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In Colombia's central Meta region, Security Council witnesses first-hand progress on peace deal

5 May – While touring one of Colombia's monitoring mechanism facilities situated in the Amazon Region of the South American country, set up under a historic peace agreement, a delegation from the United Nations Security Council met today with members of La Referma community including government representatives, guerrilla rebels and the UN in that area.

The purpose of the field trip is to witness first-hand implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), and to observe the progress as well as the challenges of carrying out the aims of a hard-won peace deal.

This monitoring mechanism facility in Colombia's Meta Department is one of the designated locations where the Government of Colombia as well as FARC-EP continues to work together paving the path towards peace.

For information media - not an official record
While addressing all parties present in the transitional zone, Ambassador Elbio Rosselli, of Uruguay, which holds the Council's presidency of the month of May, highlighted the trust between Government and FARC-EP representatives.

He said he was struck to see, on one hand people with the UN (blue) jackets and on the other, Government representatives as well as guerrilla component using the same brown colour, adding that this “further affirms the absolute confidence, certainty, that this process goes forward and has no return.”

The members of the Council are accompanied by the head of the UN Mission in Colombia, Jean Arnault, senior Colombian Government officials and FARC-EP leaders.

The Colombian Government's High Commissioner for Peace recalled that Meta was one of the areas most affected by violence. “We know what peace means for this community and we hope they can talk to the people immersed in the conflict,” Sergio Jaramillo told the members of the Security Council.

Also present was FARC-EP leader, Iván Márquez. He expressed a “sincere, deep thanks” to the Security Council.

Upon departure from New York earlier this week, Mr. Rosselli stressed that the presence of the Security Council would carry a message to Colombia that the UN was committed to the special political mission established there, and would provide additional support, as requested.

After finishing the visit to Colombia, the Members of the Security Council will return to New York, where they will hold an informative session about their visit later in May.

'Save Lives: Slow Down,' urges UN health agency ahead of Global Road Safety Week

5 May – Spotlighting the relationship between speeding and traffic fatalities – speeding contributes to one in three traffic deaths – the UN health agency, ahead of Global Road Safety Week, is urging countries to take measures to curb dangerous driving behaviour.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1.25 million people die every year on the world's roads. Close to half of those tragic deaths are caused by drivers going faster than posted speed limits.

“Speed is at the core of the global road traffic injury problem,” WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan said in a news release issued on the eve of the week, which runs from 8 to 14 May. “If countries were to address just this key risk, they would soon reap the rewards of safer roads, both in terms of lives saved and increases in walking and cycling, with profound and lasting effects on health.”

To raise awareness and avoid tragedy hundreds of events are being organized throughout Global Road Safety Week. WHO points out that these events will contribute to achievement of the road safety-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UN health agency points to research that shows that a five per cent cut in average speed can result in a 30 per cent reduction in the number of fatal road traffic crashes.

“Speed reduction is a key contribution [to the SDGs],” said Etienne Krug, Director of the WHO Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention in an interview with UN News. “We have planned our cities for cars. Cars are everywhere, they are
speeding and [as a result] people don't feel comfortable in many cities to cycle or even to walk.”

Mr. Krug further pointed out that public transportation is underdeveloped and if “we continue [like this], we are going straight into the wall if we develop our cities just for cars.”

The campaign Save Lives: #SlowDown is also part of a larger initiative – Save LIVES: a road safety technical package – promoting 22 key measures to address road traffic deaths and injuries, including on managing speed.

Aside from speed management the plan focuses on leadership, infrastructure design and improvement, vehicle safety standards, enforcement of traffic laws and post-crash survival.

“Speed is not the only factor,” stressed Mr. Krug. “Drunk driving is also a key factor and distracted driving such as texting and being on the phone.”

He saw a clear need to campaign for improving infrastructure and modes of transportation. “We need to make cycling, walking and public transportation more safe and more accessible because that is the future and it is also much healthier. People will have less non communicable diseases if they walk and cycle more. I'm talking about cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes.”

Krug confirms that the work is paying off. “We are seeing progress there are many cities, I could highlight Freiburg, Sao Paolo and New York,” adding that “we want more of that, and we want it faster because the clock is ticking.”

**UN migration agency transports hundreds of South Sudanese refugees from border into Ethiopia**

5 May – The United Nations migration agency has begun transferring South Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia's Pagak border entry point in Gambella to the Gore-Shembola refugee camp in Benishangul Gumuz Regional States – approximately 835 kilometres away.

“IOM [International Organization for Migration] has set up two way stations, one at Metu [275 km from the Pagak entry point] and the other at Gimbi [310 km from Metu],” said Anezier Ebrahim, IOM Officer in charge of the operation, explaining the route taken to reach Gore-Shembola refugee camp in a press release announcing the effort, which began on 1 May.

“The way stations have been constructed with the financial assistance of the United Kingdom Department for International Development and provide overnight accommodation, shelter and meals for refugees in transit from the border entry point to the camp,” he continued.

With recent fighting and severe food insecurity further worsening the already dismal humanitarian situation in South Sudan, an additional 30,000 refugees are expected to enter Gambella over the coming months, according to IOM. Refugee camps in Gambella, one of Ethiopia's least developed regions, are currently at maximum capacity with the total number of South Sudanese refugees surpassing that of the local population.

In collaboration with the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs and the Office of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), IOM carried out an assessment of the potential route from Pagak border entry point to Gore-Shembola refugee camp in Benishangul, to ensure the safe and dignified migration of the refugees.

Prior to relocation, IOM provided pre-departure medical screenings to ensure that refugees are fit for travel, referring those who present medical concerns to local health facilities. IOM is also working in coordination with Plan International to
provide psychosocial support and protection services for unaccompanied minors.

Nyakim and her four children are among the 365 refugees who were transferred to Gore-Shembola refugee camp in Benishangul this week. The struggles of the journey to reach Ethiopia are clearly visible – all of her children suffer from skin rashes and a cough.

“The journey from Jonglei to Pagak has been really difficult. We have walked for six days straight and my children and I have eaten only wild fruit from the forest,” Nyakim said.

Renewed fighting led her to make the perilous journey for the safety of her children, leaving her husband behind.

IOM worked in collaboration with Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE) for way station site preparations and the provision of latrines, showers and water.

“Continued transportation assistance is urgently required to ensure newly arrived refugees’ access to basic services in the camps,” added Mr. Ebrahim, with the reminder that IOM remains committed to assist refugees with transportation from Pagak border entry point to Gore-Shembola refugee camp in the coming months.

As rainy season starts, UN health agency warns of cholera outbreak in drought-hit Somalia

5 May – Somalia is suffering from the largest cholera outbreak in the past five years and the number of people killed is expected to double by the end of June, the United Nations health agency.

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) reported close to 32,000 cases of cholera, including 618 deaths, since the beginning of the year.

“The drought had led to a lack of clean water and the largest cholera outbreak in Somalia in the past five years,” Tarik Jasarevic, spokesman for the WHO, told journalists in Geneva.

He noted that the case fatality rate of cholera is 1.9 per cent, with an emergency threshold of 1 per cent. Those numbers are expected to double at the end of next month, as the overall numbers jump due to the start this week of the rainy season.

Lack of access to clean water and hygiene, food insecurity and malnutrition caused by drought are worsening the figures.

“There may be more than 50,000 cases of cholera in 2017 in Somalia,” Mr. Jasarevic said.

The UN is working with partners to provide medicines and medical supplies, and train health staff. In addition, a vaccination campaign reached more than 450,000 people in March, and a second round was launched yesterday.

In addition to cholera, Somalis are faced with the threat of measles as a result of a low vaccination rate, and massive displacement and crowding as a result of the drought.

A campaign had been planned to vaccinate half-a-million children between the ages of six months and five years of age, but the required $2.7 million have not yet been met.
On International Day, UNHonours midwives as family 'partners for life'

5 May – The United Nations population agency today urged governments and development partners to expand midwifery programmes and promote an environment where midwives can effectively serve the needs of women and their families.

“Midwives save lives, support and promote healthy families, and empower women and couples to choose whether, when and how often to have children,” said Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) on the occasion of International Day of the Midwife.

“They also help avert sexually transmitted infections and prevent disabilities like obstetric fistula, mother-to-child transmission of HIV and female genital mutilation,” he added.

Each year, more than 300,000 women die during pregnancy and childbirth. The UN also estimates that some three million babies do not survive the first month of life, and another 2.5 million are stillborn.

“Most of them could have been saved by the care of well-trained midwives within the framework of strong health systems,” Dr. Osotimehin said.

This year's theme for the Day – 'Midwives, Mothers and Families: Partners for Life!' – underscores the important roles that these women and girls have in preventing maternal and newborn deaths and empowering women to make informed, healthy choices.

These are critical aspects of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to alleviate poverty and assist the planet, by the 2030 deadline.

Also today, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) reiterated the importance of midwives washing their hands and maintaining hygienic standards.

“Handwashing and lack of water and sanitation is a fundamental constraint to quality of care,” says Fran McConville, midwifery adviser, WHO. “As midwives we must work in partnership to improve access to water, sanitation and electricity for all women and babies everywhere.”

Worldwide, 30,000 women and 400,000 babies die every year from infections, such as puerperal sepsis, often caused by lack of water, sanitation and poor hand-washing practices.
**World needs 'soft power' of education, culture, sciences, to combat 'ancient hatreds'– UNESCO chief**

5 May – ‘Hard power’ can no longer stop conflicts nor the rise of violent extremism and “ancient hatreds” such as antisemitism and racial discrimination, the head of the United Nations cultural agency said today, insisting that “we need 'soft power' of education, knowledge, culture, communication, the sciences, to strengthen the values we share and recognize the destiny we hold in common.”

Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) made this call at the opening ceremony of the Fourth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan in the country's capital, Baku, and co-organized along with UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

More than 500 participants from around the world are attending the Forum under the theme 'Advancing Intercultural Dialogue – New avenues for human security, peace and sustainable development.'

Ms. Bokova praised President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan for his “longstanding leadership in promoting intercultural dialogue” as well as the tireless engagement of the First Lady, Mehriban Aliyeva, as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Oral and Musical Traditions.

Azerbaijan has a long history on the 'Silk Road' ancient trade route, as a centre for exchange, scholarship and art. Baku's Walled City is also inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Conflicts across the world are tearing countries apart with civilians hardest hit, Ms. Bokova warned, pointing to the rise of violent extremism and 'cultural cleansing,' as well as what she called “ancient hatreds” like antisemitism, racial discrimination and intolerance.

“We see mosques, churches and other temples destroyed and cultural diversity threatened,” the UNESCO chief told a room full of dignitaries and representatives of the public, private and non-profit sector. “We see education under attack and children forced out of learning. We see freedom of expression threatened, journalists attacked. We see societies closing against perceived 'others,' and minorities persecuted.”

In this context, Ms. Bokova argued, the world has no choice but to respond while remaining true to the compass setting of human rights and dignity.

Of late, she added, hard power is not enough. The world needs the soft power of education, knowledge, culture, communication, the sciences, to strengthen the values we share and recognize the destiny we hold in common.

Picking up that thread, Nassir Abdulaziz, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), in his address said military actions and security measures cannot be the only response to the world's challenges. “The interconnected nature of today's crises requires us to connect our own efforts for peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, not just in words, but in practice,” he said.

“The challenge now is to make corresponding changes to our culture, strategy, structures and operations. We must commit to achieve human security and sustainable development, in partnership with regional organizations, mobilizing the entire range of those with influence, from religious authorities to civil society and the business community, he said, adding that women and youth must also be brought to the table.
The Baku Process has become a successful platform to promote “peaceful and inclusive societies” around the world. Since its inception, Mr. Al-Nasser said, the Forum has encouraged and enabled people and communities worldwide to take concrete measures to support diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding amongst nations.

The focus of this year's Forum is particularly significant, he continued, adding that human security places people at the centre of multidisciplinary approaches and response, including development and human rights.

UNESCO is a main partner of the Forum in addition to organizations such as the UN World Tourism Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Council of Europe, the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.

Keep interests of people above all else, UN Security Council urges political actors in DR Congo

5 May – Voicing concern over challenges to the implementation of last year's political agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and deteriorating humanitarian and security situation, the United Nations Security Council has urged all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to resolve the problems faced by the country.

The agreement, popularly referred to as the ‘31 December agreement’ represented a significant step towards a peacefully managed transition. However, its implementation has since seen considerable difficulties.

“Effective, swift and timely implementation of the agreement is critical to a credible process and the peace and stability of the DRC, as well as in supporting the legitimacy of the transitional institutions, as it represents a viable road map towards the holding of peaceful and democratic elections,” said members of the Security Council in a statement late yesterday.

Among others, the agreement has stipulated that peaceful, credible, inclusive and timely elections would be organized in DRC no later than December 2017, and would include the participation of all sectors of the society, in particular women.

Also in the statement, the members urged for the swift and inclusive establishment of a government of national unity, the Comité National de Suivi de l'Accord, the adoption of a new electoral law and the full implementation of the confidence building measures in chapter V of the 31 December 2016 agreement, some of which are yet to be implemented.

They also urged all national political stakeholders to overcome their differences, uphold the interests of their people and ensure that they are guided by the rule of law, restraint and the spirit of compromise and dialogue.

In that regard, they called on all political actors, whether in the country or abroad, to desist from any actions that could exacerbate tensions.

Further in the statement, the members of Security Council condemned violence and alleged violations and abuses of human rights in the Kasaï region as well as the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in the region, which according to reports, has displaced more than one million people within the country and more than 11,000 across its borders.

The members also stressed the need for a swift and full investigation into the killing of the two members of the Group of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1533 (2004) and underlined the need for full cooperation from the Government.

In this context, they further welcomed the Secretary General's establishment of a UN Board of Inquiry to investigate the
deaths of the two experts and his commitment that the UN will do everything possible to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

**New UN study makes 'strong' economic case for Africa's investment in green energy**

*5 May* – Charting data from 54 African countries, a new UN atlas reveals the continent's energy potential; revealing that investment in renewable energy would strengthen its economic advancement.

“The Atlas makes a strong case that investments in green energy infrastructure can bolster Africa's economic development and bring it closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” said Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Director and Regional Representative of the Africa Office for the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

As such, she continued, it is an important policy guide for African governments as they strive to catalyze national development by making use of their energy resources.

The Atlas of Africa Energy Resources, released by UNEP and the African Development Bank at the World Economic Forum being held in Durban, South Africa, shows both the potential and the fragility of the continent's energy resources, which are at the heart of Africa's socio-economic development.

While Africa is richly endowed with both renewable and non-renewable energy resources, its current energy production is insufficient to meet demand. About a third Africa's population still lacks access to electricity and 53 per cent of the population depends on biomass for cooking, space heating and drying.

According to UNEP, energy consumption on the continent is the lowest in the world, and per capita consumption has barely changed since 2000. The poorest African households spend 20 times more per unit of energy than wealthy households when connected to the grid. A kettle boiled twice by a family in the United Kingdom uses five times as much electricity as a Malian uses in a year, according to UNEP.

“This Atlas will be instrumental to ease access to information and data in the energy sector for all stakeholders, including the donor community, African governments and the private sector,” said Amadou Hott, Vice-President in charge of power, energy, climate and green growth, African Development Bank.

Providing information in the form of detailed 'before and after' images, charts, maps and other satellite data from 54 countries through visuals, the Atlas details the challenges and opportunities in providing Africa's population with access to reliable, affordable and modern energy services.

Prepared in cooperation with the Environment Pulse Institute, United States Geological Survey and George Mason University, the Atlas consolidates the information on the energy landscape in Africa, highlighting some success stories of sustainable energy development around the continent, but also shining a light on major environmental challenges associated with energy infrastructure development.
Central African Republic: UN cites ‘dire’ situation for children; amid threats, some aid work suspended

5 May – Four international humanitarian organizations have temporarily suspended activities in northern Central African Republic (CAR) after dozens of attacks on aid workers in the region, the United Nations humanitarian office today said.

During the first quarter of the year, 33 incidents targeting humanitarians were recorded across the country, placing CAR “among the high-risk countries for humanitarian aid,” according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Sixteen of those attacks were in the northern prefecture of Ouham, and were reported since March.

The senior UN humanitarian official in the country strongly condemned the attacks, reminding that half of the population – about 2.2 million people – depends on aid. Provision of basic services has been hampered by decades of instability, the latest following the ouster of President François Bozizé by the Séléka rebel coalition in March 2013.

“Suspending this aid would jeopardize social stability and threaten the fragile resilience of the communities,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator, ai, Michel Yao.

“This withdrawal constitutes a setback in humanitarian access for the Central African Republic, as it places in the disarray of people who have already repeatedly suffered violence and have experienced successive displacements.”

The staff from the four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will redeploy to the capital, Bangui, while other aid organization plan to “strictly reduce” their presence and possibly withdraw if the attacks persist, according to OCHA.

Aiding children in the ‘forgotten crisis’

Meanwhile, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today called for increased support to the more than 1 million children threatened by violence, in what a senior UNICEF official called a “forgotten crisis.”

The situation for children inside the country is “calamitous as violence and widespread displacement have made children especially vulnerable to health risks, exploitation and abuse,” the UN agency reported.

“We cannot allow the Central African Republic to become a forgotten crisis,” said Christine Muhigana, UNICEF Representative in the Central African Republic. “The reality is that without sufficient support we will not be able to provide the vital services that are needed to keep children healthy, safe and in school.”

The UN agency is facing a $32.6 million funding gap in its work in the country.
Worsening food insecurity forcing more people to migrate, finds new UN report

5 May – Highlighting the complex link between food insecurity and migration – where increase in one forces the other to rise and then spirals back to push the former even higher – the United Nations food relief agency has urged greater investments in food security and livelihoods at places of origin to prevent displacement and reduce forced onward migration.

In its new report, *At the Root of Exodus: Food security, conflict and international migration*, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) found that each 1 per cent increase in food insecurity pushed 1.9 per cent more people towards migration. However, the act of migration itself can cause food insecurity, given the costs, lack of opportunities and often hazardous conditions along the journey, and force people to continue to move.

“With millions of our brothers and sisters having fled their homes and facing so much hardship, it is our duty to shed light on their tragic situation,” David Beasley, the Executive Director of WFP, said in a news release announcing the report.

“When understanding the dynamics that compel people to move, we can better address what lies at the heart of forced migration and what must be done to end their suffering,” he added.

The report is launched at a moment when multiple protracted crises and a period of political transition challenge the levels of international food and humanitarian assistance provided for refugees and people who have been forcibly displaced.

**Link between food insecurity and armed conflict**

The WFP study is the first time such comprehensive analysis has been carried out on the subject. It is based on quantitative and qualitative research and features often dramatic accounts of people forced to take extreme measures when left with nothing at all.

One particularly troubling finding was the link between food insecurity and armed conflict: food insecurity was found to be a significant cause for the incidence – and intensity – of armed conflict, with 0.4 percent more people fleeing a country for each additional year of conflict.

“This means that a country with rising levels of food insecurity and conflict will experience greater outward migration, or movement of people away from their homes,” noted the UN agency.

**People want to stay closer to their homes**

The report also found that people who are displaced often do not want to move far away from their homes, and try to stay as close to their place of origin as possible.

Nearly eight in ten Syrian refugee families interviewed had been internally displaced inside Syria at least once, and 65 per cent twice or more. Almost every single Syrian participant in the study strongly affirmed a desire to return to Syria if the situation stabilized and security prevailed.

In light of these findings, one of the key recommendations contained in the report is for increasing investments in food security and livelihoods at or near people's place of origin.
“Doing so may prevent further displacement, reduce forced onward migration, result in more cost-effective humanitarian interventions and yield greater socioeconomic benefits now and in the long term,” noted WFP.

**Efforts to impeach Nepalese Chief Justice 'an assault on human rights' – UN rights chief**

5 May – Raising alarm over moves to impeach the Chief Justice of Nepal – who has been instrumental in a number of high-profile and politically sensitive decisions – the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, warned today that such actions suggest a concerted attempt by the Government to undermine the independence of the judiciary.

According to a news release issued by the High Commissioner's Office (OHCHR), the impeachment motion was filed days after the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Sushila Karki, revoked the Government's appointment of a new Inspector General of Police, ruling that the Government had violated existing processes and regulations.

“I urge the Nepal authorities to respect the independence of the judiciary, to withdraw what appears to be a politically motivated impeachment motion and to commit to the processes of transitional justice and accountability,” said the top UN human rights official, underscoring their importance to overcome the “tragic legacy” of the decade-long internal armed conflict in the South Asian nation.

On 30 April, two ruling parties, the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), filed the motion, alleging that the Chief Justice had encroached on the prerogatives of the executive branch, noted the OHCHR news release, adding that the move suggested a fundamental misunderstanding on the role of an independent judiciary.

Also in the news release, High Commissioner Zeid stressed that recent Supreme Court rulings have been critical in advancing human rights in the country and ensuring redress for victims of crime and serious human rights violations.

I urge the Nepal authorities to respect the independence of the judiciary, to withdraw what appears to be a politically motivated impeachment motion and to commit to the processes of transitional justice and accountability

Some of these cases included overturning a presidential pardon recommended for Bal Krishna Dhungel, a leader of the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) who had been convicted of murder, and a Government decision to withdraw criminal charges against individuals accused of serious crimes during Nepal's civil war.

Noting that the attempt to remove the Chief Justice also gave rise to serious concerns about the Nepalese Government's commitment to transitional justice and the rule of law, High Commissioner Zeid added: “The failure to address impunity raises serious questions about Nepal's [...] obligations under international human rights law and the motion to impeach Chief Justice Karki undermines its commitment to strengthen democratic institutions and transitional justice.”

Following the filing of the impeachment motion, Chief Justice Karki has been suspended from her post until the impeachment proceedings are concluded. A committee will now be established to investigate the allegations, after which Members of Parliament will vote on whether to impeach her.

The process is unlikely to be concluded before the Chief Justice reaches the mandatory retirement age on 7 June, meaning she will not be able to participate in a number of politically sensitive cases that she had announced the Supreme Court would consider in the near future.

However according to most recent reports, acting on a litigation challenging the impeachment motion against Ms. Karki, the Supreme Court of Nepal issued an interim stay on the motion and relieved her suspension.
Saudi Arabia must reform 'unacceptably broad' counter-terrorism law – UN rights expert

5 May – Saudi Arabia must stop using its anti-terror law to violate the right to free speech of its people, and end the use of torture terrorist suspects during investigations, a United Nations human rights expert urged at the end of his mission to the country.

“I am concerned about the unacceptably broad definition of terrorism and the use of Saudi Arabia's 2014 counter-terrorism law and other national security provisions against human rights defenders, writers, bloggers, journalists and other peaceful critics,” Ben Emmerson, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism, said in a statement summing up his five-day mission.

Arguing the legislation failing to comply with international human rights norms, Mr. Emmerson called on the Government to timely review the definition of terrorism.

Also expressing serious concern over allegations of torture made by terrorism suspects, lawyers and human rights defenders not resulting in thorough investigations, the human rights expert stressed the importance of establishing an independent mechanism immediately to review all current cases, especially regarding the use of the death penalty following the proceedings.

“The lack of effective guarantees against ill-treatment during investigation offers the potential for torture and other forms of abuse of power,” said Mr. Emmerson, adding that “I have handed the Government a list of priority cases for urgent review.”

The special rapporteur also voiced concerns about Saudi Arabia's extra-territorial counter-terrorism involvement in Yemen and Syria, urging for greater transparency on civilian casualties in such operations and recalling the Government's commitment to halt all terrorist financing.

Despite such observations and warnings, Mr. Emmerson noted many positive efforts made by the Government. Among others were assisting victims of terrorism through comprehensive financial, housing and psycho-social support and detaining terrorist suspects with care and medical and recreational facilities.

Special Rapporteurs 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.