Ban takes call for action on climate change to Commonwealth summit in Malta

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon took his call for urgent action on climate change to the Heads of Government of the 53-nation, 2.2-billion-people-strong Commonwealth today, declaring that the stars seemed aligned for at last making major progress on the issue.

“We must take action. We have spoken for a long time - at least 20 years, longer than 20 years – and the science has made it plainly clear,” he said at a news conference on the margins of the Commonwealth summit in Malta, on the eve of the two-week-long UN climate change conference, widely known as COP21, opening in Paris on Monday.

“How I hope this will [also] be the last place to talk about this and I hope we have a good and ambitious agreement in Paris,” he stressed, citing the years of effort to rein in greenhouse gas emissions that threaten to radically impact the world as we know it, from rising sea levels overwhelming low-lying island States to devastating droughts and floods.

Five years ago at a climate change summit in Durban, South Africa, Member States agreed in their Declaration: let us agree on a universal, legally binding, ambitious climate change agreement by 2015, Mr. Ban stressed.
“I think that [now] all the stars seem to be aligning. There is a strong commitment, not only from the Government but from the business communities and civil society.

“And people on the ground, urge the leaders of today to make this world better and environmentally sustainable so that our succeeding generations can live in peace and harmony and prosperity, in a safer way,” he added.

“We are going to make it happen and the time for taking action is now. We cannot again delay or postpone it until tomorrow.”

While in Malta Mr. Ban held talks with Queen Elizabeth II and British Prime Minister David Cameron.

**Adolescent deaths from AIDS have tripled since 2000, warns new UNICEF study**

*27 November* - The number of adolescent deaths from AIDS has tripled over the last 15 years with 26 new infections occurring every hour, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) announced today and warned that “it is critical that young people who are HIV-positive have access to treatment, care and support.”

“At the same time, those who are HIV-negative must have access to the knowledge and means to help them to stay that way,” said Craig McClure, head of UNICEF’s global HIV/AIDS programmes, at a conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, where new data was released by UNICEF.

According to the agency, AIDS is the top cause of death among adolescents (15-19) in Africa and the second leading cause of death among adolescents globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest prevalence, girls are vastly more affected, accounting for 7 in 10 new infections among 15-19 year olds.

“Among HIV-affected populations, adolescents are the only group for which the mortality figures are not decreasing,” according to UNICEF.

UNICEF also said among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, just over 1 in 10 is tested for HIV.

According to the data in UNICEF's Statistical Update on Children, Adolescents and AIDS, less than half of children under 2 months old are tested for HIV. Only 1 in 3 of the 2.6 million children under the age of 15 living with HIV is on treatment.

UNICEF said the new data shows that most adolescents who die of AIDS-related illnesses acquired HIV when they were infants, 10 to 15 years ago, when fewer pregnant women and mothers living with HIV received antiretroviral medicines to prevent HIV transmission from mother to child.

“These children have survived into their teenage years, sometimes without knowing their HIV status,” UNICEF said.

On a positive note, the new data shows that since 2000, nearly 1.3 million new infections among children have been averted, largely due to advances in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

The new data showed that among adolescents, 26 new infections occur every hour and about half of those living with HIV are in just six countries: South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Mozambique and Tanzania.

“The gains we have made on preventing mother to child transmission are laudable, and to be celebrated,” Mr. McClure added, “but immediate investments are needed to get life-saving treatment to children and adolescents who are infected.”
West Africa cannot recover from Ebola epidemic on its own – senior UN health official

27 November - Following the flare-up of Ebola in Liberia 77 days after the outbreak was declared over, the region's top coordinator of the UN's response to the epidemic said the three West African countries most affected by the deadly disease cannot recover from its ravages on their own.

“The response to Ebola – the national leadership, community engagement, so many people working so hard for such a long period of time with such dedication – if that can be translated into efforts beyond Ebola, then actually all there countries have a bright future ahead of them,” Peter Graaff, the UN Regional Inter-Agency Coordinator on Ebola, told the UN News Centre.

“But they cannot do it alone,” Mr. Graaff said of efforts end transmission of the virus that has killed more than 11,000 people in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The interview comes just days after the World Health Organization (WHO) said that a cluster of three confirmed cases of Ebola were reported last week in Liberia, which had been declared free disease transmission on 3 September.

Stressing that the regional epidemic is not over, Mr. Graaff said the “first reported case in 77 days shows that even when you are able to break the chain of transmission, there is a chance of the disease coming back,” which he said is “largely due to a persistence of the virus in survivors.”

The recent cases in Liberia underscore the importance of robust surveillance measures to ensure the rapid detection of any reintroduction or re-emergence of the disease in unaffected areas, he said.

Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have each put surveillance systems in place to enable health workers and members of the public to report any case of illness or death that they suspect may be related to Ebola to the relevant authorities, according to WHO.

Going forward, the UN coordinator drew attention to the need to make sure that the most-affected countries stay at zero, that survivors can live up to their full potential in society as soon as possible, and ensure that investments take place and directed not only to the health care sector of the three West African countries but also in other sectors like education and infrastructure.

Earlier this month, the UN Special Envoy on Ebola, Dr. David Nabarro, underscored that his top priority is to make sure the more than 15,000 survivors and their families across West Africa have access to the support they need.

Saying “they have a tough time” because “they're distressed” and “not trusted,” as well as being “a subject of a lot of stigma,” Dr. Nabarro said he wants to be sure that every person who survived Ebola can access a comprehensive package of care that helps them, and that help their communities.
UN agencies weigh in on climate change impacts ahead of Paris conference

27 November - In the weeks leading up to the United Nations climate change conference (COP21), which begins in Paris on Monday and aims to reach a new universal climate agreement, many of the Organization’s agencies and programmes announced their latest climate-related findings, bringing to light new data, major concerns, and underlining existing and potential opportunities to preserve the planet.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported that the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere reached yet another new record high in 2014, continuing a “relentless rise” which is fueling climate change and will make the planet more dangerous and inhospitable for future generations.

Just days later, the agency shared more “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.

In addition, data from the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) revealed that over the last 20 years, 90 per cent of major disasters have been caused by 6,457 recorded floods, storms, heatwaves, droughts and other weather-related events.

Echoing this message was the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which underlined that natural disasters triggered by climate change have risen in frequency and severity over the last three decades, increasing the damage caused to the agricultural sectors of many developing countries and putting them at risk of growing food insecurity.

The World Food Programme (WFP) further insisted that without “ambitious action” to address the causes and consequences of climate change, hunger cannot be eradicated. During the global gathering in Paris, the agency will launch its Food Security Climate Resilience (FoodSECuRE) Facility, a new tool that will help respond to climate disasters before they occur based on climate forecasts.

Ahead of COP21, the World Bank said “climate-smart” development can keep 100 million people out of poverty. According to the Bank’s latest findings, the poorest people are more exposed than the average population to climate-related shocks, and they lose much more of their wealth when they are hit.

Noting the significant impact climatic activities have on African people and countries, the Bank also unveiled a $16 billion business plan to boost the continent’s climate resilience, outlining actions required to maintain and protect its growth and poverty reduction goals.

Raising awareness on groups most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said youngsters will bear the brunt. More than half a billion children reportedly live in areas with extremely high flood occurrence and 160 million in high drought severity zones, leaving them highly exposed.

Recalling that indigenous peoples own, occupy or manage up to 65 per cent of the Earth’s land surface – and that their voices must be heard in Paris – the UN Development Programme (UNDP) expressed significant concern regarding the exclusion of their issues from national plans to combat climate change. Formally called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, these will form the basis of the agreement expected to be reached at COP21.

Meanwhile, the important role that nuclear power could play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions was the focus of a new report released by the UN International Atomic Energy (IAEA). It highlighted that nuclear power is one of the major low-carbon energy sources currently available, and many countries believe that it can help them to address the twin challenges of ensuring reliable energy supplies while curbing emissions.

From the UN entity organizing the conference – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – came a set of best practice climate policies from across the world. ‘Climate Action Now’ was introduced in Bonn, Germany, as a solutions guide, revealing a “wealth of existing opportunities” to immediately scale up reductions in
greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, according to a report released by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the implementation of the national target plans will limit greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, but a new climate agreement can encourage further action that will be necessary to limit global temperature rise to 2 degree Celsius by 2100.

**Sudan: Ban condemns deadly attack in Abyei, urges swift action to bring perpetrators to justice**

**27 November** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has strongly condemned the attacks last night by unknown assailants on the residence of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief in Abyei town, during which one Ethiopian peacekeeper from the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and a young girl were killed.

“The Secretary-General expresses his deepest condolences to the Government of Ethiopia, to all UNISFA personnel, and to the families of the two victims. He wishes the wounded a speedy recovery,” said a statement issued by his spokesperson on the attack, which also left three civilians wounded.

Mr. Ban called on the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to assist UNISFA in swiftly bringing the perpetrators of this attack to justice.

“He urges both Governments to resume without delay their cooperation on the implementation of the 20 June 2011 Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei area and to support the Mission’s efforts to promote dialogue between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities,” said the statement.

Lastly, he called on both communities to remain calm and avoid any escalation of this tragic incident.

**Use Pope’s visit to restore peace, UN refugee agency tells Central African Republic’s warring sides**

**27 November** - The United Nations refugee agency called on warring groups in the Central African Republic (CAR) today to use Pope Francis’s visit this weekend to rebuild national reconciliation after renewed violence since September triggered an 18 per cent increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs) to 447,500.

“The recent waves of displacement have created new needs for protection, emergency shelter, health care, psychosocial support as well as water and sanitation,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Leo Dobbs told a news briefing in Geneva, citing cases of torture, rape and the burning of villages at a time when humanitarian aid is massively under-funded.

The new violence comes after nine months of relative calm that had seen IDPs begin returning home, following more than two years of fighting between the mainly Muslim Séléka group and the mainly Christian anti-Balaka movement.

“The intra-communal fighting, starting in September and flaring up again in late October and November, left scores of people dead, hundreds of homes destroyed and more than 70,000 people displaced,” Mr. Dobbs said.

“Although the situation in Bangui (the capital) is currently calm but tense, we are concerned at the outbursts of violence in the country, which set back fragile efforts to restore a lasting peace and put planned elections in late December at risk.”

Hundreds of people have also fled to Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At least 13 people died, including a UN peace-keeper, and hundreds were injured this month in the latest clashes in Bangui, Bambari and Batangafo, including
attacks on IDP sites.

Some 800 IDP shelters and 120 houses were destroyed in Bangui. Those fleeing their homes have mostly hidden in the bush, fled to other sites or moved to UN peace-keeping bases or compounds run by international humanitarian organizations.

“Today, protection concerns include arbitrary arrests and illegal detention, torture, extortion, armed robbery, beatings, rape and other sexual violence, looting, arbitrary attacks on civilians, burning of villages, kidnapping, forced recruitment by armed group of children and others, restriction of movements,” Mr. Dobbs said.

Of the $241 million in funding sought for projects in CAR and host countries only $48.8 million, just 20 per cent, have been received. “These gaps mean the support needed by hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people is not able to reach them,” he stressed.

At the same time, humanitarian organizations have been increasingly targeted since September, with their offices and warehouses looted and staff attacked.

Pope Francis began his visit to Africa Wednesday in Kent and yesterday met with UN officials in the country including UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Achim Steiner and United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) Director-General Sahle-Work Zewde.

Situation of children in South Sudan is deteriorating, UN agency warns

27 November - The situation of children in war-torn South Sudan has worsened since the beginning of the year, with sustained recruitment, primarily of boys but also girls, by armed forces and groups amid severe malnutrition and flight, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) warned today.

It is estimated overall that 16,000 children have been forcibly recruited since the conflict between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President Machar erupted two years ago, and the killings, abductions and sexual abuse of youngsters have continued throughout the country, UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulierac told the regular bi-weekly news briefing in Geneva.

A quarter of million children under the age of five are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, double the rate of two years ago, and despite the signing of a peace agreement in August, the situation of children remains grave, he stressed.

Nearly 1,500 children have been killed, around 900,000 have been internally displaced and 650,000 have fled to neighbouring countries.

In June UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake warned that violence against children in South Sudan had reached a new level of brutality. “The details of the worsening violence against children are unspeakable, but we must speak of them,” he said, citing reports that boys have been castrated and left to bleed to death and girls as young as 8 have been gang raped and murdered.

“Children have been tied together before their attackers slit their throats...Others have been thrown into burning buildings,” he added.

Addressing the briefing by phone from Juba, South Sudan’s capital, the UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by War, Ishmael Beah, said the only reason children joined armed groups was because it was the only choice they had left to protect themselves, to have access to basic necessities. For many, war was the only way to even live, he added.
Indigenous people need support to reinforce resilience against climate change – UNESCO

27 November - Building resilience “is deeply rooted in [the] lifestyles and social solidarity” of the more than 400 million indigenous people – from the Samis of northern Europe, Berbers in Morocco to Vanuatu communities in the Pacific – who are feeling the adverse effects of climate change even they contribute little to its causes, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“Indigenous peoples suffer from the impacts of climate change, but they are not passive victims,” said Flavia Schlegel, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, which is hosting at its headquarters in Paris a two-day conference, ‘Resilience in a time of uncertainty: Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change.’

“They respond, innovate and adapt to this changing context, and this source of resilience is deeply rooted in their lifestyles and social solidarity,” Ms. Schlegal told the scientists, decision makers and indigenous peoples to share their knowledge and solutions, as governments are preparing a coherent response to the climate crisis in Paris at the UN climate change conference – known as COP21 – which kicks off Monday, 30 November.

In a press release, UNESCO said “indigenous peoples need support to reinforce their resilience.”

According to the agency, more than 400 million of the world’s indigenous peoples live in territories that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as the Samis of northern Europe, Berbers living in the High Atlas in Morocco, indigenous villagers in Alaska, or Vanuatu communities in the Pacific Ocean.

The objective of the conference that opened Thursday “is to understand the contributions that diverse knowledge systems, such as indigenous knowledge, can make to reinforce the climate change knowledge base, and to highlight practical community-based solutions and initiatives while reinforcing the links between cultural diversity and the sustainability of the global environment,” according to UNESCO.

“The voices of indigenous peoples, so often side-lined in climate change debates, rang clearly from the podium at the opening of an international conference focusing on reinforcing resilience,” the organization said.

A UN independent human rights expert said climate change is threatening their way of life.

“It has been shown that decisions, policies and actions undertaken by the majority, even if well-intended, may prove inadequate, ill-adapted, and even inappropriate simply because decision-makers do not understand nor know the aspirations, rights and capacities of indigenous peoples,” said Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Ms. Tauli-Corpuz called for the “successful adaptation and resilience achieved through processes that are community-driven, sensitive to local histories, ecologies and priorities.”
UN agencies concerned about worsening humanitarian conditions of displaced Iraqis in Kurdistan

27 November - A recent assessment conducted by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and REACH initiative found that the humanitarian situation of Iraqis displaced in the Kurdistan region of Iraq is worsening due to limited access to jobs and economic opportunities, forcing many to resort to negative coping mechanism to meet their basic food needs.

“Most displaced families have already been forced to move multiple times within Kurdistan and the increase in population is putting strain on Kurdistan's already limited resources and host communities,” said Jane Pearce, Representative and Country Director of WFP in Iraq in a news release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

She added that the conflict has already forced most people to be uprooted several times and are now struggling to find work to feed themselves or their families.

OCHA said that over three million people have been displaced throughout Iraq, including an estimated one million within Kurdistan and the neighbouring areas of Ninewa and Diyala governorates, due to the Iraqi crisis, which is now well into its second year.

“Where farmers have had their equipment and harvests destroyed, crop production has plummeted and markets are ruined. Price fluctuations, reduced water supply and insecurity have devastated overall food production across the country and put more strains on the 2.4 million food-insecure Iraqis.” said Dr. Fadel ElZubi, FAO Representatives in Iraq.

According to the rapid assessment, which surveyed internally displaced Iraqis living in and out of camps as well as local communities, high unemployment rates have driven displaced families to increasingly rely on negative coping mechanisms such as skipping meals, eating smaller portions and spending their savings, in order to meet their basic food needs.

The assessment warned that due to high unemployment rates and many IDP families, especially in camps facing severe shortage of funding, additional shocks could have an impact on their ability to afford enough food.

Alternatively, amid increased displacements and a severe lack of funding, WFP has been forced to reduce food rations by up to 50 per cent, resulting in many families, who previously had sufficient access to food, now facing the risk of food insecurity.

Lastly, OCHA warned that continued conflict, reductions in WFP food assistance and disruptions to the Public Distribution System, a Government-run social protection programme that provides food to all Iraqis, could push more people to cope by selling assets, eating fewer meals and eating less nutritious food, which would in turn cause levels of nutrition to fall further as winter sets in.
Greece: UN labour agency outlines roadmap for tackling unemployment and weak economy

27 November - The head of the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO), after meeting with Greek Government officials and labour representatives, has reaffirmed the agency’s support to the country’s economic revival and efforts to curb unemployment.

“It is the ILO’s intention to assist the Greek Government in addressing the social and labour impacts of the current economic situation and to promote collective bargaining and social dialogue, in full respect of the International Labour Conventions ratified by Greece,” Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General, said, commenting on the Greek Government’s 2016 budget proposal.

Mr. Ryder, at the invitation of the Greek Minister of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, George Katrougalos, visited the country yesterday to discuss its economic and social reforms.

Having agreed with the Government on ILO’s technical support, Mr. Ryder said that it “will aim at curbing unemployment through the strengthening of active labour market policies and the social economy in Greece.”

The UN labour agency will further enhance support for Greece’s efforts to fight undeclared work and informal economy.

In addition to meeting with Government officials, Mr. Ryder also attended a Tripartite Round Table Discussion on Strengthening Social Dialogue with Greek social partners, representatives from employers and workers to identify improvements on social dialogue mechanism.

“Achieving better job quality, reducing labour market insecurity, improving working conditions, and ensuring healthy and safe workplaces presupposes that bipartite and tripartite social dialogue and collective bargaining find their place in policy making,” said Mr. Ryder in his remarks.

Moreover, he urged the Government and social partners to urgently explore consensus-driven solutions to address the problems caused by unemployment, underemployment and informal jobs, as well as to undertake an impact assessment of certain provisions of the MoU (between the Greek Government and the European Commission).

The official visit of the ILO chief to Greece came during critical reforms in labour law, pensions and the broader industrial relations framework.

Since 2010, Greece has been implementing a fiscal consolidation and structural adjustment in exchange for a multi-billion euro bailout package. In order to curb budget expenditures and increase revenue, Greece expects its economy to contract by a further 0.7 per cent in 2016.

The unemployment rate in Greece is about 25 per cent with youth disproportionately affected. It is estimated that 75 per cent of the unemployed have been without work for over a year.
Ban appoints senior UN officials as Chef de Cabinet and Deputy Chef de Cabinet ad interim

27 November - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of Edmond Mulet of Guatemala as his Chef de Cabinet, and Patrick Carey of Ireland as his Deputy Chef de Cabinet ad interim.

Mr. Mulet will succeed the outgoing Chef de Cabinet, Susana Malcorra, to whom Mr. Ban reiterated his deepest gratitude for her tireless support, outstanding leadership and admirable dedication and her commitment, integrity and diligence inspired and shaped the UN, leading by example while setting standards at the highest level.

Mr. Mulet has been Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations since 2007, with a term from 2010 to 2011 as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Previously, he served as Special Representative and Head of MINUSTAH, from 2006 to 2007, prior to which, he was a diplomat, having been posted as Ambassador to the European Union and the United States. Mr. Mulet was also a member of Guatemala’s National Congress for some 12 years, including one term as its President. In addition to his public service, he worked for many years as a journalist and as a legal counsellor in public institutions and the private sector.

Mr. Carey is presently Director of Office in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, a function he has exercised since 2012, and previously he held a series of progressively responsible positions, including as Deputy Executive Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), Deputy Director of Mission Support in the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and Executive Officer for the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support.

He also served in other peacekeeping missions, and before joining the UN Mr. Carey served 14 years as an Officer in the Irish Defence Forces, including two tours of duty with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Rashid Khalikov, veteran UN official from Russia, named to senior humanitarian position

27 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today named Rashid Khalikov, a veteran United Nations humanitarian official from Russia, as Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Partnerships with the Middle East and Central Asia.

Most recently Mr. Khalikov has served as Director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Geneva since 2010, where he has played a leading role in building stronger partnerships, resource mobilization and emergency preparedness, Mr. Ban’s spokesperson said.

He brings a wealth of experience in engaging with partners, including with regional organizations, in particular in the Middle East and Asia, as well as the private sector.

He became UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Libya in 2011 and co-led partnerships missions with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the League of Arab States to Mauritania and Chad, in addition to visiting over 40 countries where OCHA maintains a field/regional presence.

Mr. Khalikov joined the United Nations in 1993. In 2005 he became Head of the OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, and the Area Humanitarian Coordinator in the aftermath of the South Asia earthquake.

As Director of OCHA New York from 2006 to 2010 he oversaw policy development, information management, external
relations, the Central Emergency Response Fund and other humanitarian financing issues.

In 2009 and 2010, he led missions to Pakistan, Yemen, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Kyrgyzstan to evaluate in-country humanitarian conditions, developing recommendations on the UN’s humanitarian role in these crises.

**Ban appoints experienced Australian national as new UN disaster risk reduction chief**

**27 November** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of Australia’s Robert Glasser as Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

Mr. Glasser will succeed Margareta Wahlström of Sweden, to whom Mr. Ban is grateful for her dedication and excellent leadership of UNISDR over the past seven years, according to the spokesperson of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Glasser has over 20 years of experience in disaster response and fighting poverty. Currently, he is the Executive-in-Residence at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), where he has focussed on the humanitarian impacts of climate change.

Prior to this role, Mr. Glasser worked with CARE International, where he had been Secretary General since 2007.

Before joining CARE International, Mr. Glasser was Chief Executive of CARE Australia, overseeing aid and humanitarian relief programmes in Cambodia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea and the Middle East, and he previously held the post of Assistant Director General of the Australian Government aid programme.

**Top UN human rights official calls for more safety after political opponent killing in Venezuela**

**27 November** - The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, today called on Venezuelan authorities to ensure that political opponents, human rights defenders and others facing threats in relation to their work are adequately protected.

“As I reminded President [Nicolás] Maduro during his recent visit to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, a sovereign State must defend and protect individuals who criticize and question the policies and practices of the State,” the UN’s top human rights official said two days after the assassination of opposition leader Luis Diaz and days before elections scheduled early next month.

“Democracy suffers greatly when the pre-election environment is marred by violence, threats and intimidation,” Mr. Zied said.

Mr. Diaz was shot and killed at a political rally on Wednesday while was sharing the stage with the campaigner and activist Lilian Tintori, who is married to jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez.

“I urge the authorities to ensure that the investigation into Luis Diaz’s murder is independent and impartial and brings to justice the perpetrators, as well as the masterminds behind the assassination,” Mr. Zeid said.

“All sides must refrain from violence and violent rhetoric in the run up to the elections,” he said.

The Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a news release it is not clear whether or not Ms. Tintori was also a target, but she has allegedly been the subject of other attacks and threats.
The UN Human Rights Committee, which has recently reviewed Venezuela’s compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has also expressed concerns about intimidation, threats and attacks against journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers.

**Surge in climate change-related disasters poses growing threat to food security – UN**

26 November - Droughts, floods, storms and other disasters triggered by climate change have risen in frequency and severity over the last three decades, increasing the damage caused to the agricultural sectors of many developing countries and putting them at risk of growing food insecurity, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned today in a new report.

"This year alone, small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and foresters - from Myanmar to Guatemala and from Vanuatu to Malawi - have seen their livelihoods eroded or erased by cyclones, droughts, floods and earthquakes," said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva in a press release.

In addition, the agency finds that worldwide, between 2003 and 2013—the period analyzed in the study—the average annual number of disasters caused by all types of natural hazards, including climate-related events, almost doubled since the 1980s. The total economic damage caused is estimated at $1.5 trillion.

Focusing specifically on the impact of climate-related disasters in developing countries, some 25 per cent of the negative economic impacts were reportedly borne by the crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry sectors alone. In the case of drought, over 80 per cent of the damage and losses affected the agriculture sector, especially livestock and crop production.

The FAO report is based on a review of 78 on the ground post-disaster needs-assessments conducted in developing countries coupled with statistical analyses of production losses, changes in trade flows and agriculture sector growth associated with 140 medium and large scale disasters, defined as those affecting at least 250,000 people.

The report demonstrates that natural hazards—particularly extreme weather events—regularly impact heavily on agriculture and hamper the eradication of hunger, poverty and the achievement of sustainable development.

FAO is warning that the situation is likely to worsen unless measures are taken to strengthen the resilience of the agriculture sector and increase investments to boost food security and productivity and also curb the harmful effects of climate change.

Mr. Graziano da Silva noted how the international community recently committed itself to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendia Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and is expected to reach a climate change agreement at the upcoming UN climate change conference—(COP21). Measuring progress made in meeting these global targets will require accurate, up-to-date information, including on the impact of disasters, the Director-General stressed.

"National strategies for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation that support resilience must address the types of disasters with the greatest impact on the agriculture sector," Mr. Graziano da Silva said.

He noted how sector-specific data on damage and losses are essential for effective policy and practice, and that the FAO study aims to contribute to national, regional and global efforts to develop comprehensive disaster data collection and monitoring systems.
Pope Francis calls for strong climate agreement during visit to UN office in Nairobi

26 November - Pope Francis today called on world leaders to seal a strong agreement at the upcoming UN climate change conference (COP21), stating that transforming current development models is a "political and economic obligation", as he visited the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi, Kenya.

Speaking to an audience of thousands, which included UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner and United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) Director-General Sahle-Work Zewde, Pope Francis placed particular emphasis on the need to adopt low-carbon energy systems and end the "throw-away culture" that contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.

"In a few days, an important meeting on climate change will be held in Paris...It would be sad, and I dare say even catastrophic, were particular interests to prevail over the common good," Pope Francis told the crowd. “In this international context, we are confronted with a choice which cannot be ignored: either to improve or to destroy the environment.”

He said COP21 represents an important stage in the process of developing a new energy system which depends on a minimal use of fossil fuels, aims at energy efficiency and makes use of energy sources with little or no carbon content.

“We are faced with a great political and economic obligation to rethink and correct the dysfunctions and distortions of the current model of development,” he stressed.

UNEP's Emissions Gap report, released in early November, showed that the expected Paris commitments from Member States will cut up to 4 to 6 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year from global emissions in 2030. This, however, is 12 gigatonnes short of the level that will keep the world on track to stay below the "safe" limit of a 2 degree Celsius temperature rise this century.

Meanwhile, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner praised Pope Francis's moral leadership on the environment, which the Pontiff has already displayed with his encyclical 'Laudato Si' calling on the faithful to embrace their responsibilities to the environment. Mr. Steiner said this added global momentum to efforts to close this emissions gap and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Addressing the world just a few days before the Paris climate conference, with the future of this planet hanging in the balance, you [Pope Francis] remind world leaders, business leaders and individual citizens that we each have not only a responsibility, but an obligation to act on what our conscience tells us to be right," Mr. Steiner said.

"In this pivotal year, your powerful notion of the 'globalization of indifference' speaks to the heart of the practical and ethical challenges ahead: both to reach a climate change agreement in Paris and to deliver it within the much broader, holistic spectrum of sustainable development that must leave no one behind."

Pope Francis also touched upon the need to create a world in which unsustainable consumption and production patterns, which contribute to pollution, ecosystem degradation and climate change through the wasteful use of resources in the production of food and other goods, are ended.

"This calls for an educational process which fosters in boys and girls, women and men, young people and adults, the adoption of a culture of care-care for oneself, care for others, care for the environment-in place of a culture of waste, a 'throw-away culture' where people use and discard themselves, others and the environment," he insisted.

As a further symbol of his environmental commitment, Pope Francis planted an Olea capensis, an indigenous tree found across the continent of Africa, on the grounds of the UN headquarters before his talk.
"Planting a tree is first and foremost an invitation to continue the battle against phenomena like deforestation and desertification," he said. "Planting a tree is also an incentive to keep trusting, hoping, and above all working in practice to reverse all those situations of injustice and deterioration which we currently experience."

Mr. Steiner took Pope Francis on a tour of the UNEP offices, a sustainable facility powered largely by solar panels, to demonstrate renewable energy and energy efficiency in practice.

There, Mr. Steiner presented Pope Francis with an elephant created from discarded flip-flops—a product designed to draw attention to the issue of marine litter and plastic waste—as a token of his appreciation for the Pope's commitment to the environment.

**UN nuclear watchdog's work impacting lives worldwide, says agency chief**

26 November - The head of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) today delivered an opening statement at the meeting of its Board of Governors by addressing issues of technical cooperation, nuclear applications, nuclear energy, safety and security, and nuclear verification.

The 648 proposed new technical cooperation projects for the next two years demonstrate the wide scope of the Agency's mandate, and the positive impact of its work on the lives of people around the world, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano told the Board in Vienna, Austria.

"Importantly for our work, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by world leaders in September, contain explicit recognition of the importance of science and technology for development," he said.

"The SDGs cover many areas in which the IAEA contributes a great deal," Mr. Amano continued. "These include energy, food security and nutrition, human health, protection of the oceans and management of water resources, as well as climate change."

The SDGs are a set of universal development goals, targets and indicators that countries can use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. They were adopted by the UN General Assembly in September.

Mr. Amano said Member States may choose to reflect SDG targets in their development plans, which could be reflected in their IAEA country programme frameworks.

The Director General also briefed the Board on the progress of plans to modernize the IAEA's nuclear applications laboratories in Seibersdorf, near Vienna. The Insect Pest Control Laboratory will be the first of two new laboratory buildings scheduled for construction under the Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories (ReNuAL) project. Modernization of the labs will improve the IAEA's ability to help countries use nuclear science and technology to achieve the SDGs, Mr. Amano said.

Construction of the first laboratory is expected to begin next April. Mr. Amano told the Board that the construction of the second building, the Flexible Modular Laboratory, will begin once the required funding is available.

So far, some 13.9 million euros has been provided or pledged by 20 Member States for the ReNuAL project, he confirmed, thanking them for their support. "However, we still need an additional 6.7 million euros. I again call on all Member States in a position to do so to contribute generously."

Turning to nuclear energy, Mr. Amano noted that the IAEA will be participating in side events at the United Nations climate change conference, COP21, that begins in Paris next week. The objective of the conference is to reach an agreement on combating global warming.
“Many countries expect nuclear power to play an important role in their energy mix in the coming decades,” Mr. Amano said. “It is one of the lowest emitters of carbon dioxide among energy sources, considering emissions through the entire life cycle.”

On nuclear safety, Mr. Amano noted that his report on the Fukushima Daiichi accident and the final report on the implementation of the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety had been published in September.

“Work is underway to incorporate the output from these major undertakings into the Agency’s regular nuclear safety activities,” he said.

In the area of nuclear verification, the IAEA is conducting preparatory activities related to the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), agreed between Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union in July this year. This includes verification and monitoring of the steps Iran has begun taking towards the implementation of its commitments under the agreement, Mr. Amano underlined.

He noted that the activities set out in the Road-map for the clarification of past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear programme for the period up to 15 October were completed on schedule and a wrap-up technical meeting took place on 24 November.

“Next week, I expect to provide my final assessment on all past and present outstanding issues, as set out in my report of November 2011, for action by the Board,” Mr. Amano said.

Meanwhile, an IAEA team of experts today said Russia's Novovoronezh Nuclear Power Plant has improved safety in recent years by, for example, using innovative techniques to reduce its impact on the environment. The team also proposed further improvements such as completing work to bring the plant's various quality arrangements into a single integrated management system.

A press release issued by the Agency indicated that the Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) today concluded a 19-day mission to assess operational safety at Unit 5 of the Novovoronezh NPP in the Russian Federation, one of the plant’s three operating reactors.

OSART missions aim to improve operational safety by objectively assessing safety performance using the IAEA's Safety Standards and proposing recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

'Nothing has changed' – UN expert on DPR Korea says two years after key human rights report

26 November - A United Nations expert on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) today warned that nothing has changed in the country since the UN Commission of Inquiry on DPRK presented its landmark report to the Human Rights Council two years ago.

“Regrettably, the human rights situation in the DPRK has not improved, and crimes against humanity documented by the Commission of Inquiry appear to continue,” UN Special Rapporteur Marzuki Darusman said in a press release, at the end of his last official mission to the neighbouring Republic of Korea (ROK).

“It is time to take stock of what has been done in the last two years and to move forward to pursue accountability for the crimes outlined in the report,” stated the expert, who will present his last report to the Human Rights Council in March 2016 before his mandate ends.

Mr. Darusman, who has been serving as the Special Rapporteur since 2010, was also a member of the Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the DPRK. Since his appointment, he has made several requests to visit DPRK. However, access
has so far not been granted.

“During this last mission, I discussed issues related to transitional justice with stakeholders in the ROK,” he said. “These discussions need to be further developed to adapt transitional justice process that suit the unique situation of the Korean peninsula, and also to ensure that there is accountability, as required under international law.”

The Special Rapporteur noted that, in the various meetings he held in Seoul, his attention was repeatedly drawn to the increasing difficulties faced by individuals from the DPRK as they cross the border to reach the ROK.

“In this regard, I am disappointed to learn that Russia signed an extradition treaty with the DPRK last week,” the expert stressed. “Despite Russia's assurance that this treaty will not be used to return anybody at risk of persecution, I am deeply concerned that it could de facto facilitate forced repatriation of DPRK asylum seekers. This may put the returnees at risk of serious violations, including torture.”

In late October this year, the reunion of families separated by the Korean War took place after a one and a half year gap.

“I had the opportunity to meet with a member of these families, who shared his experience - his hopes connected with the reunion, and also the disappointment it brought,” Mr. Darusman said. “He, and many others who have been separated from their family members are now elderly, and the issue requires urgent and practical solutions that are shaped with the participation of all affected family members. One cannot imagine psychological suffering of these families that there would be only one meeting in their lives.”

The independent expert stressed that “the separation of families is not only a humanitarian issue, but should be recognized as a human rights violation in and of itself,” as it continues to affect families in the two Koreas at multiple levels.

“I also had an opportunity to meet with youths – three from the ROK and three originally from the DPRK – and listen to their views of unification and possible accountability for serious human rights violations in the DPRK,” he noted. “I welcome the fact that that young people, as key actors in a potential future unification process, are actively engaging in these issues.”

In this connection, the Rapporteur underlined the crucial role of civil society in taking a lead role towards accountability for those most responsible for the Government's systematic denial of human rights.

“The issue of human rights in the DPRK is not something that can be tackled in the short term. Countless individuals have worked towards addressing these issues for decades,” Mr. Darusman said. “I pay the deepest respect to the individuals who continue their strive for the goal to protect human rights of people in the DPRK.”

During his five-day visit to Seoul, the expert met with senior officials from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Unification. He also met with representatives of the Korea Institute for National Unification, Korean Institute for Criminology, Judicial Policy Research Institute of Korea, Korean Bar Association, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, persons who left DPRK and members of the diplomatic community.

“I thank the ROK Government for its support and excellent collaboration during my tenure as Rapporteur during the past five years. I also thank all the officials and civil society actors for our fruitful meetings during this mission, as well as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Seoul for its support,” he concluded.

Mr. Darusman will visit Japan in January 2016 on a similar assessment mission. He will then present his last report to the Human Rights Council in March 2016.
Child brides in Africa could more than double to 310 million by 2050 – UNICEF

26 November - Nearly half of the world's child brides in 2050 will be African, if current trends persist, due to the continent's rapid population growth and lagging social reforms, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned, calling for sharper focus on reaching the poorest and most marginalized girls with quality education and a host of other protective services.

A UNICEF report released yesterday at the African Union Girls Summit in Lusaka, Zambia, shows that the total number of child brides in Africa will more than double, rising from 125 million to 310 million over the next 35 years, largely because of slow rates of reduction, combined with rapid population growth.

The statistical report, A Profile of Child Marriage in Africa, reveals that in all other regions of the world, current rates of reduction and demographic trends mean there will be fewer child brides each year. By 2050 Africa will surpass South Asia as the region with the highest number of women aged 20 to 24 who were married as children.

“The sheer number of girls affected – and what this means in terms of lost childhoods and shattered futures – underline the urgency of banning the practice of child marriage once and for all,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in a news release on the launch of the report.

“In all other regions of the world, current rates of reduction and demographic trends mean there will be fewer child brides each year,” UNICEF expressed in the press release.

In all other regions of the world, current rates of reduction and demographic trends mean there will be fewer child brides each year. By 2050 Africa will surpass South Asia as the region with the highest number of women aged 20 to 24 who were married as children, according to the report.

“Child marriage generates norms that have become increasingly difficult to exterminate – norms that undermine the value of our women,” said Chairperson of the African Union Commission Nkosozana Dlamini Zuma. “Through greater awareness, teamed with a collaborative approach, the crippling effects of child marriage can be eradicated.”

The report notes that across Africa, the percentage of young women who were married as children has dropped from 44 per cent in 1990 to 34 per cent today. However, because Africa's total population of girls is expected to rise from 275 million today to 465 million by 2050.

UNICEF points out that far more ambitious action is needed – as even a doubling of the current rate of reduction in child marriages would still mean an increase in the number of child brides.

The report points out that progress has also been deeply inequitable: the likelihood that a girl from the poorest quintile would be married as a child is as strong today as it was 25 years ago.

"The data is also clear that ending child marriage requires a much sharper focus on reaching the poorest and most marginalized girls – those in greatest need and at greatest risk – with quality education and a host of other protective services. Their lives, and the futures of their communities, are at stake,” said Mr. Lake.

UNICEF's report also states that when children get married, their prospects for a healthy, successful life decline drastically, often setting off an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Child brides are less likely to finish school, more likely to be victims of violence and become infected with HIV.
Children born to teenage mothers have a higher risk of being stillborn, dying soon after birth and having low birth weight. Moreover, UNICEF says that child brides often lack the skills needed for employment.

The African Union launched a continent-wide campaign to End Child Marriage last May. This was followed with an action plan for governments to reduce child marriage rates by increasing girls' access to birth registration, quality education and reproductive health services, as well as strengthening and enforcing laws and policies that protect girls' rights and prohibit marriage before 18, according to UNICEF.

“Each child bride is an individual tragedy. An increase in their number is intolerable,” concluded the UNICEF chief.