Iraq: Fostering reconciliation should complement military victories against ISIL, Security Council told

9 November – Alongside liberating the country’s territory from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), it is essential that processes are undertaken to “capture the hearts and minds” of all Iraqis from all parts of Iraq for it to be peaceful and united, the United Nations envoy to the country told the Security Council today.

“The rebuilding of infrastructure, restoration of essential services, rule of law, schools and employment are ever more important to restore confidence in the Government,” the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, told the Council.

“Returns of IDPs [internally displaced people] holds the key to rebuilding Iraq’s solid societal fabric. It is part of the reconciliation and healing,” he added, noting that in general, the pace of returns in the previously liberated despite the Government’s and international community’s efforts is rather slow.

Making special mention of the operation against ISIL in Mosul, Mr. Kubiš said that the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the Peshmerga, the Popular Mobilization Forces and allied tribal and local volunteers are making steady progress in liberating the city, while trying to avoid excessive risks to the civilian populations.

“This liberation operation marks the beginning of the end of the so-called ‘Da’esh caliphate’ in Iraq,” he underscored.
He also called on local leaders to ensure that the grievances of the past are addressed and a way is found to live together “after ISIL in justice and equality for all.”

“Reconciliation at both community and national level is the way to make military victories against ISIL sustainable, to make Iraq truly peaceful and united,” he highlighted.

In his briefing, Mr. Kubiš also informed the Council of credible reports of the group forcing tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children to relocate inside the city, effectively using them as human shields, as well as the killing civilians who refuse to comply with their instructions or those who previously belonged to the ISF, including 232 civilians who were reportedly shot dead on 26 October.

He added that as of yesterday, some 35,000 people have been displaced due to the fighting in Mosul, and Iraqi authorities have been providing them transport to emergency sites, where some 20,000 are presently being housed, while many others, he said, have found shelter in host communities.

The UN envoy further reported that humanitarian agencies continue their preparations for mass displacement as well as for the upcoming winter.

Mr. Kubiš, also the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), noted that the Mission had referred a few sporadic reports, mostly of individuals committing “ad hoc acts of revenge” against captured ISIL fighters to the Iraqi Government for investigation and appropriate action.

“The Government must continue its efforts to prevent such incidents from occurring and to investigate and punish any such incidents should they occur,” he reiterated.

Further in his briefing, the UN official also called on the Governments of Iraq and Turkey to “tone down” their rhetoric and accelerate bilateral efforts to find a mutually acceptable resolution to the presence of Turkish troops.

He also informed the Council of the activities of the UN in Iraq, including UNAMI’s technical advice to Iraq on a number of laws, including one related to prevention of sexual and gender-based as well as the work of UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN entities.

Also, speaking on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, as well as Kuwaiti property, including the National Archives, he said the Government of Iraq was injecting much-needed energy and momentum into bolstering efforts to find missing persons.

**MARRAKECH: UN conference spotlights water, the ‘first victim’ of climate change, as part of the solution**

**9 November** – In a first for United Nations climate change conferences, a special day was devoted to action on water issues, providing stakeholders gathered in Marrakech, Morocco, for the so-called ‘COP 22’ an opportunity spotlight water as a way of providing solutions to help implement the Paris Agreement.

“Water is one of the most impacted resources, but water also provides solutions to these challenges,” stressed the President of the World Water Council, Benedito Braga, who said today in a news release issued by the meeting, formally known as the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Water is critical for successful climate change mitigation, as many efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions depend on reliable access to water resources.
The Action Day for Water is part of the Global Climate Action Agenda, an initiative of France and Morocco to boost cooperation between governments, cities, companies, investors and citizens on climate change.

In an interview with the UN News Centre, Hakima El Haité, the Minister in charge of Environment of Morocco and one of the ‘Climate Champions’ tasked with carrying forward the Agenda, stressed the importance to include water in the discussions on climate change.

“Water and climate [are] linked. At school, all of us studied the water cycle,” she said. “Water connects everything. To produce energy, some countries have 97 per cent renewable energy from water. So it affects everything. It is crucial for human development, it is crucial for education, it is crucial for health, it is crucial for stability and food security.”

Ms. El Haité noted that the water community would like to be included in the discussions. She stressed that she and her fellow Climate Champion, Laurence Tubiana, the French Ambassador on climate change, would work to facilitate the dialogue between the [UNFCCC] parties and water stakeholders.

Wednesday, the Moroccan Government and its partners launched a Blue Book on Water and Climate, which includes recommendations by the international water community.

“Water is not only a problem but it is part of the solution,” said the Minister of Water of Morocco, Charafat Aftailal, at a press conference, adding: “Water is a key factor in human development.”

According to the Blue Book, only integrated and sustainable water management can help humankind meet the challenges related to water availability, extreme weather events and uncertainty about the resource. It recommends that water be recognized as the “first victim” of climate change and to initiate an action agenda for water.

The Moroccan Government also launched the ‘Water for Africa’ initiative, with the support of the African Development Bank. It aims to render justice to the continent through the adoption of a specific action plan that will mobilize different international political, financial and institutional partners to improve water and sanitation services and management for those most affected by climate change.

Seven of the 10 countries most threatened by climate change are in Africa. Water is the first sector through which the African population suffers from the impact of climate change.

“Water is not only a story of adaptation, it is about development, it is about climate justice,” said Ms. El Haité.

UNICEF sounds alarm over safety of children in Myanmar’s Rakhine state

9 November – Expressing concern for the safety of children in the northern part of Myanmar’s Rakhine state which is in the midst of “security operations,” the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has called upon the Government to protect children there from all forms of violence and to support prompt and independent investigations into reports of grave violations against them.

“Worsening inter-communal conflict in Rakhine state […] is taking a terrible toll on children – especially those living in the northern part of the state, where thousands of children have been cut off from humanitarian assistance in recent weeks,” said UNICEF in a statement late yesterday.

“These children already suffer from high levels of deprivation and malnutrition. Their futures depend on help from doctors, nurses, teachers and others who can provide them with nutrition, health and education services,” it added.
Noting that though some relief has been delivered in recent days, UNICEF called for “full resumption” of essential services as well as the urgent lifting of all restrictions of movement of health and other professionals so they can safely reach children and families.

In late October, in her briefing to the Third Committee of the General Assembly – the main GA committee on social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee had voiced concern over the situation in Rakhine state, including the killing of nine police officers (earlier in the month) and the resulting security operations, which she said led to multiple allegations of serious human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment during interrogations, summary executions, arbitrary arrest and the destruction of mosques and houses in Muslim villages.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

**UN envoy reports on 'constructive' discussions with Burundi to resolve differences**

9 November – The United Nations envoy on conflict prevention has said that the international community and the Government of Burundi would find a common ground for implementing the Security Council resolution that proposes the deployment of unarmed UN police officers through continued dialogue.

“Our discussions were constructive and I’m confident that with continuous engagement and political will, we will find common ground as a basis for moving forward with the implementation of the resolution,” said Jamal Benomar, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Conflict Prevention, after he briefed the 15-member Council yesterday on his recent visit to Burundi.

The Council dispatched him to consult with officials in Burundi to find a way forward on all issues related to peace and security and UN activities in the country, after the Government earlier rejected the Council resolution on establishing a police officers' component there and amid reports that it will withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Council Resolution 2303, adopted on 29 July 2016, authorized up to 228 UN individual police officers for the component, to be deployed in the capital, Bujumbura, and throughout Burundi, for one year.

Also through the resolution adopted by 11 votes in favour to none against with four abstentions (Angola, China, Egypt, Venezuela), the Council expressed “its intention to pursue targeted measures against all actors, inside and outside Burundi, who threaten the peace and security of Burundi.”

In yesterday's briefing, Mr. Benomar told the Council that he had held the various meetings with the Government and other stakeholders there, as well as with former President Benjamin Mkapa, the facilitator of the East African Community (EAC)-led dialogue, in Dar es Salaam.

“I told the Council that I listened carefully to the views and concerns of the Burundian Government in respect to resolution 2303, particularly regarding the proposed deployment of unarmed UN police officers,” Mr. Benomar said.

“I told the Council that I believe we need a new compact between the Government of Burundi and the international community, with both sides engaging in a constructive effort to promote peace and stability, in full respect of Burundi’s sovereignty,” he added.
We need a new compact between the Government of Burundi and the international community, with both sides engaging in a constructive effort to promote peace and stability, in full respect of Burundi’s sovereignty.

Noting that the Burundian people are suffering the economic and humanitarian consequences of this situation, the special adviser said that the UN is seeking to increase its efforts to meet the needs of the population.

“But in order to address the many implications of this crisis in the long-term, its root causes must be tackled – a Burundian-led political process and a genuine and inclusive dialogue are urgently needed,” he stressed.

“I look forward to continued engagement with the Burundian Government and other stakeholders in order to reach consensus on the steps needed to move the country forward,” he added.

The United Nations works with Burundi, including through the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

Burundi was thrown into fresh crisis more than a year ago when President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to run for a controversial third term that he went on to win. To date, it has been reported that hundreds of people have been killed, more than 250,000 have fled the nation, and thousands more have been arrested and possibly subjected to human rights violations.

**MARRAKECH: New initiatives on forest protection give boost to climate action agenda**

9 November – The global effort to protect and sustainably manage forests and deliver on climate change targets got a major boost at the United Nations Climate Conference (COP 22) taking place in Marrakech, Morocco, where several projects on protecting woodlands worldwide were announced.

Forest actors at the meeting, formally known as the 22nd Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), expressed cautious optimism, welcoming the progress made on forest protection but warned against complacency.

“We know that the annual net loss of natural forests is slowing – a 25 per cent decrease in 2015 compared to 2000. But this is very much about restoration, regeneration of forests and reforestation, [but] unfortunately tropical forest clearing continues,” said ‘Climate Champion’ Laurence Tubiana at a press conference yesterday.

Ms. Tubiana, the French Ambassador on climate change, and Hakima El Haité, Moroccan Minister in charge of Environment, were appointed Climate Champions by the previous UN Climate Conference, known as COP 21.

“It is improving, the action was effective, but we have to improve it if we want to be really consistent with the [Paris targets],” Ms. Tubiana added, referring to the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change, which was adopted in the French capital last year and calls on countries to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future, and to adapt to the increasing impacts of the phenomenon.

Also at press conference, René Castro Salazar, the Assistant Director-General for Forestry of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), also warned against complacency.

“Forests are still disappearing at close to three million hectares per year […] especially natural forests. We hope the remaining four billion hectares of forest of the world will be sustainably managed, that will be the only way to preserve the resource. Addressing climate change cannot be done without a sustainable forest management programme,” he underscored.
In efforts to tackle climate change, forests play an important role as they absorb and store carbon as trees grow, thereby eliminating emissions from the atmosphere. But deforestation and forest degradation have the opposite effect: they release carbon into the atmosphere. Currently, deforestation and forest degradation are responsible for 12 per cent of global carbon emissions.

“Forests are one of the largest and most cost-effective responses we have to climate change,” said Helen Clark, Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), said in a news release.

According to Mr. Castro Salazar, healthier forests not only help combat climate change but also contribute to many other global development goals by providing food, income, fuel and shelter.

The sense of prudent optimism was shared by the Senior Director of the Forest and Climate Program of the non-governmental organization WWF, Josephina Brana-Varela. “There is a lot of progress. We are on the right path but we need to do it faster,” she said at the press conference. To that end, she drew attention to the “very unusual coalition of partners” that has emerged around the issue, including developed countries, developing countries, corporations, private sector actors, indigenous people, and multilateral organizations.

A dozen initiatives were presented yesterday at COP 22 by countries from Africa, Asia and South America during Forest Action Day, which is part of the Global Climate Action Agenda initiative by France and Morocco to boost cooperative action between governments, cities, business, investors and citizens.

Among initiatives, the Government of Indonesia announced that it is implementing a moratorium on clearing super-high-carbon intact peatlands. Colombia announced forest plans linked to the peace process, including an initiative to put very large areas of forest under the control of indigenous people.

The Moroccan Government announced an initiative called ‘Strengthened Action in Favor of Forests in the Mediterranean-Sahel Region in the Context of Climate Change’ to help countries of that region meet multilateral commitments to forests.

“The idea is to form a collaborative partnership throughout the region given the interactions and strong relationships in environmental and socio-economic areas,” said the Secretary General of the High Commissioner for water and forests of Morocco, Abderrahim Houmy, at the press conference.

**International Criminal Court aims to make Libya priority for next year, says Prosecutor**

9 November – The International Criminal Court (ICC) will make the situation in Libya a priority in 2017, its prosecutor said today, citing the widespread violence, lawlessness and impunity in the country and the tragic consequences of the conflict borne by civilians.

“My commitment to make Libya a priority situation in 2017 is compelled by a number of factors,” Fatou Bensouda, ICC Prosecutor, told a Security Council debate, noting that those factors include the widespread violence, lawlessness and impunity in the country, a desire to provide justice for victims of Rome Statute crimes, and alleviate the suffering of those civilians, and the opportunities for further investigation.

The situation in Libya was referred to her Office by the 15-member Council. “The referral by definition carries great responsibility to seek justice for the countless civilians who have been victims of the widespread crimes in Libya since 15 February 2011,” she said.

Regarding the case of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, a former Libyan political figure and a son of late Libyan leader Muammar
Gaddafi, she said that media reports suggested that Mr. Gaddafi had been released from detention in Zintan on the basis of a grant of amnesty.

“I must report to you that reliable sources, including the Libyan Prosecutor-General’s office, have confirmed this information to be incorrect,” she said, adding that Mr. Gaddafi is still in Zintan and outside the custody and control of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord.

She called on the Libyan authorities to ensure that they do everything possible to have Mr. Gaddafi transferred to the ICC without any further delay.

As for the case of Abdullah Al-Senussi, former Libyan intelligence chief, her Office awaits the full report of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) on the conduct of the domestic trial, and will study it carefully when it is available, she said. At this stage, her Office remains of the view that no new facts have arisen which negate the basis on which the Pre-Trial Chamber found Mr Al-Senussi's case inadmissible before the Court, she added.

She said that the persistent instability and armed conflict prevents her Office from conducting investigations within Libyan territory, in relation to both existing and potential new cases.

However, her Office intends to apply for new warrants of arrest under seal as soon as practicable and hopes to have new arrest warrants served in the near future, she said, noting that her Office’s ongoing efforts to arrest additional suspects have advanced significantly.

“Timely execution of these new arrest warrants will be crucial, will require coordinated efforts by States, and may also require support from the Council,” she said, adding that she has decided to allocate additional resources from within her Office’s overall budget to the Libya situation.

“Without this Council’s support, this allocation will necessarily come at the expense of investigations of other crimes in other situations,” she said.

“I appeal to this Council to recognise the collective responsibility arising out of your referral and to support financial assistance by the United Nations for my Office’s Libya investigations in 2017. The Libyan people deserve no less,” she stressed.

**UN agency responding to severe health risks women and girls face during Mosul military operation**

9 November – The United Nations estimates that 1.2 to 1.5 million people are currently being affected by the military operations underway to retake Mosul from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS or Da’esh), some quarter million of which are women who potentially need reproductive health services and care for gender-based violence.

Since 17 October, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been providing emergency reproductive health care and services for affected women and girls, many of whom have gone without such care since Da’esh has occupied the region.

“Fleeing displaced women are often cut off from reproductive health services. For pregnant women, this risk can become a life-or-death scenario,” said Ramanathan Balakrishnan, a UNFPA representative in Iraq.

UNFPA estimates that of the more than 34,000 people who have been displaced during the conflict so far, 8,500 are women...
of childbearing age, including 1,360 who are pregnant and need health services for a safe delivery. These figures do not include women in liberated villages who are lacking reproductive health services.

For example, in Qayyarah, a newly liberated town some 30 kilometres south of Mosul, women were without health services under Da’esh control. The town lacked medical supplies and staff, and restrictions on women’s movement meant that they were denied access to basic care. Da’esh torched the town’s only hospital two months ago – part of what has been described as the group’s “scorched earth policy.”

Since then, UNFPA has provided supplies and personnel for a delivery unit at the Qayarra Primary Health Centre, which is now serving civilians fleeing the operations in Mosul. 25 deliveries have been performed safely at the centre.

“I am so happy that my son was born after Qayyarah was liberated from Da’esh,” said one woman after giving birth to a boy, Najem.

Najem was one of the first babies to be born after the town was liberated. His name means “star,” which his mother says “represents a new beginning for what we hope to be a better future.”

The gynaecologist also expressed gratitude that the centre had been reopened: “Now we have the capacity to provide safe deliveries to women who otherwise would have been at risk.”

At another support centre in Dohuk province, an area north of Mosul on the border of Turkey, medical and psychological support is being offered to the women and girls who were held captive and sexually assaulted by Da’esh.

A gynaecologist working at the centre for the past two years, Dr. Naam Gawzat, said that the trauma these women and girls have suffered is overwhelming.

“All of us are destroyed,” she said. “I have not seen one case that is better than the other. The next one who comes in is sadder than the one before. You see nine-year-olds who have been raped and you see the most humiliating and brutal treatment.”

Part of the UNFPA’s response to the operations in Mosul includes positioning 25 mobile reproductive health teams and establishing or strengthening 20 maternal health facilities. Clinics provide gynaecological services, family planning care, antenatal care, safe delivery services and post-natal care. More than 4,000 dignity kits, which contain soap, menstrual pads, clothing, and other supplies, are also being distributed.

Meanwhile, the agency has organized 23 mobile teams who will provide psychosocial support, emergency case management and referrals for survivors of gender-based violence in addition to more than 2,000 reproductive health consultations that have been conducted in Qayyarah, Hajj Ali and I’jhala since the start of the military operations.

Training is also being provided to health workers in surrounding provinces so that they can provide reproductive health services as well as to social workers who will offer care to survivors of gender-based violence.

The continuing military operations mean that women are forced to make dangerous journeys in search of safe havens, sometimes sleeping outside, facing risks of gunfire, mines and other explosives.
Ban congratulates Donald Trump on his election as next US President

9 November – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today congratulated Donald Trump on his election as the new President of the United States.

“I congratulate Mr. Donald Trump on his election as forty-fifth President of the United States of America,” Mr. Ban said this morning in a statement he read out to the press at the UN Headquarters in New York.

“In the aftermath of a hard-fought and often-divisive campaign, it is worth recalling and reaffirming that the unity in diversity of the United States is one of the country's greatest strengths. I encourage all Americans to stay true to that spirit,” he said.

Noting that today's global challenges demand concerted global action and joint solutions, the UN chief said: “As a founding member of the United Nations and permanent member of the Security Council, the United States is an essential actor across the international agenda. People everywhere look to the United States to use its remarkable power to help lift humanity up and to work for the common good.”

“The United Nations will count on the new Administration to strengthen the bonds of international cooperation as we strive together to uphold shared ideals, combat climate change, advance human rights, promote mutual understanding and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve lives of peace, prosperity and dignity for all,” Mr. Ban added.

The Secretary-General stressed the need to mobilize around the principles and common values of the UN Charter more than ever.

Mr. Ban expressed his deep appreciation to former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for a lifetime commitment to peace, the advancement of women and the well-being of children. “She has been a powerful global symbol of women's empowerment, and I have no doubt that she will continue to contribute to our work across the world,” he said.
Small farmers can earn big returns by investing in climate adaptation, new UN report finds

9 November – The United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) today issued a new report which shows that for every dollar invested through its Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP), farmers could earn a return of between $1.40 and $2.60 over a 20 year period by applying climate change adaptation practices.

The report, The Economics Advantage: Assessing the value of climate change actions in agriculture, was presented today at the UN Climate Conference in Marrakech, known by the shorthand ‘COP 22’ and is a result of cooperation between IFAD and the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS).

“There is a strong economic case to be made for investing in agriculture for future food security, even under changing climate conditions,” said IFAD’s Director of Environment and Climate, Margarita Astralaga. “IFAD’s ASAP, the world’s largest programme for smallholder farmers’ adaptation, shows that where investments are made that help farmers adapt to climate change the returned financial benefit to farmers is much, much higher.”

According to findings, regions where IFAD invests in adaptation, the rate of return for farmers and the government agencies comes in 15 to 35 per cent higher, even despite the cost of borrowing.

CCAFS’s Head of Research, Sonja Vermeulen stressed the importance of agriculture for adaptation and mitigation, ‘saying: “Agriculture is especially sensitive to climate change, as well as accounting for significant emissions.”

In addition, there is a strong economic rationale for supporting actions on agriculture confirmed by the majority of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement.

“Climate change proposals on agriculture need to be supported by credible economic and financial proposals in order to unleash significant public and private finance,” stated Ms. Astralaga. “The purpose of this report is to share emerging information to support the use of clear and concise economic data that shows when, where and how IFAD investments bring financial returns to the communities we work with,” she added.

Reports have also shown that positive economic returns can be implemented in practices to build adaptive capacity and reduce emissions intensity such as innovative rice cropping in Viet Nam, or switching from growing coffee to cocoa in Nicaragua.

Furthermore, an additional set of non-technical mitigation and adaptation intervention are equally important but more difficult to implement, including capacity building, institutional strengthening, access to value chains and research.