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Ukraine: Minsk peace accords must be revived, UN political chief tells Security Council

26 January - Briefing the Security Council on recent developments in Ukraine, Jeffrey Feltman, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, called today for revival of the Minsk Accords and an immediate end to hostilities.

His call for a cessation of violence came with emphasis “particularly on the rebels” and he stressed the need for the trilateral contact group to reconvene to work towards a sustainable ceasefire and implementation of the Accords – an agreement signed under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to halt fighting in the Donbass region of Ukraine –prioritizing protection of civilians and reaching those in need.

“Over 5,000 lives have already been lost in this conflict,” said Mr. Feltman. “We must find a way to stop it and must do so now.”

Full political commitment to a lasting solution was needed at the highest levels, he said, recognising the difficulties associated with diplomatic discussions for a peaceful resolution given entrenched positions.

“Nonetheless, efforts to find a political solution must urgently be redoubled,” he said.

Mr. Feltman’s briefing came five days after his previous one and follows a period in which close to 50 civilians were killed and nearly 150 were seriously wounded.
At least 12 died when their trolleybus was hit by rockets in Donetsk, another 10 died on the same day in Horlivka, while a “barrage of attacks” by multi-launch rocket systems hit the city of Mariupol causing dozens of deaths.

“The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission reported, based on crater analysis, that the rockets originated from the territory controlled by the so-called ‘Donetsk People’s Republic,’” Mr. Feltman said, adding that Mariupol lay outside the immediate conflict zone and that therefore the rockets deliberately targeted a civilian population, constituting a violation of international humanitarian law.

“We must all send an unequivocal message: the perpetrators must be held accountable and brought to justice,” he said.

Noting that the leader of the so-called ‘Donetsk People’s Republic’ had announced a boycott of further consultations with the Trilateral Contact Group, a unilateral withdrawal from the ceasefire and had threatened to seize further territory, he recalled the Secretary-General’s statement of 24 January, which said such a move constituted violation of their commitment to the Minsk Accords and called on the rebels to immediately cease their provocative and violent actions, to abide by international law and to make good on their commitments.

“We also urge the leadership of the Russian Federation to use their influence to call on the rebels to cease hostilities immediately,” he said. “This will be a critical step in stopping the bloodshed.”

He noted the Ukrainian leadership’s vocal commitment to the Minsk accords and assertions that they remained in a defensive position, while also noting the recent emergency measures adopted by the National Security and Defence Council, particularly those relating to ‘strengthening counter-terrorism measures’ and appealed for the application of maximum restraint.

Mr. Feltman stressed the importance of guaranteeing humanitarian workers and goods full and unhindered access to those in need, urging the Government of Ukraine to ensure humanitarian operations were free from taxation.

“Bureaucratic hurdles on both sides of the conflict line are impeding humanitarian access and must be eased,” he said.

‘Vicious circles linking violence and hunger’ must end – UN agriculture chief

26 January - Agriculture and food security must be treated as essential components of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, the head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said during a special meeting of the UN Peacebuilding Commission held at Headquarters today.

“Food security is an important foundation for peace, political stability and sustainable development. In the history of humanity, time and time again we have seen vicious circles linking violence and hunger – and these are conflicts that are not restricted by national borders,” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said to participants today.

In addition to Mr. Graziano da Silva’s briefing, the meeting was also expected to hear opening remarks from the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, another briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support as well as an interaction with Member States.

In his remarks, the FAO Director-General emphasized that food security can be used as “a conflict prevention and mitigation tool” for the advancement of peace and security. Policies and actions on food security can not only build resilience and resolve conflicts; they can help prevent them, too.

“We cannot just wait for an emergency to react. To achieve food security, we need to act before the crisis. We cannot prevent a drought from happening, but we can prevent it from becoming famine,” he added.

Hunger kills far more people than war or terrorism, he noted during his speech. For example, between 2004 and 2009, an...
estimated 55,000 people a year lost their lives as a direct result of conflict or terrorism, while in Somalia alone, between 2010 and 2012 over 250,000 died due to famine caused by severe drought, Mr. Graziano da Silva said.

Meanwhile, the impact of conflicts in rural areas can be devastating for crop production, livestock and harvests and often causes the destruction of farm assets and household capital.

And the impact of conflicts on food security often lasts long after the violence has subsided, Mr. Graziano da Silva said.

As agriculture continues to be the primary way of life for the majority of people in post-conflict countries, rehabilitation and revival of agriculture in those areas, therefore, becomes crucial to alleviating poverty and ensuring overall development.

The FAO Director-General emphasized that “partnerships are crucial,” spotlighting that now more than ever countries need to work together to overcome the multiple, interconnected challenges. It is in this spirit of collaboration that FAO has been able to successfully carry out projects across the globe.

Additionally, with the crafting of new global sustainable development goals (SDGs) underway, “improved knowledge and understanding of the possible interplays between food security and human security will help shape more effective interventions and contribute to more lasting results,” Mr. Graziano da Silva said.

In new development report, UN spotlights ‘string of successes’ in Asia-Pacific region

26 January - The United Nations main development programme spotlighted today its string of successes in 36 countries and territories in the Asia and Pacific region in the areas of poverty reduction, conservation of natural resources, democratic governance, and crisis resilience.

Launched by the UN Development Program (UNDP), the Asia-Pacific Regional Report Achieving Development Results in Asia and the Pacific highlights the accomplishments of programmes implemented in 2013 and 2014.

“The report documents the achievements of UNDP’s $2 billion delivery in the region during the past two years, focusing on key priority areas: innovative solutions to persistent development challenges and scaling up those solutions for greater impact,” UNDP Administrator’s Helen Clark said in a statement today.

Innovative solutions go hand-in-hand with efforts to strengthen local level partnerships, UNDP says. An example of that is the Programme’s work with Baidu, China’s largest internet service provider, to develop a mobile application to encourage responsible recycling of electronic waste.

“UNDP will strengthen partnerships and ensure that we are fit for purpose to continue achieving high quality results in the region,” said Haoliang Xu, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

With its programmes, UNDP also assisted people in strengthening livelihoods. From the help of governments and development partners, more than five million people now have access to social protection in the region, half of them women. Additionally, UNDP supported three million urban poor women and men in Bangladesh to gain financial security through loan schemes.

This is critical because economic empowerment is closely linked to the creation of community housing development funds and the various models of land tenure security, ensuring people are secure and can invest in their homes, UNDP said.

On crisis resilience, UNDP supported debris removal efforts, helped to restore social service centres and rebuild infrastructure following Typhoon Haiyan, the biggest natural disaster to hit the region in the two years. Since then, UNDP has been working with local and national authorities to improve early warning systems. The Philippines Government’s impressive preparatory action meant that the death toll from Typhoon Hagupit was just 18 as opposed to the 6,000 casualties.
after Haiyan.

In the area of strengthening democratic governance, UNDP provided electoral assistance which led to 16.7 million new registered voters across the region. In Bhutan, where it can take up to a week for parliamentarians to visit voters in remote areas, constituents can now interact with their parliamentarians virtually. And in the Maldives, selected community members are testing a new scheme to use mobile phones or log on to a website to report problems with public service delivery.

“It’s a new way for citizens to communicate with policy makers. According to a global survey responsive government is a key priority for more than three million people in the region as the post-2015 development agenda is being formulated,” said Nicholas Rosellini, the Director of UNDP’s Bangkok Regional Hub.

UN rights chief says world ‘haunted’ by suffering endured by millions during Holocaust

26 January - Ahead of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, taking place tomorrow, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement to mark the “forever solemn day” when the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camp was liberated.

Seventy years since the camp was liberated on 27 January 1945, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said he bowed “both personally and as a representative of the United Nations” to every woman, man and child who was forced to endure terrible suffering at the hands of the Nazis.

“We continue to be haunted by the fate of the millions of Jewish men, women and children, as well as Roma, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war and other prisoners and deportees from all over Europe, people with disabilities, homosexuals, and dissidents, who suffered and were killed by this ghastly extermination machine,” Mr Zeid said. “The memory of well over a million Jewish children, and thousands of other children, who were put to death is particularly unbearable.”

Underlining the fact that the UN Charter was shaped in response to the atrocities of the Holocaust and the Second World War, he said the document pursues a vision of “what the world should be”, where people are able to exercise their human rights in freedom, dignity and equality, in full accordance with international human rights law.

Nonetheless, he noted also that the “toxic influences” of discrimination and racial and ethnic hatred have not disappeared, while atrocities continue.

“Discrimination and hatred kill and wound thousands of people,” he said. “In memory of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, and the pain that many others have since endured, I believe that it is urgent for us all to strengthen our moral courage. We must resist discrimination of every kind so that all may live in liberty, with respect, equality and justice.”
Libya: latest round of UN-mediated peace talks kick-off in Geneva


The latest gathering, hosted by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), is a follow-up to a meeting held in the Swiss city last week, when stakeholders expressed commitment to a united and democratic Libya governed by the rule of law and respect for human rights.

This time around the participants will discuss the items that were agreed on last week. On Wednesday, another meeting will bring together municipal and local council representatives from cities and towns across Libya to discuss confidence-building measures.

In a statement issued over the weekend, UNSMIL appealed to all Libyan stakeholders and invited participants to approach these talks ‘in a spirit of openness and reconciliation that is guided by the higher national interest of the Libyan people.’

Last week in Geneva, participants agreed on an agenda aiming to reach a political resolution to form a national unity government and make the security arrangements necessary to end fighting and ensure the withdrawal of armed groups from Libyan cities. There was also a call to safeguard Libya’s national unity and end the suffering of the Libyan people.

In addition to mounting numbers of casualties, Libya’s protracted conflict has caused a humanitarian crisis with at least 120,000 people forced to flee their homes, resulting in consequent shortages in both food and medical supplies.

A recent outburst of violence has further rattled the beleaguered nation, in conflict since the beginning of its civil war in 2011 which resulted in the ouster of late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

In the eastern city of Benghazi, an uptick in violence has seen 450 people killed since October 2014 as residents continue to face shortages in medical care. Moreover, upwards of 15,000 families – some 90,000 people – have been displaced.

UN experts say post-2015 negotiations must emphasize human rights, accountability

26 January - As United Nations Member States start discussions to finalize the post-2015 development agenda, 10 top UN human rights experts have today stressed the need to anchor the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in international human rights standards and to ensure that strong means for ensuring accountability are employed to make sure they are met.

“We welcome the emphasis placed on accountability and call for this to be strengthened,” said a statement issued by the Chairpersons of 10 UN human rights treaty bodies as Member States began negotiating the framework for setting plans and policies to achieve sustainable development over the next 15 years.

The statement collected the views of the:

- Chairpersons of the Human Rights Committee;
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women;
They urge Member States to ensure that the goals they put forward for adoption at a UN summit in New York in September 2015 reinforce the alignment of the goals with human rights. Their concrete recommendations include strengthening the reference to protecting fundamental freedoms by explicitly referring to freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly in proposed goal 16.

In the new goals, reliable and validated means for measuring progress in meeting all the goals should be provided, and based on disaggregated data. In addition, progress should be measured in terms of how fundamental rights and freedoms are being protected.

“UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for there to be a robust and participatory monitoring and review framework for the SDGs at the national, regional and global level,” said Malcolm Evans, Chairperson of the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture and current head of the Treaty Body Chairpersons’ group. “We strongly support this and urge Member States to build upon the principles and inclusive working methods of the Treaty Bodies, as well as other existing human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review.”

The statement also highlights the important role to be played by the private sector in achieving the SDGs, and the importance of ensuring private sector accountability.

“The work of the treaty bodies regarding corporate sector accountability is highly relevant here. For example, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have issued guidance regarding the impact and obligations of business,” said Mr Evans.

The treaty body Chairpersons also said they would encourage their Committees to consider the impact of development goals on the enjoyment of the rights in their respective treaties, and draw on development data and reports in their dialogues with States.

UN Security Council strongly condemns killing of Japanese civilian by ISIL militants

25 January - The United Nations Security Council today deplored the “apparent murder” of Japanese citizen, Haruna Yukawa, by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – the latest atrocity to be committed by the militant group against a captured civilian.

In a press statement issued earlier today, the 15-Member Council strongly condemned “the heinous and cowardly act” and demanded the immediate release of Japanese citizen Kenji Goto, also detained by the Islamist extremists.

“This crime is, yet again, a tragic reminder of the increasing dangers people face every day in Syria, including journalists,” the Council press statement declared. “It also once again demonstrates the brutality of ISIL, which is responsible for thousands of abuses against the Syrian and Iraqi people.”

Mr. Yukawa's beheading was confirmed by the group in a video message released on 24 January.

In their statement, the Members of the Council underlined the need to bring the perpetrators of such “reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice” and stressed that those responsible for Mr. Yukawa's death will be held accountable. In addition, they expressed their deep sympathy and condolences to the family of the victim, to the Government of Japan and to the families of all victims of ISIL.
ISIL’s reign of terror spans across the countries of Syria and Iraq where they are actively seeking to establish a ‘caliphate’ governed by so-called ‘shari’a’ law. As a result, they regularly mete out brutal and inhumane punishments including beheadings, crucifixions, and death-by-stoning, according to the UN rights office. Recently, two men accused of homosexual acts were thrown off the top of a building in Mosul, Iraq.

Meanwhile, other civilians who are suspected of violating ISIL’s rules, or who are suspected of supporting the Government of Iraq, have also been victims. Four doctors were recently killed in central Mosul, allegedly after refusing to treat ISIL fighters.

The Council stressed again that ISIL “must be defeated and that the intolerance, violence and hatred it espouses must be stamped out.”

In addition, the Members further emphasized that such continued acts of barbarism perpetrated by the militants “do not intimidate them but rather stiffen their resolve that there has to be a common effort amongst Governments and institutions, including those in the region most affected, to counter ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al-Qaeda, as the Council resolved in United Nations Security Council resolution 2170 (2014).”

Reaffirming the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, the Members also demanded the “immediate, safe and unconditional release” of all those kept hostage by ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other extremist groups associated with Al-Qaeda, adding that, in accordance with international humanitarian law, journalists, media professionals and associated personnel engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict are considered as civilians and “shall be respected and protected as such.”

**Ebola: UN health agency urges better global preparedness against future outbreaks**

25 January - The Ebola outbreak is “clearly” in retreat throughout the affected countries of West Africa but the continuing emergency response shows the need for urgent changes so that “never again should the world be caught by surprise,” the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) told a special meeting on Ebola today.

Speaking in Geneva to the UN agency's Special Session of the Executive Board on Ebola, WHO Director-General, Dr. Margaret Chan, emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum in the fight against the deadly virus and guarding against complacency while also delineating a set of recommendations for future large-scale and sustained outbreaks and emergencies.

“The Ebola outbreak points to the need for urgent change in three main areas,” Dr. Chan told those gathered. “To rebuild and strengthen national and international emergency preparedness and response, to address the way new medical products are brought to market, and to strengthen the way WHO operates during emergencies.”

Above all, she said, the Ebola outbreak had revealed “some inadequacies and shortcomings” in the WHO's administrative, managerial, and technical infrastructures, including the need for “a dedicated contingency fund” to support rapid responses to outbreaks and emergencies; “streamlined recruitment procedures” in order to increase the agency's personnel base; the application of a “one WHO” approach in which all levels of the agency use “the same standard operating procedures, tools, and frameworks for risk assessment, monitoring, and accountability during emergencies” and need to enhance crisis management and field experience during emergencies in WHO country offices.

Echoing these points, UN Special Envoy for Ebola, Dr. David Nabarro, conveyed a message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reinforcing the call to draw lessons from this outbreak for the future. In addition, he urged Member States to ensure that the WHO has the resources it needs to end Ebola transmission and build structures for future pandemics.

Meanwhile, Dr. Chan celebrated the international community's ongoing efforts to stamp out the virus in Guinea, Liberia, and
Sierra Leone but warned that reaching zero cases in the three affected countries was “not going to be easy.”

The United Nations has, in fact, launched an appeal for the $1 billion needed for the first six months of 2015 in order to sustain the momentum in combatting the disease. Nearly 22,000 people have been affected by the disease with more than 8,600 deaths.

The WHO head noted, however, that despite the devastation left in its wake, the 2014 Ebola crisis also presented “an opportunity to build a stronger system to defend our collective global health security,” adding that health systems around the world need adequate numbers of well-trained and appropriately paid health care workers.

“This is one of the biggest lessons the world learned last year,” she continued. “Well-functioning health systems are not a luxury. Well-functioning health systems are the cushion that keeps sudden shocks from reverberating throughout the fabric that holds societies together, ripping them apart.”

“The volatile microbial world will always deliver surprises,” Dr. Chan concluded. “Never again should the world be caught by surprise, unprepared.”

**UN refugees envoy Angelina Jolie says international community 'failing' Iraq's displaced**

25 January - The rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Iraq is a “shocking” reality that demands the international community's immediate attention, Oscar-winning actress and United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie, urged today as she visited Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqi citizens in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

“Since I was last here in Iraq, another 2 million people have been forced from their homes, mostly in the last six months – this time Iraqi citizens,” Ms. Jolie said at a press conference held at the Khanke Camp for Internally Displaced People (IDPs), in Iraq's Dohuk Governorate.

“The spill-over from the Syria conflict has been devastating,” she continued. “The brutality of the conflict and speed and scale of the displacement has shocked the world. Help has come, but not nearly enough.”

Ms. Jolie's latest visit – her first to Iraq since September 2012 – comes amid a “dramatic” worsening of the humanitarian situation in the war-torn country as the conflicts in Syria and Iraq “intensify and become intertwined,” UNHCR warned in a press release.

As a result of the escalating violence and precipitating security situation in the region, 3.3 million remain displaced throughout the country and an estimated 330,000 people still live in sub-standard shelters as they face their first winter away from home. The grim scenario is also unfolding despite UNHCR's ongoing “massive aid response” which, noted Ms. Jolie, was in dire need of additional funding.

During her visit to Khanke, the Special Envoy met with Iraqi IDPs as well as elderly women who were among the 196 Yazidis recently released by insurgents. The camp is currently hosting more than 20,000 people from the Yazidi minority who fled Sinjar, in Iraq's Nineveh province, in early August as militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) advanced against Government forces.

“Nothing can prepare you for the horrific stories of these survivors of kidnap, abuse and exploitation and to see how they cannot all get the urgent help they need and deserve,” Ms. Jolie said. “Children whose parents were murdered and are now here unaccompanied – a 19 year old working and being the sole provider for his 7 siblings. I have met mothers whose children have been kidnapped by ISIL. As a parent, I couldn't imagine a greater horror. They are overwhelmed by thoughts of what is happening to their children.”
According to UNHCR, funding shortfalls have directly affected the scale and type of programmes the agency maintains to help survivors of violence and human rights abuses, including shelter and other assistance. Only 53 per cent of the UN agency’s required $337 million for 2014 Iraq response has been received. In addition, it has received the go-ahead to proceed on projected funding for only 31 per cent of its required $556 million for 2015.

“To many innocent people are paying the price of the conflict in Syria and spread of extremism,” Ms. Jolie added, as she concluded her visit. said wrapping up the first day of her two-day visit to Iraq today. “The international community has to step up and do more.”

“It is not enough to defend our values at home. We have to defend them here, in the camps and in the informal settlements across the Middle East, and in the ruined towns of Iraq and Syria. We are being tested here, as an international community, and so far – for all the immense efforts and good intentions – we are failing.”

UN chief strongly deplores latest deadly attack in Ukraine

24 January - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has strongly condemned today’s rocket attack in the eastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol which reportedly killed dozens of civilians and left another one hundred injured.

In a statement released by his spokesperson late this evening, Mr. Ban noted that the rocket attack appeared to have been launched indiscriminately into civilian areas, constituting a violation of international humanitarian law.

Shelling and rocket fire have, in fact, led to numerous civilian deaths in Mariupol and other cities in Ukraine's war-torn east over the past few months. The killing of civilians when an artillery shell hit a bus stopping for passengers in the Leninskyi district of Donetsk last week was the second bus attack, with significant casualties, in the last 10 days, bringing into stark focus the impact of the ongoing hostilities on civilians.

The Secretary-General also denounced the 23 January unilateral withdrawal from the ceasefire by the rebel leadership and, in particular, the group's “provocative statements” about claiming further territory, adding that this constituted “a violation of their commitments under the Minsk accords.”

In late February 2014, the situation in Ukraine transcended what was initially seen as an internal Ukrainian political crisis into violent clashes in parts of the country, later reaching full-scale conflict in the east. Despite the Minsk cease-fire, the situation in Ukraine has since continuously deteriorated, with serious consequences for the country's unity, territorial integrity and stability.

Just last week, the UN human rights office (OHCHR) confirmed that more than 5,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine in mid-April last year while some 10,948 people have been wounded.

Moreover, the UN has recently reported that since March 2014, more than one million people have been displaced from the conflict-affected areas, including nearly 530,000 people within Ukraine, of who at least 130,000 are children.

“The Secretary-General urges all concerned to redouble their efforts to revive the Minsk accords,” the statement continued. “Ukraine's peace, territorial integrity and stability, intrinsically linked to that of the broader region, must be urgently restored.”
Haiti: UN, international partners hail formation of Government, urge 'credible' elections

24 January - The United Nations and its international partners have welcomed the formation of a new Government in Haiti one week after the country's Parliament became “dysfunctional” due to its failure to hold elections within its constitutional framework.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative in Haiti, Sandra Honoré, and other members of the international community represented in the “Core Group” – comprising the Ambassadors of Brazil, Canada, France, Spain, United States, and the European Union, as well as the Special Representative of the Organization of American States – today welcomed the installation of Prime Minister Evans Paul, the formation of the Government, as well as the establishment of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP).

In a press release, Ms. Honoré and the “Core Group” encouraged the new Government to create “the political and security conditions necessary to guarantee the organization of fair, credible and inclusive elections” and said that the Group's members were “pleased” that the newly established CEP could pursue its activities in “full independence, with a view to guaranteeing the transparency and impartiality of the electoral process.”

In addition, the press release added, the “Core Group” continued to support the efforts of all stakeholders “to reinforce stability, consolidate democracy and restore the functioning of the country's institutions.”

Five years ago, on 12 January 2010 a devastating earthquake struck Haiti killing more than more than 220,000 people as well as 102 UN staff, delivering a major blow to country's already shaky economy, infrastructure and political landscape.

As a result, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti's (MINUSTAH) mandate was immediately increased to help the country's recovery, reconstruction and stability efforts. The Security Council subsequently requested MINUSTAH to further provide logistical support and technical expertise to assist Haiti's Government to continue operations to build the capacity of its rule of law institutions at the national and local level.

At Davos, UN chief meets Republic of Korea, Canada Ministers, urges climate action

24 January - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has reiterated the United Nations' ongoing commitment to the post-2015 development agenda and the implementation of a credible climate policy in meetings with senior officials from Canada and the Republic of Korea (ROK), the UN Spokesperson said today.

According to a readout, Mr. Ban met with Christian Paradis, Minister for International Development of Canada, on the margins of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and welcomed Canada's leadership in maternal, newborn and child health, as well as its “strong engagement” in shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

In addition, said the Spokesperson, Mr. Ban encouraged Canada to continue playing “an important and constructive role” in climate negotiations leading up to the Paris climate conference scheduled for December.

The Secretary-General also met with Yun Byung-se, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, in a meeting in which Mr. Ban asked for the Asian State's “leadership and full support” in assisting with the continuing efforts to tackle climate change and shape the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, he also expressed his “appreciation” for the ROK's contribution to UN efforts to address Ebola.
Turning to the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, Mr. Ban reiterated his “readiness to support renewed engagement and dialogue” between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on unification issues and expressed his “wish” to see a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations in 2015.

Central Asia: Security Council commends UN centre's work for preventive diplomacy

24 January - The Security Council today celebrated the role of the United Nations regional office in assisting countries in Central Asia confront a range of threats, from terrorism to trans-national drug trafficking, and reaffirmed the importance of conflict prevention tools in contributing effectively to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In a statement to the press, the Council welcomed the recent briefing on 21 January by the Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Miroslav Jenča, on the Centre's work over the past seven months and “acknowledged” UNRCCA's role in providing support to Central Asian States to address regional challenges “by encouraging and facilitating closer cooperation, identifying and tackling potential sources of tension before possible escalation, responding to domestic and transnational threats to peace and by supporting the sustainable development of the region.”

The UNRCCA was established in 2007 in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. It assists and supports the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in finding solutions for emerging problems and eliminating potential threats.

In addition, the Council also commended the Centre's “ongoing efforts” to assist the Central Asian States in modernising the legal framework for regional trans-boundary water management – an issue which has been a source of frequent tension between countries in the region.

To this point, the statement added, the Council “further encouraged the Centre to continue to facilitate regional dialogue and encouraged all States in the region to engage constructively in consultations to reach agreement on how to meet energy and water resource challenges across the region.”

At the same time, Council members also expressed support for UNRCCA's role in regional counter-terrorism activities, including through its support for the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action on implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia as well as through recent efforts aimed at engaging the media in the fight against terrorism, raising awareness, capacity building and promoting information sharing.

In their statement, the members of the Security Council underlined that illicit drug production, trade and trafficking remained a threat to international peace and stability in the region and, as a result, the UN body also highlighted the importance of “close coordination” between the Central Asian States and Afghanistan while also commending UNRCCA's efforts, in collaboration with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, to help the Central Asian States address this problem.

Moreover, recognizing the regional security concerns generated by the post-2014 scenario in Afghanistan and the drawdown of ISAF troops in Afghanistan, the Council also commended UNRCCA's work, in cooperation with the UN Assistance Mission in the country (UNAMA), in facilitating the bilateral and multilateral engagement of the Central Asian States with Afghanistan and encouraged enhanced cooperation and coordination between them.

The Council also noted that, to date, the situation in Afghanistan had not led to any major security implications in Central Asia. Nonetheless, it encouraged “increased cooperation and coordination” between the Central Asian States, UNRCCA and relevant regional organizations, in order to further strengthen the region's capacity “to overcome challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development.”
UN Libya Mission deplores deadly shooting in Tripoli

24 January - The top United Nations official in Libya, Bernardino Léon, has condemned a fatal shooting incident outside a UN facility in the capital, Tripoli, as tensions continue to simmer across the war-torn country.

In a statement issued earlier today, Mr. Léon reported that on the morning of 23 January, unidentified gunmen opened fire from a passing car at members of the Diplomatic Police guarding the offices of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). One policeman was mortally wounded.

“The Diplomatic Police are investigating to determine the circumstances and the motives behind this drive-by shooting,” Mr. Léon's statement continued, adding that UN staff were not involved in the incident.

“The United Nations condemns this shooting incident and offers its condolences to the Diplomatic Police. The United Nations calls on the police to thoroughly investigate this incident,” it added.

Yesterday's attack is the latest outburst of violence to breach the recent ceasefire announced following a first round of intensive talks, hosted by UNSMIL in Geneva, during which participants agreed upon an agenda for discussions going forward, with the aim of reaching a political agreement to form a consensual national unity government, and making security arrangements necessary to end fighting and ensure the withdrawal of armed groups from Libyan cities.

As well as discussing confidence-building measures to safeguard Libya's national unity and to alleviate the population's suffering, participants also agreed to hold another round of talks in Geneva next week and strongly urged all relevant Libyan stakeholders to attend.

UN-facilitated Libyan political dialogue set to resume in Geneva

25 January - Libyan stakeholders will return to Geneva this week for a new round of United Nations-facilitated dialogue aimed at resolving the war-torn country's longstanding political crisis, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has announced.

“UNSMIL appeals to all the Libyan parties and invited participants to approach these talks aimed at ending Libya's political and security crisis in a spirit of openness and reconciliation that is guided by the higher national interest of the Libyan people,” the UN Mission declared in a statement issued earlier today.

The first round of talks took place last week at the Palais des Nations with stakeholders expressing their unequivocal commitment to a united and democratic Libya governed by the rule of law and respect for human rights.

During the meetings, participants agreed an agenda aiming to reach a political agreement to form a consensual national unity government while also making security arrangements necessary to end fighting and ensure the withdrawal of armed groups from Libyan cities. There was also a call for confidence-building measures to safeguard Libya's national unity and to alleviate the population's suffering.

In addition to the main political track established during last week's dialogue, another meeting later this week will bring together municipal and local council representatives from cities and towns across North African country to discuss confidence building measures and ways to implement them, the statement continued.

UNSMIL explained that it planned to convene a number of other tracks at a later stage which would include representatives from Libyan political parties, social and tribal forces, as well as the armed groups.
Ban congratulates people, Government of Zambia for 'peaceful' election

25 January - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has congratulated the Government and people of Zambia for the peaceful conduct of their recent presidential election, according to a United Nations spokesperson.

In a statement released this evening, Mr. Ban's spokesperson said the Secretary-General congratulated the people, Government and political parties of Zambia, as well as the electoral authorities, for “the peaceful manner in which the country organized its presidential election, despite difficult weather conditions.”

“Zambia's long record of peaceful transitions through proper democratic processes is an example in the region,” the statement continued.

“The Secretary-General reaffirms the readiness of the United Nations to continue to work with the Government of Zambia to press ahead with its national priorities and to support the Government and people of Zambia as we all move towards a new sustainable development agenda.”

According to media reports, the Zambian election was won by Edgar Lungu, the country's Defence and Justice Minister, who ran on the Patriotic Front ticket.

The election was called after the death of President Michael Chilufya Sata, who died on 28 October 2014 while receiving treatment at a hospital in London.