited food stocks for distribution and, in response to a Serbian government appeal, is looking at ways to bring in more supplies, including sleeping mats, blankets, tents and accommodation halls.

Meanwhile, there was no noticeable increase of refugees or migrants apprehended by the police while entering Hungry over the weekend. Many refugees who had arrived in Hungary – which has, this year, received more than 120,000 asylum applications – wished to reach family in other parts of Europe.

Border authorities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been struggling to cope with the large numbers of people trying to enter, and on Friday and Saturday temporarily sealed the border. UNHCR has, at the same time, received assurances from the Government that the border will be open to refugees fleeing conflict in their countries of origin.

In this connection, UNHCR stressed that the authorities urgently needed to boost their border presence and capacity for a more orderly and protection-sensitive flow. The agency added that it stood ready to help establish sufficient reception capacity as well as organized registration and identification.

UNHCR also reiterated its appeal to the Greek authorities to provide urgent assistance to those stranded on the Greek side of the border, enhance registration and reception arrangements, and help move the refugees and migrants to reception facilities deeper inside Greece.

“Most of those arriving at the border have suffered immensely before even reaching Greece and need understanding, protection and assistance,” UNHCR emphasized.

UNHCR staff have been at the border since the start, monitoring the situation and helping the vulnerable. Most recently, the UN agency and its partners have delivered food, water, sanitary items as well as plastic sheeting and blankets to those in need on the Greek side of the border. Volunteers have also helped with the distributions.

UNHCR has worked in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with the local Red Cross to reunite families separated during the confusion while crossing the border on Friday and Saturday. In addition, UNHCR has been working closely with groups of volunteers to dispense food, water and blankets.
At the Gevgelija railway station, UNHCR has set up a resting point offering refugees protection from the weather and providing legal advice on documentation, registration and asylum procedures for those heading north by train to Serbia. The agency has also funded the hire of data entry clerks to support the registration process.

“UNHCR believes more needs to be done by Greece and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to tackle a problem that will not go away any time soon and affects all of Europe,” said Vincent Cochetel, who directs UNHCR's Europe Bureau.

“We call again on EU member states to step up help to Greece, [the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia] and Serbia.”

**Ebola aftermath is ‘best chance’ to transform future epidemic response – UN health agency**

**24 August** - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) today warned that infectious diseases have become “a much larger menace” under the unique conditions of the 21st century with its unprecedented global travel volume of nearly 100,000 flights carrying 8.6 million passengers every day.

WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan, said however, that “the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak likely represents our best chance ever to transform the world’s response to epidemics and other health emergencies.”

Dr. Chan made those remarks in Geneva, Switzerland, at the beginning of a two-day meeting of the Review Committee on the Role of International Health Regulations in the Ebola Outbreak and Response, consisting of experts with a broad mix of scientific expertise and practical experience in public health, security, law and trade.

The review takes place at a time of nearly universal agreement that the international response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was inadequate. “When the number of cases in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone began to increase exponentially, all responders, including WHO, were overwhelmed,” she said.

Stating managing the global regime for controlling the international spread of disease is a central and historical responsibility of the WHO, Dr. Chan said “our challenge now is to look for improvements that leave the world better prepared for the next inevitable outbreak.”

“Your job is not an easy one,” she told the Committee. “Emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases have become a much larger menace under the unique conditions of the 21st century, with its unprecedented volume and speed of international travel and the radically increased interdependence among nations.”

Every day, nearly 100,000 flights carry 8.6 million passengers and $17.5 billion of goods to their destinations, she noted.

Also stating that Ebola in West Africa, where the epidemic has killed more than 11,000 people, was the largest, longest, and most deadly event in the nearly four-decade history of this disease, the top UN health officials said “it was not a worst-case scenario.”

“Preparedness for the future means preparedness for a very severe disease that spreads via the airborne route or can be transmitted during the incubation period, before an infected person shows tell-tale signs of illness,” she said.

At the 68th World Health Assembly in May 2015, member States set a mandate for a Review Committee on response to the Ebola outbreak. The Committee will recommend steps to improve the functioning, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of the Regulations, and to strengthen preparedness and response for future emergencies with health consequences.
Abuja: honouring victims of 2011 terrorist attack, Ban sees Nigeria as key partner in achieving UN goals

24 August - Commemorating the 4th anniversary of the “vicious terrorist attack” that killed 23 United Nations employees in Abuja, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today also paid tribute to the “extraordinary fortitude” and determination of the survivors, many of whom suffered terrible injury and trauma.

“Our fallen colleagues and partners will be remembered this morning with moments of silence in many places. But nowhere are the memories of these colleagues more immediate, more vivid and more compelling than here in Abuja. We will remember them forever as truly the best of humanity,” Mr. Ban stated in his remarks during a wreath-laying ceremony.

The Secretary-General also met with the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, whose peaceful election sent a “strong global message of respect for democracy and the rule of law” throughout the country and the continent.

Both men, he told the press, discussed a full range of issues covering development, human rights and peace and security, including the troubling levels of violence and terror perpetrated by Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria and in the sub-region, as “terrorism knows no bounds or boundaries.”

This week will witness another grim anniversary, noted the UN chief, noting that it has been 500s day since the kidnapping of the Chibok school girls. “I once again call in the strongest possible terms on those responsible to unconditionally release these girls and the many other abducted children.”

Women and girls are not caught simply in the crossfire – they are being “deliberately” targeted through brutal physical and sexual assault, child and forced marriages, sexual slavery and abduction on a massive scale, he emphasized.

“I am appealing as UN Secretary-General and personally as a father and grandfather. Think about your own daughters. How would you feel if your own daughters and sisters were abducted by others?” Asking all those who might have information about those innocent abducted girls to help them, he urged communities to work hard to reintegrate all abductees and their families.

Against that backdrop, “more than ever,” Mr. Ban stressed, collaboration is indispensable in addressing this menace and in addressing these crimes. This is why he said that he was looking forward to the rapid operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

“No country can tackle this threat on its own. I welcome Nigeria’s increased cooperation with countries of the region. We know this battle will not be won by military force alone. Weapons may kill terrorists. But good governance will kill terrorism.”

Also delivering remarks to a dialogue about today’s interlinked challenges, the Secretary-General underlined how development deficits – economic marginalization, lack of opportunities, and climate stress – have greatly aggravated security challenges.

“The Boko Haram insurgency emerged from the seeds of grievances,” he observed.

This is why the development challenge must be addressed by tackling the root causes and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals Member States agreed on and will approve at a summit in New York late September, Mr. Ban went on...
“To achieve our global goals, we must be people-centred and planet-friendly. People-centred means poverty eradication, safe schools, good health care, decent jobs. And it must mean empowering women and girls. Planet-sensitive means taking on the threat of climate change and living harmoniously with nature.”

Explaining that climate change was a “moral issue,” as much as an economic and political concern, the UN chief presented sustainable development as “putting the economic, the social and the environmental on an equal level,” in “one integrated agenda.”

“We have a financing framework that was approved last month in Addis Ababa. We have the new transformative Goals that will be adopted by world leaders next month in New York. And in December in Paris, the world’s governments have committed to approve a universal, fair, and meaningful climate change agreement.”

Ban Ki-moon also noted that all actions, including in the field of counter-terrorism, must rest on a “strong foundation” of human rights and honest institutions. “Surely we can all agree: counter-terror should not be counter-productive.”

Commending the President Buhari for his determination that military operations adopt a human rights-centred approach, he offered the United Nations’ assistance, positioned to support Nigeria through training and other measures to ensure that such operations strictly comply with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

“We also stand ready to respond to the increasing humanitarian challenges associated with Boko Haram violence”, the Secretary-General assured, requesting his UN team to “scale up” humanitarian presence.

Considering Nigeria as a UN key partner and leader on the international stage, Mr. Ban said that the country’s leadership was needed on many fronts, “from strong public health policies for women and girls to people-centred development, including peace and security in the region and internationally.”

**Syria: UNESCO chief condemns destruction of Palmyra’s ancient temple**

24 August - Extremists “cannot silence history,” the Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova, declared today, firmly condemning the destruction of Palmyra’s ancient temple of Baalshamin, in Syria, a World Heritage site.

“The systematic destruction of cultural symbols embodying Syrian cultural diversity reveals the true intent of such attacks, which is to deprive the Syrian people of its knowledge, its identity and history, Ms. Bokova declared in a press release.

“One week after the killing of Professor Khaled al-Assaad, the archaeologist who had looked after Palmyra’s ruins for four decades, this destruction is a new war crime and an immense loss for the Syrian people and for humanity,” she added.

According to UNESCO, Baalshamin temple was built nearly 2,000 years ago, and bears witness to the depth of the pre-Islamic history of the country. According to several reports, the building was blown up on Sunday 23 August. Its *cella*, or inner area, was severely damaged, and followed by the collapse of the surrounding columns.

The structure of the Baalshamin temple dates to the Roman era. It was erected in the first century AD and further enlarged by Roman emperor Hadrian. The temple is one of the most important and best preserved buildings in Palmyra. It is part of the larger site of Palmyra, one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world, famed for its Greco-Roman monumental ruins, repeatedly targeted by Da’esh [also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL] since May 2015.
The art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, is a symbol of the complexity and wealth of the Syrian identity and history, Mrs. Bokova continued.

“Extremists seek to destroy this diversity and richness, and I call on the international community to stand united against this persistent cultural cleansing. Da'esh is killing people and destroying sites, but cannot silence history and will ultimately fail to erase this great culture from the memory of the world. Despite the obstacles and fanaticism, human creativity will prevail, buildings and sites will be rehabilitated, and some will be rebuilt.”

Such acts are war crimes and their perpetrators must be accountable for their actions, the Director-General added.

**Iraq: UN hotline set up to reach out to displaced Iraqis scattered in hard-to-reach areas**

24 August - United Nations relief agencies today announced the launch of a national hotline in Iraq to respond to the urgent food, medical and shelter needs of people displaced by the fighting now numbering 3.2 million and scattered in over 3,000 hard-to-reach locations across the war-ravaged country.

“More than 3.2 million Iraqis have been internally displaced since the beginning of 2014 and we are simply not able to reach everyone due to the sheer size of the crisis,” Bruno Geddo, the representative for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Iraq, said a joint announcement released today in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

“People continue to be on the move and many more are being displaced as we speak,” said Mr. Geddo. “While the call centre will help identify and respond to the most urgent needs of the displaced, it will also ensure that up-to-date information is available to them, so that they can access the assistance and services they require.”

“This is particularly important for displaced people living outside formal camps and settlements, who may otherwise not be easy to reach to help them meet their needs and harness their resources,” he said.

According to UNHCR, the conflict in Iraq has resulted in a displacement crisis of an unprecedented scale with more than 3.2 million people have been forced into displacement since January 2014 alone.

“People are scattered in over 3,000 locations across the country,” the agency said.

The hotline is designed so that those forced to leave their homes because of the fighting, as well as affected communities, will be able to seek information about humanitarian aid, request assistance, and provide confidential feedback on the humanitarian agencies’ services and outreach activities.

Jane Pearce, UN World Food Programme (WFP) Director for Iraq, said “first and foremost, the call centre serves as a quick and easy way for IDPs [internally displaced persons] to find out about how the humanitarian community can help.”

“But more importantly, it offers us a chance to connect to, and better understand, the people we serve,” Ms. Pearce said.

Following a successful pilot in July 2015 in Erbil Governorate, the information centre is now operational across Iraq and can be reached via any Iraqi mobile phone by dialling 6999.

The UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), an operational arm of the United Nations, supporting implementation of its partners' peacebuilding, humanitarian and development projects around the world, established and operates the information centre through the financial contributions of UNHCR, WFP, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
Top UN relief official in Central African Republic condemns attack against aid workers

24 August - A senior United Nations relief official today strongly condemned the attack against humanitarian workers that occurred on August 20 in Bambari, in Central African Republic (CAR), and injured one staff from the Red Cross Movement.

“I condemn the violence and call on all belligerents to respect and protect humanitarian workers who provide assistance to thousands of people affected by the crisis in the country,” said the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative for the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), Aurélien A. Agbénonci, in a press release.

The violence occurred in the context of renewed intercommunal tensions that caused the death of at least five civilians and the evacuation of eight injured to Bambari health structures.

“The humanitarian situation in the country is worrying and the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality and the rules of international humanitarian law must be respected,” Mr. Agbénonci added.

Humanitarian workers pay a heavy price in the exercise of their function. Nineteen of them have been killed since the start of the crisis in CAR. Access continues to be hampered by various constraints in the country, particularly by violence.

“Attacks against aid workers reduce their ability to carry out these essential activities, leaving the most vulnerable in CAR at a risky situation,” said Mr Agbénonci.

Therefore, he called on all parties to ensure that those providing humanitarian assistance can safely access people in need and conduct their activities without hindrance.

New open-access database aims to get water-scarce countries ‘more crop per drop’ – UN agency

24 August - At the start of the World Water Week conference in Stockholm, Sweden, the United Nations agriculture agency today announced that it would develop a new open-access data portal that uses satellite imagery to provide insights into more efficient and productive use of agricultural waters – helping water-scarce countries in the Near East and North Africa better manage the resource.

“Reporting on water productivity is lacking at country level in water scarce regions and this data will be key to creating sustainable agricultural systems in areas with scarce resources,” said Jippe Hoogeveen, project coordinator and technical officer in the Land and Water Division of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

According to an FAO press release, currently all countries in North Africa and the Near East suffer from severe water scarcity, with significant consequences for irrigated agriculture, the region’s largest water user – which is expected to intensify as climate change leads to more frequent and longer droughts, severely impacting food production.

The aim of the new data portal – to be developed in October – is to collect and analyze satellite information to improve land and water productivity and boost the sustainability of agricultural systems. All information will be openly available for countries and users who need it.
Mr. Hoogeveen elaborated: “Remote sensing satellite images offer governments near real-time information regarding the use of natural resources for food growth and production, making assessments and improvements to existing agricultural practices more efficient and cost effective.”

While remote sensing technologies have revolutionized the possibilities for assessing land and water productivity through greater coverage and data capture, many countries lack the capacity and resources to analyze and work with this data.

Among other things, FAO technical support will assist countries in monitoring land and water productivity, identifying productivity gaps, proposing solutions to reduce these gaps and contributing to a sustainable increase in agricultural production.

To allow experts to cross-check results at various levels and make appropriate recommendations for different settings, the new database will be developed at three spatial scales: the continental level over the whole of Africa and Near East; country and river basin level; and irrigation scheme level.

“Advanced information and communication technology will play a crucial role in all of this work,” said the project coordinator. “This information will empower those who need it, from SMS messaging for farmers working in water-scarce areas to country experts using more sophisticated applications to assess information on water basin levels.”

The four-year project is being financed by the Government of the Netherlands and implemented by FAO in collaboration with the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education and other partners.

Globally, water use has been growing at more than twice the rate of population increase for most of the last century, and an increasing number of regions are reaching the limit at which reliable water services can be delivered.

Today, agriculture uses 70 per cent of all freshwater withdrawals worldwide and up to 95 per cent in several developing countries.

Growing water scarcity is a major threat to future food security and poverty alleviation, especially in rural areas. In semi-arid regions, increasing numbers of rural poor see water entitlement and access for food production, livestock and domestic purposes to be just as critical as access to primary health care and education.

By 2025, 1.8 billion people are expected to be living in countries or regions with “absolute” water scarcity, and two thirds of the world population could be under “stress” conditions.

During World Water Week, FAO is also making presentations on its various regional water scarcity initiatives. It is currently leading two projects related to monitoring progresses for the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including SDG 6, which concerns the world's water resources.

FAO Senior Land and Water Officer Jean-Marc Faurès noted that monitoring water productivity will ultimately enable countries to report on an SDG target, which is of paramount importance in water scarce areas, but also globally.
States Governors of Nigeria can implement locally the Sustainable Development Goals, says UN chief

23 August - The UN chief travelled over the weekend to Abuja, Nigeria, where today he met the States Governors, who can play a “fundamental role” in shaping the future of their country by implementing the sustainable development agenda Members States will adopt in a month in New York.

“You have the resources and the power to help the people of Nigeria realize the tremendous promise of this great country – on education, on health care, on women's empowerment, on climate change, on governance, institution-building, security and on rights across the board,” stated Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his remarks.

Stressing that he was speaking at a time of great challenges – including the rise of extremism and the lack of equal opportunity –, he acknowledged that the Governors of the Northeast, in particular Borno State, Mr. Ban assured that this was also a “time of hope,” as the peaceful democratic transition of power in Nigeria showed.

Reminding Governors that, over the past few weeks, UN Member States agreed on a new financing for development plan and on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he pointed out that the latter would be adopted be formally adopted by world leaders in New York in September, while governments will meet in Paris in December to agree on a new far-reaching climate change agreement.

“Together, these three processes provide an opportunity to put the world on a sustainable pathway fostering human prosperity while protecting our planet,” the Secretary-General continued.

In that regard, local governments have an important role to play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, he added, emphasizing five essential ways for Nigeria to “build on your advances and sustain that momentum.”

First, the universal framework will have to be tailored to national circumstances to live up to its promise to be an agenda “of the people, for the people, and by the people” that leaves no one behind. Sub-national and local governments, he assured, will play a major role in the national tailoring process and in ensuring that this process is participatory and inclusive.

“Second, we need to work together to establish a revitalized global partnership for development. Each of you is crucial for engaging local civil society organizations and the private sector in the implementation of the goals at local level.”

Third, the UN top official explained, sub-national and local governments can help ensure that the limited available funds are targeted at the most vulnerable and marginalized who are often hard to reach, in particular ensuring health, education, empowerment and equality for women and girls.

“That leads to my fourth point – institutionalizing gender mainstreaming across all government ministries and bodies responsible for implementing agenda 2030, with effective means of implementation and capacities for monitoring progress.”

Fifth, he noted, Governors can support the follow-up and review process by “feeding inputs” directly into the review and by helping to ensure the quality of data by investing in institutions and using big data to inform better planning and decision making.

“Accurate data will also allow us to better respond to new and unforeseen challenges,” Mr. Ban observed.

“This is a crucial moment for Nigeria. You face many serious challenges, but you have also taken a hugely important step to move forward in a way that can respond to the aspirations of the country's people. I am eager to hear your views on how you think you can best achieve this universal and ambitious agenda,” he concluded.
UN mission in Afghanistan condemns deadly suicide attack in Kabul

23 August - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today condemned “in the strongest terms” yesterday's suicide attack in Kabul that killed 12 and injured at least 88 others, including 13 children and 21 women.

“Once again, anti-Government elements conducted a suicide attack using a car full of explosives in a crowded area of Kabul with complete disregard for the lives of Afghan civilians,” deplored Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Targeting a convoy from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led Resolute Support Mission, the attack was carried out on a street of the Macorayan area of Kabul, during rush hour and in front of a private hospital, indicates a press release.

Three contractors from the NATO mission were among the victims and extensive damage was caused to surrounding homes and property.

Extending its condolences to the families of those killed and a speedy recovery for those injured, the UN Mission reaffirmed its “continued support” to the people of Afghanistan.

Teaching history of slave trade can reinforce rights of all peoples, UN declares on Day of Remembrance

23 August - By teaching, communicating and transmitting the history of the slave trade the world can reinforce the rights and the dignity of people of African descent and, together, fight against all forms of racism and discrimination, the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization said on the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

“The crime of slavery has forged irreversible bonds between peoples and continents, and reminds all peoples of the world that their destinies are linked, because their histories and identities were partly made across the seas, sometimes even on other continents,” declared Irina Bokova in her message on the Day, which is marked annual on 23 August and this year coincides with the beginning of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).

The history of the slave trade is that of a battle, and eventually a victory, for freedom and human rights, symbolized by the uprising of the slaves of Santo Domingo on the night of 22 to 23 August 1791, she continued, noting that this message and the spirit of the Day, dovetailed with the Decade's goal to promote knowledge of and respect for the contribution of people of African descent to cultural diversity and the development of societies.

“Through its Slave Route Project and General History of Africa, continued Ms. Bokova, UNESCO is striving to reveal the reality of slavery and the slave trade to help all people to learn from this chapter of history.

And indeed, the International Day for the Remembrance is both a tribute to every victim and their resistance against slavery and a call for truth, justice and dialogue between peoples.

Moreover, faced with the permanent dangers of racism and extremism, UNESCO is taking action to ensure that memory and history be forces for dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding. “By promoting the diversity inherent in nations, through
the experience of slavery and the slave trade, we can better understand the world's diversity and find the road to peace,” she said.

**Ban encourages parties to 'pave way' for deescalating situation on Korean Peninsula**

23 August - Welcoming a high-level meeting between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which was held yesterday, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon encouraged both sides to pave the way for deescalating the situation and promoting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

“He calls on the parties to redouble efforts to resolve differences through dialogue while refraining from taking any measure that is not conducive to dialogue,” points out a statement issued yesterday evening by the UN spokesperson.

The Secretary-General further took note of the agreement that the discussions will be resumed today, adds the statement.

**Mali: two UN peacekeepers seriously injured in an explosion**

22 August - The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) today condemned the use of landmines or explosive ordnance, which gravely injured this morning two of its peacekeepers.

“The MINUSMA strongly condemns such acts, aimed at paralyzing its operations in Mali and which indiscriminately affects UN personnel or innocent civilians,” stated a press release issued by the Mission.

A MINUSMA vehicle escorting a logistics convoy hit a mine or an explosive device on the axis Ansong–Menaka, about 70 kilometers east of Ansongo, says the Mission. The blast destroyed the vehicle and seriously injured two MINUSMA soldiers who are currently evacuated.