In the headlines:

- ‘Paralyzing’ funding gap forces shutdown of 80 per cent of frontline health services in war-torn Iraq – UN
- UN mission finds overall environment in Burundi ‘not conducive’ to credible election process
- Top UN relief official in Yemen warns of conflict’s ‘catastrophic’ consequences; urges humanitarian access
- Ban welcomes UN Assembly’s endorsement of action plan on post-2015 development financing
- Nepal: children still at risk three months after devastating quake, UNICEF warns
- Parties continue to make progress towards ‘shared vision’ of united Cyprus, UN envoy says
- Yemen: UN chief welcomes Saudi-led coalition’s announcement of humanitarian truce
- UN chief condemns deadly Al Shabaab attack against hotel in Mogadishu
- Funding crisis may force UN agency to delay start of school year for half a million students in Middle East
- ‘Senseless cycle of violence’ in South Sudan must end – UN humanitarian chief
- Top UN official in Somalia condemns terrorist attack on hotel in Mogadishu

‘Paralyzing’ funding gap forces shutdown of 80 per cent of frontline health services in war-torn Iraq – UN

27 July - The top United Nations humanitarian official in Iraq today declared as “devastating” the “inexplicable” closures of life-saving services in Iraq for people in need, citing the most recent shut-downs of basic health care that will directly impact more than one million people, including some 500,000 children who now will not be immunized, spreading risk of a measles outbreak and resumption of polio.

The most recent cutbacks come on top of recent “cascading” closures that has affected food rations, water supplies, sanitation and hygiene services as well specialized programmes for one million women and more than 1.2 million girls, many of whom the survivors of brutality and sexual and gender-based violence, according to a press release by UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Lise Grande.

“At a time when the people of Iraq need us the most, we are letting them down,” Ms. Grande said from Baghdad.

UN humanitarian partners are seeking $498 million to cover the costs of providing shelter, food, water and other life-saving services for the remainder of the year, but to date, only 15 per cent of this has been secured.

Ms. Grande confirmed today that 184 front line health services have been suspended because of the “paralyzing” funding shortfall for humanitarian activities in Iraq, meaning that more than 80 per cent of general health programmes supported by humanitarian partners are now shuttered, directly impacting one million people.

“The impact is immediate and enormous,” according to the press release. Partners estimate that one million sick people, who
would have sought primary medical care, will not receive help.

“Over half a million children will not be immunized, spreading the risk of a measles outbreak and the resumption of polio and contributing to morbidity amongst some of the most vulnerable children in the entire region,” it said.

Less than two months ago, on 4 June, the UN and partners urgently appealed for funding for the most highly prioritized, pared-to-the bone appeal ever launched in the region, Ms. Grande said.

“Although some support is coming in, it’s devastating, inexplicable really, that we are being forced to shut-down programmes in a country where so much is at stake and where the international community is so involved,” she said.

In one year, the number of people requiring life-saving assistance has quadrupled; poverty rates in the Kurdistan region where more than a million displaced people have sought safety, have doubled, and an estimated 8.2 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid – including 2.3 million people living in areas controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, according to Ms. Grande’s office.

As conflict intensifies, at least another one million more people will need help to survive before the end of 2015, it said.

UN mission finds overall environment in Burundi ‘not conducive’ to credible election process

27 July - While the 21 July election in Burundi that won President Pierre Nkurunziza a controversial third term was relatively peaceful and conducted adequately, the overall environment was ‘not conducive’ for an inclusive, free and credible electoral process, the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in the country (MENUB) announced today.

This was the main conclusion of MENUB’s preliminary findings on the conduct of the presidential polls in Burundi, which took place after two postponements in an environment of “profound mistrust” between opposing political camps. The decision of the incumbent President to run for another term precipitated a deep political and socioeconomic crisis, the mission said.

“The Constitutional Court's ruling on the admissibility of the President's candidature for a third mandate did not solve the wider political problem of presidential term limits in Burundi, but rather exacerbated further controversy, protests and tensions,” the Mission explained in a statement issued today.

Freedoms of expression, assembly and association, essential conditions for the effective exercise of the right to vote, remained severely impaired. “Violence, although observed in a less intense degree than during the period preceding the 29 June [legislative and communal] elections, remained an unfortunate feature of the entire process.”

The various dialogue efforts, including the most recent initiative under the leadership of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and the East African Community (EAC), remained inconclusive, stated MENUB.

“Also, the parties did not reach agreement on a consensual electoral calendar. Nevertheless, on election day, Burundians in most places went peacefully to the polls to cast their ballots.”

Out of the eight presidential candidates, four declared that they would withdraw from the race. However, their names remained on the ballot, pointed out the Mission.

It also found that media freedom remained severely restricted. “Private and independent media outlets that were destroyed during the failed coup did not reopen, despite national and international appeals to the Burundian government to enable media to operate. State-owned media did not provide balanced media coverage to all presidential candidates.”
The *Commission électorale nationale indépendante* (CENI) conducted adequate logistical preparations for the presidential elections and polling activities in the observed polling sites largely followed procedures, the UN observers noted.

But tabulation at the observed municipal and provincial locations was carried out expeditiously, albeit in a disorganized manner, they said.

In conclusion, MENUB reiterated the Secretary-General’s call “for the cessation of all forms of violence respect of basic human rights and resumption of dialogue.”

**Top UN relief official in Yemen warns of conflict’s ‘catastrophic’ consequences; urges humanitarian access**

27 July - Witnessing first-hand the “shocking” devastation in Yemen’s main port city of Aden, the top United Nations relief official in the country today declared that the humanitarian consequences of the conflict are “catastrophic,” making an urgent plea for safe, unhindered access for aid workers and a major scale-up of funding.

“The intensification of violence and conflict over the past four months have devastated the city and destroyed the lives and livelihoods of the majority of its people. As has become all too familiar in contexts of war, civilians are paying the heaviest price,” the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Johannes van der Klaauw, said in a statement issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“I heard numerous accounts of death, hunger and utter desperation as mothers and fathers struggle to find safety, security and care for their loved ones.”

Mr. van der Klaauw’s remarks come just hours after UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the announcement by the Saudi-led Coalition of a unilateral five-day humanitarian pause in Yemen, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is calling on all parties to the conflict to suspend military operations and facilitate safe, unhindered access of relief workers to desperate populations throughout the crisis-riven country.

In his statement today, Mr. van der Klaauw painted a grim picture of the situation, saying the level of destruction in Aden and the high number of civilian deaths and injuries, estimated at over 23,000 nationwide, is a “shocking” testament to the suffering faced by the civilian population.

Counter to all the responsibilities that conflict parties must adhere to under international humanitarian law, the damage to critical infrastructure in the whole country, including hospitals, schools, air and sea ports, mosques, and residential premises is “unacceptable”, he accused.

“I repeat my plea to all parties of the conflict to put an end to the attacks on civilians and to end the destruction of critical infrastructure, vital for supplying essential goods and services to the civilian population.”

In Aden, scaling up the humanitarian response effort means urgently restoring healthcare services, repairing and servicing water and sanitation systems, providing emergency shelter to displaced families, increasing the distribution of food and basic commodities such as blankets, mattresses and other household items.

“We need to get children back to school and provide psycho-social support to the women, men, girls and boys that have witnessed and experienced unspeakable violence in a city that has seen some of the bloodiest fighting since the escalation of conflict in March,” the Humanitarian Coordinator underscored.

Against that background, parties to the conflict must provide rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need, he demanded. “Current access constraints meant I had to reach Aden via Djibouti on a twelve hour boat ride. We need more direct access and I call on all parties to the conflict to open all land routes and facilitate the use of air and sea ports to enable humanitarian agencies to rapidly deliver much needed life-saving assistance.”
Explaining that funding is another immediate requirement, Mr. M. van der Klaauw reminded that the Yemen humanitarian appeal has received “only” 15 per cent of the requested $1.6 billion required for 2015.

“I call on all donors to show their generosity and solidarity to the Yemeni people in this desperate time of need.”

**Ban welcomes UN Assembly’s endorsement of action plan on post-2015 development financing**

The United Nations General Assembly today endorsed the new global action agenda for financing sustainable development adopted two weeks ago by a major UN conference, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the move as a major step that firmly puts the world “on the path to a more prosperous, just and sustainable world for this and future generations.”

General Assembly President Sam Kutesa said today’s action “will further demonstrate our collective commitment towards eradicating poverty, achieving sustainable development and building a better future for all,” and urged UN Member States to “do whatever it will take to ensure that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is fully implemented.”

The outcome document adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia earlier this month, the Action Agenda contains a series of bold measures to overhaul global finance practices and generate investments for tackling a range of economic, social and environmental challenges.

Building on the outcomes of previous development financing conferences held in Monterrey, Mexico, and in Doha, Qatar, the Action Agenda also addresses all sources of finance, and covers cooperation on a range of issues including technology, science, innovation, trade and capacity building.

In his statement to the Assembly, Mr. Ban said by endorsing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, “we launch a new era of cooperation and global partnership.”

He hailed the development as the foundation for success at the UN summit to adopt the UN post-2015 development agenda, in New York this September, and at the Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), known informally as COP 21, in Paris in December.

“Only by staying engaged will we ensure that the commitments we endorse today will lead to tangible progress on the ground, in all countries and for all people,” the UN chief said.

Commending UN Members States for taking this critical step forward, he declared: “We are now firmly on the path to a more prosperous, just and sustainable world for this and future generations.”

Earlier this morning, Mr. Ban and Member State representatives paid tribute in a General Assembly session to the late Permanent Representative of Djibouti, Ambassador Roble Olhaye, the longest serving top diplomat at the UN, calling him a passionate champion of Africa and a great believer in the value of the continent’s partnership with the United Nations.
Nepal: children still at risk three months after devastating quake, UNICEF warns

27 July - Three months after Nepal's devastating 25 April earthquake and its aftershocks, children continue to face multiple risks as their families have been pushed deeper into poverty and they remain in need of aid, warned the United Nations's Children Fund (UNICEF).

“When a major disaster strikes like the earthquakes on 25 April and 12 May, it incurs not only loss of lives but also destruction of assets, sources of livelihoods and substantially reduces household income particularly among the most vulnerable population,” said Tomoo Hozumi, the UNICEF Representative in Nepal, over the weekend.

Although the humanitarian situation has improved over the past three months, hundreds of thousands of Nepalese children still need shelter, food, access to water and sanitation, medical care, education and protection.

About one million of them continue to live in areas at high risk of landslides and floods, points out UNICEF in a press release. As the rainy season takes hold, access to these areas is becoming increasingly challenging, threatening these children and putting them at a higher risk of exploitation and abuse, including trafficking.

More than 10,000 have been identified as acutely malnourished since the first earthquake, including more than 1,000 with severely acute malnutrition. Over 200 children remain without a parent or caregiver, and more than 600 have lost one or both of their parents to the quakes. Over 32,000 classrooms have been destroyed and nearly 900,000 houses have been damaged or destroyed.

According to a Government-led assessment, between 700,000 and almost 1 million people in the worst-affected districts could be pushed below the international poverty line of US$1.25 a day, stated UNICEF.

“We know that when going through difficult times, poor households often resort to harmful coping strategies, such as reducing their food consumption, cutting down their health and education expenditure, and sending their children to work – all of which can have irreversible negative consequences on them and more so on their children,” Hozumi said.

“The top-up cash provided will help vulnerable households to at least meet some of their basic needs such as food and medicine without further resorting to harmful coping strategies during these lean times.”

To help address the immediate needs of children and their families affected by the quakes, UNICEF is providing $15 million worth of direct cash transfers to approximately 330,000 households, including an estimated 450,000 children. This support, channeled through existing government social assistance programmes, is reaching vulnerable individuals including Dalit children, people with disabilities, widows, the elderly and marginalized ethnic groups.

"The earthquake has exposed the fragility of Nepal's progress in terms of poverty reduction,” continued Hozumi.

“Looking beyond immediate relief, one of the priorities for UNICEF is to assist the government to phase in a reliable and predictable form of income support for children and their families. Strengthening and expanding the country's social protection system and improving its responsiveness to shocks will contribute to children's well-being and development during normal times and increase their families' ability to cope in case of future disasters.”

Since April, UNICEF has also been providing a wide range of services to the children and families living in the areas worst hit by the earthquakes.

“Together with the Government and partners, we have been able to achieve a lot in the past 90 days. At the same time, given
the enormity of the damages and losses, and the possible impact of the monsoons, there is a lot more to be done to bring a sense of normalcy to the lives of the earthquake survivors especially the most vulnerable amongst them,” said Hozumi.

**Parties continue to make progress towards ‘shared vision’ of united Cyprus, UN envoy says**

27 July - The positive and results-oriented climate of the talks between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders continues to foster the progress required towards conclusion of a settlement as soon as possible, the United Nations Special Adviser on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, confirmed today.

“The Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akinci, and the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, continued to make progress towards their shared vision of a united, federal Cyprus,” according to Espen Barth Eide.

Today’s meeting focused on issues of property and criteria on territory, Mr. Eide explained in a statement.

“Regarding property, the leaders agreed that the individual’s right to property is respected. There shall be different alternatives for the regulation of the exercise of this right. Dispossessed owners and current users shall have various choices regarding their claims to affected properties.”

These different choices shall include compensation, exchange and reinstatement, stressed the Special Adviser. The exercise of any such choice shall be subject to agreed criteria. There shall be a list of categories of affected properties, as well as an independent Property Commission – formed of an equal number of Turkish and Greek Cypriot members – mandated to resolve property claims, according to the statement.

“The leaders also underlined their commitment to maintain the momentum of the process and decided that their next meetings will be held on 1 and 14 September.”

In the meantime, the negotiators will continue to meet intensively between leaders’ meetings in support of this endeavour. Over the coming days, the negotiators will have joint sessions with the Working Groups on European Union Matters, Property and the Economy to more effectively guide their work.

During today’s meeting, the leaders also welcomed the strong expressions of support of the members of the UN Security Council for a settlement in Cyprus.

“In the prevailing positive climate, the two leaders will tomorrow participate in a musical event at the Othello tower as agreed by the technical committee on culture,” Mr Eide added.
Yemen: UN chief welcomes Saudi-led coalition's announcement of humanitarian truce

26 July - Welcoming the announcement by the Saudi-led Coalition of a unilateral five-day humanitarian pause in Yemen, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is calling on all parties to the conflict to suspend military operations and facilitate safe, unhindered access of relief workers to desperate populations throughout the crisis-riven country.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York, Mr. Ban welcomed the announcement by the Saudi-led Coalition of a unilateral five-day, renewable humanitarian pause set to commence today, Sunday, 26 July, at 23:59 (GMT+3), or 4:59 pm EST.

“He urges the Houthis, the General People's Congress and all other parties will agree to and maintain the humanitarian pause for the sake of all the Yemeni people, and that all act in good faith throughout the pause,” said the statement, which notes that the growing number of civilian casualties, including disturbing reports of civilian deaths in Mokha on Friday evening, in the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe make a pause and an eventual extension an imperative.

Calling on all parties to the conflict to suspend military operations during the pause and refrain from exploiting the pause to move weapons or seize territory, the UN chief appealed to the parties to exercise maximum restraint in cases of isolated violations and to avoid escalation.

“The Secretary-General urges all parties to facilitate the urgent delivery of humanitarian assistance to all parts of Yemen, as well as rapid, safe, and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to reach people in need of humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance;” it said.

The statement concluded with the Secretary-General's call on the conflict parties to comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and to urgently work with the United Nations and humanitarian aid organizations to bring assistance to millions in need throughout the country.

Announcement of the pause comes after “a major breakthrough,” as the UN World Food Programme (WFP) reported that its first ship since conflict erupted in Yemen in March berthed Tuesday in the port of Aden after repeated attempts to reach huge numbers of increasingly desperate people and as intense fighting continues to take a serious toll on civilians.

Meanwhile, in the latest report on the toll the fighting is taking, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that at least 165 civilians, including 53 children and 23 women, were killed between 3 and 15 July, and another 210 were injured during this period.

“The majority of the casualties are reported to have been caused by air strikes, but civilians are also regularly being injured and killed by mortar fire and in street fighting,” OHCHR Spokesperson Rupert Colville told reporters Tuesday in Geneva, Switzerland.

“The total death toll since 26 March is now at least 1,693 civilians, with another 3,829 injured,” Mr. Colville said.
UN chief condemns deadly Al Shabaab attack against hotel in Mogadishu

27 July - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has strongly condemned the attack perpetrated by Al Shabaab yesterday on the Al-Jazeera Hotel in Somalia’s capital, Mogadishu.

“The attack resulted in a number of casualties and injuries, including to staff of diplomatic missions of several countries whose missions were based in the hotel,” reads a statement issued by Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

Mr. Ban, adds the statement, conveys his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to their Governments, and wishes the injured a swift recovery.

“The Secretary-General affirms that this egregious attack will not deter the UN and international partners from our steadfast commitment to help the people and Government of Somalia realize a peaceful future for their country.”

Yesterday, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, also condemned the terrorist act.

Funding crisis may force UN agency to delay start of school year for half a million students in Middle East

26 July - Facing its most severe financial crisis ever, the United Nations agency tasked with assisting Palestine refugees throughout the Middle East has today convened an emergency session to weigh the growing risk that it may be forced to delay the start of the academic year in some 700 schools for half a million students across the region.

In a press release announcing an emergency meeting of its Advisory Commission, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said that it may be forced to take drastic measures unless the deficit of $101 million can be fully funded before the school year is due to start.

The session is taking place in Jordan and brings together UNRWA’s leading donors and host governments.

As things currently stand, UNRWA has enough money to maintain its services essential to protect public health which include immunizations for children, primary health care, relief and sanitation and some emergency programmes through to the end of 2015, but the funding is insufficient to guarantee the stable provision of its education services from September onwards.

Expressing “alarm” over the situation and the possible delay in the start of the school year, the agency said such a decision would generate much anxiety and despair for hundreds of thousands of boys and girls in the region.

“Education lies at the very heart of the identity and dignity of Palestine refugees and of what UNRWA stands for,” said the press release, adding that the agency’s schools also provide a measure of stability in a very unstable region. Possible delays in opening the school year would also have grave implications for host governments, according to UNRWA.

The extraordinary Advisory Commission session will be discussing a special report to be sent by the UNRWA Commissioner-General to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and on to all 193 members of the UN General Assembly.

The report sets out the implications of UNRWA's $101 million deficit for 2015, the measures the agency has taken to reduce costs and the strenuous efforts to seek the necessary funds. It also outlines urgent steps that could be taken to put UNRWA
on a firm financial footing going forward.

The agency calls on all donors, partners and UN Member States to actively step forward with critical funding to allow the school year to begin without interruption and to preserve the historic investment in human development of Palestine refugees, recognized as one the most successful processes of its kind in the Middle-East. Ensuring the continued provision of education is a matter of dignity, rights and regional stability.

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, and financial support has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees and deepening poverty.

As a result, the UNRWA General Fund, which supports core essential services and most staffing costs, operates with a large deficit. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large deficits, are funded through separate funding portals.

'Senseless cycle of violence' in South Sudan must end – UN humanitarian chief

25 July - Amid massive displacement and “horrendous atrocities,” civilians continue to bear the brunt of South Sudan's brutal conflict, the top United Nations relief official underscored today, as he urged all parties, including the leaders of the warring factions, to “listen to their people,” lay down their arms and halt the rapidly spiralling humanitarian crisis.

“I am deeply shocked by what I have seen. Innocent civilians are bearing the brunt of this brutal war,” said Stephen O’Brien, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, as he wrapped up a four-day visit to South Sudan, which earlier this month, marked the fourth anniversary of its independence amid ongoing violence and deprivation.

Mr. O'Brien, who is also the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, painted a grim picture of the situation in South Sudan, which has been wracked by instability and conflict since later December 2013.

“Families have endured horrendous atrocities – including killing, abduction, and the recruitment of children into armed groups. Women and girls have been beaten, raped and set on fire,” he said, explaining that entire communities have lost their homes and their livelihoods. Many people are starving, living in swamps or in bushes, hiding in fear of their lives.

“This senseless cycle of violence must stop,” he declared.

During his mission, Mr. O'Brien met with humanitarian partners, Government officials and the diplomatic community, and visited communities affected by the conflict in Juba, the capital, and Unity state.

The UN humanitarian chief called on the leaders of the warring factions to take responsibility for their own actions and for those who act in their name; “I call on the leadership of South Sudan to listen to their people and lay down their arms, to stop the violence, reconcile their differences and commit to peace.”

According to the UN Office for the Coordination Of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which Mr. O’Brien heads, the humanitarian consequences of the nearly 20-month long conflict in South Sudan are grave: Some 4.6 million people are severely food insecure, with a quarter of a million children at risk from rapidly worsening nutrition.

Massive displacement continues – over two million people, half of whom are children –have fled their homes. This includes some 1.6 million people displaced inside South Sudan and almost 600,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries.

“Humanitarian needs are higher now than ever and we cannot wait to respond, to do even more than brave humanitarians are already delivering. I appeal to the international community to act now to avert an even greater humanitarian tragedy in South
Sudan,” underscored Mr. O'Brien.

The South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan for 2015 is currently only 42 per cent funded, leaving a gap of nearly $1 billion dollars, according to OCHA.

The security situation in South Sudan has deteriorated steadily over the past year since political in-fighting between President Kiir and his former Vice-President, Riek Machar, and their respective factions erupted in December 2013. The hostilities subsequently turned into a full-fledged conflict, resulting in reported atrocities and possible war crimes.

The UN Security Council marked the fourth anniversary of South Sudan's independence by expressing profound disappointment in South Sudan's leaders for putting their personal ambitions ahead of the good of their country and their people, sparking months of politically motivated violence that has left thousands dead and caused a “man-made…catastrophe.”

Top UN official in Somalia condemns terrorist attack on hotel in Mogadishu

26 July - The most senior United Nations official in Somalia has strongly condemned today's terrorist attack on Jazeera Hotel in Mogadishu that resulted in several deaths and injuries.

“I condemn the terrorist attack in Mogadishu today. The killers will not succeed in impeding the progress and extraordinary efforts of the Somali people and Government,” Nicholas Kay, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, said in a statement.

According to press reports, the attack on the hotel killed several people wounded at least 20 others.

“I commend the swift response of Somalia's security and first responders. The perpetrators need to be brought to justice swiftly,” the UN official added.

Mr. Kay, who also heads up the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), offered his sincere condolences to the family and friends of all those who have suffered, as well as to the Federal Government of Somalia.

He also extends his condolences to the family and friends of Abdulahi Hussein Mohamud, a Member of the Federal Parliament and lawmaker, and Sai'd Ali Saleh, a government official, who were shot and killed in separate incidents yesterday.

“The United Nations and international partners will stand firm in our efforts to help the Somali people to realize their aspirations for a secure and stable future,” Mr. Kay added in the statement.