As Hurricane Matthew makes landfall in Haiti, UN relief agencies on standby to provide assistance

4 October – Hurricane Matthew has made landfall in Haiti, bringing strong winds and torrential rains to the tiny island, the United Nations weather agency reported today, while UN relief agencies announced that they are mobilizing to assist, if requested, countries that are in the path of the dangerous Category 4 storm that is pummelling the Caribbean region.

“This is a very powerful and slow-moving [storm], making its potential impacts bigger. In Haiti, it could be potentially catastrophic,” Clare Nullis, spokesperson for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) told reporters at the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva.

She added that while Haiti is the most vulnerable of all the islands in the path of Hurricane Matthew and the most exposed, other islands such as Jamaica, Cuba and the Bahamas would also face risks.

According to WMO, the eye of Matthew is forecast to move near eastern Cuba later today, and move near or over portions...
of the south-eastern and central Bahamas overnight and Wednesday, and approach the north-western Bahamas Wednesday night. With maximum sustained winds near 145 mph (230 km/h), with higher gusts, Matthew is expected to remain a powerful hurricane through at least Wednesday night.

As for Haiti, which continues to struggle with food insecurity, the country remains vulnerable while recovering from the 2010 earthquake, with 55,000 people still living in shelters. The sustained winds could raze its poorly built houses to the ground.

Meanwhile, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) are mobilizing resources to aid the people of Haiti.

“Our priority is to support the governments’ interventions to save lives and meet the food needs of the most vulnerable and food insecure people affected,” said Miguel Barreto, WFP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, who added that the agency is mobilizing its emergency staff and resources to deploy in the wake of the storm.

In addition, WFP has arranged enough food supplies to feed 300,000 people for a month. Valuable stockpiles have been allocated to primary locations, with a prompt access to remote areas if needed.

For its part, along with food supplies, UNICEF is also preparing life-saving aid for 10,000 people in Haiti.

Marc Vincent, UNICEF Representative in Haiti, described the hurricane as “the worst storm Haiti has seen in decades.” He also expressed concerns regarding access to enough safe water and the high risk of water-borne diseases in children.

According to UNICEF, less than 20 per cent of people in Haiti have access to proper sanitation, while almost half of the population utilizes unsafe water resources. Such unsanitary conditions and water damage might increase the number of cholera cases in the region.

‘The best humanitarian relief is to end the conflict,’ UN aid chief says in war-torn Yemen

4 October – Concluding a three-day mission to Yemen, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator today called on all warring parties to grant humanitarian access and uphold their responsibilities to protect civilians in a conflict that has injured and killed thousands of innocent civilians, and displaced some three million people.

“The best humanitarian relief that can be provided is an end to the conflict. I urged the authorities, as I urge other parties to the conflict, to return to political negotiations without delay to reach a negotiated solution,” Stephen O’Brien, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said in Sana’a, the Yemeni capital.

The conflict shattered the civilian infrastructure, and destroyed livelihoods in a country which was already suffering from endemic poverty.

Violence against aid workers and civilians continues to characterize the conflict in Yemen. On 3 October, 10 civilians including six children were killed while 17 others were injured, reportedly due to shrapnel of a shell. Since March 2015, 13 health workers have died and 31 have been injured. More than 70 health centres have been damaged or destroyed by conflict.

In this situation, four out of five Yemenis are in need of humanitarian assistance. “In the 21st century, that is outrageous by any measure,” he said, expressing a concern particularly about the healthcare system as most of the facilities in 16 out of 22
governorates are either not functioning or only partially functioning. This denies thousands of Yemenis access to much needed essential health services, he added.

Mr. O’Brien travelled to the field to meet with people affected by the crisis. “My visit to Al Hudaydah hospital was heart-breaking,” he said. “Mothers bring their malnourished children for treatment but there is simply not enough medicines to treat them. The quantities of food, medicine and fuel entering the country are way below the needs and must be increased as a matter of urgency.”

The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 is only 46 per cent funded, leaving a gap of $880 million.

“We deliver emergency food assistance to 4 million people every month, but we need to do more […] The UN and our humanitarian partners are ready to do so, but donors need to support resources mobilisation efforts,” Mr. O’Brien said.

Yemen has been engulfed in violence for several years now – a confrontation between the country’s Houthis (Ansar Allah) and the Government of Yemen in early 2014 led to a Houthi advance on the capital, and an ensuing conflict which has involved support from outside parties. The UN has been heavily involved in efforts to resolve the crisis.

While peace talks between a Yemeni Government delegation and a delegation of the General People’s Congress and Ansar Allah continued, serious violations have occurred in Marib, al Jawf, Taiz and in the border areas with Saudi Arabia. Those UN-facilitated talks ended on 6 August.

**UN peacekeeping chief urges follow-up action to consolidate peace in Darfur**

4 October – The security situation in Darfur, Sudan, remains volatile and the humanitarian impact of the conflict significant, the top United Nations peacekeeping official said today, calling on the Government of Sudan and the international community at large to address the current challenges in the country.

“With the signing by all the Sudanese parties of the political road map proposed by the high-level panel of the African Union (AU), an important step in the peace process has been crossed,” said Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, as he briefed the Security Council.

“To consolidate this achievement, the parties should from now on implement both the letter and the spirit of the document and engage themselves in resumed negotiations towards arriving quickly at an agreement on ending hostilities and providing access for humanitarian aid,” he added.

Providing an overview of the situation in Darfur since his previous briefing to the 15-member body this past June, Mr. Ladsous also introduced the latest report of the Secretary-General on the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

The Under-Secretary-General noted that despite access and reporting restrictions, the UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) remains focused on its objective of protecting civilians and continues to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, while engaging the parties to immediately cease hostilities.

“UNAMID continues to be supportive of central and local government initiatives to restore peace and stability in the communities. The Mission remains focused on its core objective of protecting civilians. We call on the Government of Sudan and the international community to work closely, and in good cooperation, to address these challenges,” Mr. Ladsous said.
Turning to other political developments, the Under-Secretary-General said that President Omer al-Bashir had dissolved some bodies established under the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. On 26 September, the President had officially received the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference, which he had pledged to implement following its conclusion on 10 October. Due to disagreements over that date, however, the process remained constrained, Mr. Ladsous said.

On the security situation, the Under-Secretary-General highlighted that certain areas of central Darfur remained volatile, with fighting between the Sudanese army and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, which remained outside the peace process.

Calm in other areas was disrupted by sporadic seasonal violence between pastoralists and farmers over the use and management of grazing land and water. In addition, outbreaks of inter-communal and intra-communal violence occurred in some hotspot areas amid a reduction in the number of large-scale conflicts, he said.

The local authorities continued to take measures to contain the situation by facilitating peace agreements and ensuring the presence of Government forces in volatile areas, Mr. Ladsous said. The central government in Khartoum had also announced a strategy to address inter-communal conflicts and curb criminality through, among other measures, the regulation and control of weapons.

While that announcement was an “encouraging recognition of the seriousness of the situation,” Mr. Ladsous said, complex governance and development challenges must be addressed in order to “restore the social fabric and the peaceful coexistence between the communities in a region crippled by a decade of conflict.”

Regarding allegations that the Government had used chemical weapons in Jebel Marra, Mr. Ladsous said that the UN had not come across any evidence to support such claims. He pointed out, however, that UNAMID had consistently been denied access to conflict zones in Jebel Marra, and that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) had stated, in an initial assessment, that it was not possible to draw any conclusions without further information and evidence being made available.

In that regard, Mr. Ladsous encouraged the Government, which he noted was a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to maintain full cooperation with any future OPCW investigation.

Aleppo demands ‘bold action,’ including limiting use of Security Council veto – UN rights chief

4 October – The human rights calamity unfolding in Syria’s eastern Aleppo city demands bold new initiatives, including proposals to “limit the use of the veto” by the permanent members of the Security Council, the top United Nations human rights official declared today.

“Since the launch of the new offensive on opposition-held neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo by the Syrian Government and its allies, pictures of suffering and death have filled our screens. Faced with such a ghastly avalanche of violence and destruction, extraordinary steps must be taken,” said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, noting that since 21 September, hundreds of civilians have been killed, including at least 100 children.

“I firmly believe that the time has come for strong leadership and bold actions, and that the UN Security Council should, without any further delay, adopt criteria to restrain members from using the veto when there are serious concerns that war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide may have been committed,” the High Commissioner said in the statement, which was released by his Office (OHCHR).
The UN Security Council has 15 members. The five permanent members – China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, widely known as the ‘P-5’– all have the special power bestowed under the UN Charter to cast a ‘negative vote’ or veto, by which a Council decision or resolution would not be approved. The 10 elected, or non-permanent members, whose seats are distributed on a regional basis, do not retain this privilege.

Mr. Zeid said that such a “crucial initiative” will permit the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, a move he has repeatedly requested.

“Such a referral would be more than justified given the rampant and deeply shocking impunity that has characterized the conflict and the magnitude of the crimes that have been committed, some of which may indeed amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity,” he said.

*International law ‘does not exist to preserve superfluous rights’*

The High Commissioner said that the attack on a humanitarian convoy on 19 September, the recent strikes that hit three centres of the ‘White Helmets’ volunteer rescue group, and those that hit at least three major hospitals in eastern Aleppo – including most recently a vital trauma facility, which was struck repeatedly over the weekend – all “seem to indicate that the ongoing operations are conducted in complete disregard for the most basic standards of international humanitarian law.”

“These standards do not exist to preserve superfluous rights; they were agreed by the international community in order to preserve the most minimal element of humanity in the conduct of war,” Mr. Zeid said.

The attacks over the past 10 days have been the “most intense” the inhabitants of eastern Aleppo have endured since the conflict began, and not a single neighbourhood is now considered safe, the High Commissioner said, emphasizing that the use of weapons such as high-explosive blast bombs and incendiary weapons in heavily populated areas is having a “devastating impact” on the civilian population and structures.

Further to the statement, the High Commissioner stressed that the current operation by the Syrian Government and its allies “appears to be intended to force the surrender of fighters in eastern Aleppo by any means necessary.”

“This apparent aim is reflected in a pattern of attacks that have damaged or destroyed objects that have special protection under international humanitarian law, including medical units and structures vital for people’s well-being such as water-pumping stations; and attacks that have killed and injured people involved in providing humanitarian assistance,” he added.

*Use of weapons with indiscriminate effects ‘strictly prohibited’*

The use of weapons with indiscriminate effects – such as incendiary weapons – in heavily populated areas is of particularly grave concern, Mr. Zeid said, reminding all State parties to the Protocol III of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including the Russian Federation, that they are “strictly prohibited from using incendiary weapons in airstrikes on heavily populated areas, and that the use of such weapons by ground forces is severely restricted.”

“The use by armed opposition groups of what is known as a ‘hell-fire cannon,’ a homemade mortar that fires gas cylinders packed with explosives and shrapnel, is also totally unacceptable,” the High Commissioner said, noting that the use of such weapons constitutes indiscriminate attacks, as they are virtually impossible to aim correctly and have frequently killed and maimed civilians in Government-held areas.

“As no military advantage can likely be gained from their use due to their inaccuracy, it must be concluded that their primary purpose is to terrorize the inhabitants of western Aleppo,” he added.

“If proven to be intentional, the attacks currently launched on Aleppo by all sides, including those against civilians, against medical units and against humanitarian workers, their facilities and equipment, may amount to war crimes,” the High Commissioner said. “And if such attacks are knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population, they may also be found to constitute crimes against humanity,” he added.
We cannot afford to fail Aleppo. We cannot afford to continue to fail the thousands of children trapped in this city awaiting their slaughter.

The High Commissioner said that with a ground offensive against eastern Aleppo by the Syrian Government forces and their allies now apparently under way, “parties to the conflict must at all times and without exception strictly adhere to international humanitarian law, in particular the core principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution.”

“The failure by the enemy to adhere to international humanitarian law in no way removes the other side’s obligation to respect the law, nor does the designation of a particular group as a ‘terrorist organization’ allow for any derogation from the laws of war,” he stressed.

“Let us not forget that the destruction of cities like Warsaw, Stalingrad and Dresden, and the horror inflicted upon their civilians contributed to a great extent to the foundation of the United Nations. We cannot afford to fail Aleppo. We cannot afford to continue to fail the thousands of children trapped in this city awaiting their slaughter,” Mr. Zeid said.

**Some 385 million children live in extreme poverty, World Bank-UNICEF study reveals**

4 October – Children are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty, with nearly 385 million children worldwide experiencing that condition, according to a new analysis from the World Bank Group and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“Children are not only more likely to be living in extreme poverty; the effects of poverty are most damaging to children [...] and the youngest children are the worst off of all, because the deprivations they suffer affect the development of their bodies and their minds,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in a news release.

“It is shocking that half of all children in sub-Saharan Africa and one in five children in developing countries are growing up in extreme poverty. This not only limits their futures, it drags down their societies,” he added.

The report, titled Ending Extreme Poverty: A Focus on Children, released yesterday, finds that in 2013, 19.5 per cent of children in developing countries were living in households that survived on an average of $1.90 a day or less per person, compared to just 9.2 per cent of adults. Globally, almost 385 million children were living in extreme poverty.

The youngest children are the most at risk – with more than one-fifth of children under the age of five in the developing world living in extremely poor households.

The new analysis came on the heels of the release of the World Bank Group’s new flagship study, Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality, which found that some 767 million people globally were living on less than $1.90 per day in 2013, half of them under the age of 18.

“The sheer number of children in extreme poverty points to a real need to invest specifically in the early years – in services such as pre-natal care for pregnant mothers, early childhood development programs, quality schooling, clean water, good sanitation, and universal health care,” said Ana Revenga, the Senior Director responsible for poverty and equity issues at the World Bank Group.

“Improving these services, and ensuring that today’s children can access quality job opportunities when the time comes, is the only way to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty that is so widespread today,” she added.
The global estimate of extreme child poverty is based on data from 89 countries, representing 83 per cent of the developing world’s population.

**Highest rates of extreme poverty found in Sub-Saharan Africa & South Asia**

Sub-Saharan Africa has both the highest rates of children living in extreme poverty at just under 50 per cent, and the largest share of the world’s extremely poor children, at just over 50 per cent. South Asia has the second highest share at nearly 36 per cent – with over 30 per cent of extremely poor children living in India alone. More than four out of five children in extreme poverty live in rural areas.

UNICEF and the World Bank are calling on governments to:

- Routinely measure child poverty at the national and subnational level and focus on children in national poverty reduction plans as part of efforts to end extreme poverty by 2030;

- Strengthen child-sensitive social protection systems, including cash transfer programs that directly help poor families to pay for food, health care, education and other services that protect children from the impact of poverty and improve their chances of breaking the cycle in their own lives;

- Prioritize investments in education, health, clean water, sanitation and infrastructure that benefit the poorest children, as well as those that help prevent people from falling back into poverty after setbacks like droughts, disease or economic instability; and

- Shape policy decisions so that economic growth benefits the poorest children.

**Yemen: UN reports shelling in Taiz leaves dozens of civilian casualties**

4 October – The United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) is reporting that casualties continue to mount in war-torn Yemen, including after an incident yesterday evening in the central city of Taiz, where artillery fire on a busy street next to a market in Bir Basha, Al Mudhaffar district, left six children dead, six wounded and more than a dozen other casualties.

“At least 10 civilians – including six children – were killed, and 17 others were injured – including six more children and three women,” said OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville, at the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva today.

According to Mr. Colville, the shelling appeared to have been fired from an area in Al Ta’iziyah district, where the artilleries of Popular Committees affiliated with Al Houthis and Army Units loyal to former President Saleh are positioned.

“Witnesses who spoke to our staff in Yemen said the street where the market was located was crowded with people at the time of the attack,” he said, adding that prior to the incident there had been no armed confrontations between warring parties in the Bir Basha area.

The spokesperson went on to say that OHCHR staff in Yemen verified that the overall casualty figures from March 2015 to 30 September totalled 10,963 civilians, including 4,014 people killed.
“During August and September, when casualty numbers climbed steeply after the collapse of the cessation of hostilities, six times as many civilian casualties were reported to have been caused by the Coalition – 279 killed and 339 injured – as by the Houthis and their allies – 46 killed and 62 injured,” Mr. Colville explained. “During the previous two months, the situation was the other way around, with the majority of casualties caused by the Houthis and their allies – at a ratio of just over three to one – but the total numbers were much lower.”

‘Seriously concerned’ by situation in Jammu and Kashmir, UN rights chief urges de-escalation of tensions

4 October – The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, is seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the rising tensions between India and Pakistan, a spokesperson from the High Commissioner’s Office (OHCHR) said today.

“We urge India and Pakistan to engage in a dialogue and to de-escalate the situation,” Rupert Colville, told reporters at the regular Geneva briefing today, adding: “The inflammatory remarks on both sides only fuel the tensions and could result in a further deterioration of the human rights situation.”

“We reiterate our call for unfettered and unconditional access to both Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir to enable us to independently and impartially monitor the human rights situation,” added Mr. Colville.

“We stand ready to support efforts to de-escalate the situation,” he concluded.

The UN has long maintained an institutional presence in the contested area between India and Pakistan. According to the Security Council mandate given in resolution 307 of 1971, the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) observes and reports on ceasefire violations along and across the Line of Control and the working boundary between the South Asian neighbours in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as reports developments that could lead to ceasefire violations.

Recent developments, particularly reported ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC), have led to an escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan.
UN chief urges European Parliament to approve process on Paris Agreement ratification

4 October – Addressing the plenary of the European Parliament, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called its members to approve a speedy ratification by the European Union (EU) of the Paris Agreement on climate change and to help lead the world to a better future.

“I can think of no better way to secure the legacy of Paris than to have the Agreement enter into force in record time, backed by the support of the world’s most powerful economies and its most vulnerable countries,” said Mr. Ban in his remarks to the European body at its headquarters in Strasbourg, France.

“In the name of humanity and for the sake of future generations, I encourage you to support the speedy ratification of the Paris Agreement,” he added.

On 30 September, EU environment ministers had agreed to ratify the Agreement through a process that would enable individual countries to send their ratifications directly to the UN. The next step is the approval of the process by the European Parliament.

In his remarks today, the UN chief recalled that one of the two requirements that will allow the Agreement to enter into force first has already been achieved with 55 country ratifications (as of now 63 countries have ratified the Paris Agreement) and that the second one – that 55 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions accounted for – is close to being secured (it currently stands at 52.11 per cent).

Earlier in September, China and the United States, the world’s two largest emitters, formally joined the accord, and with India’s ratification just two days ago, the treaty’s entry into force is getting very close, but still a bit more effort is needed.

“Rapid entry into force would demonstrate anew Europe’s commitment to international cooperation, which is at the heart of the European Union’s identity,” noted the UN Secretary-General, highlighting that it would spur the transformation to a low-carbon, high-opportunity, climate-resilient economy needed to keep global temperature increase well below the agreed 2 degrees Celsius mark.

Hailing the leadership of the EU on addressing the challenges posed by climate change, including its role in the UN Framework Convention negotiations, support for the Green Climate Fund and other funding mechanisms, Mr. Ban highlighted that today offered them another opportunity to demonstrate their global climate leadership.

Concluding his remarks, the Secretary-General also thanked the EU and the European Parliament for their support to the UN and expressed hope that the EU will continue its support of to the UN in its work for human rights, sustainable development and lasting peace.

Also today, speaking to the media in Strasbourg after the European Parliament approved the fast track ratification process, Mr. Ban said that the approval reaffirmed the European Parliament’s support for urgent action to address climate change, and to turn it into an opportunity for building safer, healthier, and more prosperous societies.

He added that by their action, European Parliamentarians underscored their commitment to international cooperation. He also thanked them and President Martin Schulz for their leadership.
Ban condemns attacks against UN mission in Mali

4 October – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has condemned yesterday's series of attacks against the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

According to preliminary information, four different attacks targeting MINUSMA personnel and installations occurred in Aguelhok, Kidal region, during which one peacekeeper from Chad was killed and eight others injured, according to a statement attributable to the Secretary-General's spokesperson.

“The Secretary-General presents his sincere condolences to the family of the fallen peacekeeper and to the Government and people of Chad, and wishes a prompt recovery to those injured,” the statement said.

The UN chief also called for “swift action” to bring the perpetrators of the attacks to justice, recalling that attacks against UN peacekeepers constitute war crimes under international law.

The statement also said that the Secretary-General is concerned by the recent violations of the ceasefire arrangements by the signatory armed groups in the area of Kidal. In that regard, Mr. Ban urged signatory parties to fulfil their obligations under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which he said would contribute to restoring stability and security in the region.

In late September, the Secretary-General, speaking at ministerial meeting on the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emphasized that the promotion of peace and stability in Mali is crucial to its people, for the region and for the world.

The Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed in June 2015 by the Coordination des Mouvements de l’Azawad armed group, following its signature in May 2015 by the Government and a third party, the Plateforme coalition of armed groups.

The Malian Government has been seeking to restore stability and rebuild following a series of setbacks since early 2012, including a military coup d'état, renewed fighting between Government forces and Tuareg rebels, and the seizure of its northern territory by radical extremists. The country has also been wracked by a series of humanitarian crises.
FEATURE: Political differences, a dozen peacekeepers and two new wells in northern Haiti

4 October – Residents in Pilate, a remote town of some 40,000 inhabitants located on a mountain in northern Haiti, were treated to an unusual site recently: uniformed, foreign men hard at work laying concrete foundations for a well near the local hospital and school.

Local inhabitants had become resigned to a deficient water supply for months following political confrontations that led to the existing water supply system being sabotaged in December.

“There was a division between the two political parties and, to punish the population of the town, one of them cut the water supply to the community,” the Executive Director of the Hôpital L’Espérance in Pilate, Sister Louisa Bélanger.

The sabotage meant that residents would have had to rely on external water supplies in an already difficult-to-access location, with the Plaisance Arrondissement – the region Pilate is located in – known for its mountainous terrain and poor road networks. This development worsened an already dire situation in Pilate, which the authorities had identified in November 2015 as one of 15 communities under “red alert” status for the country’s cholera outbreak.

Coinciding with International Water Day on 22 March, a group of United Nations officials, led by the Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Haiti, Mourad Wahba, had visited Pilate to meet representatives from the local authorities and community groups to evaluate the town’s needs following the sabotage.

Mr. Wahba was accompanied by representatives from the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as well as specialists from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

“We are ready to help you with the water supply – but we ask for vigilance for the system’s long-term viability,” Mr. Wahba, who also serves as the world body’s Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti, said during the visit. “Civic awareness from the residents of Pilate is fundamental in this respect.”

Along with others, such as the town’s mayor and representatives of non-governmental organizations, Sister Louisa met with the UN officials and asked for their assistance.

The Humanitarian Coordinator committed to support the town and asked the local authorities to propose a plan for the management and protection of a new water system, as well as a second plan with proposals for the wider development of the town. While those plans were being prepared, as an emergency measure, MINUSTAH transported water by truck to the community, particularly for usage by the local hospital and school.

MINUSTAH has helped us greatly – they’re the ones who have supplied the water

“MINUSTAH has helped us greatly – they’re the ones who have supplied the water,” said Sister Louisa. “MINUSTAH arrived with water trucks two or three times a week, and this water was used to clean the hospital.”

“We even managed a surgical mission of 15 days thanks to the MINUSTAH-supplied water. One hundred and four beneficiaries were operated on during this time,” she added.
According to the hospital administrator, at the height of the Pilate’s cholera outbreak – between November 2015 and January 2016 – around 30 to 40 cases could be treated simultaneously thanks to the UN mission’s truck-borne water supply.

The town of Pilate in northern Haiti had been placed under “red alert” status cholera late last year. Then, further complicating its water supply situation, local political differences led to the its water system being sabotaged. UN agencies, following a visit earlier this year, committed to aiding the town with its water needs, both in the short-term and long-term. The former includes a request for two new wells near a hospital and a school – which is how a dozen Brazilian “blue helmets” recently found themselves building two wells and a water system in Pilate.

And, at their meeting, Mr. Wahba agreed to a separate request from Sister Louisa for two new wells – built by MINUSTAH engineers – to improve the water supply for the hospital and the school.

“I was ready,” said Sister Louisa. “I had my documents, and Mr. Wahba told me: ‘You will have your well.’”

The project in Pilate has drawn support from across the UN system in the Caribbean country.

“The Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Haiti, Sandra Honoré, is personally engaged to support this project that will improve the access to safe water for the local population,” said MINUSTAH’s spokesperson, Ariane Quentier.

And this is how a dozen Brazilian peacekeepers found themselves in this remote community over recent days, laying the concrete foundations and structure to protect the well’s water basin, a generator and a water pump, as well as digging two wells, each at least 100 metres in depth.

“Digging a well is straight-forward enough – the more challenging aspect to this was to bring the equipment here,” said Lieutenant Michell Vanderson Sena Leal of MINUSTAH’s Brazilian Engineering Company, which is based in the capital, Port au Prince, located just 220 kilometres from Pilate but a 10-hour journey given tough road conditions.

The move involved transporting 65 tonnes of equipment to the town by a convoy made up of 14 trucks. The peacekeepers have now finished the wells – all that remains is for them to be connected to a water system, which should be completed in the near future, providing Hôpital L’Espérance patients and local school students with an unlimited supply of clean water.

“I asked for a well so as to be more independent from other water sources, and to meet the needs of the patients. If the town’s population is divided [because of political differences], the hospital does not have to be punished for that,” said Sister Louisa. “Under no circumstances should the hospital be affected by political instability, and water should not be affected because water is life.”

**UN deputy chief urges increased participation of young people in peace and security decision-making**

4 October – With more young people around the world than ever before, it is necessary to include them when discussing global solutions related to peace, development and security, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General said today.

“Young people are often seriously affected by conflict. Decisions made by earlier generations may affect them for their entire lives. They need and deserve a place at the table, if they are to be fully engaged in peacebuilding, economic and social development and building effective, inclusive institutions,” said the UN deputy chief at an event this afternoon at UN Headquarters in New York on youth leadership in peace and security.
Mr. Eliasson noted that the world now has more young people than ever before in human history, with 46 per cent of the global population younger than 25 years old. Africa and the Middle East have the highest proportion of young people – about 60 per cent of the population.

“This presents a unique opportunity for developing innovative solutions for peace and development. But far too often, the political lingo around young people focuses on the problems they allegedly present. Sadly, young men are portrayed by some as frustrated potential extremists and young women as passive victims,” he said.

“This runs counter to the fact that the vast majority of young people around the world are practical idealists with strong values, who have a commitment to peace and a life in dignity for all. They are agents of change in their communities and societies. They are subjects of positive action, not objects to be contained or manipulated,” he added.

Highlighting that young people should be “valued for their potential and promise, not seen as a peril or problem,” Mr. Eliasson emphasized that an important way to counter damaging and inaccurate narratives is to amplify and strengthen the voices of young men and women themselves.

He pointed out that the UN Security Council had recognized the crucial role of young people as peacebuilders in December last year, when it adopted resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security.

“This was an historic step towards recognizing the need for an active role of youth in making and building peace – just like resolution 1325 established the same role for women 15 years ago. I hope we will move faster on the youth track than we did on the women track,” Mr. Eliasson said.

The Deputy Secretary-General also highlighted that in June, the UN Peacebuilding Fund launched its Youth Promotion Initiative, which offers youth organizations financial support to implement peacebuilding projects. The Fund is operating in 15 countries to advance Security Council resolution 2250.

Noting that the first anniversary of resolution 2250 is approaching, he said that a growing focus on the positive role young people can play in promoting peace has already been visible.

He also said that the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security mandated by resolution 2250 will show how new forms of engagement between the UN, civil society and young peacebuilders can strengthen the voices of young people.

“It aims to remedy their historic marginalization and exclusion. It should provide ways for young people to address not only youth-specific issues, but the full range of the peace and security agenda,” the Deputy Secretary-General said.

Beyond the Progress Study, much work remains to be done, Mr. Eliasson emphasized, pointing to the Youth Delegate Programme to the UN as an important first step. However, he noted that only 30 out of 193 Member States currently send youth delegates, and encouraged other governments to do so.

In addition, the Deputy Secretary-General said that other important measures that can be taken to turn resolution 2250 into a reality include funding youth organizations on the ground – particularly small and local ones; recognizing the need for gender-sensitive approaches to youth inclusion in political processes; and holding Member States accountable for protecting the human rights of young people, respecting their freedom of speech, and their right to education and employment.

In that regard, he noted that the recently appointed Special Envoy on Youth Employment, Werner Faymann, will be a strong advocate, together with the Youth Envoy, Ahmad Alhendawi, in tackling key youth employment challenges.

“This will bolster our efforts in enhancing opportunities for decent work for youth around the world,” Mr. Eliasson said.

“You, the young leaders here in this room, have the key both to the present and the future. You need and deserve a say in decisions that will affect your lives,” he added.
Today’s event was co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Eritrea and Finland, the Finn Church Aid and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

**Jailing teen blogger in Singapore sends wrong message on free expression—UN expert**

*4 October* – After a Singaporean teenage blogger was sentenced to jail for his social media posts, a United Nations human rights expert today warned that it is “exactly the wrong kind of message that any government should be sending to anybody, but especially to young people.”

“The criminalization of a broad range of legitimate, even if offensive forms of expression is not the right tool for any State to pursue legitimate aims such as tolerance and the rights of others,” David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, said in a news release.

This came following the 29 September sentencing by a Singapore court 17-year-old blogger Amos Yee to six weeks imprisonment for his Facebook posts and blogposts ‘wounding religious feelings of Muslims and Christians.’

The trial of the teen blogger is one of several cases in Singapore that indicate a broadening crackdown on controversial expression, as well as political criticism and dissent, Mr. Kaye noted in an statement made in August.

“Threats of criminal action and lawsuits contribute to a culture of self-censorship, and hinder the development of an open and pluralistic environment where all forms of ideas and opinions should be debated and rebutted openly,” the special rapporteur highlighted.

Mr. Kaye further stressed that the international human rights law allows only serious and extreme instances of incitement to hatred to be prohibited as criminal offences, not other forms of expression, even if they are offensive, disturbing or shocking.

**In ‘national interest’ for all Palestinians that elections be held in both West Bank and Gaza – UN envoy**

*4 October* – Welcoming today’s decision to postpone Palestinian municipal elections, the United Nations senior official coordinating efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict called on all Palestinians to work together to resolve differences.

“It is in the national interest of the Palestinian people that when such elections take place, they be organized both in the West Bank and Gaza,” said Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in a statement issued by his office (UNSCO) today.

Earlier in August, the UN Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had said that he was encouraged by the preparations for the polls across the occupied West Bank and Gaza – the first such concurrent elections in a decade.
The elections were scheduled to take place on 8 October.

“Local elections, conducted in line with established international standards, must contribute to advancing Palestinian reconciliation based on PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] principles as well as to ending the occupation and establishing a democratic, unified Palestinian state as part of a negotiated two-state solution,” noted Mr. Mladenov in the statement.

He also called on all Palestinians to work together in good faith to overcome internal divisions and uphold democracy.