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‘We are getting closer to a solution,’ says UN Libya envoy, opening latest round of talks on ending crisis

25 June - Previewing what he hopes will be the last round of United Nations-backed political talks on Libya, the United Nations envoy for the country said today that the fact that all the participants in the dialogue have accepted a fourth draft political proposal as the basis for a final solution is “extremely encouraging” that agreement could be reached during discussions over the coming days.

“We have just started this meeting, which the Libyans first of all, and everybody in the region...really [all of] us, expect to be the last round, the final round of talks,” Bernardino León, the UN Special Representative for Libya told reporters in Skhirat, Morocco, where he is facilitating the talks based on the draft political proposal he presented to the parties two weeks ago.

He said the parties and the UN facilitation are “getting closer to a solution” he is encouraged by the fact that all the stakeholders had accepted the draft as a basis for a final solution. “So, we are really looking forward to our discussions in the coming days and the possibility to have an agreement which is accepted by everybody.”

“This is the challenge we have. This is what we are trying to do,” he continued, telling reporters that the meetings had begun hearing remarks on the text by the GNC (General National Congress). Some of the other participants would be arriving in the coming hours and in the coming days he could provide a more concrete reading of what those remarks are about and the possibilities of finalizing a text which would be broadly accepted “as soon as possible.”
Responding to questions regarding changes to the text proposed by some parties, Mr. León asked for time to analyse the suggestions. “We are in a negotiation. This is a work trying to reach consensus, trying to integrate [all] points of view. But until we have a complete reading of the remarks presented by everybody we will not be in a position to assess what the possibilities for the text are.”

Calling the current stage “preliminary work”, he said that in the coming days “we will be in a much better position to assess exactly the possibilities to reach this consensus.”

**Aid efforts for Syrian refugees imperilled by ‘staggering’ $3 billion funding gap – UN**

25 June - Humanitarian and development efforts targeting millions of Syrian refugees are at risk of collapsing due to a severe funding crisis, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) warned today.

According to a report released earlier this afternoon by more than 200 partners in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in Response to the Syria Crisis, also known as the ‘3RP,’ the UN’s current programmes targeting Syrian refugees are facing a $3.47 billion funding gap.

The shortfall, the report adds, means 1.6 million refugees have had their food assistance reduced so far this year; that 750,000 children are unable to attend school; and that life-saving health services are becoming too expensive for many.

“We are so dangerously low on funding that we risk not being able to meet even the most basic survival needs of millions of people over the coming six months,” lamented UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres in a press release.

The 3RP partners have warned that if more funds were not forthcoming, up to 130,000 vulnerable families would not be provided with cash assistance to help them meet basic needs and vulnerable people would stop receiving monthly food vouchers altogether.

The four-year Syria conflict has generated a steady outflow of almost 4 million refugees into neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, burdening those countries’ infrastructures and leading to overcrowded settlements where many refugees struggle amid high unemployment and precarious services.

According to the latest data available, Turkey alone is host to 1,772,535 registered Syrian refugees – more than any other in the world – with about 259,000 living in 23 camps set up and managed by the Government.

As a result, the 3RP have urged Member States to ramp up their financial assistance adding that if the call for action remains unheeded, a generation of Syrians would be left behind and neighbouring countries would continue to struggle to provide a public good “they cannot and should not have to bear alone.”

“The Syria situation is the biggest humanitarian and development crisis in recent history, with implications for global peace and security. There appears to be no political solution in sight,” cautions the report. “The international community has no choice but to continue responding to the ever-growing needs of refugees, and the needs of the communities and States that host them.”
‘Business can be a global force for good,’ Bans says as General Assembly honour UN Global Compact

25 June - The business community and the private sector can make a difference as United Nations Member States are in the process of formulating a new sustainability agenda, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today said at the General Assembly, which was meeting to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the UN Global Compact.

“The business agenda and the sustainable development agenda are converging in new and exciting ways. What began as a simple call to action has become a global force for good,” the UN chief told a special Assembly meeting to mark the 15th anniversary of the Global Compact.

The Global Compact is a UN initiative to encourage businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation. So far, more than 8,000 business participants have committed to doing business responsibly, in line with universal principles encompassing human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and anti-corruption efforts.

As Member States are forging a new development agenda for the next 15 years and a collective way forward on climate change, “our gathering today takes place in a potentially transformative year,” stressed Mr. Ban, convinced that business will be “indispensable” in the period ahead.

“Sustainable development is not charity; it is smart investment. The Sustainable Development Goals offer an extraordinary pipeline for investment and platform in which responsible business can thrive,” he went on to say.

By respecting and supporting universal principles in their operations, and by pioneering new business models and forming innovative partnerships, the Secretary-General advised, business leaders are “poised” to make long-lasting contributions to the cause of global sustainability.

“This is a time of grave test but also one of tremendous promise. We can be the first generation to erase poverty from the face of the planet. We have a golden opportunity in Paris in December to reach a meaningful agreement that can stave off planetary disaster,” he stressed, referring to the upcoming Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

On the governance front, he emphasized, Governments and political leaders need to work with the UN to stamp out corruption, which includes aligning lobbying efforts with sustainability commitments.

“You should not speak out publicly for climate action while working behind-the-scenes against sensible climate-friendly legislation,” the UN chief urged.

While encouraging business leaders to work within their trade and industry associations to spread the tenets of sustainability, he asked leading investors to reward good business practices in financial markets.

“We are here together in the belief that business can and must be a force for good,” he concluded.

Georg Kell, outgoing Executive Director, UN Global Compact stressed a similar point in an interview with the UN News Centre earlier this month, saying that the initiative’s job has been to win over companies that going global does not just mean having more short-term profits and looking for the cheapest allocation or sourcing capabilities.

“But rather to understand that for markets to grow, and for your own future prospects to be successful, it makes sense to integrate, in your strategic thinking and operations, environmental, social and governance issues,” he said.
The day featured addresses by business leaders, including: Henrik Madsen, CEO of DNV GL; Paul Bulcke, CEO of Nestlé; Monica de Greiff, President of Chamber of Commerce of Bogota; Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever; Yılmaz Argüden, Chair of Global Compact Network Turkey; Fu Chengyu, Chairman of Global Compact Local China; Erika Karp, Founder and CEO of Cornerstone Capital Inc; and Dov Seidman, Founder and CEO of LRN.

Also addressing the audience were key voices from civil society, labour and academia, including Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice; Julia Christensen Hughes, Dean of College of Business and Economics, University of Guelph, Canada; and Jyrki Raina, General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union.

Also today, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Lise Kingo, of Denmark, as Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact. She will succeed Georg Kell, who retires later this year after over 25 years of service to the United Nations.

Ms. Kingo, who assumes the role on 1 September, was most recently the Chief of Staff, Executive Vice President and member of the Executive Management at Novo Nordisk A/S from 2002 to 2014.

**Yemen: UN releases emergency funding for relief efforts in crisis-torn country**

25 June - The United Nations humanitarian arm today announces it will provide a critical injection of emergency funding in order to accelerate relief efforts to war-trapped civilians in Yemen, the Organization has confirmed.

According to an announcement made by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), $25 million will be released from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in order to support lifesaving projects including the provision of fuel, medicine, emergency supplies, clean water, sanitation services and nutrition programmes to Yemenis in need.

“ Innocent civilians in Yemen are paying a terrible price,” said UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, in a press release. “They face daily airstrikes, shelling and fighting while medical supplies, fuel and food are running out, and basic services have collapsed.”

The humanitarian situation in Yemen has been progressively deteriorating by the day despite ongoing UN-backed efforts to help national stakeholders reach a political solution to the crisis.

The collapse of basic services and extreme shortages of food and fuel have had a devastating impact across the whole country, added Mr. O'Brien during a press conference.

“More than 21 million people – that's 80 per cent of the population – now need humanitarian assistance. Health facilities report that over 2,800 people have been killed and 13,000 injured since the violence escalated in March. At least 1,400 civilians have lost their lives; these numbers are likely to be significant underestimates.”

According to a recent joint survey released by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), six million people in Yemen are slipping towards severe hunger and now need emergency food and lifesaving assistance, a sharp increase from the last quarter of 2014. In addition to the population facing a food security 'emergency,' over 6.5 million people are classified as facing a food insecurity security 'crisis.'

Meanwhile, the study added, 10 out of Yemen's 22 governorates are now classified as facing food insecurity at 'emergency' level. Millions more are highly vulnerable and could easily fall into emergency levels unless there is a dramatic improvement in the availability and access to food at prices that most people can afford.

The humanitarian stresses brought on by the conflict, however, have only compounded the already severe human toll of the
fighting.

OCHA has noted that thousands of people in the country have been killed and injured by airstrikes and ground fighting in the last three months alone while over 1 million people have fled their homes.

“The parties to this conflict show an utter disregard for human life, repeatedly attacking civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, power stations and water installations,” deplored the Under-Secretary-General.

Finally, the dire situation has also aggravated the country's health infrastructure as a recent World Health Organization (WHO) analysis reported over 3,000 suspected dengue cases across the country.

Massive damage to Nepal's healthcare services has put millions of quake survivors at risk, UN warns

25 June - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) today warned the health of the people who survived Nepal’s twin earthquakes could be at risk if regular services are not urgently rebuilt and restored in a country where 80 per cent of health facilities in the 14 most affected districts are damaged.

“'We need to urgently restore regular health services for the millions of affected people – for the pregnant women, newborns, children, the aged, people with diseases such as TB (tuberculosis), heart ailments, diabetes, [among others]. Without critical services their health could be at serious risk,’ Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director of WHO's South-East Asia Region, told the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction 2015 in the capital, Katmandu.

WHO, in a press release, said displaced populations continue to live in temporary shelters with sub-optimal hygiene, sanitation and water conditions.

“They are vulnerable to diseases and health risks in the ongoing rainy season and the approaching winter,” according to WHO. “Many of the affected people – the injured, need long term care or rehabilitation. A large number of people need mental health care to cope with the trauma caused by the calamity.’

WHO said it has been working closely with the Nepali Ministry of Health and Population on the health sector response that has focused on trauma management and temporary reinstatement of the critical health services, and is now transitioning to early recovery and reconstruction.

One of WHO's key interventions during ongoing monsoon season is the medical camp kits consisting of water proof tents that are strategically located in the most affected districts to serve as temporary patient consultation and treatment facilities and to ensure the “critical” continuity of services.

With 80 per cent of health facilities in the 14 most affected districts damaged, the task of reconstruction is huge but equally important, WHO said.

Dr. Singh said long-term development and the scaling up of risk reduction and preparedness will be key features of WHO's contribution in the recovery and reconstruction phase.

WHO said it has been supporting Nepal's disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness initiatives and as a result, the major hospitals in Kathmandu covered under these initiatives withstood the earthquakes and continued to function with its trained staff demonstrating the importance of resilient health facilities in emergencies for saving lives.

Two separate earthquakes and a series of powerful aftershocks struck Nepal in April and May, killing more than 8,000 people and devastating large parts of the country.
Also addressing the conference via video message, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended Nepal's "exceptional efforts" in working to help the country recover from the devastating earthquakes.

"This conference is an opportunity to build a new partnership to support Nepal to get back on its feet and to build back stronger and safer," Mr. Ban declared as he applauded the Nepalese people for having "stood strong during this crisis."

"The United Nations stands ready to support the government and people of Nepal in this endeavour," he added.

**UN rights chief calls opening of office to monitor issues in DPR Korea a 'breakthrough'**

25 June - The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, today called the opening in Seoul, Republic of Korea, of an office to work on human rights issues in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) a “breakthrough that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.”

“It is rare that the opening of a small office is such big news,” the High Commissioner told a press conference in Seoul, as he wrapped up a three-day visit. “While none of us expects a new UN human rights office will dramatically alter that situation overnight, we do all feel, I think, that it is a significant step.”

The new office was set up in line with a recommendation made last year by the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK, whose report the UN human rights chief called “powerful, devastating and extremely influential.”

“The population of the DPRK has been suffering appalling human rights violations and deprivation for decades, and much of the outside world was barely aware of what was going on there and focussed only on the nuclear issue,” he noted, adding that the gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world.

“The victims now have faces and they have voices,” he went on to say.

Some of the report’s most important recommendations – such as a referral by the Security Council of the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court – have not yet been acted on, but still could be, he stated.

But for him, the fact that this UN human rights office in Seoul is now a reality, and will start fully operating in a month or so, is a sign that the Commission’s work is starting to “bear fruit.”

Not only will the office monitor, report and criticize, it will also engage with civil society, refugees and defectors and with governments of the region, while keeping the UN’s channels open to the authorities in the DPRK itself.

The High Commissioner also pointed out that the Republic of Korea has undergone a highly successful transformation since becoming a democracy just over 30 years ago, rising to become the 13th largest economy in the world.

“This performance on the human rights front has also improved significantly in parallel with its economic growth. In general, the country’s recent history makes it one of the world’s most dramatic success stories – an excellent model for countries in transition to try to emulate.”

Like even the most established democracies elsewhere in the world, the country nevertheless still faces challenges, he added.

One of the most prevalent concerns is the limitations imposed on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly by the 1948 National Security Act (NSA) which is considered by many to be long overdue for reform, he pointed out.

The vague language of Article 7 of the NSA, which refers to “anti-Government organizations” without defining what this...
means exactly, has in the past led to unjust and inappropriate convictions of human rights defenders and non-threatening
groups – sometimes simply for comments made on social media – and is likely to continue to do so until it is amended, he explained.

“The Republic of Korea lives under constant threat from its heavily armed neighbour, and has an obligation to protect its citizens. Finding the balance between honouring the human rights of its citizens and minimizing threats to their security is difficult, but not impossible, and amending the NSA is an essential part of that process.”

**New UN study calls for major surge in AIDS treatment to avoid 'catastrophic' resurgence of HIV**

25 June - The world risks a deadly AIDS rebound unless the countries most affected by the virus expand access to antiretroviral treatments and boost their focus on stopping new infections, a new United Nations report has warned.

According to the findings of the study released today by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and famed medical journal, *The Lancet*, sustaining current HIV treatment and prevention efforts in the most affected African countries over the next 15 years would require at least a third of total government health expenditures, emphasizing the growing need for continued international support for these countries.

“We have to act now. The next five years provide a fragile window of opportunity to fast-track the response and end the AIDS epidemic by 2030,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, in a press release. “If we don’t, the human and financial consequences will be catastrophic.”

The report does acknowledge that unprecedented progress has been made over the years towards increasing access to HIV treatment globally. The UN, in fact, has steadily been rolling out a so-called fast-track approach highlighting the need to focus on the counties, cities and communities most affected by HIV, and recommends that resources be concentrated on the areas with the greatest impact in order to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

In particular, the approach calls for efforts in the 30 countries that together account for 89 per cent of new HIV infections worldwide. To fast-track national responses in these 30 priority countries, UNAIDS maintains, will require extensive mobilization of human, institutional and strategic international partners, as well as significant commitments from both national and international sources.

Despite some advances in the battles against the disease, however, the joint UNAIDS-Lancet report warns that the rate of new HIV infections is not falling fast enough. This, combined with high demographic growth in some of the most affected countries, is increasing the number of people living with HIV who will need antiretroviral therapy to stay alive.

As a result, the study calls for an urgent need to scale up AIDS efforts, calls on governments to ramp up HIV prevention efforts, and continue expanding access to treatment.

“We must face hard truths – if the current rate of new HIV infections continues, merely sustaining the major efforts we already have in place will not be enough to stop deaths from AIDS increasing within five years in many countries,” Professor Peter Piot, Director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and lead author of the report confirmed.

“Expanding sustainable access to treatment is essential, but we will not treat ourselves out of the AIDS epidemic. We must also reinvigorate HIV prevention efforts, particularly among populations at highest risk, while removing legal and societal discrimination,” he concluded.
Celebrating vital role of seafarers, UN officials encourage young people to consider life of ‘real adventure’

25 June - On the Day of the Seafarer, the United Nations is issuing a strong call to young people to consider seafaring as a career, including with the UN maritime agency, which could offer them a chance to experience “real adventure” in a workplace that might be a hundred thousand-ton oil tanker or a cargo ship navigating the world’s oceans with beautiful landscapes and also a stimulating job in a truly hi-tech environment.

Marking the Day from the Seamen’s Center at Intramuros, in Manila, operated by the world’s leading supplier of manpower to the global maritime industry, the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Koji Sekimizu said: “This year, I want to speak about how fulfilling and rewarding a seafaring career can be; and I particularly want to address this message to young people, who may now be actively considering the options open to them.”

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his message on the Day, commemorated annually on 25 June, did the same and also noted that “seafaring remains one of the world’s most important professions.”

“But as the global population grows, so does the demand for shipping, and there are fears that, in the future, there may be shortage of seafarers,” Mr. Ban cautioned, adding that seafaring is a particularly attractive option for people in developing countries.

“Imagine sailing the world’s oceans, seeing the northern lights, experiencing arctic snow or a tropical storm for the first time – and meeting people from all over the world while doing so,” said Mr. Ban.

IMO’s Mr. Sekimizu said: “Today, more than ever, seafaring is a job that demands highly trained and qualified personnel.”

“Modern ships are designed and built to the highest technical standards and require crew members with a high level of professional competence,” he said. “To operate them safely and efficiently is a stimulating job in a truly hi-tech workplace.”

Seafaring can provide not only an opportunity to earn money to live and provide for your families, it also offers unique opportunities to navigate the seas of the globe and encounter the wonders of the ocean. “It offers young people the opportunity to experience a world of real adventure on the seas and oceans of our planet, to interact with people from all over the world, and to experience the huge variety of mankind’s culture and heritage,” said Mr. Sekimizu.

IMO, a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships, has launched a social media campaign #CareerAtSea to show what a career at sea could look like and hope to inspire young people to consider seafaring as a livelihood.
**Haiti: UN envoy urges that deportations do not result in statelessness of people born in Dominican Republic**

**25 June** - Amid ongoing concern about the status of thousands of immigrants living in the Dominican Republic, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Haiti, Sandra Honoré, said that deportations carried out by Santo Domingo authorities should not result in statelessness of people of Haitian descent.

Ms. Honoré also considered that such acts should be consistent with the dignity, human rights and international humanitarian law.

This call comes as the Office of the UN high Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) last Friday appealed to the Government of the Dominican Republic to ensure that people who were arbitrarily deprived of their nationality as a result of a 2013 ruling of the Dominican Constitutional Court would not be deported.

According to UNHCR, in May 2014, the Dominican Republic adopted a naturalization law which provided for the re-issuance of nationality documents for some individuals born in the Dominican Republic and gave others the possibility to apply for special registration until February 2015, opening a path to eventual citizenship.

In a welcome development, the agency said, the Dominican authorities have concluded an audit of the first group whereby some 57,000 individuals could be reasonably presumed to have found a solution, but tens of thousands of people who were born in the Dominican Republic and are of Haitian descent remain stateless. The consequences of their eventual expulsion to Haiti could be devastating.

In an interview with UN Radio, Ms. Honoré said in a recent meeting with the Foreign Minister and the immigration authorities in the Dominican Republic, those officials explained to her that during the process would “take all necessary measures so that there was full respect for the basic guarantees of the people.”

Ms. Honoré, who is also head of UN Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH), said that to date, there has been an increase in the flow of returnees and that both governments have decided that there would be two official points for carrying out deportations.

“We encourage the dialogue recently begun at the level of foreign ministers of both countries to continue, to agree on the best way to...address these measures,” she said.

She said that at several points along the border where people have gathered, the Haitian Government does not have the capability to receive or process them. “This will, in fact, be a challenge for the Government,” she acknowledged, and added that is response, Haitian authorities have established a committee of national solidarity to deal with the question of returnees from the Dominican Republic.

In addition, Ms. Honoré said the Government of Haiti does have a contingency plan that it has developed to deal with the return of large numbers of Haitian citizens and the Government is working with UN agencies funds and programmes regarding the support it needs to enact the plan.

“Our mandate for stabilization in Haiti dictates that we do support the Government as best we can and within the resources that are available to us,” she said, explaining that two rounds of elections – legislative and presidential – are scheduled to take place in Haiti over the coming months.

The UN would want to maintain support for the Government to ensure that the climate surrounding these elections would be a serene as it could possibly be, and “we would do everything that we possibly can to ensure that the challenges posed by this situation do not translate into any undesirable effects on the overall election process,” concluded Ms. Honoré.
Security Council welcomes ‘extraordinary’ efforts by UN to convene Yemen consultations

25 June - The Security Council today recognized and welcomed the extraordinary efforts of the United Nations to convene the UN-brokered political consultations on Yemen, strongly encouraging the parties to consider the UN Special Envoy’s proposals to advance the process.

The members of the Security Council, in a press statement issued at UN Headquarters in New York, also “strongly condemned all violence, attempts or threats to use violence to intimidate those participating in UN-brokered consultations and emphasized that such action is unacceptable.”

They also expressed “deep concern” about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, including the risk of famine, and encouraged donors to contribute to the UN’s revised appeal for $1.6 billion, which is currently only around 10 percent funded.

“The members of the Security Council recognized and welcomed the extraordinary efforts of the United Nations,” in particular Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, to convene the consultations for Yemen in Geneva, Switzerland and expressed their continued support for the efforts of the Special Envoy,” the statement said.

The statement went on to say that the Security Council “positively took note of the Special Envoy’s briefing to the Security Council on the principles to advance the UN-brokered consultations” and “strongly encouraged the parties to further discuss and consider these proposals in their engagement with the UN and the Special Envoy.”

They also “reaffirmed their call on Yemeni parties to attend 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.”

Furthermore, the Security Council “emphasized that the UN-brokered inclusive political dialogue must be a Yemeni-led process, with the intention of brokering a consensus-based political solution to Yemen’s crisis in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue conference, and relevant Security Council resolutions.”

On humanitarian efforts, the Security Council endorsed the UN Secretary General’s call for a further humanitarian pause to allow life-saving assistance, including medical aid, to reach the Yemeni people urgently and stressed the urgent need for commercial supplies to enter Yemen as a humanitarian imperative.

Members called upon all sides to comply with international humanitarian law, including taking all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects, and to urgently work with the United Nations and humanitarian aid organizations to get assistance to those in need.
Security Council extends mandate of UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire

25 June - The Security Council today decided to extend the mandate of the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) for another year, until 30 June 2016, as well as the authorization it provides to the French Forces in order to support the mission.

The resolution unanimously adopted this morning maintains the mission’s focus on the protection of civilians, political support and on the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

It also addresses the remaining security threats and border-related challenges, the reconstitution and reform of security institutions, and the monitoring of the arms embargo. Support for compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, were also addressed.

For Côte d’Ivoire, the 2015 October presidential election represents an important milestone in the consolidation of the hard-won gains of recent years, said recently the Special Representative and Head of the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), Aïchatou Mindaoudou, who encouraged the Security Council to renew the Mission’s mandate.

Later in the day, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, welcomed the signed commitment of 47 commanders from the Forces Républicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI) to fight against sexual violence and ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law.

“I applaud the signing…and take this as another concrete step by Côte d’Ivoire in consolidating the gains achieved since the end of the conflict,” the Special Representative said.

“For Colombia, the 2016 presidential election represents an important milestone in the consolidation of the hard-won gains of recent years, said recently the Special Representative and Head of the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), Aïchatou Mindaoudou, who encouraged the Security Council to renew the Mission’s mandate.

Colombia: UN chief concerned about uptick in fighting, urges continued peace talks

25 June - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has expressed concern over the current upsurge in fighting in Colombia in a reversal of recent attempts to de-escalate the country’s longstanding armed conflict, the United Nations spokesperson’s office has reported.

In a statement released earlier this afternoon, the Secretary-General’s spokesperson confirmed Mr. Ban’s call to all parties to the Havana talks and the Colombian people to remain hopeful and to persist in the search for peace.

Rebels from Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have been in talks with the government for the last 30 months, seeking to end a 51-year conflict that has made almost a quarter of a million victims.

According to media reports, however, tension mounted in recent weeks amid clashes between insurgents and Government soldiers.

“The Secretary-General commends the parties for the important progress they have made thus far in negotiations, a process that has brought the country closer to peace,” the spokesperson’s statement continued. “He is confident they can overcome
the current impasse and bring the process to a successful conclusion.”

In addition, the statement noted that Mr. Ban called on the parties to resume the path toward de-escalation and accelerate the pace of the negotiations in order to restore momentum and public confidence in the process and added that the Secretary-General “firmly believes that peace is possible as long as Colombians can put this goal above all others and find ways to overcome their differences, both in Havana and in Colombia.”

**Senior UN official urges States to ensure inviolability of schools in times of conflict**

*25 June* - Schools and universities must remain immune to the violence wrought by global conflicts, the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, has affirmed as she urged Member States to commit to safeguarding places of learning from the ravages of war.

“While some claim there is a military logic to using schools, Governments and military commanders must also be cognizant of the grave repercussions such commandeering has on children’s right to education,” Ms. Zerrougui declared in a statement delivered on her behalf at a Human Rights Council side-event in Geneva yesterday.

“At best, the military’s presence arguably dilutes, and can even dispel the feeling for children that their school is their sanctuary where they can exercise their right to education – especially in locations where conflict and confusion are sadly more the norm than the exception,” she added.

The Special Representative’s appeal comes as she campaigns for Member States to sign the recently completed Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines which aim to protect schools and universities from military use during times of armed conflict. The Declaration has already received 46 endorsements.

In addition, the Security Council recently reaffirmed its commitment to the issue of safe schools stating in its Resolution 2225 on the protection of children in armed conflict that it encourages Member States to take concrete measures to deter the use of schools by armed forces and groups.

“I can assure the participants attending this present event that I and my office will strongly advocate on behalf of children in conflict situations to persuade as many other Member States as we can to throw their support behind the initiative, and to commit to the Guidelines so that we may in turn assure children everywhere that the school they attend is a safe one,” Ms. Zerrougui’s statement concluded.