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Libyan Government forces committed war crimes, says UN human rights panel

1 June - A United Nations-ordered panel investigating human rights abuses in Libya says that Government forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the course of their crackdown on opposition forces seeking the ouster of Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi.

The three-member International Commission of Inquiry, dispatched by the UN Human Rights Council, submitted its findings to the 47-member body in Geneva today. The report comes as concern grows about the worsening humanitarian situation in the North African country, including dwindling food stocks, and as diplomatic efforts to help resolve the crisis continue.

The commission “has reached the conclusion that crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed by the Government forces of Libya,” according to a news release issued in Geneva.

“The commission received fewer reports of facts which would amount to the commission of international crimes by opposition forces; however, it did find some acts which would constitute war crimes.”

The acts falling under crimes against humanity include murder, imprisonment, torture, persecution, enforced disappearance and sexual abuse, which the report stated were committed by Government forces “as part of a widespread or systematic
Serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by Government forces amounting to war crimes include intentionally directing attacks against protected persons and targets such as civilian structures, medical units and transport.

The commission said it had received, but was unable to verify, individual accounts of rape. “It notes, however, that sufficient information was received to justify further investigation to ascertain the extent of sexual violence, including whether cases were linked to incitement by the command of either side.”

Further investigation is also warranted, it stated, with regard to the use and recruitment of child soldiers, the use of excessive force by Government forces against demonstrators, arrests and detentions that were carried out in a “blanket” fashion, and a “pattern of enforced disappearances.”

The commission also found that torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment were committed by both the Government and opposition forces in violation of obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law.

The team, led by Professor Cherif Bassiouni, an Egyptian jurist and war crimes expert, calls on the Government to immediately cease acts of violence against civilians in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, and to conduct “exhaustive, impartial and transparent” investigations into all alleged violations.

It also calls on the National Transitional Council, the umbrella group representing the opposition, to conduct similar investigations into alleged violations, and to ensure the immediate implementation of applicable international humanitarian and human rights law.

Also serving on the commission is Asma Khader, a Jordanian-Palestinian lawyer who serves on the executive committee of the International Commission of Jurists, and Canada’s Philippe Kirsch, who was the first president of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Council is scheduled to consider the report on 6 June, as part of its current session.

**Citing high HIV infection rates, UN report urges ‘chain of prevention’ to shield youth**

1 June - An estimated 2,500 youth are newly infected with HIV every day, with women and adolescent girls facing a disproportionately higher risk, according to a new joint report by the United Nations and the World Bank that calls for a “chain of prevention” to protect young people.

“Opportunity in Crisis: Preventing HIV from early adolescence to young adulthood” presents, for the first time, data on HIV infections among young people and identifies factors that increase risk of infection as well as opportunities to strengthen prevention.

According to the report, people between the ages of 15 and 24 accounted for 41 per cent of new infections among adults in 2009. Worldwide, an estimated 5 million (4.3 million to 5.9 million) young people in that age group were living with HIV in 2009.

“For many young people HIV infection is the result of neglect, exclusion, and violations that occur with the knowledge of families, communities, social and political leaders. This report urges leaders at all levels to build a chain of prevention to keep adolescents and young people informed, protected and healthy,” said Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“We must protect the second decade of life, so that the journey from childhood to adulthood is not derailed by HIV – a
journey that is especially fraught for girls and young women,” he added.

The report attributes the increased risk faced by young women and adolescent girls to biological vulnerability, social inequality and exclusion. Globally young women make up more than 60 per cent of all young people living with HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa that rate jumps to 72 per cent.

The agencies note that early adolescence is a window of opportunity to intervene, before most youth become sexually active and harmful gender and social norms that increase the risk of HIV infection are established.

Family members, teachers, community leaders have a role to play in setting norms for responsible behaviour, and in advocating for the full range of services needed for young people to stay healthy, they add.

“Indeed, reducing the level of HIV incidence requires not one single intervention, but a continuum of prevention that provides information, support and services throughout the life cycle,” the agencies stated, stressing the need to empower young people with knowledge, prevention services and health care to effectively protect them from infection.

“Young people are not only tomorrow’s leaders, they are the leaders of today,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

“If young people are empowered to protect themselves against HIV, they can lead us to an HIV-free generation.”

**Bahrain: Ban welcomes end of state of emergency and call for national dialogue**

1 June - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the lifting of the state of emergency in Bahrain, which has witnessed a violent crackdown by the Government against protesters demanding reform, as well as the call made by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa for a national dialogue to begin on 1 July.

“The Secretary-General hopes that such a dialogue will be genuine and meaningful and lead to an inclusive reform process aimed at meeting the political, economic and social aspirations of all Bahraini people,” Mr. Ban’s spokesperson said in a statement.

“In this regard, he appeals to all national stakeholders to work constructively towards creating a conducive environment for such a dialogue to take place,” the statement added.

Bahrain is one of several nations in the Middle East and North Africa that has been rocked this year by protests calling for increased freedoms and democratic reforms.

The Government’s crackdown on protesters – which has reportedly killed 20 people – has drawn criticism from UN officials, including Mr. Ban and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, both of whom have urged maximum restraint and called for inclusive dialogue with all parties.

Mr. Ban reiterated his call on the Bahraini authorities and the security forces “to act in accordance with relevant international norms and standards with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
Japan underestimated tsunami hazard for nuclear sites, UN expert group finds

1 June - Experts from the United Nations atomic energy agency said today that Japan had underestimated potential tsunami hazards to its nuclear power plants before the March earthquake and tsunami that damaged the Fukushima Daiichi facility.

The team of international nuclear safety experts, from 12 countries, said in a preliminary assessment of the safety issues that “the tsunami hazard for several sites was underestimated,” according to a press statement of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

“Nuclear plant designers and operators should appropriately evaluate and protect against the risks of all natural hazards, and should periodically update those assessments and assessment methodologies,” the experts said.

They added that “Japan’s response to the nuclear accident has been exemplary… [and that the country’s] long-term response, including the evacuation of the area around stricken reactors, has been impressive and well organized.

“A suitable and timely follow-up programme on public and worker exposures and health monitoring would be beneficial. “

IAEA said the team held extensive discussions with officials from the Japanese nuclear-related agencies and visited three nuclear sites, including the plant at Fukushima Daiichi.

The visits gave the team a first-hand appreciation of the scale of devastation wreaked by the earthquake and tsunami on 11 March and of the extraordinary efforts Japanese workers have been applying ever since to stabilize the situation, IAEA said.

“Our entire team was humbled by the enormous damage inflicted by the tsunami on Japan. We are also profoundly impressed by the dedication of Japanese workers working to resolve this unprecedented nuclear accident,” said team leader Mike Weightman, the United Kingdom's Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations.

The team was comprised of experts with experience across a range of nuclear specialties, hailing from Argentina, China, France, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Their final report will be delivered to the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety at IAEA headquarters in Vienna from 20 to 24 June.

UN stresses need for global cooperation on using outer space

1 June - As the world marks the 50th anniversary of humankind’s first flight into outer space, the United Nations today reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation in developing norms of law to ensure adherence to treaties that promote peaceful and beneficial uses of outer space.

In a declaration adopted today, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), which is also marking 50 years since its first session in 1961, voiced its conviction that space science and technology and their applications, including satellite communications, Earth observation systems and satellite navigation technologies, provide indispensable tools for sustainable development.

They can also contribute effectively to efforts to improve people’s lives, conserve natural resources and enhance disaster
preparedness and mitigation.

“When I looked down on Earth from space, I saw the beauty and the wounds of our planet. The effects of climate change are very visible when you look down,” said Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu, the chair of UNCOPUOS, reflecting on his time in space as the first Romanian astronaut in space.

The Vienna-based UN Office of Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) has invited members of the public this week to celebrate the two anniversaries.

Activities will include meeting astronauts and cosmonauts, touching a rock from the moon and joining a Space Tour at the Vienna International Centre.

More than 25 States and organisations have put their national space accomplishments on display. Tomorrow, astronauts and cosmonauts will discuss the topic “Future of Humankind in Space.” On Saturday, astronauts and cosmonauts, as well as representatives of all major space agencies, will be present to answer questions from visitors.

Aleksei Leonov, a Russian cosmonaut and the first person to walk in space, reminded UNCOPUOS members that outer space belongs to all humankind.

“We have to share with the developing countries the benefits from outer space and also what we know about it. We have to work hard in all countries to make that kind of education available to everybody,” he said.

The UNCOPUOS declaration called upon States to take measures at the national, regional and global levels to engage in common efforts to use space science and technology and their applications to preserve Earth and its space environment for future generations.

**Global recovery must start with the poor – UN human rights expert**

1 June - Unjustified cuts in aid to the poor during a financial crisis could violate human rights standards, and economic recovery must start with the most vulnerable, according to a United Nations human rights expert.

Magdalena Sepúlveda, the UN Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty, told a Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva that “unjustified reductions in expenditures devoted to implementing public services that are critical to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights will be in violation of human rights standards.

“There is no space in human rights for a trickle-down approach,” she said on Monday.
“From a human rights perspective, recovery must start with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.”

“Human rights are not expendable during times of crises and recovery. Even when resources are limited, States are legally bound to respect, protect and fulfil international human rights obligations,” Ms. Sepúlveda said. “The challenge of recovering from the global economic and financial crises is an opportunity to embrace a vision for the future aimed at the full realization of human rights.”

The independent expert said that several recovery measures adopted by States in the aftermath of the crises seriously jeopardize the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

“Austerity measures such as cuts to social protection systems, regressive taxation measures, and elimination of food subsidies are proving detrimental to the poorest of the poor, exacerbating their already precarious situation,” Ms. Sepúlveda said.
Increasing inequalities and food insecurity, the declining availability of natural resources and unpredictable changes to climate patterns are likely to increase the potential for social unrest throughout the world, she said.

“Any recovery plan must anticipate these challenges and assume that there will be many more crises to recover from,” she said. “Only human rights-based change can directly address the long-term structural barriers to equality and set the foundations for a sustainable, socially inclusive society.”

Ms. Sepúlveda urged States to view the challenge of recovery as a unique opportunity to aim towards the full realization of all economic, social and cultural rights for all individuals.

“Through a human rights-based recovery, States have the chance to embrace new and ambitious approaches to reducing inequality, eliminating poverty and creating stable societies that will withstand future shocks.”

The expert’s report outlines a number of innovative measures to which States should lend serious consideration when formulating their economic recovery, including implementing a comprehensive social protection floor, adopting socially responsible taxation policies, and enhancing regulation that protects individuals from abuse.

Ms Sepúlveda, who serves in an unpaid and independent capacity, reports to the Human Rights Council. She has been in the current post since May 2008.

**More UN food aid reaches besieged Libyan city of Misrata**

1 June - A ship carrying enough United Nations food assistance to feed 25,000 people for one month arrived in the besieged Libyan city of Misrata today, as the World Food Programme (WFP) voiced concern once again about dwindling food stocks in the strife-torn country.

The ship, which was chartered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), also brought a WFP team that is part of a UN inter-agency mission that will conduct a rapid needs assessment of the humanitarian situation on the ground.

The UN team will also evacuate the wounded and stranded migrants, and deliver up to 700 tons of food and blankets, kitchen sets and medical supplies.

The WFP shipment of wheat flour, pulses, vegetable oil, and high-energy biscuits is the fourth time that the agency has sent food assistance to Misrata since 7 April, delivering a total of more than 1,600 tons of food aid to civilians trapped by the fighting that erupted several months ago between Government forces and rebel groups seeking the ouster of Muammar al-Qadhafi.

WFP has chartered another vessel which is due to reach Misrata in the next few days carrying more food assistance and providing transport for other humanitarian partners.

The agency also announced today that it is extending its regional emergency operation for North Africa for three more months until the end of August. The $100 million operation aims to assist 1.5 million people affected by the violence in Libya and neighbouring countries.

WFP has also deployed experts on the ground in Libya to coordinate and strengthen logistics and telecommunications for the entire humanitarian community. A three-month special operation for the WFP-run UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has already provided at least 15 flights between Malta, Cairo, Benghazi and Djerba.

The air operation is currently facing a shortfall of close to $3 million and may have to end unless funds are mobilized, WFP warned.

Also today, the UN-ordered panel investigating human rights abuses in Libya submitted its report, which states that
Government forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the course of their crackdown on opposition forces.

The three-member International Commission of Inquiry, dispatched by the UN Human Rights Council, called on the Government of Libya to immediately cease acts of violence against civilians and to thoroughly investigate all alleged violations.

Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts to help resolve the crisis in Libya are continuing. Yesterday UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe told the Security Council that the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to Libya, Abdel Elah Al-Khatib, the African Union and other stakeholders have been making every effort to narrow the differences between the parties and to begin a credible negotiating process.

He noted that the parties remain sharply divided on how to start peace talks, with the Government adamant on a truce, including the cessation of an international bombing campaign, and the opposition demanding that Mr. Qadhafi and his family first relinquish power.

The pro-democracy movement emerged in Libya in February following similar protests in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries across North Africa and the Middle East.

**World industrial production on the rise, UN report finds**

1 June - World manufacturing output has grown by 6.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2011 compared to the same period last year, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reported today.

“The figure clearly indicates the progress of the recovery of world industrial production from the recent financial crisis,” UNIDO said, in the first edition of its new plan to report industrial statistics quarterly. Formerly the presentations were annual.

The report, based on an analysis of quarterly production data, said developing countries were in the lead with their manufacturing production increasing by 11.5 per cent. The major contribution to this growth was by China, with its output growing by 15 per cent.

Newly industrialized countries also performed well, with Turkey displaying a growth rate of 13.8 per cent, while Mexico’s was estimated at 7.4 per cent and India’s at 5.1 per cent.

The manufacturing output of industrialized countries increased by 4.4 per cent during the named period, with strong growth of 7.1 per cent observed in the United States, the world’s largest manufacturer.

Major European economies, including France, Germany and the United Kingdom, also demonstrated significant growth in manufacturing output. But other European countries, such as Greece, witnessed a 6.9 per cent drop, while Portugal and Spain maintained a marginal growth of less than one per cent.

Japan’s figures fell by 2.4 per cent. The full impact of the March Tsunami disaster was not yet reflected in manufacturing production data for the first quarter.

Negative growth was observed in North Africa, where the manufacturing output of Egypt and Tunisia fell by 8.9 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively.

The UNIDO report also contains the growth estimates for the first quarter by major manufacturing sectors. It suggests that production of general machinery has increased by more than 15 per cent, electrical machinery and apparatus by 12 per cent, and medical and precision equipment by 11 per cent.

While industrialized countries performed well in high-tech sectors, their growth in traditional manufacturing areas such as
food and beverages, textile and wearing apparel was quite low. Developing countries maintained higher growth across all sectors.

**Sustainable agriculture key to green growth, poverty reduction – UN officials**

1 June - United Nations officials today called for boosting support for sustainable agriculture, including smallholder farmers, as a way to drive green growth and reduce poverty.

According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the challenge of feeding more than nine billion people by 2050, along with tackling climate change and maintaining productive land and sufficient water resources require a “more intelligent pathway” for managing the world’s agricultural systems.

“Agriculture is at the centre of a transition to a resource-efficient, low-carbon Green Economy,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. “The challenge is to feed a growing global population without pushing humanity's footprint beyond planetary boundaries.”

Mr. Steiner called for galvanizing support for smallholder farmers, who are an “untapped resource” in addressing food security and today’s environmental challenges.

Investments through official development assistance (ODA) are one way of stepping up support for this important group, as is scaling-up and accelerating government policies for unleashing investment flows from the private sector, he noted.

“Well-managed, sustainable agriculture can not only overcome hunger and poverty, but can address other challenges from climate change to the loss of biodiversity,” said the UNEP chief.

“Its value and its contribution to multiple economic, environmental and societal goals needs to be recognized in the income and employment prospects for the half a million smallholdings across the globe,” he added.

The world’s rural poor and especially farmers of the 500 million smallholdings in developing countries feed one-third of the global population and account for 60 per cent of global agriculture.

Smallholder farmers also provide up to 80 per cent of the food consumed in Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

“Smallholders in developing countries – the majority of them women – manage to feed 2 billion people, despite working on ecologically and climatically precarious land, with difficult or no access to infrastructure and institutional services, and often lacking land tenure rights that farmers in developed countries take for granted,” said Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of IFAD.

“Right now, we are squandering the potential of rural poor people to contribute to global prosperity. Investing in sustainable smallholder agriculture is a smart way to right this wrong,” he stated.

IFAD also stressed that investments in sustainable smallholder agriculture must go hand-in-hand with policy and institutional reforms, investments in infrastructure and improvements in market access. They must also be informed by the knowledge and needs of the rural poor.

On 5 June, UNEP will celebrate World Environment Day (WED) in India with one of the fastest growing economies in the world and whose 1.2 billion people continue to put pressure on land and forests, especially in densely populated areas where people are cultivating on marginal lands and where overgrazing is contributing to desertification.

This year’s theme – ‘Forests: Nature at Your Service’ – underscores the intrinsic link between quality of life and the health
of forests and forest ecosystems.

**UN unveils three initiatives to promote biodiversity in fashion**

1 June - The United Nations trade and development body today announced three initiatives to encourage biodiversity in the world’s fashion industries.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will support competitions in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands aimed at encouraging the use of recycled or natural materials in fashion, and will work with a design group in Spain to further research biodiversity in clothing design and manufacture, according to an UNCTAD press statement.

UNCTAD and the Fashioning the Future Awards campaign in London have announced an annual award category which seeks to encourage young designers “to pursue environmentally sustainable fashion design.”

The agency said it is also will support the Green Fashion Competition of the Amsterdam International Fashion Week to identify “talented entrepreneurs in the industry who aim to create fashion businesses that sustain biodiversity.”

In Madrid, UNCTAD is collaborating with the Coknit Connect of the European Institute of Design to support a research and experimentation project that “seeks to provide a sound basis for design students to use materials in innovative ways and in collaboration with clothing companies.”

“It is expected that the project will result in the creation of limited series of appealing, trend-conscious fashion products made from recovered and/or recycled clothing and fabrics,” the agency said.

“The fashion industry can play a significant role in conserving biodiversity through innovation and new ideas. The industry makes extensive use of raw materials derived from biodiversity, such as natural fabrics and animal skins.”

**Ban urges tolerance and social inclusion in an age of global emigration**

1 June - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged the world to deepen its commitment to the common values of social inclusion, acceptance and understanding, saying emigration was increasingly a global trend with minorities and migrants gravitating towards cities for economic opportunities.

“We meet in what I call an age of mobility. This is an era where people are crossing borders in ever-increasing numbers in pursuit of opportunity and hope for a better life,” said Mr. Ban, addressing the International Conference on the Inter-Ethnic City in the Italian capital, Rome.

“Cities are the main centres of action – the hubs, the magnets, the places where people collide and coexist,” he told the conference, organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the auspices of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was created to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The Secretary-General acknowledged that cities face both economic and social challenges in creating an inclusive environment, especially in the prevailing global economic uncertainty and political transitions under way in many countries.

“In such a climate, there is a tendency to blame the ‘other’ or to see the ‘other’ as draining the local economy.

“Indeed, in every corner of the world, migration is often the subject of shrill debate – a wedge to provoke social tensions, drive political extremes, fan the flames of discrimination and hatred,” said Mr. Ban.
On the other hand, migrants tended to complement, rather than displace, national workers. They generated additional demand and often performed jobs that nationals do not want, even in times of economic crisis, he stressed.

“We should also remember that the profile of migrant workers is not always what we imagine. They are not always low-wage, poorly educated labourers. To the contrary, in many countries and cities they are the best and the brightest: doctors, nurses, engineers and other highly educated professionals. They are entrepreneurs who revitalize neighbourhoods and create jobs. These are a welcome addition to any society,” the Secretary-General added.

He pointed out that Italy, which is marking the 150th anniversary of its unification, was, some decades ago, a country of emigration when millions of Italians went abroad and in so doing alleviated unemployment, sustained their families and sent home much-needed remittances.

“Italy showed how international migration can be a triple win – for countries of origin, countries of destination, and migrants and their families. Italy should bring that wisdom to the global debate,” he said.

The Secretary-General said local authorities and civil society groups were essential to the successful integration of migrants and other ethnic minorities, as well as the effective management of cultural diversity.

Corporations too could take steps to make diversity a priority when recruiting their workforce, procuring new vendors and reaching out to new customers, while foundations and local educational institutions could provide safe spaces for people from different ethnicities to discuss their differences and act on their common goals, Mr. Ban said.

“We live in a world where, too often, division sells. It wins votes. It gets ratings. It is much easier to blame others than to think for one’s self.

“And yet, wherever I go, I have found something else – a growing realization that we are in this together. A sharper understanding that cities and communities do best when everyone has a chance to give their full potential – when all can play a part,” the Secretary-General added.

Separately, the Secretary-General met with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini for discussions that included the current situations in Libya, Somalia, Lebanon, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as nuclear safety. He was also expected to confer today with Italian President Giorgio Napolitano.

Mr. Ban reiterated his condemnation of the attack last week on Italian peacekeepers serving with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and renewed his sympathies to those wounded and their families.

He voiced his hope that Italy would maintain its current level of support to UNIFIL, saying the Italian contingent and the mission as a whole were making a significant contribution towards stability and peace in Lebanon and the wider region.

Turning to the Middle East and North Africa, the Secretary-General underscored the importance of including women in dialogue.

He voiced his concern over violence in Syria and Yemen, but also took note of the amnesty announced by the Syrian authorities, as well as Bahrain’s decision to end the state of emergency.

The Secretary-General and Italian President Giorgio Napolitano exchanged views on developments in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly the situation in Libya. They also discussed emigration, with Mr. Ban stressing that the importance of upholding the rights of emigrants regardless of their status.
Delegates to UN-backed gathering on Darfur endorse draft document on peace pact

1 June - United Nations-backed inclusive consultations on the conflict in the Sudanese region of Darfur has ended in the Qatari capital, Doha, with delegates voicing support for a draft document that will form the basis of a permanent ceasefire and a comprehensive peace agreement.

The All Darfur Stakeholders Conference “called on the Government of Sudan and the Armed Movements to make every effort to reach a permanent ceasefire and a comprehensive peace settlement on the basis of this document,” the delegates said at the end of the five-day meeting yesterday.

The gathering brought together high-ranking representatives of the Government of Sudan, Darfur movements, civil society delegates, representatives of internally displaced persons (IDPs), Sudanese political party leaders and elected members of state legislatures and the national parliament from Darfur.

In their final communiqué, participants noted that significant progress had been made on compensation and return of IDPs and refugees; power sharing and administrative status of Darfur; wealth sharing; human rights and fundamental freedoms; permanent ceasefire and final security arrangements; and mechanism for internal dialogue and implementation modalities.

The conference, however, noted that despite the progress in the negotiations, the security situation in Darfur remained precarious.

“Given the direct humanitarian consequences of this situation, the Conference called upon the Doha negotiating parties to abide by the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreements already signed.

“The conference strongly urged all the other armed movements of Darfur and the Government of Sudan to end hostilities and to sign a ceasefire agreement with the Government of Sudan,” said the participants.

In a related development, the UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) reported yesterday that several humanitarian organizations were able to access the Kalma IDP camp to provide assistance to residents. Authorities had restricted entrance to the camp since 17 May.

UN labour agency chief calls for ‘new era of social justice’

1 June - The head of the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) today called for “a new era of social justice” in face of unemployment, unfair globalization, turmoil in the workplace and extreme differences between rich and poor.

Speaking before the organization’s 100th conference in Geneva, Director-General Juan Somavia said: “Our world of work is in turmoil. It is urgent to commit to a new era of social justice, of growth with social justice based on sustainable development.”

Mr. Somavia said “the world of work was facing multiple crises, including an unacceptably high level of youth employment, stagnant levels of world investment in the real economy, marginalization of job-creating small enterprises, and ‘indecent levels’ of income and wealth concentration,” according to a statement released by the ILO.

“We have in front of us the bigger danger of further consolidating inefficient growth patterns and unfair globalization rules that were at the root of the crisis, and that have systematically increased inequality almost everywhere in the last 30 years,”
Mr. Somavia said.

“No wonder people are upset and angry. Too many feel squeezed – including the middle classes between the immediate social impact of the crisis and these long-term trends.”

Mr. Somavia said that people were also angry over the perception that it seems some financial institutions are regarded as “‘too big to fail’” while many people are seen as “too small to matter.”

“From Tahrir Square [in Cairo] to Puerta del Sol [in Madrid], in streets and plazas in many countries, we are witnessing the birth of a social and popular movement led by youth that may change the world,” he said. “And let us not forget that as we speak, the daring and courageous commitment of the Arab world and beyond is giving us a powerful message: that real change today demands widespread peaceful social and popular mobilization that can project the voice and demands of people into the heart of political decision-making.

“We must also hear them. Let us be as bold and ambitious as our forebears have been.”

He told some 3,000 government, employer and worker delegates “whether a new era of social justice remains just an idealized vision of a desired future, or becomes a practical reality that takes hold in our societies, will depend in many ways on you, on us, on the ILO family.”

Mr. Somavia’s speech echoed remarks made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in February to mark the World Day of Social Justice.

“Social justice is more than an ethical imperative; it is a foundation for national stability and global prosperity,” he said. “Equal opportunity, solidarity and respect for human rights, these are essential to unlocking the full productive potential of nations and peoples.”

UN official arrives in DR Congo to spotlight humanitarian crisis

1 June - A top-level United Nations humanitarian official started a five day visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) today, “aiming to draw international attention to one of the world’s most serious and chronic humanitarian crises.”

Catherine Bragg, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator will discuss ways to protect civilians, prevent and respond to sexual violence, and ensure humanitarian access to people in conflict areas, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said.

It is estimated that almost 1.7 million people are internally displaced in the DRC due to armed violence, the agency said.

“The country is affected by a complex humanitarian crisis with intertwined causes and dynamics within a background of widespread poverty, chronic instability and serious abuses against civilians,” OCHA said.

“This crisis receives far less attention than it deserves. We call on the Government to step up its relief efforts. We also urge donors and the rest of the international community to continue supporting humanitarian response, notably in the north-east, to alleviate the suffering of thousands, while working with the Government to promote peace and stabilization,” said Ms. Bragg.

Ms. Bragg is scheduled to travel to two of the country’s regions most affected by conflict – the provinces of North Kivu and Orientale – to meet local officials, local communities, UN personnel, humanitarian organizations and international partners on the ground, OCHA said.

Her visit to those provinces follows a similar trip in March by Valerie Amos, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian

UN News Centre • www.un.org/news
Sudan: UN delivers food aid to thousands displaced by conflict in Abyei

1 June - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said today it has provided food aid to more than 45,000 people who were displaced from Sudan’s disputed Sudanese area of Abyei during the recent fighting that culminated in the taking over of the territory by Government troops.

“We have partners on the ground who helped us get food quickly to those who need our assistance,” said Amer Daoudi, the WFP Sudan Regional Director.

The agency said it had delivered food assistance to more than 25,000 displaced people in Warrap state, where the former Abyei residents have sought safety, with each one of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) receiving a month’s ration. Some 2,800 people who went to Western Bahr el-Ghazal state also received food rations.

Food assistance has also reached an estimated 18,000 people in the Abyei area where WFP operations were disrupted by the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) from the north and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) from the south.

WFP said it is working with NGO partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to locate and assist those who have fled into remote villages. The agency is also working with the charity Samaritan’s Purse, which has offered tractors and trucks to help move food around Twic county and into Agok.

WFP plans to send 2,000 tons of cereals, pulses and salt to Wunrok in the Twic county of Warrap state, where WFP has set up a response base. Yesterday a convoy of 23 trucks carrying almost half of that consignment left El Obeid in Northern Kordofan state headed for Wunrok.

“As soon as the security situation allows, WFP will conduct a rapid assessment to determine the extent of the damage the fighting has had on WFP assets, including its office, vehicles and warehouse as well as on the livelihoods of people in the Abyei area,” the agency said in its operational update on Abyei.

An additional 30 WFP staff have been deployed to manage food distributions, provide logistical support, and to coordinate with other humanitarian workers on the ground. An expert will also be sent to look into the nutrition situation of those displaced, especially children, as well as the overall food security situation in Twic county.

UNESCO and Spanish soccer club team up to ‘imagine peace’

1 June - The top-level Spanish football team Málaga will sport the logo of the United Nations cultural organization as part of an “Imagining Peace” campaign that will also include Internet and social media messages aimed largely at youth, under an agreement signed today.

The four-year agreement “requires UNESCO (the UN Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) and Málaga Football Club to mobilize their networks and communities to promote initiatives in favour of intercultural dialogue, education, the fight against doping and against racism,” UNESCO said.

“The alliance is rooted in the will to promote the values and objectives of healthy, doping-free sport and to help create a society unfettered by racism and discrimination,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova at a signing ceremony in the southern Spanish city. “We must imagine peace and make it become reality.”
Club president Sheikh Abdullah al-Thani said: “Our joint purpose is to use the values of sport to educate grown-ups and the young and this is one of the main reasons for our association. The training of young athletes must not be limited to the development of individual, or group, technical skills, it must also draw on the values inherent to sport, such as the will to excel, camaraderie and respect.”

The UN agency and Málaga, which competes in Spain’s top-flight La Liga, “will share their resources so as to inspire young people with a new understanding of peace,” UNESCO said. “The Internet and social media will be used to promote UNESCO values concerning intercultural dialogue and the importance of education.”

“The agreement also aims to contribute to the creation of an environment free of racism where girls and boys enjoy the same opportunities; to help foster a social conscience among the young using the information tools that are theirs, i.e. the Internet and its social networks; and to implement the principles that underpin UNESCO’s Convention Against Doping in Sport.”

The agency added that Málaga’s training centre of about 500 young players will serve as a practical laboratory for the agreement.

**Mladic arrest shows ending impunity requires united action – UN prosecutor**

1 June - The arrest of Ratko Mladic after he spent 16 years on the run demonstrates that “ending impunity requires a united front,” the chief prosecutor of the United Nations war crimes tribunal for the Balkan conflicts said today, pledging that the Bosnian Serb wartime military figure would receive a fair trial.

Serge Brammertz told journalists in The Hague, where the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is based, that Mr. Mladic’s transfer yesterday to the custody of the ICTY was significant for international justice.

“His arrest confirms that no one can count on impunity for war crimes,” Mr. Brammertz said, noting that just one person – Goran Hadžić, who led a self-proclaimed breakaway state within Croatia – out of a total of 161 indicted by the tribunal is still at large.

Mr. Brammertz thanked the efforts of Serbian authorities in arresting Mr. Mladic last week, including President Boris Tadic, the Serbian National Security Council and the country’s security services.

“The international community has also played a significant role in bringing about Ratko Mladic’s arrest. This arrest is proof that ending impunity requires a united front.

“We particularly thank the European Union for giving Serbia positive incentives to cooperate with the tribunal. We also acknowledge civil society, which has insisted on holding Ratko Mladic accountable and provided great support to my office on this issue.”

Mr. Mladic, who served as a colonel general and as commander of the main staff of the Bosnian Serb army during the Balkan conflicts, is facing charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The indictment against him, which was amended today, includes allegations about his role in the notorious killing of more than 7,000 Muslim men and boys in the supposedly “safe haven” of Srebrenica in 1995 and in the protracted and deadly siege of the city of Sarajevo between 1992 and 1995.

Mr. Brammertz said the rights of Mr. Mladic – whose first appearance before the tribunal is scheduled for Friday morning – will be respected during his upcoming trial.

“We will draw on the many lessons we have learned over the years to make the Mladic prosecution successful. Our
challenge is to present a manageable case that reasonably reflects Ratko Mladic’s alleged criminality and the harms suffered by his victims.”

**Trafficking victims should have legal redress and compensation – UN rights expert**

1 June - Victims of human trafficking have the right to seek legal redress and compensation for the violation of their rights, a United Nations expert said today, voicing concern that those trafficked were often treated as “instruments” of criminal investigation, rather than people with rights.

“In many States, trafficked persons do not receive remedies in a holistic manner as a matter of right, but are only provided with ad hoc measures which are predominantly aimed at facilitating criminal investigation,” said Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

She criticised such measures as temporary residence permits, which are granted on the condition that the victims cooperate with law enforcement authorities.

“Trafficked persons are rarely known to have received compensation, as they are often not provided with the information, legal and other assistance and residence status necessary to access it,” said Ms. Ezeilo when she presented her report on the right to effective remedy for trafficked person to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

“At worst, many trafficked persons are wrongly identified as irregular migrants, detained and deported before they have an opportunity to even consider seeking remedies,” she added.

In her report, Ms. Ezeilo recommends that States “ensure that adequate procedures are in place to enable quick and accurate identification of trafficked persons” to prevent any misidentification of trafficked persons as irregular migrants, which often leads to detention and deportation, effectively precluding a chance to seek compensation.

“States should ensure that trafficked persons are equipped with access to information, free legal aid and other necessary assistance such as interpretation services, and regular residence status during the duration of any legal proceedings,” Ms. Ezeilo recommended.

She also advised States to provide trafficked persons with temporary or permanent residence permits “where a safe return to the country of origin is not guaranteed or a return would not otherwise be in the best interests of the trafficked person for reasons related to his or her personal circumstances, such as the loss of citizenship or cultural and social identity in the country of origin.”