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UN adopts new Global Goals, charting sustainable development for people and planet by 2030



Source: UN in collaboration with Project Everyone

25 September - The 193-Member United Nations General Assembly today formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with a set of bold new Global Goals, which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hailed as a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world.

“The new agenda is a promise by leaders to all people everywhere. It is an agenda for people, to end poverty in all its forms – an agenda for the planet, our common home,” declared Mr. Ban as he opened the UN Sustainable Development Summit which kicked off today and wraps up Sunday.

The UN chief's address came ahead of the Assembly's formal adoption of the new framework, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

The Goals aim to build on the work of the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000, rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty.

The Summit opened with a full programme of events, including a screening of the film *The Earth From Space*, performances by UN Goodwill Ambassadors Shakira and Angelique Kidjo, as well as call to action by female education advocate and the youngest-ever Nobel Laureate, Malala Yousafzai along with youth representatives as torch bearers to a sustainable future.



The adoption ceremony was presided over by Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who stressed the successes of the MDGSs and the need for the full implementation of the new Agenda.

Speaking to the press after the adoption of the Agenda, Mr. Ban said: “These Goals are a blueprint for a better future. Now we must use the goals to transform the world. We will do that through partnership and through commitment. We must leave no-one behind.”

In his opening address to the Assembly, which also marks the Organization’s 70th anniversary, the UN chief hailed the new framework as an agenda for shared prosperity, peace and partnership. “It conveys the urgency of climate action. It is rooted in gender equality and respect for the rights of all.”

Mr. Ban urged the world leaders and others convened at the event to successfully implement the Global Goals or Agenda 30 by launching ‘renewed global partnership.’

“The 2030 Agenda compels us to look beyond national boundaries and short-term interests and act in solidarity for the long-term. We can no longer afford to think and work in silos.

Institutions will have to become fit for a grand new purpose. The United Nations system is strongly committed to supporting Member States in this great new endeavour,” said Mr. Ban.

“We must engage all actors, as we did in shaping the Agenda. We must include parliaments and local governments, and work with cities and rural areas. We must rally businesses and entrepreneurs. We must involve civil society in defining and implementing policies – and give it the space to hold us to account. We must listen to scientists and academia. We will need to embrace a data revolution. Most important, we must set to work – now,” added the Secretary-General.

“Seventy years ago, the United Nations rose from the ashes of war. Governments agreed on a visionary Charter dedicated to ‘We the Peoples’. The Agenda you are adopting today advances the goals of the Charter. It embodies the aspirations of people everywhere for lives of peace, security and dignity on a healthy planet,” said Mr. Ban.

General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft called the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development “ambitious” in confronting the injustices of poverty, marginalization and discrimination.

“We recognize the need to reduce inequalities and to protect our common home by changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. And, we identify the overwhelming need to address the politics of division, corruption and irresponsibility that fuel conflict and hold back development,” he said.

On the adoption of the new agenda, UN Economic and Social Council President (ECOSOC) Oh Joon said action on Sustainable Development Goals must start immediately. “The Economic and Social Council stands ready to kick-start the work on the new agenda,” he added.



'The future demands of us critical and global decisions' Pope Francis tells UN General Assembly



Pope Francis is welcomed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and receives flower bouquets from children of UN staff members at the start of his visit to UN Headquarters. UN Photo/Mark Garten

25 September - Pope Francis delivered a wide-ranging address before world leaders gathered at the United Nations General Assembly today, urging global action to protect the environment and end the suffering of "vast ranks of the excluded," saying that "human beings take precedence over partisan interests."

"The present time invites us to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society, so as to bear fruit in significant and positive historical events. We cannot permit ourselves to postpone 'certain agendas' for the future," said Pope Francis.

"The future demands of us critical and global decisions in the face of world-wide conflicts which increase the number of the excluded and those in need," he declared in an address just ahead of the General Assembly's formal adoption of a new global framework,

Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate over the next 15 years.

In his remarks, he also warned that the realities in the Middle East and Africa were grave.

"I must renew my repeated appeals regarding the painful situation of the entire Middle East, North Africa and other African countries," said Pope Francis, "These realities should serve as a grave summons to an examination of conscience on the part of those charged with the conduct of international affairs."

"Not only in cases of religious or cultural persecution, but in every situation of conflict, as in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya, South Sudan and the Great Lakes region, real human beings take precedence over partisan interests, however legitimate the latter may be," he continued. "In wars and conflicts there are individual persons, our brothers and sisters, men and women, young and old, boys and girls who weep, suffer and die."

The Pope also noted the achievements of the UN as it celebrates its seventieth anniversary.

"The history of this organized community of States is one of important common achievements over a period of unusually fast-paced changes," he said. "Without claiming to be exhaustive, we can mention the codification and development of international law, the establishment of international norms regarding human rights, advances in humanitarian law, the resolution of numerous conflicts, operations of peace-keeping and reconciliation, and any number of other accomplishments in every area of international activity and endeavour."

But he also cautioned that the experience of the last 70 years had made it clear that reform and adaptation to the times were sometimes necessary.

"The need for greater equity is especially true in the case of those bodies with effective executive capability, such as the Security Council, the financial agencies and the groups or mechanisms specifically created to deal with economic crises," he said.

The Pope also addressed the effects of exclusion and inequality, noting that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, was an important step forward, adding that he was confident that the December Conference of States Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), widely referred to as COP 21, would secure fundamental and effective agreements.

During his introductory remarks, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said never in its 70-year history has the United Nations been honoured to welcome a Pope for the opening of the General Assembly.

“Your visit today coincides with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” Mr. Ban told Pope Francis.

“But that is no coincidence. You have often spoken of an ‘integral ecology’ – one that encompasses the environment, economic growth, social justice and human well-being – in other words, sustainable development for our common home.”

He noted that the recent Papal Encyclical – *Laudato Si* – defined climate change as a principal challenge facing humanity, and a moral issue.

“This message is critical as we approach the pivotal climate change conference in Paris in December,” the UN chief continued. “Across the global agenda, His Holiness is a resounding voice of conscience. He has cried out for compassion for the world’s refugees and migrants, and solidarity with people trapped in conflict and poverty.”

Mr. Ban recalled that in May 2014, Pope Francis met with the full leadership of the United Nations system at the Vatican, at which time he affirmed that the global community must mobilize the world beyond religious or political differences to forge a shared vision – a life of dignity for all.

For his part, General Assembly Mogens Lykketoft also welcomed Pope Francis to the world body.

“When you recalled previously how inseparable the ‘bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and peace’, you spoke directly to the three pillars of the United Nations – and to the interdependency and interconnectedness between these three pillars,” Mr. Lykketoft told the Pope.

“That is the message at the heart of the new and very ambitious 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development,” he continued.

Mr. Lykketoft also referred to the upcoming climate change conference in Paris, where, he said, the UN must adopt an ambitious climate agreement to protect people and the planet.

He also noted that a similar urgency was required “to bring an end to the conflicts and violent extremism affecting many parts of our world today,” adding that “our collective response to these crises, and to the plight of millions of displaced people and refugees has been, at best, inadequate, and, at worst, a failure of our humanity.”

Those gathered at the General Assembly must respond “with leadership and action, in the spirit of solidarity, dialogue and tolerance,” he said.

UN already forging ahead on ways to implement ambitious new development agenda



UN Development Programme (UNDP)
Administrator Helen Clark, UN
Photo/Cia Pak

25 September - Within hours of the General Assembly’s adoption today of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations was already looking ahead to the monumental task of wiping out poverty, fighting inequality and tackling climate change over the next 15 years.

The UN Development Group (UNDG), which unites the UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments, and offices that play a role in global development, pledged its collaboration with all Member States, rolling out a common approach to eliminate bottlenecks, provide new direction and the necessary coordination.

“The transformation of our world for which the 2030 Agenda calls is a tall order,” UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark told a meeting of the UNDG, which she chairs.

“But we all appreciate what it will mean for the well-being of people, including the one billion who continue to live in extreme poverty, on under \$1.25 per day and the prospects of the one planet on which we all depend,” she said, of the

common approach, called MAPS – for ‘Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support.’

“Mainstreaming refers to the support we can give governments to incorporate the agenda in national and local strategies, plans, and budgets,” she explained of the 17 individual Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embodied in the Agenda.

“We can contribute to mapping what countries are already doing, and where new areas of emphasis and direction are needed for the SDGs. We can help countries strengthen data systems, and sensitize national stakeholders about the new agenda,” she told the meeting which was convened to kick start the effort to take the aims of the new Agenda ‘from conversation to global action.’

On acceleration, she said the past five years of experience gained in speeding up the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the previous 15-year programme adopted at the 2000 UN summit would help identify obstacles and the actions needed for progress on multiple targets at the same time.

“On policy support, we can provide co-ordinated and demand-driven advice, drawing on knowledge and programme experience from across the UN,” she added.

Also addressing the UNDG, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed that implementation is the litmus test of the new agenda. “The message to policy-makers is clear: go beyond business as usual; work for true transformation; provide the conditions that allow us all to be agents of change,” he said.

More broadly, the UN chief declared: “Today, we can say to all the people around the world, to those experts from all walks of life who have contributed to this global conversation: we have listened to your views.”

“All your governments have heard you. This 2030 Agenda is for you; it is for everyone, everywhere. Claim it, demand that commitments are made and promises kept. Be part of this global call to action,” said Mr. Ban reiterating that preparations across the United Nations system are in full swing to support implementation of the Goals.

“Together, we can build a better future for people and planet,” said the Secretary-General.

Malala Yousafzai urges world leaders at UN to promise safe, quality education for every child



Education advocate Malala Yousafzai (third left) addresses the General Assembly during the opening day of the UN Sustainable Development Summit. UN Photo/Mark Garten

25 September - Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly alongside 193 youth representatives from the Organization’s 193 Member States, Pakistani education advocate Malala Yousafzai today asked world leaders to promise that every child will have the right to safe, free and quality primary and secondary education.

“World leaders sitting there, look up because the future generation is raising their voice,” Ms. Yousafzai, who was shot in 2012 by the Taliban for attending classes, told hundreds of senior government officials in a stirring address delivered from the highest mezzanine of the General Assembly Hall.

“Today, we are 193 young people representing billions more. Each lantern we hold represents the hope we have for our future because of the commitments you have made to the global goals,” she added as each young person held up a blue light.

The 17 Global Goals are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by the General Assembly just minutes after the youngest-ever Nobel Laureate addressed the Hall.

They aim to build on the work of the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000 rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty.

“I’m hopeful that we all in the UN will be united in the goal of education and peace, and that we will make this world not just a better place, but the best place to live. Education is hope, education is peace,” Ms. Yousafzai stressed.

Meanwhile, at a press conference following the event, she was joined by four girl ambassadors from Syria, Nigeria and Pakistan who echoed her call to world leaders to ensure that every child gets 12 years of safe, free and quality education.

“The world leaders need to take all these issues more seriously,” Ms. Yousafzai told reporters. “They need to give it full attention and they should think about their own children. No one leader would want their own daughter, their own son, to be neglected of education, to be neglected in society and not given full rights.”

“It’s really tragic what’s happening to children around the world, especially in Syria, in Iraq, and how they’re suffering. It’s shocking,” she continued.

Ms. Yousafzai noted how difficult it is for her to watch the news about those conflict-torn areas because every time she does, it makes her cry that no one is taking action while children die and girls continue to be sexually abused.

“I’m hopeful that when girls like us come together and raise our voices, the voices of those girls will be listened to because we speak on their behalf, we speak for their rights.”

The advocate’s first visit to the United Nations was on 12 July, 2013, which coincided with her 16th birthday. The date is now marked internationally as Malala Day.

Crisis in Africa’s Lake Chad Basin ‘must not be forgotten’ – UN humanitarian chief

25 September - The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator today reminded the world to pay attention to the Lake Chad Basin, now an epicentre of “violence and terror” where children as young as six-years old have been used as suicide bombers and the scene of the fastest-growing displacement crisis in Africa.

“A quarter of a million people have fled across borders,” Stephen O’Brien, the Under-Secretary-General of Humanitarian Affairs as well as the UN’s Emergency Relief Coordinator told the High-Level Event on the Lake Chad Basin. “Many have walked hundreds of kilometres from Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad and Niger, in the most appalling conditions.”



A woman buys dates at the market in the town of Bol on the outskirts of Lake Chad. Photo: OCHA/Pierre Peron

Mr. O’Brien, who convened the meeting at UN Headquarters in New York on the sidelines of the UN Sustainable Development Summit, which opened today, appealed to countries in the region to give relief workers access to those in need and also called for urgent financial contributions to the under-funded operations.

“If we disregard the huge scale of humanitarian needs, we could all pay a high price,” he said.

Describing the people in the Lake Chad Basin, which straddles Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, as “some of the poorest and most resilient in the world,” the top UN humanitarian official said “now the region has also become an epicentre of violence and terror.”

“The emergence of Boko Haram has pushed them over the edge,” he said. “Over the past five months, a sharp increase in attacks by Boko Haram has uprooted 500,000 children, bringing the total number of children on the run in northeast Nigeria and neighbouring countries to over 1.4 million.”

He described the “appalling impact on women and children, who are being abducted, abused, raped, exploited, trafficked, and forced to work as porters and lookouts,” and “children as young as six years old have been used as suicide bombers.”

“With so many other humanitarian crises on the international agenda, we hear relatively little about the horrors taking place in the Lake Chad Basin,” he said. “And yet this is the scene of the fastest-growing displacement crisis in Africa, with 2.3 million people forced from their homes since May 2013.”

Mr. O’Brien warned that the future of the region, where business activity is reportedly down by 80 percent, “looks even bleaker, as farmers are unable to tend their fields and trade in some areas is at a standstill.”

UN agencies like the World Food Programme, the UN refugee agency and the UN Children’s Programme (UNICEF) echoed Mr. O’Brien in presenting a grim humanitarian picture of the region and appealing for greater international support to their efforts to reach those in desperate need.

‘Many people have reached the end of the line in Iraq,’ warns senior UN relief official

25 September - Ten million Iraqis, or a quarter of the population, are going to need humanitarian aid by year’s end amid “dramatically” worsening conditions that are forcing many people to leave their homeland because they no longer see a future inside their country, a senior UN relief official said today.

“We are seeing a gradual increase in departures from Iraq,” Dominique Bartsch, the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, told reporters in Geneva. “Many people have reached the end on the line. They no longer have the possibility to support themselves. Many will say that the only future is outside of Iraq.”

Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that its partners and local authorities have opened two new camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Baghdad province, providing shelter to close to 3,500 Iraqis who have fled Anbar province due to recent fighting.

“The humanitarian situation is worsening dramatically as the crisis in Iraq has accelerated since last year, when militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL] took over large portions of Iraq,” Mr. Bartsch said.

Since January 2014, 3.2 million people in Iraq have fled their homes in multiple waves of internal displacement and already now, as estimated 8.6 million need humanitarian support. Mr. Bartsch said an anticipated 10 million Iraqis would need some sort of humanitarian assistance by the end of the year, representing more than a quarter of the population.

The UN refugee agency was anticipating a much larger flow of internally displaced persons in Iraq, as Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, had been taken by ISIL and more fighting was expected.

The humanitarian official warned that most basic services had to be reduced because of lack of funding, and that children had now been out of school for more than a year, leading families to leave for Europe. In addition, he also feared that a recently declared cholera outbreak could very quickly spread under the current conditions in Iraq.

“Preventing further displacement out of Iraq will require a combination of minimum humanitarian assistance, but also more sustained support to, for example education and rebuilding livelihoods,” Mr. Bartsch said.

Mr. Bartsch also called attention to the situation of more than one million Kurdish internally displaced persons in Iraq who had no perspective and inadequate humanitarian support.

The Humanitarian Response Plan requesting some \$500 million is only 40 per cent funded.



Families fleeing ongoing violence in Ramadi, Anbar province, walk across Bzebiz Bridge into Baghdad province in Iraq. Photo: UNICEF/ Wathiq Khuzaie

UNICEF launches new appeal to support refugee and migrant children in Europe



A woman carrying a child under a blanket walks on a muddy path in the southern Serbian town of Preševo, on the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Photo: UNICEF/Tomislav Georgiev

25 September - Warning of a “massive” increase in the numbers of children on the move to Europe, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) announced today that it will be appealing for \$14 million to address the needs of migrant and refugee children who have escaped war-torn countries such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

UNICEF spokesperson Sarah Crowe told reporters at the regular press briefing in Geneva that the agency’s presence in all countries should help in allotting the funds appropriately to create child-friendly locations, health care, food, shelter and other humanitarian services.

The agency reported that there has been an 80 per cent increase in the number of children moving through Europe with approximately 19,000 children arriving each month. According to Eurostat data, there were 133,000 children who sought asylum between January and July 2015.

Ms. Crowe also introduced Valentina Otmacic, UNICEF representative in Croatia, who described the harsh conditions for migrant children in that country.

Ms. Otmacic recounted a traumatic incident at a child-friendly zone in a camp in Opatovac, Croatia, where a 9-year-old Afghan boy had tried to commit suicide by cutting his neck with a metal lid before being stopped.

The agency announced that it would be providing support to European governments to ensure that the policies and procedures undertaken by them serves the best interests of the children and are in compliance with internationally accepted standards.

“With so many children on the move, and with winter in Europe approaching, our priority has to be caring for these children now. Working alongside governments and other partners across Europe, wherever our support is needed, UNICEF will do all it can so that refugee and migrant children are safe, healthy and that their rights and dignity are fully respected.” said Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF’s Special Coordinator for the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe.

Ms. Sarah Crowe stressed that the priority for the agency still remains the Syrian crisis, where there are seven million children in need and the relief effort underfunded by some \$500 million.

Syria: UN cites utter desperation behind ‘tsunami’ of refugees into Europe

25 September - Despair at appalling living conditions among the 4 million Syrians who have already fled to neighbouring countries is fuelling the current flood of refugees to Europe as they flee once more, this time from restrictions and under-funded aid programmes that have led to child labour and even ‘survival sex,’ the United Nations said today.

“Refugees face horrible living conditions, and restrictions in the legal regimes for refugees in the countries where they live [...] When people don’t have proper shelter and are living on 45 cents a day, of course they want to move,” Amin Awad, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Bureau of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said today.



Syrian man carrying a baby along the highway with other refugees, several kilometres after leaving Budapest, Hungary, heading in the direction of Vienna, Austria. Photo: UNHCR/Mark Henley

“Refugees are having to adopt negative survival strategies – like child labour, dropping out

of school, begging and survival sex. They need much more support,” he told a press briefing in Geneva. “These are societies that put a high value on education and now they are seeing their children out of school.”

Stressing that the refugees have lost hope for any improvement in Syria which has been torn asunder by more than four years of war in which at least a quarter-million people have been killed and 12 million more forced to flee their homes, he warned that the situation would only end when the fighting ended and the region stabilized.

“Syria is burning; towns are destroyed and that’s why people are on the move, that’s why we have an avalanche, a tsunami of people on the move towards Europe,” he said. “As long as there’s no resolution in Syria and no improved conditions in neighbouring countries, people will move.”

There have now been almost 429,000 Syrian asylum applications in Europe since 2011, but due to the lack of reception facilities many of the most recent arrivals have yet to apply with the flood increasing exponentially.

Based on surveys of refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, Mr. Awad cited seven principal factors behind the latest outflows, first among them loss of hope with no sign of a solution in sight. “Feelings of uncertainty about the future are compounded by miserable conditions, fuelling a sense of despair and desperation,” he noted.

Other factors include the high costs of living in the neighbouring host countries and deepening poverty; limited employment opportunities due to restricted access to work; aid shortfalls with programmes that are 59 per cent underfunded; difficulties in renewing legal residency; lack of education for children; and a feeling of insecurity especially among refugees in Iraq.

Malawi facing worst food crisis in decade, requires \$81 million in relief aid – UN agency



Floods in early 2015 were the worst in living memory in Malawi, washing away homes and food stocks, and ruining fertile land. Photo: UNDP/Arjan van de Merwe

25 September - More than 2.8 million people will face hunger in the coming months in the worst food crisis in a decade in Malawi, where a staggering four out of every 10 children suffer from stunting, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned today.

“People in some affected districts have already started selling their livestock to make ends meet,” WFP said in a press release. “Women are also engaging in more firewood and charcoal selling, which degrades the environment and further aggravates the fragile climate.”

“The agency said more than 2.8 million people will face hunger in the coming months following severe floods and drought that ruined this year’s harvest.

“The floods early this year were the worst in living memory in Malawi, washing away homes and food stocks, and ruining fertile land,” it said. “Some crops managed to withstand the floods only to succumb to intense dry spells in the following months, making survival even more difficult for the most vulnerable.”

“Since the end of last year, WFP has provided relief assistance to avert hunger in households hit by poor rainfall during the 2013/14 growing season and the floods in early 2015. This operation has reached more than one million vulnerable people.

“WFP, which is financed entirely by voluntary contributions from governments, companies and private individuals, is less than 25 per cent funded for the \$81 million relief operation that lies ahead.

“Additional contributions are urgently needed,” says WFP Representative for Malawi Coco Ushiyama.

WFP also said a swift response is imperative to save children’s lives and prevent worsening undernutrition, particularly stunting among children, which limits cognitive development, and has far-reaching effects on health and productivity over a lifetime.

“A recent Cost of Hunger in Africa report for Malawi estimated that stunting, which at 42 percent is among the highest in the region, costs the nation nearly \$600 million annually,” the agency said.

“The WFP announcement comes a day after an appeal to the international humanitarian community made by the President of Malawi Peter Mutharika at the launch of the National Food Insecurity Response Plan on Monday.

Security Council welcomes reinstatement of the transitional authorities in Burkina Faso



Wide view of the Security Council. UN Photo/Loey Felipe (file)

25 September - Welcoming the recent reinstatement of President Michel Kafando and the transitional authorities of Burkina Faso in the wake of a coup d'état last week, the United Nations Security Council urged all parties in the country to refrain from violence and resume the transition process without delay.

In a statement, the members of the Security Council commended the engagement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Heads of State and Government, as well as the efforts of the African Union, to support a solution to the crisis and restore constitutional order in Burkina Faso.

The Council members also reiterated their full support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

President Kafando, Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida and several Government ministers were detained one week ago and later released by elements of Burkina Faso's Presidential Guard.

The members of the Security Council urged all actors in Burkina Faso to refrain from any violence and commended those who had exercised restraint in this regard.

In their statement, they also called for “the resumption of the transition without delay, including the holding of free, fair and credible elections, in accordance with the Constitution and Transitional Charter of Burkina Faso.”

The Security Council also expressed their intention to continue to monitor closely the situation, recognizing the legitimate aspiration of the people of Burkina Faso for a peaceful transition.

Ban welcomes announcement of joint measures by China and US on tackling climate change



Climate change poses a threat to survival in the Southwest Pacific, and in most of the small islands around the globe. Photo: FAO/Sue Price

25 September - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has commended the joint announcement made today by the Governments of China and the United States on the significant steps each country is aiming to take to address climate change.

“This announcement bolsters prospects for a universal, meaningful agreement in Paris this year. It further signals the shared vision and seriousness with which the world's two largest economies are moving to a low carbon future,” said Mr. Ban in a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York.

China's plans to create the world's largest carbon market by 2017, coupled with its groundbreaking commitment of \$3 billion to South-South cooperation on climate change, will improve the health and well-being of its citizens and deliver tangible benefits to the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, the statement said.

“The Secretary-General also welcomes the United States' reaffirmation of its commitment to significant emissions reductions and its pledge to the Green Climate Fund,” the statement continued.

Concluding, it said that the joint China-US announcement provides strong leadership and momentum for a comprehensive global climate agreement in Paris that can put the world on a safer, more sustainable pathway.

Polio is no longer endemic in Nigeria – UN health agency

25 September - The World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that polio is no longer endemic in Nigeria, leaving the devastating disease endemic in only two countries and bringing the world one major step closer to achieving this goal of ending polio for good.

“The outstanding commitment and efforts that got Nigeria off the endemic list must continue, to keep Africa polio-free,” said WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan. “We must now support the efforts in Pakistan and Afghanistan so they soon join the polio-free world.”

Since 1988, the incidence of polio has been reduced by more than 99 percent, according to WHO. At the time, more than 350,000 children were paralysed every year, in more than 125 endemic countries. Today, two countries remain which have never stopped endemic transmission of polio: Pakistan and Afghanistan, where there have been in 2015, 41 cases reported (32 in Pakistan, 9 in Afghanistan).

In its announcement today, WHO said that Nigeria has made remarkable progress against polio, but continued vigilance is needed to protect these gains and ensure that polio does not return.

Nigeria has not reported a case of wild poliovirus since 24 July 2014, and all laboratory data has confirmed that a full 12 months have passed without any new cases.

Immunization and surveillance activities must continue to rapidly detect a potential re-introduction or re-emergence of the virus, the agency said, explaining that only after three years have passed without a case of wild poliovirus on the African continent will an official 'certification' of polio eradication be conducted at the regional level in Africa.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), the public-private partnership leading the effort to eradicate polio on the planet, called the development a 'historic achievement' in global health.

As recently as 2012, Nigeria accounted for more than half of all polio cases worldwide, according to WHO.

“More than 200,000 volunteers across the country repeatedly immunized more than 45 million children under the age of 5, to ensure that no child would suffer from this paralysing disease,” the agency said.

UN rights expert urges Brazil to introduce measures to ‘fulfill promises of equality’ for minorities



UN Independent Expert on minority issues Rita Izsák. Photo: Violaine Martin

25 September - Warning that despite a wealth of legislation, minority groups in Brazil have not seen the promises of equality fulfilled, a United Nations human rights expert today urged Brazilian authorities to introduce immediate measures to overcome serious structural challenges facing the country’s most vulnerable communities.

“I do believe that Brazil is on the right track in terms of developing laws and policies to tackle discrimination, racism and injustice. However, many of these legislative developments, whilst having impact in the long term, do not meet the urgent demands that disadvantaged minorities often want and need,” said, Rita Izsák, UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, as she wrapped up her first official visit to the country.

She urged Brazil to ensure continuing the dialogue and trust-building among the different actors of society. Otherwise, it



Survivors of polio in Kano State, Nigeria, sit on tricycles specially designed for people with disabilities. Photo: UNICEF/Sebastian Rich

might “fail to capitalize on the advancements made thus far, and damage its already delicate social fabric.”

Poverty, injustice, discrimination and violence are everyday life experiences of black communities, who although constitute a numerical majority, identify themselves as a political minority, said Ms. Izsák, noting: “the high murder rates – at a shocking rate of 56,000 victims every year – have to come to an end.

This particularly affects Afro-Brazilians as they constitute 75 per cent of all victims. There is a need to abolish the military police, remove the mechanism of *auto de resistencia* and treat all deaths as homicide cases, prosecute the perpetrators and provide psycho-social support for the families of the victims, especially the mothers who lost their children.

Ms. Izsák called on the Brazilian Government to speed up the process of land demarcation and entitlement of the *Quilombo* communities. “All development projects taking place on *Quilombo* lands must seek free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities,” she said, adding that the community must be provided services to prevent youth from engaging crime and violence. In addition, schools in *Quilombo* areas also must be accessible and provide quality education.

The Special Rapporteur went on to draw particular attention to and consulted with members of the Roma (*Cigano*) community who seemed to be “highly invisible” in Brazil, despite an estimated population of 800,000.

“They are still largely stereotyped [...] as thieves, beggars or fortune tellers,” she noted, welcoming several new Government initiatives designed to learn more about their situation and to address their vulnerable position in the society.

During her 11-day mission, the human rights expert visited Brasilia and several other cities. Ms. Izsák congratulated Brazil for its harmonious inter-religious relations, which widely prevails across the country, however, cautioned that Afro-Brazilian traditional temples have been undergoing serious attacks, threats and violence, and even killings of their leaders.

UN expert also met with Government and UN officials during her visit, various minority communities, and a wide range of civil society and human rights organizations and other non-State actors. The Special Rapporteur will present a report containing her findings and recommendations to the Government and to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2016.

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