In the headlines:

- As world embarks on new Global Goals, African leaders at UN urge ongoing focus on continent’s challenges
- Azerbaijan ‘crucial player’ in energy projects, Foreign Minister tells UN Assembly
- In wake of ‘dramatic’ violence in Central African Republic, Foreign Minister calls to strengthen UN mission
- Iraqi leader, at UN, highlights progress despite ‘evil will’ of region’s terrorist groups
- At UN, Libya warns of ISIL’s increasing influence, calls for unanimity to end region’s crises
- ‘The time for excuses is over,’ small island leaders tell UN, urging global action on climate change
- Addressing UN, Lebanese Prime Minister calls on world powers to end ‘ongoing massacres’
- In UN Assembly speech, Pakistan’s Prime Minister proposes new peace initiative with India
- Terrorism and climate change greatest threats to humanity, Bangladeshi leader tells UN Assembly
- Global response to terrorism vital for solving refugee crisis, European leaders tell UN
- ‘UN has no equal,’ Sultan of Brunei tells Assembly, praising scope of new sustainability agenda
- At UN, Turkish Prime Minister urges action to end Syrian crisis

More stories inside

As world embarks on new Global Goals, African leaders at UN urge ongoing focus on continent’s challenges

30 September - Among the host of African leaders addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, the President of Togo, Faure Essozimnia Gnassingbé stressed the need for continued support to the continent – as well as ongoing cooperation with the vital work of the African Union – to ensure that gains of the past decades could be maintained and bolstered in the face of lingering poverty, terrorist activities and weak governance systems in some areas.

Mr. Gnassingbé said that since becoming a member in 1960, Togo had done its utmost to contribute to the Organization’s noble ideals and, in turn, had received much from the “great United Nations family”, with support, including from the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the UN system in Lomé.

Despite the great economic growth in Africa in recent years, actions and financing that went beyond classic financial structures were needed. Following the Addis Ababa conference on development financing, he hoped the donor community would spare no effort to assist African countries more constructively and with fewer restrictions.

President Gnassingbé said today’s realities also included the impact of climate change, poverty and threats to human rights. The Togolese experience every day the effects of climate change, including coastal erosion that is threatening coastal populations. Their survival requires more urgent responses and significant investments. In that regard, climate change financing is critical and should not come by way of a reduction in traditional official development assistance.
In his remarks, Ismaël Omar Guelleh, the President of Djibouti, said the international community undeniably remains faced with an unprecedented range of immense challenges. “Poverty and hunger, persistent unemployment and violent armed conflicts as well as climate change. Last year alone we saw the health systems of fraternal countries being overwhelmed by new and terrible threats such as the Ebola virus.”

“Climate change is the greatest challenge confronting human kind, but also the most important one of our day in terms of development and threatens to undermine life for future generations,” he continued, noting that the many meetings on climate change and the little progress that has been made over the years shows the extent to which the issue is a source of “controversy and division.”

“It is true that our claims are legitimate and understandable. However, it is also true that Africa has more to lose than others. For that reason, we stand ready to shoulder our responsibilities in order to reduce our emissions and we hope that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities will be scrupulously respected,” he said.

President Guelleh said violent extremism is the deadly ideological product which openly advocates the elimination of others on behalf of a supposed religious belief. Noting that West Africa is one of the first regions to have fallen victims to terrorist attacks, he said that Al-Shabaab is a major threat to our region and it is behind terrorist attacks and many attempted attacks. “In most countries of our region, this painful experience has enabled us to develop knowledge of the workings and practices of all the terrorist groups. And this deserves to be shared.”

Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, Vice President of Equatorial Guinea, said that his country always trusted the United Nations despite attempts by some to monopolize the Organization. While renewing faith and trust in the world body, which promotes peace, security and stability among all nations, his country was also concerned about some weaknesses it has shown in preventing and eliminating conflicts.

“In most countries of our region, this painful experience has enabled us to develop knowledge of the workings and practices of all the terrorist groups. And this deserves to be shared.”

Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, Vice President of Equatorial Guinea, said that his country always trusted the United Nations despite attempts by some to monopolize the Organization. While renewing faith and trust in the world body, which promotes peace, security and stability among all nations, his country was also concerned about some weaknesses it has shown in preventing and eliminating conflicts.

“We must deny the perpetrators of economic and financial crimes the ability to take refuge in

Lionel Zinsou, Prime Minister of Benin, said that while the international community had made much progress over the 70-year lifespan of the UN, many challenges remained, including terrorism, climate change, massive youth unemployment, poor governance and corruption. Africa was struggling against such corruption and needed coordinated judicial assistance to counter its harmful effects. “We must deny the perpetrators of economic and financial crimes the ability to take refuge in
safe havens,” he declared.

He was pleased that the United Nations is working with the African Union on such matters. Closer to home, Benin, with the help of its technical and financial partners has implemented robust plans to tackle corruption but was seeking assistance to end the impunity that often accompanied financial crimes.

**Azerbaijan ‘crucial player’ in energy projects, Foreign Minister tells UN Assembly**

30 September - In his address to the United Nations General Assembly today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan highlighted a number of contributions his country has made to the global community especially in terms of energy, and responded to yesterday’s statement by Armenia’s President regarding tensions over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

“Azerbaijan is making concrete contributions to the activities of the United Nations,” stated Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, highlighting Azerbaijan’s participation in UN-mandated peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan for more than 15 years.

He also noted that in recognition of Azerbaijan’s “outstanding commitment, determination and continued efforts” towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, his country received the 2015 South-South Award.

“Azerbaijan has managed to become one of [the] crucial players of the global market in energy infrastructure projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline through the construction of Trans-Anatolian and Trans-Adriatic natural gas pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor which will connect energy pipeline networks of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Albania and Italy,” he announced.

The Azerbaijani Minister further highlighted that his country has initiated strategic transport infrastructure networks, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project which will connect railroads systems of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, as well as the new Baku International Sea Trade Port allowing short and efficient connection between East and West.

“Azerbaijan considers information and communication technologies as a driving force of development, and has initiated the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) within the United Nations,” he added, explaining that it is designed to provide affordable and reliable broadband connectivity to landlocked countries of Eurasia, including Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Meanwhile, in response to the address delivered by the President of Armenia yesterday, Minister Mammadyarov said it was “full of usual set of falsifications, distortions and misinterpretations.”

“It is well known that Armenia unleashed the war and used force against Azerbaijan, occupied almost one fifth of its territory, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts, carried out ethnic cleansing of the seized areas by expelling about one million Azerbaijans from their homes and committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict,” he stressed.

He recalled that the international community has “consistently deplored, in the strongest terms, the use of force by Armenia against Azerbaijan and the resulting occupation of its territories.” He also mentioned four UN Security Council resolutions from 1993 which “demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.”

“Azerbaijan is the most interested party in the soonest negotiated settlement of the conflict,” the Foreign Minister declared, warning however that “if the negotiations fail to bring as an outcome the complete and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from our occupied lands, Azerbaijan will be compelled to use its inherent right of self-defence guaranteed under Article 51 of the UN Charter to ensure the restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity within the
30 September - Warning that the Central African Republic (CAR) is currently seeing an upsurge in deadly violence in and around its capital, Bangui, Foreign Minister Samuel Rangba today called on the United Nations to step up its support for the war-weary country, including by strengthening the UN peacekeeping mission there and lifting sanctions impacting training of military forces.

Opening his address to the General Assembly’s annual debate, he thanked the UN for its important support to the transition process and invaluable efforts to end violence and ease tensions in the country over the past months. But he acknowledged that the recent violence that swept Bangui just days ago – reportedly leaving dozens dead and injured – had forced CAR Head of State Catherine Samba Panza to return home.

Drawing the Assembly’s attention to the “new drama” affecting his country, Mr. Rangba said CAR was beset by “blind and savage violence” perpetrated by irregular armed groups. He said that over the past year, Ms. Samba-Panza had negotiated with a broad spectrum of parties, and, with the assistance of the international community, a roadmap had been drawn up that focused on, among others, economic advancement and institution-building with a view to eventual elections.

He said that the transition had yielded solid progress over the past 18 months that had culminated in the landmark Bangui Forum on national reconciliation, which had included the participation political parties and other groups. Mr. Rangba said that despite the current station, CAR’s transition process is irreversible. “The people of the country are determined to go to the ballot box,” he said, telling the Assembly that more than one million people were registered to vote, showing the desire to solidify constitutional order.

“Yet, the situation has once again become alarming,” he noted, with a “horrendous spike” in internally displaced persons in and around Bangui, even though those numbers had dropped in recent months.

While the international community had provided essential support in order to help CAR return to normality, the current violence “proves that peace and reconciliation are still tenuous and require strong support so the country will not once again fall into extended violence.”

“We ask the international community, and particularly the United Nations, to make it possible for there to be a stronger presence – and stronger action – to help staunch destruction and widespread criminal activity,” said Mr. Rangba.

While acknowledging that the international community today is struggling to find the resources to ease suffering in so many parts of the world, he urged the Assembly to “remember the thousands of children, women and older persons who are being hatefully killed, raped and humiliated, or forced from their homes just because a handful of individuals decided to put into effect their nefarious plans to destabilize and entire country in an attempt to quench their thirst for power.”

With CAR facing such a situation, he urged the strengthening of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the country, known by the French acronym MINUSCA. The Security Council, in taking such action, should also seriously consider lifting the sanctions regime regarding training and equipping defence and security forces in the spirit of bilateral cooperation.

He warned that CAR is susceptible to a raft of challenges and every effort must be made to ensure that Government institutions could exercise control over the entire country, especially in the North, which could be a breeding ground for terrorism.

In wake of ‘dramatic’ violence in Central African Republic, Foreign Minister calls to strengthen UN mission
Iraqi leader, at UN, highlights progress despite ‘evil will’ of region’s terrorist groups

30 September - The 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly is being held as the world tackles myriad challenges, especially ones posed by the terrorist group known as Da’esh or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Prime Minister of Iraq told world leaders attending the annual debate in New York.

“We achieved in Iraq remarkable progress in dropping rates of mortality, raising the percentages of education, reducing gender gap inequality, and improving living standards,” Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi declared from the podium.

“However, the evil will carried by the terrorist groups especially Al-Qaida and Da’esh, and the ones who followed them from the Ba’ath ex-regime, have hindered the development movement and spread murder and destruction which targeted people, possessions and infrastructure,” he said.

In spite of this, Iraq continues its democratic approach by promoting respect of the Constitution, ensuring a peaceful transition of power, and supporting freedom of expression and religion, Prime Minister Al-Abadi asserted.

He noted that the Government has produced a political, economic, administrative, and financial package of reforms based on the Iraqi people’s demands during the last two months.

“The people respected and accepted these reforms with a transparent identification of their needs,” he explained. “We are determined to continue in these reforms without neglecting our important role in managing the security and military operations to fight Da’esh.”

Regarding the new Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the 193 UN Member States last Friday, the Iraqi leader said his country is “serious and enthusiastic” to work to attain the goals it sets out.

“However, we expect from all countries to adhere and implement UN Security Council resolutions which are related to prohibiting the support, finance and armament [of] terrorist groups, in addition to the resolution of the General Assembly related to saving Iraqi heritage which will support building the country and achieve development,” he stressed.

At UN, Libya warns of ISIL’s increasing influence, calls for unanimity to end region’s crises

30 September - In his address, at the annual General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly, Libya’s Acting Head of State, Agila Saleh Essa Gwaider, reported on the “overwhelming threat” posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which is hindering Libya from becoming to a transparent democracy.

“We in Libya represent a fledgling democracy seeking to find its way in order to take hold as an added value in the minds of people and to transform it into transparent, democratic, effective and stable institutions,” said Mr. Gwaider.

However, he said that the spread of weapons and armed groups, some of which turned to criminal and terrorist behaviours, in addition to the exploitation of the situation by some people with personal interests, has resulted in the spread of chaos in the country, and has weakened the central authority, he continued.

He said that over the past year, Libya has witnessed the emergence of ISIL, or Da’esh, which asserts control over the towns of Derna and Sirte, aiming to secure them as bases from which to assert full control throughout the country, in addition to exploiting the area’s resources.
“This entity aims at stretching from Mauritania to Bangladesh and making the whole region subject to the law of the jungle claiming it as the ‘Rule of Islam’. This ideology is totally rejected and resisted by the Libyan people with all power available under the leadership of the legitimate authorities, represented in the elected House of Representatives, and the government emanating from it,” he added.

The Libyan leader also said that external powers have been hampering Libya’s attempts at fighting terrorists, including the UN Security Council, which displayed indecisiveness in approving requests by the Libyan government to exempt it from the arms embargo.

Mr. Gwaider also added that terrorist groups such as ISIL and Al-Qaida look to spread beyond Libya to North Africa, the wider Sahel region and even Europe.

“Therefore, all United Nations members should be aware of the gravity of the position taken by the Security Council… and exercise pressure for the lifting of the arms embargo on the Libyan army, or speed up the approval of applications for exemption from the arms embargo, and provide assistance to the Libyan government in the area of security, according to the provisions of Security Council resolution 2214 (2015),” he urged the world leaders.

He also called for coordinated action to resolve the refugee and migrant crisis that is spreading across Europe.

“We also emphasize that the humanitarian crisis needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner, in consultation amongst the countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination. Taking into account the need to address the root causes of illegal migration in general, and the reasons for the large increase in the numbers of migrants through Libya in recent months,” he said.

'The time for excuses is over,' small island leaders tell UN, urging global action on climate change

30 September - Speaking today at the United Nations General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Fiji, along with other leaders of other small island developing States, warned of the existential threat of climate change and looked forward to the possibility of consensus at the upcoming conference in Paris.

Prime Minister Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama noted his nation’s recent elections and encouraging advances in economic growth, primary and secondary schooling, infrastructure, roads, water and healthcare.

He then turned his attention to the subject of climate change, noting that Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) have “a unique perspective of the world to share with the international human rights community.”

“Like our neighbours in the South Pacific and other SIDS, we see the bright future we have charted for ourselves dimmed by the prospect of climate change and sea-level rise,” he said.

Fiji has been outspoken in insisting that all nations do their duty, he said, with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

“It is simply not acceptable for advanced economies to build a high standard of living based on the degradation of the Earth and the seas,” he said. “The time for excuses is over.”

Mr. Bainimarama said he hoped for an acceptable outcome at the Paris climate change conference later this year, and called for an agreement of a temperature rise of not more than 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, also noting that it should be legally binding for all parties.

“We also call for the climate change adaptation measures to be 100 percent grant financed,” he added.
He said that, because of climate change, Fiji currently has plans to move 45 of its villages to higher ground, and also to settle people from other low-lying Pacific Island States.

The President also welcomed the Sustainable Development Goal on the conservation and sustainable management of the oceans.

“Our destiny is shaped by the ocean in which we are set,” he said.

Meanwhile, the President of Nauru, Baron Divavesi Waqa, highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda, which “places the welfare of human beings at its core and lays out a comprehensive set of goals and targets to help empower every individual to realize their full potential.”

He also spoke about the importance of the ocean as the source of almost all development possibilities for Nauru, and highlighted concerns over illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the nation’s waters, noting “if we are to be true to Agenda 2030 and the commitments made to SIDS, we must do much more to eliminate IUU fishing and ensure that the income from fishing goes to the rightful resource owners.”

Turning to the subject of climate change, Mr. Waqa called it “the largest test of our international and domestic institutions.”

“Clearly, a strong, legally binding agreement in Paris is absolutely critical, with ambitious mitigation contributions from all countries,” he said. “The agreement should be guided by a temperature goal of 1.5 degree Celsius and consistent with our vision for a safe and secure world. It must also ensure climate finance is available for adaptation, particularly for the most vulnerable countries.”

He added that he believed many major economic powers wanted to reach an agreement in the upcoming Paris climate change conference.

“However,” he continued, “I’m starting to doubt whether they are willing and able to make the fundamental changes in their political and economic systems required to achieve our ambitious goals.”

Mr. Waqa warned that intense lobbying to accept an unsatisfactory outcome had already begun, which could leave a “take-it-or-leave it deal” for climate change.

Meanwhile, the President of the Marshall Islands, Christopher Loeak, addressed the General Assembly on the pressing issues of climate change and nuclear disarmament.

“The UN’s 2030 development agenda – and its Sustainable Development Goals – offers small island States a powerful tool to craft and adjust our own domestic strategies,” he said.

“In adopting the SDGs, the Marshall Islands cannot afford a ‘set it and forget it’ mentality which has too often marked past international efforts, he said.

He said he also welcomed the establishment of a comprehensive assistance program with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which will build his country’s capacity to monitor and evaluate serious issues of nuclear contamination, as well as addressing health strategies and other SDG benchmarks.

He also referred to the upcoming climate change conference in Paris.

“I am proud that climate change is now recognized by all world leaders as a reality which deserves, and is gaining, a firm and collective response. Everyone among us must act - and many, including my own nation, have already committed to emissions cuts well into the future of 2025, of 2030 and beyond,” he said.

“A world without a true commitment, and meaningful pathway, towards decarbonization is, for us in the island nations, ultimately, no world at all,” he said.
“As a low-lying island nation, with no higher ground, climate change poses a severe threat to our very security,” he continued. “Some have said there is no more hope, and no more time. I forcefully disagree. The future of my nation – the future of our very land – is perhaps more in the hands of my fellow world leaders than it is my own.”

In his remarks, Comoros President Mr. Ikililous Dhoinine noted the need to build on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, and endorsed the 2030 Agenda while cautioning against the misuse of sustainable resources.

Speaking on climate change, Mr. Dhoinine emphasized the importance of conserving and using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. He also said that, in the same way, leaders should promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and forests, and combat desertification and land degradation.

He also urged efforts to build peace and accountable institutions, as well as to ensure a world without poverty and inequalities.

Mr. Dhoinine also addressed the consequences of war, which have resulted in millions being forced “to leave homelands and board makeshift boats and live in inhumane conditions,” as well as “barbarous acts perpetrated by terrorist movements.”

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Meltek Sato Kilman Livtuvanu, told the Assembly that climate change continued to be a major challenge for the world and a major threat for SIDS.

Mr. Livtuvanu said “if we do not resolve this global crisis today, then we are running a risk of creating a world where there is no prospect for sustaining peace and security.”

“The linkage between Climate Change and sustainable development is clear,” said Mr. Livtuvanu. “Without addressing climate change, sustainable development for SIDs cannot be achieved.”

He outlined how, in March this year, his country experienced a category 5 tropical cyclone that affected 60 per cent of the population and 64 per cent of its economy.

“In our current assessment, it will take many years and more than USD500 million to rebuild our economy,” he added.

Mr. Livtuvanu said that Pacific island leaders continued to voice their concerns on climate change at international fora, calling for a legally binding agreement limiting global average temperature increase to well below 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels.

Prime Minister Tuiitaepa Sailele Malielegaoi of Samoa devoted the majority of his address to the General Assembly to the issue of climate change and SDG goal 13, particularly as it pertained to small islands.

He describes climate change as “the single most urgent challenge confronting mankind,” adding that it is “facilitated largely through human-induced activities driven for the most part by profit motives, with some degree of insensitivity to the consequences of such action on others.”

He noted that climate change was also a security risk.

“For some of the low lying Pacific island countries, climate change may well lead to their eventual extinction as sovereign States,” he warned.

“Against the backdrop of the existential threat climate change poses especially to atolls and low lying islands, SIDS have long been advocating for ambitious mitigation efforts by member states with the capacity to do so, and for a global goal of limiting the rise in average global temperature to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius to prevent some of our low-lying islands from being submerged by sea level rise,” he cautioned.

He also noted the importance of the upcoming climate change conference in Paris, emphasizing that it required “a new brand of cooperation and broad outlook.”
“A durable climate change agreement in Paris is therefore a test of multinational solidarity,” he said. “Time is running out.”

**Addressing UN, Lebanese Prime Minister calls on world powers to end ‘ongoing massacres’**

30 September - Holding up a photograph at the podium of the General Assembly of three-year old Aylan lying face down on a Turkish beach – the Syrian boy who drowned at the beginning of the month along with his mother and brother – the President of the Council of Ministers of Lebanon reiterated his country’s call to all powers in the world to “end the ongoing massacres.”

“He said the picture describes the story of “tormented people, drifting in the seas to nowhere, jam packed on the sidewalks in cities and train stations, waiting for a permission, a visa or simply a meal.”

“If Europe, with its sizeable capacities and generous humanity, has been confused at the sight of thousands of displaced erupting suddenly in its cities, Lebanon, with its limited space and scarce capacities has been crawling for the past four years under the burden of one million and a half displaced Syrians, amounting to one third of its population,” the Lebanese leader added.

He explained that the problem of the displaced is only one facet of the many negative repercussions Lebanon has endured as a result of the neighbouring war – terrorism being the most daunting consequence of this conflict that claimed “steep sacrifices.”

“It is no secret that for more than a year now, a group of our military forces is still held by terrorist groups, and we are still exerting tremendous efforts to free them,” he underlined.

He also indicated that despite the many political crises Lebanon is enduring, chiefly the vacuum on the Presidency of the Republic, the country is proud of being a “paragon of diversity and an oasis of coexistence between members of different religions and sects, at a time of surging Middle Eastern events threatening the social, cultural and religious diversity.”

On the issue of the new agreement between Iran and the five permanent members of the Security Council [United States, France, United Kingdom, China, Russia] and Germany, Prime Minister Salam said it will “open a new page” in international relations and mark the beginning of an improvement “in the regional environments, which will reflect positively on the political situation in Lebanon.”

Meanwhile, thanking all those serving within the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), he called on the international community to compel Israel to cease its violations of Lebanese sovereignty, cooperate with UNIFIL to demarcate the rest of the Blue Line [separating Israel and Lebanon and the Litani River], and withdraw immediately from the northern Ghajar area, Shebaa Farms and Kfarshuba Hills.

“Lebanon denounces Israel’s continued occupation of Palestinian land and its blockade of the Gaza Strip, and calls upon the international community to compel it to lift this inhuman blockade and secure the conditions for a decent living for the Palestinians,” Prime Minister Salam added.

He further noted that while Lebanon is rejecting the resettlement of refugees on its territory, it is stressing the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland, according to the international resolutions.
In UN Assembly speech, Pakistan’s Prime Minister proposes new peace initiative with India

30 September - Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif proposed today renewed peace talks with India, aimed at defining the relationship between the Asian countries ‘as one of cooperation, not confrontation.’

He said that one of his key priorities is to strengthen relationship with neighbouring India, to end the conflict that dates back to the independence of both countries.

“When I assumed office of the Prime Minister in June 2013, for the third time, one of my first priorities was to normalize relations with India. I reached out to the Indian leadership to emphasize that our common enemy was poverty and underdevelopment. Cooperation, not confrontation, should define our relationship,” he said.

“Yet today, ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary are intensifying, causing civilian deaths including women and children,” he told the Assembly’s 70th annual General Debate.

Mr. Sharif also added that the issue of Kashmir can only be resolved if peaceful dialogue is renewed between India and Pakistan along with consultations with Kashmiris.

“Consultations with Kashmiris, who are an integral part of the dispute, are essential to evolving a peaceful solution. Since 1947, the Kashmir dispute has remained unresolved. UN Security Council resolutions have remained unimplemented. Three generations of Kashmiris have only seen broken promises and brutal oppression. Over 100,000 have died in their struggle for self-determination. This is the most persistent failure of the United Nations,” he explained.

He suggested a four-step measure to be implemented as part of the new peace initiative.

“One, we propose that Pakistan and India formalize and respect the 2003 understanding for a complete ceasefire on the Line of Control in Kashmir. For this purpose, we call for UNMOGIP's expansion to monitor the observance of the ceasefire. Two, we propose, that Pakistan and India reaffirm that they will not resort to the use or the threat of use of force under any circumstances. This is a central element of the UN Charter. Three, steps be taken to demilitarize Kashmir. Four, agree to an unconditional mutual withdrawal from Siachen Glacier, the world's highest battleground,” said the Prime Minister.

Turning to other issues, he also spoke about the repeated terrorist attacks Pakistan faces and underscored that his country is a victim of terrorism.

“The global threat of terrorism cannot be defeated unless we address its underlying causes. Poverty and ignorance are part of the problem. Extremist ideologies must be opposed. But the narrative of the terrorists also has to be countered through the just resolution of the several instances of oppression and injustice against Muslims in various parts of the world.

Unfortunately, some seek to use the global campaign against terrorism to suppress the legitimate right of occupied peoples to self-determination,” he added.

Pakistan also urged a renewed and restructured Security Council. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged the need for a “Security Council that is more democratic, representative, accountable and transparent.” He also said that the Council should reflect the interests of all member states and not merely limit to an expanded club of the powerful and privileged.
Terrorism and climate change greatest threats to humanity, Bangladeshi leader tells UN Assembly

30 September - As the global community marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh told the UN General Assembly today that two global challenges pose the greatest threat to the sustainability of humankind: terrorism and violent extremism, and climate change.

“I am myself a victim of terrorism and violent extremism,” Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh said, recalling that on 15 August 1975, her father, mother, three brothers and other close relatives were brutally assassinated.

“I was subject to terrorist attacks 19 times,” she continued. “My Government, therefore, maintains a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy to all forms of terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalization.”

She insisted that her country is steadfast in tackling the extremists and anti-liberation forces who “continue to remain active in destroying the democratic, progressive and secular ethos” of Bangladesh.

“Second, climate change poses formidable developmental challenge,” the Prime Minister stressed. “We would not be able to sustain our development endeavours if climate change cannot be effectively dealt with.”

She noted that the new 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by the Member States of the UN last Friday, makes it clear that all actions need to be underpinned by the strong commitment to protect and preserve the planet and biodiversity.

“Bangladesh has taken lead in building regional cooperation processes,” she explained. “We have also taken initiatives to develop infrastructures to enhance trade and people-to-people contacts among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.”

Sheikh Hasina also announced the decision to lead the Global Forum on Migration and Development 2016, with migration having been recognized as a key enabler of development in the 2030 Agenda.

She further highlighted that Bangladesh is proud to be associated with UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding as a “leading troop contributor,” with its presence in 54 peacekeeping missions in 40 countries so far, and with the highest number of female police in UN peacekeeping missions.

“Bangladesh is widely recognized today as a role model for the developing world,” she underlined, noting that during the last six years, the country’s average gross domestic product (GDP) growth remained about 6.2 per cent despite global recession.

She informed world leaders that Bangladesh now offers stipends to 13.4 million students from poor families and free education for girls up to higher secondary level. The Government also distributed over 334 million free text books throughout the country.

“Our lead role in the UN in promoting the rights and well-being of persons affected by Autism and other neuro-developmental disabilities emanate from our efforts to build an inclusive society,” she added.

Finally, the Prime Minister recalled that her country recently settled the maritime and the land boundary demarcation and related issues with its neighbours, India and Myanmar.

“We exchanged 162 enclaves whereby more than 50,000 ‘stateless’ enclave residents have got their much cherished citizenship,” she said, adding that by doing so with India, a unique precedent has been set for the rest of the world.
Global response to terrorism vital for solving refugee crisis, European leaders tell UN

30 September - European leaders took to the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to call for a global response to terrorism, both by combatting it and taking early action to pre-empt the scourge, which has seen hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding to the continent’s doorstep.

“Joint action by the international community in the fight against violent extremism is crucial. The UN is the best platform to manage and coordinate international efforts,” Bulgarian President Roden Plevneliev told world leaders on the third day of the Assembly’s annual General Debate, calling for close cooperation of governments, law enforcement and regional organizations.

“As long as there is conflict in Syria, the refugee crisis will not go away. The efforts of the entire international community should be focused on ending hostilities in conflict zones, supporting institution building, the rule of law and respect for human rights.”

Noting that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has become a key obstacle to political settlement in Syria and a serious risk to stability in Iraq, Mr. Plevneliev also called for ramping up preventive action.

“Every crisis can be traced back to its initial phase when someone has violated the law and human rights,” he said. “To prevent future crises, a UN early crisis detection system needs to be set up to safeguard the rule of law and human rights.”

He also denounced Russia’s annexation of Crimea as “a blatant violation of international law,” hailed the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and pledged his country’s efforts to make the Paris conference on climate change in December a success.

Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic also stressed the need for early action against terrorism and conflicts. “Too often, we have to deal with the consequences of our inaction. Too often, instead of solving problems at their source and addressing root causes in their early stages, we spend more time and resources on the crises that we have allowed to spin out of control,” she said.

“We must change this approach. We must act on time, with determination and adequate resources. This is not only the right thing to do; it is smart thing to do. The migrant crisis that has over-flooded many European States is a textbook example of the consequences of inaction; the price is just too high.”

While noting that the solution to the crisis is an issue of defence against terrorism and extremism in all its forms that must be prevented and defeated at its core, Ms. Grabar-Kitarovic also appealed for providing sufficient financial and material aid to refugee camps in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East.

She called for full mobilization of efforts to fight ISIL and all forms of forms of intolerance and discrimination. “We are confronted with unspeakable barbarism and terror with the most appalling forms of murder such as beheadings, sexual violence against women and girls and other most heinous crimes against humanity, culture, religion, dignity and against dearest of all - human life. It is shocking and sickening.”

Swedish Prime Stefan Löfvén called on the Security Council to step up to the plate in Syria. “Time is of the essence,” he said. “The Security Council and its major powers must shoulder this responsibility. This bloodbath must end.”

Noting that Sweden is the largest per capita receiver of asylum seekers in Europe, he said the current refugee situation is
now also a global crisis of responsibility. “The UN system, and all leaders of the world, need to come together to ensure that those fleeing war and repression are treated in a safe, orderly and dignified way.

“We should dramatically increase the number of resettlement places, expand legal avenues for migration, and base all our efforts on the principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek asylum. And it is extremely urgent that all countries of the European Union treat the people seeking refuge in the Union in a spirit of humanity, solidarity and shared responsibility.”

The need for a global fight against terrorism and extremism was echoed by Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg who stressed that exodus from Syria today is a direct consequence of the violence unleashed by the Government.

“The conflict in Syria has also allowed extreme terror groups like ISIL to gain a foothold. Now, both the Government and non-State groups such as ISIL and the Nusra front are committing monstrous atrocities. The spread of these extreme groups needs to be stopped,” she added.

“The fight against extremism must be maintained, also in our countries. Extremism is once again raising its head in different shapes and forms. The ideology of disorder, discrimination, violence and disruption dominates the ideologies of ISIL, al-Qaeda and their various affiliates.”

Ms. Solberg urged all States to join the proposed code of conduct to enable the Security Council to act decisively against mass atrocities by suspending the use of the veto in such situations by the five permanent members – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States. Several resolutions on Syria have been vetoed.

Calling for a global response to tackling the root causes of migration as the only real long term solution, Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat denounced the unscrupulous people smugglers fuelling the refugee influx across the Mediterranean Sea, “the cradle of civilisation that has now sadly been turned into a graveyard,” he said.

He noted that his island nation has been at the forefront of this dangerous influx that has seen hundreds of people drown. “We are the only country in Europe, and probably the only around the world, that dedicates 100 percent of its limited military resources to saving people at sea,” he stressed.

“An important and necessary part of the effort by the European Union requires a more committed response to taking on the smugglers before they can put the lives of more innocent people at risk. The international community should be under no illusion.

“When it comes to these criminals, we are dealing with individuals who feed on the desperation of innocent people. In the process, they are making a fortune - money which is also being used to finance other criminal activities, probably even including terrorism. These people must be held accountable for their crimes and brought to justice.”

Noting that despite some vociferous internal criticism Europe is the only region to adopt a mandatory distribution system for refugees, Mr. Muscat added: “We made a first step. Now the global community has to follow. The United Nations is the forum to do that.”

The need for early action and non-use of the Security Council veto in cases of atrocities was echoed by Latvian President Raimonds Vījonis.

“On several crucial occasions in recent times the Security Council was not able to take timely and decisive action. It has had dire consequences,” he told the Assembly, citing the fighting in Ukraine and Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

“The Security Council was blocked from playing a role to stop Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and to seek justice for the victims of the (Malaysian) flight MH17 in an international tribunal that could establish the truth on who shot down this civilian airplane.

“The conflict in eastern Ukraine has cost the lives of thousands and led to the suffering of millions of innocent victims. Russia must stop all forms of support to separatists,” he said, warning that early UN action in situations of concern is
“Latvia supports the proposal to voluntarily restrain the use of the veto at the Security Council in situations involving mass
atrocity crimes. It also supports a Code of Conduct for any member of the Council not to vote against any action designed to
end and prevent mass atrocity crimes,” he added.

For Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic, the problem of mass migration from the Middle East is the greatest challenge of
today.

“The humanitarian disaster facing the world is only a consequence of the crisis that has shaken Syria for four years now, all
along without an adequate response by the international community,” he told the Assembly.

“If the international community, the European Union in the first place, fails to make concrete efforts to solve the problem, a
humanitarian catastrophe of an even larger scale threatens South-East Europe,” he said, noting that more than 125,000
migrants had passed through Serbia so far this year.

“We therefore need a comprehensive plan that would have to be implemented within the shortest possible time. Without
such a plan, migrants will be left altogether to the mercy of human smugglers. Passivity and an increasingly inhumane
treatment of migrants open a market for smugglers.”

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel also called for global action against terrorism. “The terrorists wish to destroy
universal values,” he said. “All means must be mobilized against this new threat.”

He said it was not a question of choosing between the barbarities of the Islamic State in Syria and the massacres perpetrated
by the Government there. The Islamic State must be eliminated and elections must be held to lead to a legitimate
government at the same time. He supported the relaunch of dialogue among the parties in Syria.

Slovenian Prime Minister Miroslav Cerar also chided the Security Council for its inaction in the face of the war in Syria,
raging conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Gaza, Yemen and elsewhere, and the escalation of violent extremism and crimes committed
by the Islamic State and other terrorist groups.

“We call upon the Security Council, and especially its permanent members, to overcome divisions and find the way to deal
more effectively with this worsening situation, in line with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international
peace and security,” he said.

He also called for global solidarity in the face of the refugee crisis. “The magnitude of the current humanitarian crisis needs
a determined and immediate response from the whole international community, based on common principles of solidarity,
humanity and shared responsibility,” he declared.

“We should help these people in need. We should increase assistance to countries hosting large numbers of refugees. We
should also act more decisively in the countries of origin by pushing for sustainable political solutions to the ongoing
conflicts and countering the spread of radical ideologies.”

Decrying the illegitimate use of military force and other forms of violence by States and non-state actors, Moldovan Prime
Minister Valeriu Strelet said gross violations of international law and the dramatic decrease in the trust between States have
already undermined the central pillars of the international system.

“The annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation, in a flagrant violation of international law, and the
outbreak of armed conflict in the eastern regions of the Ukraine have directly challenged international peace and security,”
he told the Assembly.

He pledged to seek a peaceful solution for the separatist Transnistria region of Moldova based on a special status within
Moldova’s internationally recognized borders, and called for the withdrawal of Russian military forces and ammunitions
from there.
Foreign Minister Gilles Tonelli of Monaco also called for the suspension of the veto in the Security Council in cases of massive human rights abuses.

“The primary responsibility bestowed by the Charter to the Security Council to maintain international peace and security brings me to commend the courageous initiative taken by France to call on the voluntary and collective suspension of the right of veto by its five permanent members when dealing with situations of mass atrocities,” he declared.

Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel García-Margallo, the last European speaker of the day, likewise called for global action against terrorism. “With Da'esh, we found ourselves with a terrorist movement which succeeded in controlling a territorial base from which it seeks to attack and destroy our model of civilization,” he said.

“Since we are all the targets, we must form a common front against Da’esh. With terrorists, one does not negotiate, they have to be defeated,” he added, calling on the UN to support the proposal by Romania and Spain to set up an international criminal court against terrorism.

‘UN has no equal,’ Sultan of Brunei tells Assembly, praising scope of new sustainability agenda

30 September - Despite what some people may say about its effectiveness, the Sultan of Brunei today told world leaders in the General Assembly that the United Nations has no equal, and 70 years of existence is a testament to its relevance.

“With a membership of 193, the expectation is inevitably high on what our Organization can do to address ever-increasing range of issues,” said Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah. “So, I am pleased that our new development agenda has encapsulated most if not all of these concerns.”

The Sultan was referring to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all 193 UN Member States last Friday to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

“Brunei Darussalam firmly believes that tolerance, compassion and social harmony are essential for lasting peace and security,” the Sultan of the Southeast Asian nation continued. “This has resulted in the close-knit community we have and enjoy today.”

He noted that in his region, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member States share principles of territorial integrity, non-interference, rule of law, and good governance which guide efforts towards closer cooperation for peace.

“It is these national and regional experiences which constitute our contribution to the UN as part of the multilateral process,” he explained. “And it is through the UN, that I envision the creation of a close-knit global community with similar values and principles, which can unleash our potential to work and achieve greater things together.”

He proposed that one way to achieve this is through cultural exchanges to foster greater understanding and empathy with one another, and which could also help prevent new conflicts.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah also underlined that according to the World Bank, the average cost of civil war is equivalent to more than 30 years of [gross domestic product] growth for a medium-size developing country.

“So, preventive diplomacy is a cost-effective means of addressing conflict and certainly an integral part of conflict prevention efforts,” he added.

On the issue of terrorism, he stated that since the last General Assembly, the global community has witnessed tragic loss of lives caused by “inhumane” terrorist acts in various parts of the world.
“It is crucial for us to address the root causes of terrorism and extremism in a comprehensive manner,” the Sultan declared. “We need to ensure that irresponsible parties do not exploit others' despair and suffering to fuel their own extremist agendas.”

Noting the numerous challenges facing the world, from armed conflicts, terrorism and poverty to infectious diseases, climate change and natural disasters, President Choummaly Sayasone of Lao People’s Democratic Republic called for strengthening the UN.

“I am of the view that we must enhance our political will, mutual assistance and cooperation under the banner of the United Nations in order to collectively address the challenges facing us,” he told the Assembly, urging comprehensive reform “so as for the UN to be able to respond to the emerging challenges in a more effective manner.”

He hailed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and voiced hope for success of the climate change conference to be held in Paris in December.

**At UN, Turkish Prime Minister urges action to end Syrian crisis**

30 September - Recalling the heart-rending story of the little boy whose lifeless body washed up on a beach in Turkey last month, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu today urged the United Nations to take swift action to address the deepening crisis in Syria and to protect the millions of people “fleeing war and tyranny.”

“The tragic story of the three-year-old Aylan should serve as a reminder of what the UN should stand for,” Mr. Davutoglu said, adding that the child’s body had washed ashore after a boat his family was on capsized in the Aegean Sea. “[They were] trying to escape from the indiscriminate barrel bombs in his town somewhere in Syria, onto an imagined land of hope, anywhere in Europe.”

The Prime Minister declared: “This tragedy will not end before the people of Syria have a legitimate Government that truly represents their will and enjoys their full consent. Until then, the international community must act swiftly to provide them safety in their homeland, a ‘safe zone,’ free from aerial bombardment by the regime and ground assault by Da’esh [also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL] other terrorist organizations.

Turkey, for its part, has offered protection for two million Syrians and 200,000 Iraqis fleeing conflict, calling this the largest number of refugees anywhere in the world.

“And our doors will remain open. And our hearts will remain open,” he said.

To date, he said, 66,000 Syrian babies had been born in Turkey; 6,000 would-be migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean; 55,000 sea-borne migrants have been rescued by Turkish lifeguards; 5 million Syrians have fled chemical weapons and indiscriminate bombing; and 12 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), almost half of which are children, are “in desperate need of help.”

With all this in mind, Mr. Davutoglu said his delegation had proposed the inclusion of the item ‘Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with a specific emphasis on Syrian asylum-seekers’ in the Agenda of the Assembly’s 70th session.

That proposal had been accepted last week and would provide an opportunity to examine viable responses to the tragedy of migrants, through partnership between countries of origin, destination and transit. “This is now a priority agenda for all humanity,” he said.

Mr. Davutoglu also turned to other issues of concern, saying “the Palestinian tragedy continues unabated.” He also welcomed the raising of the Palestinian flag at UN Headquarters today which, he said, would give Palestine “equal footing at the table,” and ultimately lead to equitable and sustainable peace.
Turning his attention to the subject of terrorism, he said that it was without justification and it was “patently mistaken” to affiliate terrorism with any religion. He noted the rise of Da’esh, as well as the increase in the number of foreign terrorist fighters in the region.

“This threat needs to be addressed at the source,” he said.

He then noted the link between development and global stability, saying that Turkey had given $3.5 billion in official development aid and that it wished to see that “no one is left behind,” particularly women and the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and IDPs.

Mr. Davutoglu also said that Turkey, as the Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development for 2014-15, looked to promote the linkages between these two subjects.

He closed his statement by echoing the calls of other leaders for UN reform, particularly with regard to the Security Council.

“The UN must remain relevant and effective,” said Mr. Davutoglu. “The change in the UN is not comprehensive enough to make it fit for purpose.”

Central American leaders say UN must be reformed and democratized to tackle today’s crises

30 September - As the annual high-level segment of the General Assembly entered its third day, leaders from Central America stressed reform of United Nations institutions and the urgent need to bolster multilateral relations between States.

Calling for “urgent restructuring” of UN mechanisms and bodies, Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, the President of Costa Rica, underscored the need for a “democratic” elections of the next UN Secretary-General, and also called for measures to ensure that the permanent members of the Security Council cannot use their veto power in situations of humanitarian crisis.

“Since 1946, the process for selecting the person who will hold the most important position in the international community has been characterized by opaqueness. Costa Rica is determined to change this, he declared.

He said that along with Estonia, Costa Rica is leading the efforts of almost 30 States to establish a process that is transparent, democratic, equitable, inclusive, “and one that, unlike today, would be consistent with Charter and similar high level international processes.”

Mr. Solis Rivera also emphasized the need to elect a woman as the next UN Secretary-General in order to uphold Organization’s principle of empowering women and girls.

“The time has come for the General Secretariat to be occupied by a woman. Let us acknowledge the great capacity, competence and commitment of women in all areas, and let us send an unequivocal political signal that, as we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this Organization stands by what it preaches in terms of equality and empowerment of women and girls,” he declared.

The President went on spotlight what he saw as the Security Council’s inadequate and untimely decision-making process.

“To consolidate the United Nations at the centre of global governance, the Security Council should take on its responsibilities with regards to maintaining international peace and security, taking into account human rights considerations in its actions and improving its work regarding conflict prevention. The Council’s focus on conflict prevention is inadequate and, when it does take action, it often comes too late,” he said.
The President associated the inefficacy of the Security Council as the main reason for the emergence of humanitarian crisis of Middle-east and Central African countries.

“None of these crises emerged without prior warning,” he said. “The responsibility of promoting, protecting and fulfilling the peoples’ rights and fundamental freedoms rests with the [Member] States. However, when governments fail to meet the ‘responsibility to protect,’ either because they lack the will or the ability to safeguard the rights of their own people, then it is up to the international community, and in particular the Security Council, to intervene and deploy the wide variety at its disposal to resolve conflicts,” he added.

“Because human lives are at stake, Costa Rica supports France’s proposal to restrict the veto in the case of mass atrocities […] and to demand a political commitment to act promptly and decisively in such situations,” he suggested.

This call for Security Council reform was echoed by the President of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez, who urged review of UN structures and governance mechanisms, including the Security Council, towards achieving greater transparency and geographical representation.

He went on to urge the “great powers” to join forces, as they had to end the Second World War, to work together to forge a roadmap to defeat terrorism and ensure that peace would prevail. In addition, he reminded the Assembly that “politics is meant to serve society,” and as such, nations should work together and in a non-politicized manner to eradicate poverty and ensure equal opportunities and sustainable development for all.

President Varela Rodriguez said that Panama was facing irregular migration flows and as such had pledged to treat migrants with dignity. The joint fight to resolve the problems that had led “our brothers” to leave their countries must continue.

Further, the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), informally known as COP 21, must reach a definitive, universal agreement. The Coalition of Tropical Forests, chaired by Panama, had worked on measures to mitigate and prevent the impacts of climate change on forests, including procuring resources to that end.

Citing Israeli violations, Palestinian leader renounces security, political accords at UN Assembly

30 September - On the day that the Palestinian flag was raised at United Nations Headquarters for the first time, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas today renounced political and security accords with Israel, saying it must now resume its responsibilities as occupying Power, due to its continual violations of the 20-year-old agreements.

“They leave us no choice but to insist that we will not remain the only ones committed to the implementation of these agreements, while Israel continuously violates them,” he announced from the General Assembly podium, referring to the so-called Oslo accords to set up a Palestinian state alongside Israel, with interim terms governing security and economic cooperation.

But at the same time, he held out the prospect of peace if Israel fully respects the accords.

“My hands remain outstretched for the just peace that will guarantee my people's fights, freedom and human dignity. I say to our neighbours, the Israeli people, that peace is in your interest, in our interest, and in the interest of our future generations,” he declared.

“I hope that you will consider the dangerous reality on the ground and look to the future and accept for the Palestinian people what you accept for yourselves. Then, you will find that the achievement of peace will be possible, and you will enjoy security, safety, peace and stability.”

Speaking on the third day of the Assembly’s 70th annual General Debate shortly before the official flag-raising for Palestine
as an Observer State, Mr. Abbas cited continual Israeli violations of the accords, which originally set full Palestinian independence for 1999, from non-stop settlement of territory slated for the Palestinian State to deadly attacks by Jewish extremists.

“Is it not time to end the racist, terrorist, colonial settlement of our land, which is destroying the two-State solution,” he said, referring to the establishment of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security.

“Is it not time to end this injustice? Is it not time to stop this suffering? Is it not time for the racist annexation wall to be dismantled? Is it not time for the humiliating and degrading checkpoints and barriers set up by the Israeli occupying forces in our land to be removed, for the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip to be lifted, and for our people to move in freedom and dignity in their own homeland and outside?”

Voicing deepest gratitude to the countries that voted by a massive majority in favour of the resolution allowing the Palestinian flag to fly at UN Headquarters, he said the day is not far off when the flag of Palestine will be raised in East Jerusalem.

“The policies and practices of the Israeli Government and the positions of its Prime Minister and cabinet members lead to a clear conclusion: it is working extremely hard to destroy the two-State solution that we are seeking on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy,” Mr. Abbas declared.

But he again stressed, in a reference to both Muslim and Jewish festivals coinciding at this: “From this rostrum at the United Nations and in this period of religious holidays, I also extend a sincere call to the people of Israel for peace based on justice, security and stability for all.”

Speaking at the flag-raising ceremony, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called today a day of pride and hope for Palestinians around the world and urged renewed efforts to achieve the two-state solution.

“Now is the time to support initiatives which will preserve the two-State solution and create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations on the basis of an agreed framework,” he said. “Now is the time to restore confidence by both Israelis and Palestinians for a peaceful settlement and, at last, the realization of two states for two peoples.

“I sincerely hope that a successful peace process will soon yield a day when we unfurl the Palestinian flag in its proper place – among the family of nations as a sovereign Member State of the United Nations.”

General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft also stressed the need to implement the two-state solution.

“On this day, we are of course keenly aware of the urgent need for real improvements on the ground and a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – one that fulfils the vision of an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel,” he said.

**Closing ‘vast’ gender gap, ending child marriage key priorities, Ghanaian President tells UN**

**30 September** - Spotlighting the importance his country places on gender equality, the President of Ghana told the United Nations General Assembly today that a major priority will closing the “vast” gaps between men and women through, among other efforts, providing decent education for girls and working to end child marriage.

“Most of the world's poorest people are women,” John Dramani Mahama said. “Currently we create programs and policies to address this imbalance, yet regardless of how successful they may be, they are not permanent solutions. They do not solve the ultimate problem, which is the vast inequality between men and women that so many traditions have inculcated.”
He also addressed the plight of children and the work his country is doing to address their needs.

“In order to address the issue of child mortality and malnutrition, preparatory work is underway to earmark disbursements for pregnant women and mothers of children under the age of one,” he said.

He noted the central role of education in achieving gender parity, emphasizing that it was “the key to change.”

“In Ghana, we have made tremendous progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goal target on universal basic education. We instituted the ‘Girl Child Program,’ which encourages parents to send girls to school, and at the primary level we have achieved gender parity between boys and girls,” he said.

Turning to the practice of child marriage on the continent, Mr. Mahama highlighted that, in West Africa, two out of five girls are married before they turn 18, face increased maternal mortality rates and “are subject to the sort of poverty that is nearly insurmountable.”

“Ghana has launched a campaign, under the auspices of [the UN Children’s Fund] to end child marriage in our nation by focusing not only on getting young girls in school but also on keeping them there their education is complete,” he continued. “This is being achieved through enhanced access to secondary education and beyond without compromising quality.”

On UN reform, he emphasized that it was time “for greater inclusivity in the United Nations.”

“The world that was in 1945 does not exist now in 2015,” he continued, “so the visionary Organization that was formed to meet the needs of that world must now be reformed to meet the needs of this one.”

He also delineated those needs, among them the issues caused by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Boko Haram and Al-Qaida, as well to address the situation of those killed in the South Sudan conflict and the “thousands dead in Syria, in Pakistan, in Nigeria, in Mexico, Afghanistan and Somalia; thousands more, the majority from African nations, dead in the Mediterranean Sea while attempting to flee poverty, hunger, disease or political strife or persecution.”

At UN, President of Sri Lanka details country’s ‘new vision’ built on sustainability and reconciliation

30 September - After years of conflict, “a new era of democracy” dawned in Sri Lanka this year, ushering in justice, freedom and equality, the country’s President told the United Nations General Assembly today, reporting that his Government supports a “fresh universal approach” that deals honestly with the past while pursuing sustainable development.

“Our new vision for the country involves achieving the twin objectives of sustainable development and reconciliation. A fundamental requirement in this context is dealing with the past honestly and building a modern Sri Lankan nation,” Maithripala Sirisena told the Assembly, explaining that, in the wake of years of conflict, his Government is now moving forward with a process of “truth seeking, justice, reparation and non-recurrence.”

Rising to 21st century challenges will require Sri Lanka to adopt a new social, economic and political approach, and, in that regard, he said that reconciliation must receive “priority attention.” Indeed, the new consensus Government he is leading has already taken several steps to introduce and operationalize the constitutional and institutional reforms required to accelerate the achievement of these goals.

Mr. Sirisena said Sri Lanka has suffered from conflict and while such turmoil could bring destruction to a society, there are also many lessons that could be learned during and after a conflict. “All forms of war and terrorism are a disgrace to humanity,” he continued, saying that the challenge of the modern era is to find ways and means to “defeat such brutality against humanity.”

“Sri Lanka succeeded in eliminating terrorism, which continues to throttle other developing countries in many regions –
from Asia and Africa to Latin America,” he said, declaring: “We defeated one of the world's most ruthless terror outfits. Equally, our post conflict experiences also have been significant. We believe that all these experiences can be shared fruitfully with other developing countries affected by terrorism.”

Turning to the issue of sustainable development, he said to ensure broader advancement for all, it is necessary to pursue dialogue within the global South as well as between the North and South. “Development should result in the empowerment of women and youth and assure security for children. Frustration in youth usually leads to conflict,” Mr. Serisena continued, but noted that youth is the driving force for sustainable development.

“Therefore, we should transform the youth to a totally skilled workforce to succeed in the 21st century knowledge-based society. It should be a lead component of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda,” underscored the President, adding that the overall aim must be to have an inclusive model of development that is capable of uplifting development standards globally.

Stressing the need for a “fresh universal approach,” he said that extremism, over-consumption, arbitrary exploitation of the environment, violation of human rights, and massive income disparities can often cause insecurity, conflict, violation of fights, and exploitation.

As such, he said that the edifice of sustainable development should be built upon the foundation of self-discipline and equity. “If this could be practiced at personal, community, national and global levels, it would mark a giant leap forward for human kind.”

**High-level UN event tackles biggest refugee and migration crisis since Second World War**

30 September - As the world confronts the biggest refugee and migration crisis since the Second World War, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today convened a high-level meeting on the issue and outlined eight guiding principles to improve preparedness.

“We must step up our work to prevent and stop wars and persecution. But we know that conflicts will not disappear overnight. More people will flee crisis, and people will keep moving in search of better opportunities. We must be better prepared,” Mr. Ban told participants.

The meeting, held at United Nations Headquarters on the side-lines of the high-level segment of the UN General Assembly, provides an important opportunity for Member States to discuss the challenges and responsibilities, as well as the opportunities, that large migrant and refugee movements bring.

Mr. Ban outlined eight guiding principles to improve preparedness, beginning with saving lives. “The preservation of life must guide all our efforts, from asylum policies to robust search-and-rescue mechanisms,” he stated.

Also vital is protection; non-discrimination; preparedness to better adjudicate claims; responsibility sharing in terms of boosting the number of refugee resettlement places; better cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination; managed migration to ensure safe and legal channels for refugees and migrants; anticipating future challenges – including the plight of those escaping areas progressively ravaged by climate change.

“Together, we must translate these principles into reality,” Mr. Ban stressed.

Recalling the haunting photograph of a lifeless Syrian toddler laying on a Turkish beach, the Secretary-General said such an image, while symbolizing deficiencies and failures, can also catalyse solutions.

“Let us make sure that the heartbreaking death of Aylan Kurdi – and so many other nameless tragedies – compel us to move forward together and see the long-term benefits of integrating refugees and migrants.”
The Secretary-General’s Special Representative for International Migration, Peter Sutherland, said the issues being discussed are “issues for humanity” that are not going to go away, and which are likely to grow in the coming period.

Stressing the need for cooperation, he noted that there are still far too many countries which believe in unilateral action to address migration challenges. “Cooperation is central to where we have to go. Those who seek unilateral solutions sometimes rely on sovereignty. But the only way to exercise sovereignty effectively in the day and age in which we live is through cooperation in an interdependent world. If we don’t take that course, then the winners will be those who seek to undermine society and the rule of society which we all claim to wish to uphold,” he stated.

“In the context of migration, the winners will be smugglers, traffickers and unscrupulous employers. Those who lose will be the dispossessed, the hungry, the vulnerable, the defenceless and the children.”

He also underscored the principle of global responsibility, stating that “proximity doesn’t determine responsibility.”

**At Security Council, Ban underscores shared responsibility to resolve Mid-east conflicts**

30 September - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called for using all the tools available to the United Nations to help steer the Middle East and North Africa towards a path of freedom, safety and dignity, citing in particular the obligation of the international community to ensure a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria and accountability for serious crimes committed there.

“Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen are our common concern, and their resolution is our shared responsibility,” Mr. Ban told a ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council on the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region.

He said the region is in the midst of some of the deadliest conflicts and worst humanitarian emergencies ever, with terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida affiliates “elevating the horror and complicating the search for solutions.”

While each is very different, the crises and conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen all expose similar horrors, Mr. Ban said.

“Syria has proven to be the most intractable,” he stated. “It has generated one peril after another: the use of chemical weapons, the rise of ISIL and other extremist groups, the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War and the displacement of 8 million people inside the country.”

He appealed to the Council to strongly support the efforts of his Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, to promote a comprehensive and credible political transition based on the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, which sets out a clear roadmap for a democratic transition and remains the basis for any peaceful settlement.

Mr. Ban went on to note that conflicts, governance failures and systematic violations of human rights are affecting not only the Middle East and North Africa, but the world at large. “Women and girls are facing systematic brutality. Young people are having their futures taken away from them before they have barely had a chance to dream,” he noted.

“We must work together to stop this downward spiral, using all UN tools. The people of the Middle East and North Africa deserve our full support in meeting these tests and steering the region towards a path of freedom, safety and dignity for all.”

On the subject of terrorism, Mr. Ban said “it is not enough to counter terrorism; we must also prevent violent extremism, while taking care not to take steps that only breed the resentment and alienation on which violent extremism feeds.”

To that end, he said, the UN is working with partners to expand capacity-building assistance to Member States, including to
stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and to address the related ills of illicit drug-trafficking and cybercrime.

“During the course of this General Assembly, I will present to the Member States a comprehensive plan of action outlining ways we can work together in this endeavour,” he said.

Today’s Security Council meeting was chaired by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of Russia, who holds the rotating Council presidency for the month of September.

Afghanistan: UN stresses need to protect civilians amid reported abuses in Kunduz

30 September - Amid reports of extrajudicial executions, abductions and other abuses in Kunduz following this week’s attack by the Taliban, the United Nations today reminded all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan of their obligations to protect civilians and to respect human rights at all times.

“I am deeply concerned about the situation in Kunduz following the Taliban’s attack on the city,” said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

“The reports of extrajudicial executions, including of healthcare workers, abductions, denial of medical care and restrictions on movement out of the city are particularly disturbing,” he stated in a press statement.

Preliminary information indicates that the current fighting has caused more than 100 civilian deaths and injuries, and there are concerns the number of casualties will rise. The UN has also received reports that up to 6,000 civilians have fled the city due to the fighting.

“The protection of civilians must remain at the core of any response to the current situation in Kunduz and Taliban and Afghan security forces must take all feasible actions to prevent civilian casualties,” said Mark Bowden, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan.

“Parties to the conflict must not use improvised explosive devices and indirect heavy weapons in populated areas of the city. Wounded persons must be allowed access to medical facilities for treatment and parties to the conflict must not restrict the work of humanitarian and medical personnel.”

Yesterday, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged both parties to the conflict to take all measures to protect civilians from harm and to take all feasible steps to prevent the loss of life and injuries to civilians.

“The situation in Kunduz threatens to severely undermine the progress Afghanistan has made in restoring peace, stability and the rule of law, which is what all Afghans deserve,” said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.
World must ‘act with collective humanity’ to address growing humanitarian needs – Ban

30 September - As preparations continue for next year’s World Humanitarian Summit, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today stressed the need for all actors to work together to address the growing needs around the globe which are due to a number of factors but mainly driven by armed conflict.

“Let us act with collective humanity to lift people in crisis from fear and helplessness,” Mr. Ban said in remarks to a high-level event convened by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on the margins of the General Assembly’s annual debate.

He noted that around the world, thousands of men and women dedicate themselves to helping communities facing perilous circumstances. However, despite these efforts, each year the number of people in need continues to escalate.

“The scale and cost of meeting humanitarian needs is increasingly overwhelming our capacity to respond. The future will be even worse if we do not take decisive, collective action now.”

Recalling last week’s adoption by Member States of a new sustainable development agenda, Mr. Ban said it will not be possible to achieve a world of safety and dignity for all without addressing the plight of millions of women, children and men affected by humanitarian crises.

This is why the World Humanitarian Summit that the UN will convene in Istanbul, Turkey on 23 and 24 May 2016 will be so important, he noted. “The Summit is a vital opportunity to reinforce our common endeavour to save lives, and prevent and alleviate suffering.”

The Summit will bring together governments, humanitarian organizations, people affected by humanitarian crises and new partners including the private sector to propose solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges and set an agenda to keep humanitarian action fit for the future.

It will build on a series of major global conferences such as the progress achieved on disaster risk reduction in Sendai, on development financing in Addis Ababa, on sustainable development in New York, and on the agreement on climate change that Member States are striving to adopt in Paris in December.

In preparation for the Summit, global consultation process has taken place involving 23,000 people in 151 countries. The Synthesis Report of the consultations proposes five major action areas to shape the Summit: dignity; safety; resilience; partnerships and finance.

Also expected to frame the discussions at the Summit are recommendations that will be submitted by the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, which the Secretary-General set up in May to identify ways to close the gap between rising needs and the resources available to meet them.

Mr. Ban, who will later today convene a high-level meeting on migration and refugee movements, noted that more than 60 million people around the world have been forced to abandon their homes due to violence and persecution – more than at any time since the Second World War – and half of them are children.

“Armed conflict is by far the greatest driver of humanitarian need,” he stated. “The absence of political solutions leads to protracted crises and more displacement. As populations rise, along with extreme poverty, growing inequality and rapid
unplanned urbanization, natural hazards are a growing risk.

“Climate change is also causing increasing humanitarian stress,” he continued, adding that it threatens to cause massive internal displacement and cross-border movement in the coming decades.

“Let us never forget that behind each statistic is a human life: a woman, a man, a child, with aspirations and human rights. Each deserves protection. Each has a right to a life of dignity.”

**Meeting at UN, Middle East Quartet strongly condemns Israeli-Palestinian violence**

30 September - The United Nations and its diplomatic partners in the Middle East Quartet today condemned “in the strongest possible terms” violence against Israeli and Palestinian civilians, and reiterated that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of a negotiated solution.

The grouping – comprising the UN, European Union, Russia and the United States – issued a statement following a meeting held in New York on the margins of the General Assembly’s annual high-level debate.

“The Quartet noted with deep concern recent violence and escalating tensions surrounding the holy sites in Jerusalem and called upon all parties to exercise restraint, refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric, and preserve unchanged the status quo at the holy sites in both word and practice,” said the statement.

It also expressed its serious concern that current trends on the ground – including continued acts of violence against Palestinians and Israelis, ongoing settlement activity, and the high rate of demolitions of Palestinian structures – are “dangerously imperilling the viability of a two-State solution.”

“The Quartet underscored that the status quo is not sustainable and stressed the importance of both sides’ demonstrating, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-State solution in order to rebuild trust and avoid a cycle of escalation.”

Meeting at the principals’ level were Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State John Kerry, and European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

**New UN treatment guidelines say all people with HIV should get antiretrovirals**

30 September - Anyone infected with HIV should begin antiretroviral treatment as soon after diagnosis as possible, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) announced today, as it issued new guidelines that could help avert more than 21 million deaths and 28 million new infections by 2030.

With its “treat-all” recommendation, WHO removes all limitations on eligibility for antiretroviral therapy (ART) among people living with HIV.

“All populations and age groups are now eligible for treatment,” the Geneva-based agency said in a news release.

According to WHO, the expanded use of antiretroviral treatment is supported by recent findings from clinical trials confirming that early use of ART keeps people living with HIV alive, healthier and reduces the risk of transmitting the virus
WHO is also now recommending that people at “substantial” risk of HIV should be offered preventive antiretroviral treatment. This builds on previous guidance to offer a combination of antiretroviral drugs to prevent HIV acquisition, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), for men who have sex with men.

Following further evidence of the effectiveness and acceptability of PrEP, WHO has now broadened this recommendation to support the offer of PrEP to other population groups at significant HIV risk. PrEP should be seen as an additional prevention choice based on a comprehensive package of services, including HIV testing, counselling and support, and access to condoms and safe injection equipment.

The new guideline stresses that, in order to effectively implement the recommendations, countries will need to ensure that testing and treatment for HIV infection are readily available and that those undergoing treatment are supported to adhere to recommended regimens and are retained in care.

Based on the new recommendations, the number of people eligible for antiretroviral treatment increases from 28 million to all 37 million people who currently live with HIV globally.

Expanding access to treatment is at the heart of a new set of targets for 2020 aimed at ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. These targets include 90 per cent of people living with HIV being aware of their HIV infection, 90 per cent of those receiving antiretroviral treatment, and 90 per cent of people on ART having no detectable virus in their blood.

According to estimates by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), expanding ART to all people living with HIV and expanding prevention choices can help avert 21 million AIDS-related deaths and 28 million new infections by 2030.

In a news release, UNAIDS welcomed the release of the new guidelines as a significant step towards improving the lives of people living with HIV and reducing the transmission of the virus.

“These new guidelines and recommendations are a highly significant moment in the AIDS response,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “The medicines and scientific tools now at our disposal provide us with a real opportunity to save millions of lives over the coming years and to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.”

People over 60 will double by 2050 but little evidence they will be healthier – UN report

30 September - The number of people over the age of 60 is expected to double by 2050 and require radical societal change because “unfortunately, 70 does not yet appear to be the new 60” contrary to widespread assumptions, according to the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO).

In advance of the International Day of Older Persons, which falls on 1 October, WHO Director General Dr. Margaret Chan said “most people, even in the poorest countries, are living longer lives, but this is not enough.”

“We need to ensure these extra years are healthy, meaningful and dignified,” Dr. Chan said.

In his message for the 25th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said older persons are an “enormous asset” to society and called on governments to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable so that no one – of any age – is left behind.

A report released today by WHO stressed that governments must ensure policies that enable older people to continue participating in society and that avoid reinforcing the inequities that often underpin poor health in older age.
Contrary to widespread assumptions, WHO said the report finds that there is very little evidence that the added years of life are being experienced in better health than was the case for previous generations at the same age.

“Unfortunately, 70 does not yet appear to be the new 60,” said Dr. John Beard, WHO Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course. “But it could be. And it should be.”

Dr. Beard said while some older people may indeed be experiencing both longer and healthier lives, these people are likely to have come from more advantaged segments of society.

But the report rejects the stereotype of older people as frail and dependent and says the many contributions that older people make are often overlooked.

Women, according to the report, who comprise the majority of older people, provide much of the family care for those who can no longer care for themselves.

“As we look to the future, we need to appreciate the importance of ageing in the lives of women, particularly in poorer countries,” according to Dr. Flavia Bustreo, WHO Assistant Director-General for Family, Women’s and Children’s Health. “And we need to think much more about how we can ensure the health of women right across the life course.”

The report highlights three key areas for action, beginning with making cities and communities friendlier to older people. Also critical is realigning health systems to the needs of older people and governments developing long-term care systems that can reduce inappropriate use of acute health services and ensure people live their last years with dignity.

The theme of this year’s International Day of Older Persons – “Sustainability and age inclusiveness in the urban environment” – highlights the need to make cities inclusive for people of all ages.

**Fallout from Boko Haram violence fastest growing crisis in Africa, warns UN relief official**

30 September - The humanitarian fallout from the violence inflicted by Boko Haram is the fastest growing crisis in Africa, a senior United Nations relief official warned today, appealing for concerted action on the humanitarian, security and development fronts to tackle the situation.

Recurrent conflict, erratic weather patterns, epidemics and other shocks continue to weaken the resilience of households across the Sahel region, which suffers from chronic levels of food insecurity and malnutrition.

On top of that, violent conflict has led to a surge in population displacement in and around the region, which is one of the poorest in the world and home to 140 million people.

“We now consider this the fastest growing crisis in Africa,” Toby Lanzer, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, said at a press conference at UN Headquarters.

“We’ve got 2.5 million people who have been uprooted, tossed out of their villages, off their islands, away from their farmlands… 1.4 million kids who have been displaced in the last few months alone… 1,100 schools have been destroyed.”

In a separate interview with the UN News Centre, Mr. Lanzer voiced particular concern about Mali and the Lake Chad Basin.

“It’s in those two places that the greatest human suffering is occurring in the region in terms of the fallout of violence,” he said.
There are about 5.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid – out of total 30 million – in the Lake Chad Basin, he noted. Some 2.5 million people have been displaced in north-eastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, western Chad, and south-eastern Niger.

“It’s much more than humanitarian action that’s required,” he stated. “It’s a package of security and stability measures, development measures and humanitarian action that’s really required across the region…”

“It’s important for the peace and security part of the puzzle to dovetail with development work of the international community and for that to complement the humanitarian work that we are engaged in.”

He warned that if action is not taken, “the grip of extremism could get ever tighter” and there will be more and more people who will be tempted, or even forced, to migrate.

“So I think the situation across the region is one that deserves every ounce of the world’s attention.”

**Amid numerous challenges, Lebanon needs great international support – UN chief**

30 September - While thanking Lebanon’s partners for their efforts to support the country in the face of numerous challenges, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today highlighted the need for even greater assistance, particularly as the country deals with the Syrian refugee crisis.

“The response has been significant. I welcome the generous support of donors – but this has not matched the country’s exceptional needs,” Mr. Ban told a ministerial meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon, held at United Nations Headquarters on the margins of the annual debate of the General Assembly.

Since the conflict in Syria began over four years ago, over 1 million refugees have arrived in Lebanon. Syrian refugees now make up 25 per cent of the population of Lebanon.

“Lebanon needs more support for local public institutions, especially municipalities which have to continue delivering basic services and maintaining a peaceful environment for refugees and host communities. The rights and safety of refugees who have fled to Lebanon need to continue to be guaranteed,” Mr. Ban stated.

“Resources are insufficient. Needs are rising. If we do not bridge this gap, there will be far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond.”

The Secretary-General encouraged bilateral partners to expedite support where the Lebanese Armed Forces need it most so that they can effectively address security threats.

Another area of concern highlighted during the meeting, which was attended by Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam, was the 16-month vacancy in the country’s presidency, which the Group noted “seriously impairs” Lebanon’s ability to address the security, economic, social and humanitarian challenges facing the country.

In a chairman’s summary issued after the meeting, the Group stressed that if strong international support is to contribute effectively to sustained stability, it must be paralleled by determined action by Lebanon’s leaders to resolve the political stalemate through the election of a president without further delay, to restore a fully functioning government, and to respond to citizens’ needs through the provision of effective state services.
“The international community has a deep investment in Lebanon,” Mr. Ban stressed. “The country has always stood as a symbol of co-existence. Stability there can help the increasingly fractured region.”

In addition to Lebanon, the following participants were invited to the meeting: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Italy, the European Union, and the League of Arab States.