**UN urges ‘zero tolerance at the highest levels of leadership’ to end violence against women and girls**

25 November - Ending gender-based violence is a top priority for achieving the United Nations founding mission of peace, development and human rights, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, noting his specific concerns about rising violent extremism and its impact on women and girls, and calling for global collective action to end the scourge.

“If we are united, between men and women, among government leaders, business communities and civil society leaders I think there will be nothing which we cannot overcome. There will be nothing which will stand in our way to achieve gender equality and gender empowerment,” said Mr. Ban in his remarks during the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Mr. Ban called for ending all attacks against women and girls, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, slavery, trafficking, female genital mutilation, child and forced marriages and all other forms of abuse.

Citing the attacks on activist Malala Yousafzai, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in Nigeria, the terror inflicted on women in Syria, Iraq and other countries, Mr. Ban stressed that all crimes against women must be punished.

Focusing specifically on the impact of violent extremism on women and girls, he said that many women and girls suffer other gender-specific abuses from terrorist groups and security services.

“Women, especially young women, may fall prey to false promises of violent extremists. These extremists pervert and shame the religious teachings they claim to represent. In some cases, the recruiters – even the attackers – are women. We have to confront this disturbing reality and take decisive action to address it,” said Mr. Ban.
The UN chief announced that he is preparing a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, a framework to underpin action to stop violence against women, where challenges pertaining to this issue will be discussed in the weeks ahead.

Additionally, Mr. Ban said that women are not merely victims but “agents of change with potentially enormous influence”.

“Women can play a decisive role in addressing sensitive issues such as sexual violence. This is especially true in societies where women victims of rape also carry shame and stigma. In those cases, victims may prefer to confide in women. And when we women gain prominence for defending human rights, justice and the rule of law, they also serve as role models who inspire others,” said the Secretary-General.

Mr. Ban said that he has sent a strong signal to men that gender inequality and abuses against women will never be tolerated at in the UN system and added that he has been pushing the UN Security Council to advance its women, peace and security agenda.

“But if we are serious about ending violence against women, including violent extremism, we have to intensify our efforts for women’s rights. That is why we are raising our ambitions,” said Mr. Ban.

He noted that violence against women is “pervasive” in all countries and added that individual women and women’s organizations are essential to success.

“I will continue to do everything possible to advance women’s leadership in classrooms, boardrooms and negotiating rooms. I will give as many women as possible the chance they deserve to make a difference as leaders at the United Nations. And I count on all of you to join me in pressing men to understand that women’s safety and equality are in everyone’s interest,” said Mr. Ban.

In his message to mark the International Day, commemorated annually on 25 November, the Secretary-General echoed similar sentiments as he called for urgent need collaboratively act in order to end crimes against women, which stand as “grave threats to progress.”

In that statement, Mr. Ban noted that he is leading the global response through programmes such as the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign and the HeForShe, which aim to engage men in promoting gender equality.

Additionally, he recalled that the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also recognizes the importance of eliminating violence against women, with related targets across several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For her part, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who also spoke at the today’s commemoration and stressed that violence against women, one of the most tolerated violations of human rights, can be prevented.

“Violence is directed at women because of their sexual orientation, because of their race, because of their religion and because they are indigenous women. It affects women in rich and poor countries alike. It is a universal problem. In our work, we must leave no hurting and no violated women behind. Our responses must be comprehensive and targeted because the problem is complex,” she said in her remarks at the commemoration.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka said that ending violence against women requires commitment and zero tolerance at the highest levels of leadership.

She applauded the Heads of States and governments who named ending violence against women and girls as a priority for action at the Global Leaders’ Meeting on gender equality and women’s empowerment in September on the side lines of the General Assembly.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka highlighted the importance of ensuring access to justice for all women and other essential services, including training them about their legal rights, and teaching police officers how to respond to the signs of domestic abuse.

She also said that attitudes towards women must be changed on the ground to prevent violence against women and girls.
“We can prevent violence through community groups that educate men about unequal power relations that perpetuate violence against women and positive masculinity. We can prevent violence through harnessing the power and authority of faith-based groups, cultural groups, sport at different levels […] We can empower women by letting them experience resilience and fairness, and giving them safe spaces,” said Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

She stressed that laws must be enforced across the world to eliminate violence against women, which can encourage changes in behaviours.

“We are seeing some encouraging progress when all of these are done together. One hundred and twenty-five countries have laws against sexual harassment and 119 have laws against domestic violence. Though the laws in many cases are still poorly enforced and some countries still need to close the legislative gaps,” said Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

As part of the Orange the World campaign, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka said that world monuments ranging from the Pyramids in Egypt to the European Commission in Brussels, will be lit orange today “in solidarity and the promise of change” and at the same time, tuk-tuk drivers in Cambodia and police officers in Albania, among others, will join the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka also highlighted the important role of the SDGs as they “provide us with explicit targets to eliminate violence against women.”

Lastly, she called for a collaborative action from businesses, Member States, cities, villages, all other partners, including civil society, women’s organizations and men and boys, to reach a “Planet 50-50- where women and girls can live without violence.”

**Ban tells world why he cares ‘so deeply’ about climate change**

25 November - Reminding the world that the sooner action is taken to tackle climate change, the greater the benefits for all, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today said that for the nearly nine years, he has been at the head of the Organization, he has travelled the world to the front-lines of climate change, and spoken repeatedly with world leaders, business people and citizens about the need for an urgent global response.

“Why do I care so much about this issue?” Mr. Ban asked in an opinion piece published today in some 70 countries’ media outlets ahead of the UN climate change conference, known as COP21.

“First, like any grandfather, I want my grandchildren to enjoy the beauty and bounty of a healthy planet. And like any human being, it grieves me to see that floods, droughts and fires are getting worse, that island nations will disappear and uncounted species will become extinct,” he explained.

The UN chief recalled that Pope Francis and other faith leaders have reminded the global community that “we have a moral responsibility to act in solidarity with the poor and most vulnerable who have done least to cause climate change and will suffer first and worst from its effects.”

Second, as the head of the United Nations, Mr. Ban said he has prioritized climate change because no country can meet this challenge alone. “Climate change carries no passport; emissions released anywhere contribute to the problem everywhere. It is a threat to lives and livelihoods everywhere. Economic stability and the security of nations are under threat. Only through the United Nations can we respond collectively to this quintessentially global issue,” he insisted.

While admitting that the negotiation process has been slow and cumbersome, the Secretary-General underlined that the world is seeing results. In response to the UN’s call, more than 166 countries, which collectively account for more than 90 per cent of emissions, have now submitted national climate plans with targets.

If successfully implemented, these national plans could bend the emissions curve down to a projected global temperature
rise of approximately 3 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

“This is significant progress. But it is still not enough,” warned Mr. Ban. “The challenge now is to move much further and faster to reduce global emissions so we can keep global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius. At the same time, we must support countries to adapt to the inevitable consequences that are already upon us.”

He said acting soon can lead to greater benefits for all: increased stability and security; stronger, more sustainable economic growth; enhanced resilience to shocks; cleaner air and water; improved health.

“We will not get there overnight,” the UN chief stated. “The climate change conference in Paris is not the end point. It must mark the floor, not the ceiling of our ambition. It must be the turning point towards a low-emission, climate-resilient future.”

Meanwhile, around the world, momentum is building, he said, pointing out that cities, businesses and investors, faith leaders and citizens are acting to reduce emissions and build resilience.

“The responsibility now rests with Governments to conclude a meaningful, binding agreement in Paris that provides clear rules of the road for strengthening global ambition. For this, negotiators need clear guidance from the top,” he stressed, noting that the leaders of G20 nations, who met earlier this month in Antalya, Turkey, showed strong commitment to climate action.

More than 120 have confirmed their participation in Paris, despite heightened security concerns in the wake of the terrorist attacks.

“I see four essential elements for Paris to be a success: durability, flexibility, solidarity and credibility,” the Secretary-General continued, giving an explanation for each point, before reiterating that the UN stands fully ready to support countries in implementing such an agreement. An agreement, which he said will also accelerate progress towards all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

“That is why I care so deeply about climate change,” he concluded. “My message to world leaders is clear: success in Paris depends on you. Now is the time for common sense, compromise and consensus. It is time to look beyond national horizons and to put the common interest first. The people of the world – and generations to come – count on you to have the vision and courage to seize this historic moment.”

Burundi: UN rights chief deplores suspension of human rights groups, warns of ‘civil war’

25 November - The top United Nations human rights official today deplored the Burundian authorities’ suspension of 10 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including several working on peace and human rights issues, warning against a relapse into “full-fledged civil war.”

“This suspension appears to be an attempt by Burundian authorities to silence dissenting voices and to limit the democratic space,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said of the Central African country, which has been in the midst of a political crisis since President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to run for a controversial third term earlier this year.

“It reduces the chances of success of the proposed inter-Burundian dialogue, a key step to moving the country away from the increasingly bloody path it has been following over the past few months. This is deeply regrettable,” he added.

He warned about the worsening human rights and security situation in Burundi, where the UN played a key role in restoring stability after decades of strife between Hutus and Tutsis, and the risk of regional repercussions.
In 2006 Burundi became the first post-conflict nation, along with Sierra Leone, to be referred to the UN Peacebuilding Commission, newly created to help countries avert relapsing into bloodshed, but now that relative stability is under serious threat.

“There is still a chance and hope that Burundi can avoid a full-fledged civil war. This is why I urge all actors involved in the current crisis to refrain from violence and to engage in a meaningful and truly inclusive dialogue,” Mr. Zeid said.

He noted that the number of people killed or forced to flee their homes continues to steadily grow, with 277 killed since April, including 41 since 7 November, when the president’s ultimatum for Burundians to hand in all weapons ended. More than 280,000 Burundians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries or have been internally displaced.

Targeted attacks are on the rise in areas previously considered safe, and are increasingly directed against the police and Government officials, he warned.

“Police presence is heavy in Bujumbura (the capital) and search operations continue in some neighbourhoods, often accompanied by killings, arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment and sometimes extortion as well,” he added.

Referring to the NGOs, Mr. Zeid noted that none of the five media outlets suspended in June pending investigation has been able to resume activities, and voiced fears that the suspension of the 10 groups, some of which dealt with alleged torture and the rights of women and children, will be similarly prolonged.

Since April, at least 15 heads of NGOs have been forced to flee after receiving threats against themselves or family members, and four NGO members have been killed, two by police and two by unidentified armed men.

One of the newly suspended NGOs is APRODH (Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons) led by Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, who survived an assassination attempt in August and whose son and son-in-law were recently killed.

Africa’s Sahel region can become hotbed for terrorist recruitment, UN official warns

25 November - Without international aid to improve education and jobs, the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa will become fertile ground for recruiting terrorists among its tens of millions of disadvantaged people, the top United Nations official for the region warned the Security Council today.

“It is an important opportunity to highlight the predicament of a region which desperately needs the continued focus of the Security Council,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Envoy for the Sahel, Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, said, citing recent terrorist attacks from Bamako, Cameroon, Nigeria, Paris and Lebanon to the downing of a Russian plane over Egypt.

“It is very alarming that youth and women in the Sahel, who constitute a vast majority of the population, are the targets of recruitment into radical movements. Up to 41 million youth under 25 years of age in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger alone face hopelessness and are at risk of radicalization or migration,” she added.

“If nothing is done to improve access to education, increase employment and integration opportunities for the youth, the Sahel, I am afraid, will become a hub of mass migration, and of recruitment and training of terrorist groups and individuals, which, as you know, will ultimately have grave consequences for global peace and security.”

She noted that only 56 per cent of Sahel children have access to primary education, and only 36 per cent of the population can read and write. “This unsustainable vicious cycle can only worsen without a strong international assistance,” she stressed.
“The fight against terrorism requires international solidarity. Global partnerships in the fight against terrorism are no more an option but an imperative for survival.”

Drug traffickers are increasingly colluding with armed groups and terrorist movements which grant them safe passage in exchange for financial benefits. “If conflicts are to be prevented in the Sahel, illicit trafficking, including of drugs, weapons and humans should be stopped,” she said.

She cited governance problems, noting that important segments of the populations are denied meaningful political participation, while communities’ resilience is falling victim to extreme environmental degradation, repeated climate shocks, and demographic trends which together are pushing millions of people on the brink of humanitarian disaster.

On the positive side, Ms. Sellassie first said the Sahel has continued to receive the sustained attention of the international community, the countries themselves have taken greater leadership and ownership of initiatives addressing regional challenges, and UN entities have improved coordination and coherence in implementing an integrated strategy.

“I would urge the Security Council to fully use existing mechanisms and expand their mandates to better monitor, report on and prevent the trafficking of drugs in the Sahel region. This trade finances terror and instability, and must be choked if our efforts are to be successful,” she concluded.

Finally, I encourage the international community to enhance its support to the United Nations and regional organizations in addressing cross cutting and trans-boundary issues. Together, we can prevent further deterioration of the situation in the Sahel.”

On eve of Paris climate summit, UN weather agency delivers ‘bad news’ for planet, cites record heat

25 November - In the last major report before world leaders meet in Paris to draft measures to counter global warming, the United Nations weather agency today delivered “bad news for the planet,” warning that 2015 is likely to be the warmest year on record, breaching the symbolic and significant milestone of 1 degree Celsius above the pre-industrial era.

The 2011-2015 five-year period has also been the warmest, with many extreme weather events, especially heatwaves, substantially exacerbated by human-induced climate change, in some cases by a factor of 10 or more, according to the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

“The state of the global climate in 2015 will make history for a number of reasons,” WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said, noting that this year’s climate has also been affected by El Niño, a cyclical weather pattern of devastating droughts and catastrophic floods that can affect scores of millions of people around the globe.

“Levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere reached new highs and in the Northern hemisphere spring 2015, the three-month global average concentration of CO2 (carbon dioxide), crossed the 400 parts per million barrier for the first time. As such, 2015 is likely to be the hottest year on record, with ocean surface temperatures at the highest level since measurements began.

“It is probable that the 1°C Celsius threshold will be crossed. This is all bad news for the planet. Greenhouse gas emissions, which are causing climate change, can be controlled. We have the knowledge and the tools to act. We have a choice. Future generations will not,” he stressed.

This is the huge task facing world leaders when they gather in Paris on 30 November for a two-week summit that will seek to keep the global average temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In its final report before the summit, widely known as COP21, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) last week highlighted multiple steps to immediately scale up reductions in human-caused greenhouse gas, from
switching from emission-heavy fossil fuels to renewable energy, to better management of transportation and better use of land.

This year’s El Niño, which is still gaining in strength and is on record to be among the strongest ever, is affecting weather patterns in many parts of the world and fuelled an exceptionally warm October, with its impact expected to continue into 2016.

A preliminary estimate based on data from January to October shows that the global average surface temperature for 2015 was around 0.73 °C above the 1961-1990 average of 14°C and approximately 1°C above the pre-industrial 1880-1899 period, WMO reported, noting that South America and Asia are having their hottest year on record, and Africa and Europe their second hottest.

The agency underscored the human element in global warming. It noted that of 79 studies published by Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society between 2011 and 2014, more than half found that anthropogenic climate change contributed to extreme events – the most consistent influence being on extreme heat – with some studies finding that the probability of the observed event has increased by 10 times or more.

Examples include the record high seasonal and annual temperatures in the United States in 2012 and in Australia in 2013, hot summers in eastern Asia and Western Europe in 2013, heatwaves in spring and autumn 2014 in Australia, record annual warmth in Europe in 2014, and the Argentine heatwave of December 2013, WMO said.

Longer-term events, which have not yet been the subject of formal attribution studies, are consistent with projections of near- and long-term climate change. These include increased incidence of multi-year drought in the subtropics, as manifested in the 2011-15 period in the southern United States, parts of southern Australia and southern Africa.

There have also been events, such as the unusually prolonged, intense and hot dry seasons in the Amazon basin of Brazil in both 2014 and 2015 which, while they cannot yet be stated with confidence to be part of a long-term trend, are of considerable concern in the context of potential “tipping points” in the climate system.

UN agencies release updated guidelines for countries on pesticide legislation and labelling

25 November - Some 30 years to the day after the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) first launched its International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, the agency is calling on countries to make sure that national regulatory frameworks governing the management of pesticides are kept up to date.

“Despite the very significant progress achieved since the original promulgation of the Code, many national frameworks for managing pesticides are in need of upgrades to face today's challenges,” said Ren Wang, FAO Assistant Director-General for Agriculture and Consumer Safety, in a press release.

According to the agency, much more is now known about the long-term health and environmental effects of pesticides, new international agreements have been put in place and it is broadly recognised that poor pesticide management can have negative effects on trade in agricultural produce.

Pesticide legislation formulated in the 80s and 90s needs a health check-up to ensure that countries are effectively protecting people and the environment, Mr. Wang warned. Globally, the use of pesticides has continued to grow over the past three decades, he further noted. Industry data suggest that the size of the global pesticide market has doubled over the past 15 years and currently exceeds $50 billion in annual sales.

To help address these challenges, FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) have now released a pair of updated guidelines on pesticide legislation and labelling that take into account new developments and concerns.
The revised guidelines explain in detail the elements of a sound national pesticide legal framework, which the UN agencies say serve as a reference point for governments that are reviewing or updating existing pesticide legislation or drafting it from scratch.

Meanwhile, an overhauled set of Guidelines is targeted to pesticide regulatory authorities – primarily in developing countries and countries with economies in transition – which are creating or revising national pesticide labelling requirements. A critical element in protecting human health and avoiding negative environmental impacts, pesticide labels explain how to use products correctly and legally, describe potential hazards and precautionary measures, and give instructions on responding to poisonings or spills, the UN agencies highlighted.

“FAO encourages all countries to take these guidelines into consideration when reviewing their current pesticide legislation and labelling regimes, with an aim to better protect human health and the environment and to make agriculture more sustainable,” Mr. Wang said.

“The 1985 International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides helped bring much needed order to a ‘Wild West situation,’ in which many countries did not yet have legislation for the control of pesticides, and health- and environmental problems stemming from their misuse were rampant,” he continued. “Those who paid the steepest price were millions of poor farmers lacking access to information, training, and proper means of protection.”

The Code – renamed the Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management and updated several times, most recently in 2013 – along with a series of supporting FAO guidelines, policy work, and field programs has provided an international reference framework on the control of pesticides for governments and the private sector alike.

FAO highlighted that today, nearly all countries have pesticide legislation in place and products generally are better labelled, adding that the most acutely toxic pesticides have been removed from the market in many countries, and alternative approaches to the use of chemicals in agriculture – such as Integrated Pest Management, which emphasizes natural methods to control and prevent pests and diseases – are increasingly becoming mainstream.

Yet despite this important progress, the agency said much remains to be done. FAO will be prioritizing support to countries to strengthen their capacity to enforce pesticide legislation and promote integrated pest management to reduce reliance on pesticides.

The agency will also provide guidance to governments to help them review their national list of authorized pesticides in order to identify highly hazardous pesticides that require special attention, for instance because the manner in which they are commonly used in the country may pose elevated risks to health or the environment.

**Retail company provides $10 million in funds for refugees through UN agency partnership**

25 November - Tokyo-based Fast Retailing Company Limited, which owns the UNIQLO clothing chain has partnered with the United Nation refugee agency to announce a new agreement to support refugees worldwide, including provision of $10 million in funds and distribution of winter wear for new arrivals in Europe and expanding its internship programme in Japan and abroad.

“Nearly 60 million people have been forced to flee their homes worldwide; the equivalent to almost half the population of Japan. 20 million of these people are refugees,” said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres in news release.

Mr. Guterres said that in the face of such an unprecedented challenge, robust support from the private sector is crucial for meeting the needs of millions who have lost everything and are seeking a safe place to restore and rebuild their lives.

“I welcome Fast Retailing’s decision to stand behind refugees not just through its generous funding, but also by mobilizing...
its staff, business partners and customers to join forces for the refugee cause,” said Mr. Guterres.

Echoing that sentiment, Chairman, President and CEO of Fast Retailing, Tadashi Yanai also said that the refugee issue is one of the most difficult challenges the international community is facing today.

“We must collectively tackle the constant threats that have forced so many people, including a large number of children, to flee,” said Mr. Yanai, commenting on today’s announcement.

The company, which has been providing refugees with emergency assistance, programs that promote self-reliance and donations of clothes for nearly 10 years, said that it will “continue to supply refugees with the clothes they need and give them hope for better lives, in keeping with our never-ending desire for a sustainable and peaceful world.”

According to the Office of the High Commissioner (UNHCR), the partnership with Fast Retailing dates back to 2006, which then entered into an expanded partnership in 2011, a first for a company headquartered in Asia.

The news release said that the new support pledged today is part of a global partnership aimed at assisting forcibly displaced people around the world, in recognition of the need for international organizations and private enterprise to collaborate more closely for the refugee cause.

Under the new agreement, Fast retailing will support UNHCR with $10 million over the next three years, starting from 2016, which will help the UN agency to respond to emergencies and other acute humanitarian crises, and provide refugees in Asia with help to become self-reliant.

Further, the donation is also expected to cover costs related to the distribution of donated clothing, and to date, Fast Retailing has collected and distributed through UNHCR more than 10 million items of lightly used clothing to refugees across 37 countries.

Lastly, UNHCR said that an additional 150,000 items of Extra Warm HEATTECH clothing will be provided by the agency to help families seeking asylum in Europe and Afghanistan through the coming winter, and alternatively, Fast Retailing said they would provide internships with future employment possibilities to 100 refugees in Japan.

**New UN guidelines seek to make genetic diversity part of climate change adaptation**

**25 November** - With the United Nations climate change conference in Paris just days away, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has issued new voluntary guidelines to assist countries in better managing and sustainably using genetic resources while addressing climate change.

“Genetic resources for food and agriculture will have to contribute greatly to our efforts to cope with climate change,” said Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General for Natural Resources, adding that: “We need to act now to reduce the risk that the scale and speed of climate change will surpass our ability to … use these resources in the field.”

Encompassing the diversity of plants, animals and other life forms, genetic resources play a critical role in achieving food security and nutrition objectives as well as addressing climate change, which themselves are confronting.

Crops, for example, with certain staples providing 60 per cent of all human dietary energy, may by 25 per cent lower in 2050 than today.

Aiming to assist countries in conserving genetic resources as a pivotal reservoir, the guidelines also advise on agriculture adaptation and building resilience into food production systems, said Ms. Semedo.
With no commonly adopted approach available on integrating agricultural biodiversity into strategic planning for climate change adaptation, the guidelines further fill this gap by helping countries develop their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in genetic resources dimensions.

Such efforts, among others, include maintaining on-site farms diversity and building regional and global gene banks.

“We need to secure and mobilize genetic resources now to have options for the future … and we need to plan,” said Irene Hoffmann, Secretary of FAO’s Intergovernmental Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, who supervised the guidelines’ development.

International cooperation and exchange, she stressed, is of great importance as all countries are inter-dependent on genetic diversity.

However, funding is required to support countries in this process, Ms. Hoffmann stressed.

Genetic resources for food and agriculture contain a variety of plants, animals, forests, aquatic resources, micro-organisms and invertebrates that play a role in food and agricultural production.

**Ukraine: UN humanitarian agencies step up aid deliveries as bitter winter takes hold**

**25 November** - United Nations agencies are stepping up aid deliveries to non-Government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine where more than 100,000 people, cut off from assistance for months, are now facing added hardship with the approach of the bitter east European winter.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) today delivered food to areas of Luhansk for the first time since the suspension of humanitarian activities four months ago, with a 12-truck convoy carrying enough supplies to feed more than 7,000 people for one month. More convoys bringing food to Luhansk are planned, with the next one scheduled to arrive later this week.

“As another harsh winter begins, WFP is concerned about the growing needs of the most vulnerable conflict-affected people; especially those who had to flee their homes,” the agency said in a news release.

WFP is seeking to provide food to more than 100,000 people affected by the conflict in non-government controlled areas in both the Luhansk and Donetsk regions by the end of 2015.

Today’s deliveries came two weeks after the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) brought in supplies to Luhansk, including plastic sheeting, construction material and thousands of blankets.

“Still, humanitarian organizations face major challenges in gaining access to the most vulnerable among an estimated 5 million people affected by the conflict that started in the region in April 2014,” WFP said.

“The conflict has displaced hundreds of people in Luhansk; they fled their homes, left their jobs and have no means of support other than external assistance that they had been deprived of for four months,” WFP Head of Office in Ukraine Giancarlo Stopponi said today.

In Luhansk, the food will be distributed through WFP’s partner, the international non-government organization (NGO) Mercy Corps, while in Donetsk, the international NGO People In Need, will carry out distributions. WFP is targeting the most vulnerable, including elderly and disabled people as well as single-parent households.
In government-controlled areas of both Donetsk and Luhansk, including areas near the front-line and in buffer-zone villages, WFP has continued to provide assistance over the past four months. WFP delivered food for over 20,000 people last month in non-Government controlled areas in Donetsk, after humanitarian access to the area resumed.

UN rights office alarmed by Nepal’s violation on use of force towards protestors

25 November - Alarmed by latest killings in violent clashes over the weekend in Nepal, bringing the death toll to at least 50 since protests against the new Constitution began in August, the United Nations human rights office today urged Nepalese authorities to follow international standards on use of force, respect dissenting voices and engage them in a “meaningful, inclusive and open dialogue.”

“We have been urging Nepalese authorities to ensure that existing national and international standards on the appropriate use of force are fully respected by security forces,” Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told journalists yesterday at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

Unfortunately, she said that these steps do not appear to have been taken and more lives have been lost, according to reports.

Moreover, “we stress that any obstruction of essential supplies and services is a serious violation of international human rights law, including the right to life,” said Ms. Shamdasani, following a report by Nepal’s National Human Rights Commission noting that the shortage of fuel, cooking gas, medicine, food and essential goods has deeply affected life in the country.

While urging all parties to engage in a meaningful, inclusive and open dialogue, she stressed the importance of respecting minority and dissenting views and ensuring their concerns are heard in order to seek a fair and sustainable resolution.

At least four people have been killed in the recent clashes in the Terai area of southern Nepal, which added to 50 deaths with many more injured. The protesters, from ethnic Madhesi groups, have demanded the Constitution to address their concerns and launched strikes along the Nepal-India border, causing shortage of life supplies and services, according to OHCHR.