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Respect for different faiths ‘bedrock’ and ‘prerequisite’ of world peace, UN General Assembly told

6 May – Mutual respect for different faiths and cultures is the “bedrock” of a world at peace and “prerequisite” for achieving many of the goals to which humankind and the United Nations aspire, the General Assembly was told today.

Opening the ‘High-level Conversation on Religions for Peace,’ Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft said that since its inception, the UN has worked for the betterment of humanity, by seeking to maintain international peace and security, promoting human rights and fostering sustainable development.

“ Buttressing all of its efforts, however, has been the promotion of understanding, tolerance, respect and dialogue between and among diverse cultures, civilizations, faiths and peoples,” he said, stressing that these are now “prerequisites for achieving many of the goals that we as human beings and the United Nations aspire to today.”

Terrorist attacks all over the world, however, demonstrate clearly that achieving harmony and strengthening intercultural
and interreligious dialogue is a great challenge and perhaps more important today than at any time in the recent past, he said.

Noting violent extremism as a serious concern, he said that there is a clear need for the international community to unite across all religions and all countries in response to such threats, align strategies and provide resources commensurate to the task.

With the 10-year review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the tabling of the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Member States and the UN system now have a good opportunity to advance their thinking on how best to tackle these challenges, he said.

In his opening remarks, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), highlighted that mutual respect for different faiths and cultures is the bedrock of a world at peace, and understanding and acceptance of differences in religious beliefs are the foundations of long-term sustainable development.

“Prosperity and well-being demands that people coexist in full respect of their diversity,” he said.

The UNAOC has been developing projects that bring together people, especially young people, as they are the prime targets of violent extremism, he said.

At its 7th Global Forum held last week in Baku, Azerbaijan, under the theme: ‘Living together in inclusive societies: a challenge and a goal,’ some 150 youth representatives from all over the world shared their experience and worked together to define future narratives that stress the benefits of listening and learning from the messages of different faiths, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

They also had intensive discussions on how best the Alliance could support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 16 which calls for the promotion of “peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.”

The Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism recognizes that security-based counter-terrorism measures cannot eradicate terrorism unless preventive steps that address the roots of the problem accompany it. The Plan identifies distortion and misuse of beliefs, ethnic and cultural differences as one of the drivers of violent extremism.

“The engagement of religious leaders is essential to counteract the messages of the leaders of terrorist groups who distort the core of religious beliefs for self-serving purposes,” Mr. Al-Nasser said, urging religious leaders to assert their rejection of violent doctrines, emphasize the peaceful and tolerant values inherent in their theologies, and condemn the destruction by extremists of ancient sites that are the testimony of the history ancient culture sand symbols of pluralism and tolerance.

The Forum included a session on how to defeat hate speech. As a result, a textbook on concrete recommendations on how to avoid and combat hate speech will be published in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, he added.
'El Niño is not a one-off event,’ UN says, calling for action to address phenomenon’s impacts

6 May – The international community must boost efforts to build the capacity for disaster risk management and readiness to prevent El Niño weather extremes from causing humanitarian crises in affected countries and impeding their development, the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) said today.

“We must remember that El Niño is not a one-off event but recurring global phenomena that we must address for future generations and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” said ECOSOC President Oh Joon at the opening of a special meeting on Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon: Reducing risks and capturing opportunities at UN Headquarters in New York.

“All partners, the United Nations, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and the scientific community, need to take coordinated and fortified action to tackle El Niño risks,” he added.

Mr. Oh underscored that since 2015, the world has witnessed the largest El Niño occurrence to date, with many developing countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific suffering under its “devastating and far-reaching impacts”.

“Extreme weather conditions have become more frequent with climate change, bringing droughts, fire, destruction of agricultural production, poor health and diseases, and displacement of people all over the world. These conditions also affect commodity prices and the prospects for sustainable development,” he stressed.

Noting that El Niño is a good example of climate change affecting the livelihood of people, the ECOSOC President said that Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau have all declared states of emergency due to drought conditions from El Niño, while Malawi has declared “a state of disaster.”

According to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), as of February 2016, almost one million children needed treatment for acute malnutrition in Eastern and Southern Africa from food shortages due to El Niño weather extremes.

Mr. Oh noted that the meeting – which was convened at the request of the UN General Assembly – would provide insights into the health, socio-economic and environmental dimensions of El Niño and share effective steps taken to reduce its impact, with a particular focus on what can be done to mitigate risks, losses and suffering related to such events in the future.

Unprecedented weather events are entering ‘uncharted territories’

Also speaking at the special meeting was Elena Manaenkova, Assistant Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), who highlighted that while the scientific understanding of El Niño has increased greatly in recent years, the current 2015/16 unprecedented El Niño and future events are entering “uncharted territories.”

“Our planet has altered dramatically because of climate change, the general trend towards a warmer global ocean, the loss of Arctic sea ice and of over a million square kilometres of summer snow cover in the northern hemisphere. This naturally occurring El Niño event and human induced climate change may interact and modify each other in ways, which we have never before experienced,” she said.
Ms. Manaenkova noted that, for its part, the WMO Strategic Plan 2016-2019 sets the directions and priorities to guide the activities of members and all WMO constituent bodies to enable all members to “improve their core information, products and services, maintain necessary infrastructure, and to directly benefit from advancements in science and technology.”

Noting that climate services as well as disaster risk reduction and capacity development are among the WMO’s top strategic priorities, she called on government and development partners to support and invest resources in the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, especially in least developed countries and small island development States, to enhance and sustain their contribution to climate- and disaster-resilient sustainable development.

**Need for long-term development strategies**

Along those lines, Robert Glasser, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, noted that although it is too early to assess the full impacts of the current El Niño, it is certain that countries have greater economic exposure to El Niño-related events, while the proportional impact on people and their livelihoods is higher in low-income countries and small island developing States.

“Climate change is also likely to increase El Niño risk further, highlighting the need for long-term development strategies to factor-in these risks,” he said.

Mr. Glasser underscored that as a result of more accurate seasonal forecasts, there is an increased predictability of occurrence of El Niño cycles and occurrence of extreme events in general.

“With this in mind, countries have better opportunities to take action to manage and reduce the related risks and impacts,” he stressed.

He also highlighted that the current El Niño has manifested in extreme weather events that have had an impact on a number of countries across the world and affected an estimated 60 million people so far. Some countries have experienced greater precipitation leading to floods, while others have experienced severe droughts affecting crop yields, and livestock production leading to food and water shortages.

To reduce the impacts of El Niño, it is necessary to translate seasonal forecasts and risk data into risk-informed decision-making and actionable guidance so that different development sectors can take proactive measures, Mr. Glasser emphasized.

“If development sectors get these forecasts early enough, action can be taken to reduce the impact of El Niño,” he said.

He also noted that preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk is the core goal of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted by the international community this past year.

“Together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework provides a way forward for addressing future El Niño events,” he said.

The ECOSOC special meeting was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in collaboration with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and WMO.
Syria: UN condemns camp bombing, underlines political solution ‘more urgent than ever’

6 May – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and other senior United Nations officials today “unreservedly” condemned yesterday’s bombing of two camps for displaced people in Sarmada, located in north-western Syria, which according to early reports by first responders, killed around 30 civilians including children.

In a statement, Mr. Ban reiterated his call on the Security Council to send a strong message to all warring parties that there will be “serious consequences” for grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

“Those responsible for yesterday’s seemingly calculated attack against civilians in the camp in Idlib, which could constitute a war crime, must be held accountable,” he said, urging the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Also calling the attacks “a flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law,” the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said the strikes demonstrate once again the “extreme difficulty” confronting civilians fleeing violence in Syria as they try to find safety.

According to UNHCR, the informal settlement of Ghita Al-Rahmeh, near the village of Al-Kamoneh, was hosting around 2,500 people—approximately 450 families—who had already fled their homes in western and northern rural Aleppo since late last year. Reports indicate that many people have since fled to surrounding hills, fearing further attacks.

The victims of the strikes are among some 6.5 million internally displaced people in Syria, many of whom have been uprooted several times as the frontlines of conflict have shifted over the last five years.

“It is an unacceptable tragedy that civilians who had already fled for their lives have been targeted in this way; the strikes demonstrate shameful scorn for the sanctity of the civilian nature of camps for internally displaced people,” the agency’s statement stressed. “A political solution to the Syrian conflict is more urgent than ever.”

Meanwhile, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, stated that given these tent settlements have been in these locations for several weeks and can be clearly viewed from the air, “it is extremely unlikely that these murderous attacks were an accident.”

“It is far more likely they were deliberate and amount to a war crime,” Mr. Zeid underscored. “My staff, along with other organizations, will leave no stone unturned in their efforts to research and record evidence of what appears to be a particularly despicable and calculated crime against an extremely vulnerable group of people.”

The UN human rights chief also indicated that initial reports suggest the attacks were carried out by Syrian Government aircraft, “but this remains to be verified.”

“It is hard to find any more words to describe the horror facing civilians in Syria: bombed and slaughtered in their homes, shot in the streets and tortured in prisons; bombed in their hospital beds; bombed in the camps they flee to; facing immense difficulties crossing borders to escape the horror that has engulfed their country for five long years; and finally – if they somehow manage to get there – facing rejection and xenophobia in Europe,” he stated.

In addition, the High Commissioner said he is alarmed about developments in Hama Central Prison where a riot took place on 1 May after the authorities reportedly tried to extract five detainees and take them to the notorious Sidnaya prison where
they were allegedly going to be executed.

“Detainees took control of a section of the prison and are holding some guards hostage, and the authorities have cut off water and electricity supplies,” Mr. Zeid reported. “Heavily armed security forces are surrounding the prison and we fear that a possibly lethal assault is imminent. Hundreds of lives are at stake, and I call on the authorities to resort to mediation, or other alternatives to force.”

**Political impasse adds ‘new layer of complications’ to Iraq’s complex challenges – UN envoy**

6 May – A profound political crisis has engulfed Iraq, adding “a new layer of complications to the already complex set of military, security, humanitarian, economic and human rights challenges,” the United Nations envoy for the country warned today, urging the Government, constitutional and political leaders, and civil society to work together to break the impasse and advance reforms.

“A business as usual approach simply will not be enough for the people,” Ján Kubiš, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Iraq, said in his periodic briefing to the Security Council. “They want genuine change that will improve their lives.”

Failure of Iraq’s Government and political class to agree on genuine reforms prompted demonstrators to request reform of the whole government and political process, abandoning of the ethnic and sectarian quota approach that is in the fundament of the Iraq political system since 2003, the envoy explained.

In April, demonstrators breached the entry checkpoints of the Green Zone and stormed Parliament building, bringing paralysis and deadlock in the work of the Government and the Council of Representatives.

Acts of vandalism and attacks on some members of Parliament sadly broke with the practice of many months of peaceful protests, he said.

“At this stage, the situation remains unpredictable and could unfold in many different directions,” he warned, noting that protests are set to continue as solutions discussed among the political class may not be enough for the people of Iraq.

Failing to promote genuine reforms and resume the work of the Council of Representatives will only serve the interest of Iraq’s real enemies – a terrorist group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), he said.

Expressing concern about reports of ISIL’s use of weaponized chemicals in its attacks on civilians and security force personnel in Bashir, he called on the international community to support the ongoing investigation into these incidents and to ensure accountability of anyone found to be involved in the use of weaponised chemicals.

He also condemned the continued killings, kidnapping, rape and torture of Iraqis by ISIL, which may constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and even genocide.

Iraq’s political groups must find together a solution based on the Constitution, law and principles of democracy that will respond to the needs of the people, put an end to the split and paralysis in Parliament, and enable the rapid enactment of the necessary reforms and anti-corruption measures, and the smooth functioning of State institutions without threat or intimidation, Mr. Kubiš said.

The recent resumption of contacts and dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, should be turned into a genuine partnership of mutually-beneficial cooperation, he said. Reconciling differences and working together on the necessary reforms will create conditions for enhanced financial and technical support by the international community to
Iraq, including the Kurdistan region.

It is imperative that both Baghdad and Erbil remain committed to reaching an understanding on oil exports and revenue-sharing, on Peshmerga salaries and on other outstanding issues, including those that concerns situation in the liberated and disputed areas.

**Iraq’s humanitarian crisis remains one of the world’s worst**

On the humanitarian situation, he said Iraq faces one of the world’s worst crises. In the last year, the number of Iraqis in need has doubled to nearly a third of the population – over ten million people.

Military campaigns, depending on scope and intensity, will almost certainly lead to mass displacement in the months ahead. In a worst case scenario, more than 2 million more Iraqis may be newly displaced by the end of the year, he said.

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan requests $861 million to provide life-saving assistance to seven million Iraqis. Disappointingly, only a quarter of this amount has been secured thus far. Unless $300 million is received by June, key frontline life-saving programmes will be cut-back or closed.

Turning to the issue of missing Kuwaiti people and property, he said that the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) will be reaching out to different stakeholders to seek their assistance in various aspects that will push the process forward.

However, the main responsibility in ensuring advancement lies with the Government of Iraq. "While we remain cognisant of the sheer volume of challenges that Iraq is currently facing, its international obligations have to be fulfilled and this issue cannot fall by the wayside," he said.

**Unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in Europe ‘falling between the cracks’ – UNICEF**

6 May – New data reveal that a record 96,500 unaccompanied refugee and migrant children applied for asylum across Europe in 2015, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said today, calling for urgent measures to protect these children from the serious risks of abuse, exploitation and trafficking.


“Many simply run away from reception centres to join their extended families while they wait, or because they have not had a full hearing to determine their best interests or have not had their rights explained to them,” she added.

UNICEF highlighted that, according to Interpol estimates, one in nine unaccompanied refugee and migrant children is unaccounted for or missing, and that the figures are believed to be far higher.

In Slovenia, for example, more than 80 per cent of unaccompanied children went missing from reception centres, while in Sweden up to 10 children are reported missing each week. Earlier this year, some 4,700 unaccompanied children were recorded as missing in Germany, the agency said.

UNICEF’s call comes as European Union member States begin negotiations aimed at creating a fairer and more sustainable system for dealing with migrants and refugees. The agency stressed that any decision affecting children should be based on the best interests of the child, and called for this principle to be strengthened in the Dublin Regulation currently under discussion.
UNICEF also stressed the importance of speeding up decisions involving a child, pointing out that children currently have to wait up to 11 months between registration and transfer to a country that has agreed to accept them. The agency said the waiting period should be no longer than 90 days, and there should be immediate appointment of a guardian and accelerated family reunification. Such measures are key to protecting unaccompanied children and preventing them from going missing, UNICEF stressed.

The 96,500 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in Europe in 2015 represent about 20 per cent of the total number of children who sought asylum.

The majority were teenage boys from Afghanistan, while Syrians were the second-largest group. A significant number were under 14 years of age, and travelling alone without the protection of adult family members or guardians, the agency noted.

In addition, UNICEF said that in some countries, unaccompanied children made up more than half of all children who arrived in 2015. In Sweden, lone adolescents accounted for 50 per cent of all child refugees, while in Italy 12,300 unaccompanied children arrived and a further 4,000 were with their families.

**Feature: Central African Republic’s Parliament seated after UN support for polls**

6 May – The top United Nations official in the Central African Republic (CAR) met this week with the new National Assembly, which took office after a series of successful elections supported by UN peacekeepers in the country.

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the country, known by its French acronym, MINUSCA, said the operation’s contribution was crucial to the success of this process.

“We worked hand-in-hand with the Transitional Authorities, other key international partners of the G8-CAR and the whole UN family in the country,” Mr. Onanga-Anyanga said, referring to the group which includes representatives of the UN, the African Union, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), European Union (EU), France, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), United States, and the World Bank.

“Most importantly, it was the massive mobilization of the Central African people that made a huge difference,” Mr. Onanga-Anyanga added.

His comments followed a meeting with the newly elected National Assembly which opened its first extraordinary session in the capital, Bangui, on 3 May, with 128 out of the 140 Members of Parliament. The remaining 12 parliamentarians will be elected during partial elections scheduled for 15 May.

The opening session took place one month after the inauguration of President Faustin Archange Touadera, the first elected leader in the country since March 2013 when a coup by Séléka rebels toppled the Government of former President Francois Bozize. The coup sparked fighting that killed thousands and forced one-fifth of the country’s population to flee, causing communities to split along ethnic and religious lines.

The situation in the CAR today is very different from what it was in 2013, but much remains to be done. MINUSCA peacekeepers have played a key role in helping the country move towards greater political stability, from assisting with early planning to transporting ballots and securing electoral sites.

**Preparations for the polls**
MINUSCA was established in 2014 to protect civilians and support the transitional government. When the UN Security Council renewed the Mission’s mandate for another year in April 2015, one of the roles of UN peacekeepers was to work on an urgent basis to support the Transitional Authorities, headed by Bangui’s former mayor Catherine Samba-Panza, and the National Electoral Authority (NEA), to hold “free, fair, transparent and inclusive presidential and legislative elections.”

That meant supporting a constitutional referendum on 13 December and legislative and presidential elections in late December, February and March.

Around 9 December, the first flights with electoral materials, including ballots for the second round of the presidential and the annulled legislative elections, arrived at Bangui’s Mpoko airport.

From Bangui, MINUSCA transported the sensitive materials – including ballot papers, boxes and voting screens – to polling locations throughout the capital. The Mission also deployed electoral documents, as well as electoral workers, to five of the 16 prefectures.

“Given the conditions in the country we had to move by air roughly over 350 tons of materials in coordination with the national authorities,” said Alain Nkanga, a MINUSCA Electoral Officer involved with the logistics.

“I recall that for the referendum when we received the ballot paper, it was four days before the elections. In principle it is very difficult to deploy that much material in just four days, including to far off villages. But thanks to the good cooperation with Government, this challenge was met.”

The UN helped to make sure that not only citizens of CAR within the country’s borders could vote, but also those seeking refuge in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo.

Tripartite agreements were worked out with the Governments of those asylum countries, allowing the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to provide logistical support to National Electoral Authorities to refugee camps and urban refugee settlements and for registration materials prior to and during the vote.

As a result, the turnout rate for the first round of the presidential elections among the registered refugee population was 61 per cent, while the turnout rate for the second round was 40 per cent of registered refugees.

For all voters, there was outreach to teach them about the elections and the importance of voting.

In Ippy town, Ouaka County, local resident Madina Dia, helped to organize a workshop with MINUSCA’s support. Dozens of people attended from local authorities and communities, including religious leaders, youth and women.

“For the elections to go well, we have to encourage the population to vote en masse,” said Ms. Dia.

The workshop also covered the role that media play during elections, such as helping to explain the process and strengthening messages of peace and social cohesion, according to participant, Mathurin Lakara.

First round of voting

On 30 December 2015, after three days of delays, military and police unity from the 11,000-strong MINUSCA joined soldiers from the French Sangaris force and local security teams in “a strategy of pre-emption, prevention and reaction to anticipate, prevent and react against all imponderables and all risks,” the Mission reported.

Throughout the country, more than 62 per cent of the eligible population turned out to cast ballots in a mostly peaceful first round of the presidential and legislative elections.

“I voted because I’ve suffered long enough. Central Africans have suffered a lot. We must vote! It is our civic duty, as citizens,” said one voter interviewed by MINUSCA’s Guira FM radio.
Another said that she had been waiting in line for some time, but was determined to cast her ballot: “It doesn’t even discourage me because the future of my country is at work. It’s my duty. I have to vote.”

As none of the 30 presidential candidates met the required threshold of 50 per cent vote, the elections went to a second round.

Visiting polling sites, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, said that by voting, people had shown they wanted a “peaceful and absolutely transparent” electoral process.

“These people want to move on,” he added. “These people want to turn the page.”

The polls were preceded by a referendum on 13 December, extended to 14 December, for a proposed new constitution that would limit future presidents to two five-year terms in office. The referendum passed with 93 per cent of the votes.

**Second round of the election**

On 6 February, the two candidates for the second round of presidential elections, Anicet-Georges Dolonguele and Faustin Archange Touadera, officially launched their campaigns.

Both candidates reiterated to MINUSCA their adherence to the Electoral Code of Conduct and their commitment to peaceful electoral campaigns.

Following the 14 February vote, President Touadera was inaugurated on 30 March, in a ceremony in Bangui which was attended by the head of UN peacekeeping, Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, and other senior officials from the international community.

“Today, the situation – for which we have waited for three years – is a decisive symbol of the Central African Republic’s return on the road of progress, development and reconciliation,” Mr. Ladsous said.

“The time has come! We want this President to put an end to the crisis we’ve been going through for a long time now,” a spectator at President Touadera’s inauguration told *Guira FM.*
UN launches multi-partner trust fund for Zika virus response

6 May – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the establishment of the UN Zika Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) to finance critical unfunded priorities in the response to the Zika outbreak.

The Fund, which aims to provide a rapid, flexible and accountable platform to support a coordinated response from the UN system and partners, will directly support the Zika Strategic Response Framework, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in consultation with UN agencies, partners and international epidemiological experts.

Donors will contribute to a central point and an Advisory Committee will direct funds to the highest-priority activities in the affected countries.

Since January 2015, 61 countries and territories have reported local transmission of Zika, which is caused by a virus transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes. The recent rise in the spread of the virus in some countries has been accompanied by an unprecedented rise in the number of children being born with unusually small heads – identified as microcephaly. Several countries have also reported an increase in Guillain-Barré syndrome – a neurological disorder that can lead to paralysis and death.

On 1 February, WHO announced that the cluster of cases of microcephaly and other neurological disorders, in particular Guillain-Barré syndrome, constituted a public health emergency of international concern. There is now scientific consensus that the Zika virus is linked to severe fetal malformations and serious disorders of the central nervous system and is a cause of microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome.

The Zika Strategic Response Framework aims to investigate and respond to the cluster of microcephaly and other neurological complications linked to Zika virus, increase preventive measures, communicate risks, and provide care and support to those affected.

New UN report shows that urgent action is needed to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030

6 May – A new report released by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warns that the AIDS epidemic could be prolonged indefinitely if urgent action is not implemented within the next five years.

On the Fast-Track to end the AIDS epidemic reveals that the extraordinary acceleration of progress made over the past 15 years could be lost and urges all partners to concentrate their efforts to increase and front-load investments to ensure that the global AIDS epidemic is ended as a public health threat by 2030.

“The AIDS response has delivered more than results. It has delivered the aspiration and the practical foundation to end the epidemic by 2030,” said Mr. Ban in the report. “But if we accept the status quo unchanged, the epidemic will rebound in several low- and middle-income countries. Our tremendous investment, and the world’s most
inspiring movement for the right to health, will have been in vain.”

According to a press release issued by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the review of progress looks at the gains made, particularly since the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, which accelerated action by uniting the world around a set of ambitious targets for 2015.

“The progress made has been inspiring,” said Mr. Ban. “Reaching 15 million people with antiretroviral therapy nine months before the December 2015 deadline is a major global victory.”

The report outlines that the rapid treatment scale-up has been a major contributing factor to the 42 per cent decline in AIDS-related deaths since the peak in 2004 and notes that this has caused life expectancy in the countries most affected by HIV to rise sharply in recent years.

It also underlines the critical role civil society has played in securing many of the gains made and the leadership provided by people living with HIV. Community efforts have been key to removing many of the obstacles faced in scaling up the AIDS response, including reaching people at risk of HIV infection with HIV services, helping people to adhere to treatment and reinforcing other essential health services.

In the report, however, the UN chief also calls the shortfalls in the implementation of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS distressing, revealing that even as new HIV prevention tools and approaches have emerged, HIV prevention programmes have weakened in recent years owing to inadequate leadership, weak accountability and declining funding. He notes that new HIV infections declined by just 8 per cent between 2010 and 2014.

The report draws attention to regions where new HIV infections are continuing to rise, such as in eastern Europe and central Asia – where new HIV infections rose by 30 per cent between 2000 and 2014, mostly among people who inject drugs – and in the Middle East and North Africa as well as in the Asia–Pacific region.

The report also emphasizes the necessity of repealing punitive laws and repressive policies that criminalize same-sex sexual relations, people who use drugs and sex workers, since they impede access to services.

“We must reinforce rights-based approaches, including those that foster gender equality and empower women,” said Mr. Ban. “Access to services must be ensured for the people most affected, marginalized and discriminated against including people living with HIV, young women and their sexual partners in sub-Saharan Africa, children and adolescents everywhere, and gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers and their clients, people who inject drugs, transgender people, people in prison, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees.”

The report gives strong emphasis to the links between the response to HIV and the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Finally, it urges countries to embrace the UNAIDS Fast-Track approach to ending the AIDS epidemic, which will require reaching an ambitious set of goals by 2020, including reducing the numbers of people newly infected with HIV and people dying from AIDS-related causes to fewer than 500,000 per annum and eliminating HIV-related discrimination.

Targets to reach these goals include reaching the 90–90–90 treatment target for 2020, which calls for 90 per cent of people living with HIV to know their status, 90 per cent of people who know their HIV-positive status to access treatment, and 90 per cent of people on treatment to have suppressed viral loads.
Ecuador: UN reports quake death toll hits 660; donor response poor

6 May – At the start of the third week of response to the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Ecuador, the country’s call for $72.7 million in financial assistance has received little support while the death toll has risen to 660, the United Nations humanitarian aid wing said today, urging donors to contribute to the projects that benefit the affected people.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that 23 persons are still missing, nearly 7,000 buildings have been destroyed, and 560 schools have been affected, with 166 of them suffering medium to severe damage.

Health assistance has been provided to 513,762 people, including 4,605 injured during the first 72 hours of the emergency, and the number of people in shelters has decreased to 22,754.

Humanitarian aid continues to reach affected zones, mainly urban centres and shelters. Two missions deployed during the past weekend to Portoviejo and Pedernales, the areas hit hard. A multi-sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA) and assessments by individual sectors are under way.

The Government recently announced the replacement of top officials in the Secretariat for Risk Management (SGR), the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Secretary of Water (SENAGUA), the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES).

SGR has launched the website ecuadorlistoyoysolidario.com to channel all forms of national and international relief.

Despite small upturns, UN experts note deteriorating human rights in Occupied Palestinian Territories

6 May – A United Nations human rights committee has completed its annual evaluation of the situation affecting millions of people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, during which representations were made by civil society organizations, UN representatives and Palestinian officials on a wide range of issues affecting the Palestinian and Syrian people in territories occupied by Israel.

The UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories said in a press release today that during its annual fact-finding visit to Amman, Jordan – which this year took place from 2 to 5 May 2016 – a large number of civil society organizations made representations about the escalation of violence that began in October 2015 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in which several Palestinians were killed during or after attacks on Israeli civilians or members of the security forces.

“Testimonies presented before the Special Committee in the form of videos, and oral and written submissions showed that in many cases the Israeli security forces have used disproportionate force, in some instances leading to possible extra-judicial
executions,” the Special Committee said.

_Lack of ‘systematic investigation’_

A related concern presented before the Committee is the lack of “systematic investigation into cases of apparent excessive use of force by Israeli security forces.” The Committee said that the importance of fully investigating all incidents where security forces have allegedly caused death or injury, and of holding those responsible to account was underscored.

The Committee noted that against this backdrop, and the lack of progress made on accountability in relation to the 2014 Gaza escalation, fears were expressed about what was described as “the faulty justice system” in Israel, and the dilemma faced by some non-governmental organizations on whether to approach the existing Israeli justice system, civil or military, for redress.

“Fears were also expressed that the separation of power between the judiciary and the executive was increasingly narrowing, potentially affecting the independence of the judiciary and the decisions of the courts in Israel,” the Committee said.

The Special Committee is composed of three Member States: Sri Lanka (Chair), Malaysia and Senegal. This year the Member States are represented by Amrith Rohan Perera, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in New York; Ramlan bin Ibrahim, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the UN in New York; and Mame Baba Cisse, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Senegal to the UN in Geneva.

In its statement, the Special Committee noted with particular concern video footage of Israeli security forces blocking ambulances from reaching injured Palestinians in the West Bank, and at times attacking Palestinian medical personnel arriving on the scene of an incident to provide first aid.

The Committee said it was further concerned to learn that about 70 dead bodies of Palestinians who were killed since October 2015, in the context of alleged attacks on Israeli civilians or security forces, were held by Israel for many weeks and months, denying the families a proper closure.

As of today, while many bodies have been returned to their families, it was further stated that the bodies of 18 Palestinians killed continue to be held by Israel, the Special Committee said.

“Representations were made that Israeli authorities have prohibited autopsies, and that the dead bodies are kept in poor and inhumane conditions, stacked on top of each other. It was brought to the attention of the Committee that the bodies returned to the families are often disfigured, sometimes beyond recognition, denying the families the right to accord, with dignity, final religious rites,” the Committee said.

The Committee was also briefed on the threats and intimidation faced by human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Israel. According to the representations, this has taken different forms, including restrictions/denial of freedom of movement, threatening phone calls and emails, and death threats in extreme cases.

“Steps should be adopted to provide protection necessary for human rights defenders in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory to carry out their work freely and without fear of attacks and harassment. In this regard, the need to fully investigate attacks and threats against human rights defenders, and to hold accountable those responsible, was stressed,” the Committee said.

_Testimonies on ‘coercive environment’ in the West Bank_

According to testimonies received by the Special Committee, Israeli authorities maintain a “coercive environment” as part of efforts to consolidate control of Area C in the West Bank.

The Committee said representations expressed concerns over settler violence, and the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures. Cases of destruction of donor-funded structures in Area C were viewed as reprisal measures by Israel for steps adopted by the European Union to counter the sale of settlement products. The Committee members also heard testimony
from a representative of a Bedouin community at risk of forcible transfer.

The Special Committee said it also heard about the negative impact of the occupation on children’s education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, among others, as a result of frequent raids by Israeli security forces inside school premises during classroom hours, the arrest and detention of teachers and students, and the intimidating presence of soldiers on roads in close vicinity to schools, and at multiple checkpoints along the way to school.

Further, the Special Committee was briefed about the exploitation of natural resources, including oil and gas, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan by Israeli and international companies.

The Special Committee said it noted “certain measures such as extension of access to sea in Gaza to 9 nautical miles, and a slight increase in movement of persons and goods, which could potentially have some positive impact on the daily lives of Palestinians living in Gaza.”

Another development noted by civil society representations was the unsuccessful implementation of the controversial force feeding bill adopted by the Knesset this past year due to refusal to cooperate by Israeli doctors and the Israeli Medical Association.

“It was underscored that despite these small improvements, the overall human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan was deteriorating,” the Special Committee said.

The UN General Assembly established the Special Committee in 1968 to examine the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

**UN Advocate Princess Haya Al Hussein of Jordan calls for more coordination in aid community**

6 May – People who are starving are not thinking about other anti-poverty goals, Princess Haya Al Hussein said at the United Nations, calling for cooperation and coordination among the humanitarian community to meet the world’s basic needs, starting with zero hunger.

Princess Haya of Jordan, who had been advocating for poverty eradication efforts and anti-hunger campaigns since long before she was appointed a UN Messenger of Peace in 2007, has called for more effective partnerships noting that the aid community has “too many actors, too much bureaucracy and too little trust.”

Speaking to the *UN News Centre* during a recent visit to New York, the Princess criticized what she called the “ferocious scramble” by aid providers to get into the media spotlight as they compete for resources and credit.

In the video below, Princess Haya cautions that “there’s no time like the present” to address world hunger and poverty. She refers to the 17 anti-poverty Sustainable Development Goals or (SDGs), adopted by the world’s leaders at the UN last September.

*Princess Haya talks about world hunger and poverty. Credit: UN News Centre*

Earlier in the day, Princess Haya addressed the UN Economic and Social Council, where she contextualized world challenges amid “a time of turmoil and transition” stemming from the threat of terrorism, the largest displacement of people since World War II and economic instability.

She lashed out at “the forces of evil” that include violent extremists, while the “force of true humanity remain disorganized
and fragmented.”

“How can we in the civilized world not recognize by now that humanitarian and development aid is the most effective way to prevent and fight terrorism and radicalism,” asked Princess Haya. “The best way to win this war is to give people in need hope and dignity.”

In her interview with the UN News Centre, Princess Haya called the United Nations and the UN Charter a “rallying point” which can help to unite diverse actors to overcome the challenges faced by the Arab communities and around the world.

Princess Haya talks about her role as UN Messenger of Peace. Credit: UN News Centre

Princess Haya is married to Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has been a top donor to the humanitarian aid, according to figures from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In a personal story, Her Royal Highness recalled meeting a South Sudanese woman who had walked for nearly two weeks with a child on her back to seek shelter in a crowded camp in Ethiopia.

“I was like you,” she told me,” Princess Haya said, describing a woman who had once had a house, a husband, and a sense of dignity and pride which was overshadowed by squatting amongst hundreds of other women waiting for a bucket of food.

Referring to the woman as a “mirror” for society, Princess Haya urged the international community to work together for her.

“She also deserves a life with dignity and the ability to take care of her family. And without that for her, and people like her, our existence will be just as fragile as theirs,” the UN Messenger of Peace noted.

Recalling the woman and many others whose stories she had shared in, Princess Haya stressed that the real champions are not high-level advocates like her, but the people being affected.

Youth employment an ‘absolute priority’ in Latin America – UN labour chief

6 May – “Innovative solutions” with a concrete action plan are crucial to tackle youth employment challenge in Latin America, the Director-General of the United Nations’ International Labour Organization (ILO) told representatives at the 9th Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Labour, recently held in Colombia.

“Youth employment is an absolute priority,” Guy Ryder said during the ministerial conference, adding that the “lack of trust of young people” is a huge challenge which requires “innovative solutions.”

Eight million youth are unemployed in Ibero-America, however, informality affects 60 per cent of those who succeed in landing a job, according to Mr. Ryder.

He added that we should “aim for another level, moving from generic solutions to specific programs” for youth.

Warning that regardless of the time in which they live, Mr. Ryder said that the aspiration of youth is to have a life plan.

“We must listen to and involve young people as they are strategic actors,” said Mr. Ryder, stressing that “if we fail, our
societies are going to have big problems.”

In this regard, ILO has launched a global initiative for discussions on the future employment in the region.

“The world has changed and will change but ultimately what is required is the same: access to decent work and the possibility of developing a life project,” he added.

During his two-day visit to Colombia, Mr. Ryder also met with President Juan Manuel Santos, who welcomed a new Projoven law.

This bill no longer requires a military card for those joining the labour market, and offers new incentives for employers to hire young people while also implementing rural youth employment action plans.

The ILO Director-General attended the opening ceremony and the Future of Work Forum at the ministerial meeting – a preparatory meeting for the 25th Ibero-American Summit on “Youth, Entrepreneurship and Education” which is scheduled at the end of October in Cartagena, Colombia.

He also met with the three trade unions in the country, as well as representatives from the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI).

**UN chief ‘following closely’ political developments in Comoros**

6 May – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today that he is following closely political developments in Comoros in the wake of the recent judgment of the Constitutional Court ordering a partial re-run of the elections for President and for Governor of Anjouan.

“The Secretary-General reiterates his commitment to supporting the efforts of the Comorian authorities to create a climate of confidence, conducive to peaceful, inclusive and credible elections,” said a statement issued by his spokesperson.

According to the statement, the UN will work together with the African Union in this regard.

“The Secretary-General urges the Government and all the actors involved in the electoral process to respect the legislation and the established rules, in conformity with the protocole d’accord of 15 March 2016,” the statement concluded.

The new polls are scheduled for 11 May.
Interview with Karen AbuZayd, Special Adviser on the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants

6 May – Karen AbuZayd wants you to think of refugees and migrants in a positive way. The United Nations Special Adviser has been working behind the scenes since January to raise support for global compacts to support large movements of refugees and migrants. These will be up for discussion on 19 September 2016, when the UN will host a high-level meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants, with the aim of bringing Member States together behind a more humane and coordinated approach.

Ahead of that summit, the Secretary-General will issue on 9 May a report, *In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants.*

There are close to 250 million people on the move globally, of which nearly 15 million are refugees, according to the report. Close to 75 percent of the people in the latter group come from just 11 countries and more than half of them are hosted in just seven countries.

So how do you emphasize the positive contributions of people leaving or forced to leave their homes against the challenges of trying to help large groups of people? And how do you analyze the challenges shared by “refugees” and “migrants” while taking into account legal distinctions between the two groups?

The UN News Centre spoke to Ms. AbuZayd about these questions, and her work with UN entities, Member States and civil society in the lead up to the Summit.

UN News Centre: The Secretary-General’s report on large movements of refugees and migrants will be submitted on 9 May. What are the key findings?

Karen AbuZayd: Our findings are not going to be surprising because they describe the situation of refugees and migrants around the world in general terms; we don't deal with any specific situation or a specific group of people. We're talking about refugees and migrants everywhere and the report is addressing a global audience so we're not talking [...] just about Syrians or just about Europe, but about the refugees and migrants who are increasing in numbers around the world.

And our findings are more recommendations – that's the important part – which we address as commitments that we expect and hope that the Member States will be making [and] that will be negotiated now. These are mainly commitments to work faster when there's a refugee outflow; to work more collectively, because no State can handle any of these – neither the migrants nor the refugee crises – alone. They have the earlier [unedited] version of the report, so they are already beginning to work on what kind of outcome there will be, and we'll have to see which recommendations they agree to.

They need to look not just at getting people to a place safely, which is one of the first things, but also to help them be included in the countries where they are staying; to have jobs, to have scholarships, to learn a language. All of the things that [...] are on the development side. So you treat the emergency, treat the development and help the people be happy with what they're doing.

UN News Centre: The UN and the wider international community are pushing for a new approach to large movements of refugees and migrants. What could this new approach include?
Karen AbuZayd: Well, what we’re recommending is, and what we hope [Member States accept], are two global compacts. One is on fulfilling their commitments to refugees in terms of the legal instruments already in place, that's really all they have to do, is to carry out things they've already promised to do. And for people, for nations, who have not signed up to the Refugee Convention to do so, and anyone who has expressed reservations to the Convention to lift [them] and fulfil it in its entirety.

But also, too, UNHCR [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees] has asked to come up with a comprehensive plan whenever there is a large outflow; we're talking about large movements of refugees and migrants, so when there's a large flow which could be a crisis or emergency, they come up with a comprehensive plan for that emergency and that people immediately come to help. This way, it’s not just a neighbouring country that is always the one that receives the refugees. Often times, these places are as badly off as the country refugees have come from. So they need help with that and they need help in a development sense as well, not just through emergency aid and so on.

And then on the global migration side, we’re talking again about a global compact, but one that looks at a better governance of migration. Generally around the world because there aren't the same legal instruments as there are for the refugees. So in that sense, people focused on migration issues are interested in having something worked out over a period of time.

UN News Centre: There have been discussions about the need to differentiate between migrants and refugees. Why is that?

Karen AbuZayd: Partly because there are different regimes for them. A refugee of course is someone who crosses the border fleeing persecution. [As for migrants], there are many different kinds: there are climate change migrants; there are forced migrants; there are survival migrants. But even when we're talking about forced migrants, which people could say, ‘well isn't that something like a refugee,’ migrants also move by choice as well, so we're talking about millions of people, a couple hundred million people, who move every year.

So there has to be some definition of who you're really talking about. The rights of refugees are pretty clearly accepted. But migrants’ countries need to be reminded that migrants have human rights and that [they have those rights] even as they are moving as migrants. That's why in our report, we consider the journey, as well. We talked about leaving a country, arriving in a new country, and perhaps moving on to yet another country. So we talk about the countries of origin, what needs to happen there; countries of transit; and the countries of destination. And much of that is the same for both refugees and migrants, but they are two distinct groups of people with different needs that have to be treated in the appropriate way.

The first chapter of the report in fact is data trends and so on, and the second chapter relates to the reasons for moving. But for the refugee, whether its conflict or a bad government or lack of human rights, you know it's still a refugee who deserves a certain protection when they get where they're going. And migrants, of course, probably more often the great majority of them, are in search of a better life. So they're leaving [because of] poverty, sometimes conflict, sometimes the kind of government they have, but with a little more free will, I would say, to make the decision [to move]. They’re not shoved out of their country or they're not fleeing persecution, as it were, as the refugee is.

UN News Centre: What will happen after the report is released?

Karen AbuZayd: The report will be negotiated from now until the time of the High-Level meeting in September. And then we hope that the report shows up in all of the commitments that governments will make. This is something that's done not by us but by the Ambassadors of Member States themselves. There are two ambassadors facilitating the process – of Ireland and Jordan – an excellent team who are working with the Member States to come up with this negotiated outcome.

I would have to say that when we first started, we were wondering if we were going to have to fight for this negotiated outcome, but we found that every country was in favour of one. They said we want a summit that has something that comes afterwards, that asks us for commitments. And that's what we have in mind too. The report also checks that UNHCR will report on whether the commitments for them have been made in its annual report to the General Assembly. As regards migrants, it looks at bringing the International Organization of Migration (IOM) into a closer relationship with the United Nations so we have, within the UN system, a go-to place. That will help a lot in focusing [our work] and allowing the IOM to work around the world with the United Nations, as well.
UN News Centre: What is your role between now and the Summit?

Karen AbuZayd: It’s partly advocating for the report. We still hope to be in touch with Member States. We met with 80 Ambassadors on the way up to the reports from January to now, and a lot of civil society organizations and anyone who asked to meet us. So from now on we will just follow that up. We already have a number of travels and in placing the invitations to certain places that we want to talk about. We’ll go to the World Humanitarian Summit, we’ll be going to Brussels, we’re going to Gent, where there are agencies dealing with refugees.

We may be able to visit some of the refugee-receiving and refugee-producing countries, and especially where there are large numbers of protracted refugee situations, which are extremely important and very much neglected. [For example] Kenya and Pakistan have such long-standing refugee situations and nobody really thinks about that anymore.

UN News Centre: What are you hearing from Member States and civil society groups that you’ve met with?

We have had nothing but positive, strong support from everyone we met with.

Karen AbuZayd: We’ve already been surprised that they all want this negotiated outcome. I must say, we have had nothing but positive, strong support from everyone we met with. And we’ve met with all different sorts of countries. Some have reminded us that they are not just a country of refugees but they are a country that receives refugees in the country that produces refugees so they’re a country of origin, transit and destination; there are more countries than you think in that sort of situation. So I think even if there are some differences between the refugee-receiving countries in the refugee-producing countries, even then, many are speaking in the same language.

They are all very positive, very supportive, and are very interested in what we're doing and what they're going to contribute and I think in the meetings that have already been held by the co-facilitators we've seen that, as well. We’ve been sitting in back of some of the meetings to hear what they're saying and they're looking forward to making this a successful summit – or High-Level Plenary as it's called. So we're quite pleased. Really, we haven't had any pitfalls; no stumbling blocks yet.

UN News Centre: What will be your message at the World Humanitarian Summit?

Karen AbuZayd: The same message that I'm giving to you. Overall, eventually we'd like to have a better situation for refugees and migrants, so that when they arrive somewhere as refugees or move somewhere as migrants they are received well, that they are seen as assets. As for migrants there is no doubt: all the statistics show that countries need migrants. We know that there are aging populations here and there. There are people who need the kind of migrants for different sorts of work. I think people sometimes have to be reminded that migrants are a very positive element in society. Most of our countries are made up of migrants.

But even for refugees, in instances such as when the Canadians took in some 25,000 people from the crisis last year, they said immediately the economy improved where they were settled, and that's what happens. Refugees are very keen to make their contribution and to benefit the hosts being so good to them. And I think most countries find the benefit in getting people out of refugee camps and into jobs. We've had these statements made by people who say when I give a refugee a job, he’s no longer a refugee.

UN News Centre: With xenophobia on the rise, what can the UN realistically do to help?

Karen AbuZayd: Well, we can talk about it, and one of our main recommendations is that we have to work on the narrative and making that narrative a positive one. And I think we might see the Secretary-General taking charge of starting a campaign against xenophobia and talking about the language and so on. And if he does that, I think that's a really important thing that he will leave behind us here with his office at the end of the year. I think that's one reason he wanted to have this very important summit. He saw how crucial the issue is after last year and that we do have to […] address this better, we have to manage it better and we have to do it together and not just leave it, as I said, to the neighbouring State or to one receiving State. We have to get together and work on this.

UN News Centre: You’ve worked with the UN for the past three decades. How has the situation of refugees and
migrants changed over that time?

Karen AbuZayd: I think it’s changed enough to see that when I first started working with refugees it was in the Sudan with a million people coming in from three different sides of the country and with UNHCR's help, then the Sudanese managed that. We've seen other large flows of refugees coming from Viet Nam, coming from Bosnia and it's all been managed there has been a system set up to make it work – temporary protection here, the inclusion in development elsewhere and just, you know, refugee camps food good enough once that refugees are ok, not like they're all complaining now a days.

So it seems much more dire now, it's probably how fast they have come in or how many have come in. They’ve come into small places like little islands, [and it is] not fair to the island and not fair to the refugees either. So I think that's why we have to look again at a special plan for each when we can have this standard plan of going in and registering everyone in putting them in temporary housing or temporary tents or whatever. So there are differences and I think, not just more refugees and migrants, but also not as many people going back home and that's something that we had in parallel in UNHCR in earlier years.

We had repatriation operations which were very happy ones because the refugees were going home, their governments wanted them home, the host governments were happy to see them go […], so you're just not seeing as much of that happening right now.

UN News Centre: What are some of the favourite experiences that you recall from your 30 years with the UN?

They are trying to make their lives as positive as possible to do the best they can.

Karen AbuZayd: I just mentioned repatriation operations you know and if you're working them, they are happy operations. But I worked in some of the most difficult places with refugee outflows. I worked and lived in Gaza for 10 years with the Palestine refugees. But I think what one always remembers is the resilience; it’s a word we hear a lot and is used a lot, but it is what the refugees managed to do in the midst of the worst sort of circumstances, terrible living conditions. You know they're refugees in the camp in wherever but yet they make things work and they keep things going and they keep smiling sometimes.

And we just have to remember that the children growing up in these kinds of conditions need as much attention as we can give them so that they have some good memories of their childhood and are getting educated and in seeing some positive examples of where they might go or where their family might go. I just feel I've had a really rewarding life. I'm very grateful for somehow getting into this refugee business and human rights business, because you really feel that there there's a need out there and that you're somehow helping to move others to understand that need and to maybe do something about it.

UN News Centre: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Karen AbuZayd: Just think about the refugee and migrant and think about them in a positive way. I did try to do that is as they are trying to make their lives as positive as possible to do the best they can.