In the headlines:

- With annual general debate over, time has come for action, UN Assembly President says
- In UN address, Venezuela decries effects of capitalism as enemy of Mother Nature
- Timor-Leste is vivid example of what UN can do in peacebuilding, Assembly debate told
- In UN Assembly address, Angola emphasises its ‘decisive’ role in multilateralism
- At UN Assembly, Nicaragua underscores dialogue and negotiation as way to peace
- At UN Assembly, Turkmenistan stresses importance for greater global cooperation
- United Nations ‘backbone’ of global order, stresses Norway at Assembly
- New Zealand, at General Assembly, urges reformed UN to ‘do better’ to solve global problems
- At General Assembly, Mozambique calls for reformed UN, greater aid from wealthy States
- Allow people to be ‘dignified agents of their own destiny,’ Holy See tells UN debate
- Uruguay joins other nations addressing General Assembly in calling for stronger, more flexible UN
- Peru, at UN, calls for more inclusive globalization based on multilateralism and dialogue

With annual general debate over, time has come for action, UN Assembly President says

25 September – The United Nations General Assembly wrapped up its 72nd annual general debate today, with its President underscoring prevention of conflicts before they break out, support for UN peacekeeping, sustainable development, and respect for human rights and gender equality among the major priorities raised by the 196 Heads of State, Government and delegations.

“You reaffirmed your commitment to the UN. And to each other. You said we are stronger together, in a system based on dialogue and multilateralism,” President Miroslav Lajčák declared in the vaulted Assembly Hall before the golden column with the UN logo of a world globe, which served as the backdrop for all 196 speakers.

“And you stressed that any alternative would risk repeating the mistakes of history,” he added, while noting that not all the messages delivered were positive, with many criticizing other countries or the UN.

“But that is part of the package. It is your right to do this. And regardless of size, or population, or economy, all delegations have access to the same platform, for the same amount of time. They can speak freely, without censorship,” he said, summing up the main thrust of the debate whose theme was ‘Focusing on People – Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet.’

For information media - not an official record
“We addressed many challenges over the past week. You talked about their impact on the countries of the world. Importantly, you also talked about their impact on people. We heard about people running from gunshots – or the force of exploding bombs. People living for a week on the same amount some of us spend on a cup of coffee,” he said.

“People forced to make the decision between risking their lives to stay, or risking their lives to flee. People wondering when the next hurricane will hit, or if their village will be under water in a few decades. People who are beginning to lose – or have already lost – hope in international peace processes. And people still waiting for justice and human rights to become a part of their daily reality.”

Turning to the work that lies ahead for the Assembly’s 72nd Session, Mr. Lajčák cited several milestones, including the high-level event on Sustaining Peace, in April, the adoption of Global Compacts related to Migrants and Refugees next September, and the High-level meeting on human trafficking this week.

**In UN address, Venezuela decries effects of capitalism as enemy of Mother Nature**

*25 September* – Echoing the sentiments of other speakers from the Latin American and Caribbean, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, told the United Nations today that countries in the region are suffering extreme weather and climate catastrophes due to rampant consumption and consumerism in which they played no part.

Calling for adherence to the principle of ‘shared and differentiated’ responsibility when tackling climate change, Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, voiced solidarity with those affected by recent natural disasters, noting that such events had made millions of people victims of “a war they did not choose; this is the war of the developed countries and their capitalist system against Mother Nature.”

Indeed, he said: “Let us not change the climate, let us change the system.” The responsibility must not fall on developing countries alone; it was especially unfair for the United States – the world’s largest emitter – to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

He went on to say that while the UN is a “noble instrument” intended to serve as a podium for discussion of pressing issues like the State of the planet it nevertheless played host to “arrogant powers” such as the US, which “desecrated, disrespected and offended [this] the house for peace.” He said Venezuela’s people had been directly threatened by President Donald Trump, including by military threats and the imposition of unilateral sanctions.

While Venezuela would always deal with the United States and other nations through mutual respect, it was nevertheless prepared to defend itself “in any way,” he stressed.

As for the situation in his country, Mr. Arreaza said democracy in Venezuela is “active and popular” and the “violence of the opposition” had been eased after the July 30 elections in which Venezuelans went to vote to choose to the members of the National Constituent Assembly.

“Total political peace returned to the country from July 31. Our National Constituent Assembly is [in line] with the rest of the constituted powers,” he explained, calling it an instrument for national dialogue and dealing with the most urgent problems of the country.
Timor-Leste is vivid example of what UN can do in peacebuilding, Assembly debate told

25 September – Timor-Leste, a country which the United Nations shepherded to independence from Indonesia 15 years ago, stands as a shining example of what the world Organization can achieve in establishing peace and stability, the country’s president told the General Assembly today.

“The recent history of Timor-Leste vividly reminds us that when civil values, on which the very existence of the United Nations is built, take the lead – and inspire decisions – in the international scene, the UN and international law become powerful and decisive forces to settle conflicts and restore peace,” Francisco Guterres Lú Olo said in a speech read by Delegation Chair Maria Helena Pires.

Actions by Portugal, Indonesia, Australia, and the United States, and the support of the European Union and other world powers, are “living proof of the United Nations’ ability to save lives and help make the world a safe place,” he stressed.

He highlighted his country’s advances since independence in 2002 in peacebuilding and reconciliation at both national and international levels, sustainable development, health, education, and gender equality.

In UN Assembly address, Angola emphasises its ‘decisive’ role in multilateralism

25 September – Underscoring the importance of multilateralism in solving global tensions, Angola told the United Nations General Assembly about its strong engagement and “decisive” role in restoring peace and security in the region, with its commitment for economic development and democratic society.

“Angola's attachment to multilateralism is strongly emphasized in its role in solving problems […] particularly in the Great Lakes Region,” Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN and head of the country’s delegation, told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, adding that Angola has been leading diplomatic efforts with its regional and international partners to find a lasting political solution.

“We are increasingly able and fit to play a decisive role in restoring peace and security, particularly in Africa, and in furthering its economic development,” said Mr. Gaspar Martins.

He further stressed that his country’s recent peaceful election has shown stability and a gradual consolidation of democracy.

As a new cycle of Government begins, economic development will be one of the priorities for Angola and it is strongly engaged in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, which are crucial for building a prosperous and democratic society, said Mr. Gaspar Martins.
At UN Assembly, Nicaragua underscores dialogue and negotiation as way to peace

25 September – The Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations, Maria Rubiales de Chamorro, addressed the General Assembly’s annual debate today, reflecting on the political will and action that must be undertaken to achieve a better and peaceful world.

“We must assume the commitment to continue fighting for peace, which is a global priority, of our peoples, and that the conflicts that arise in different regions of our planet can be overcome, through dialogue, through negotiation and, above all, free from the use or threat of use of force, which is what our peoples desire most, from the peoples of the great powers, to the peoples with small populations, small in development, but great, great in their values and in their history,” she quoted the President.

Turning to UN reform, she pointed out that after 72 years, “our Organization has not been able to fully comply with the objectives set out in its Charter,” saying that a “re-foundation” is urgently needed, including transformations of the Security Council to ensure that its composition and function reflects the geopolitical and economic realities.

Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro also underscored that ambitious actions are urgently needed to combat climate change. Concerned about the unprecedented record temperatures reached at the global level, she said “Developed countries must take the lead and change their unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and meet their financial commitments and technology transfers.”

Noting that her country signed the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty, she underscored that verbal confrontation and threats of using nuclear weapons are unacceptable. “There is a need to advance in the commitment to eliminate nuclear arsenals in the world, until they disappear from our planet and utilize these enormous resources for the eradication of poverty,” she stressed.

At UN Assembly, Turkmenistan stresses importance for greater global cooperation

25 September – Speaking at the 72nd annual debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Turkmenistan highlighted its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and called for greater cooperation to address the challenges before the globe.

In her address, Aksoltan Ataeva, the Chair of the Delegation of Turkmenistan, noted the importance of transport connectivity and cooperation for the achievement of the global development goals and informed the Assembly of the global conference on sustainable transport held in the country last November.

Also in her remarks, Ms. Ataeva noted the establishment of a training centre in the country to strengthen capacity in relation to the implementation of the SDGs. She also underscored the importance of energy security and in ensuring fair access to energy, including as part of the 2030 Agenda.
She also highlighted the importance of sports as a driver of peace, understanding and human rights, and in that context, recalled the participation of the Refugee Olympic Team at the Rio Olympics 2016.

Further in her address the head of the delegation of Turkmenistan noted the challenges posed by terrorism to all countries around the globe and, welcoming the role played by the UN in combatting the scourge, expressed her support for reforms at the Organization, including review of the method of its work and to react to threats in the modern world.

**United Nations ‘backbone’ of global order, stresses Norway at Assembly**

25 September – Underscoring that the “unprecedented” progress achieved by human kind over the last decades cannot be taken for granted, Norway called for continued international cooperation to safeguard the achievements and to ensure that they remain sustainable.

“Protectionism and isolationism will reverse our common development. We need more trade and cooperation – not less,” said Tore Hattrem, the Chairperson of the Delegation of Norway at the 72nd annual general debate of the United Nations General Assembly.

The world cannot afford to “shake the very foundations” that its open, global economic order is based on, he added.

In his remarks, Mr. Hattrem stressed that the United Nations is the “backbone” of the global order, noting, in his words that a strong and healthy back is needed to address and resolve the challenges the world is facing today.

“But we know that we can do it together.”

He also urged continued commitment for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 4, on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Norway’s head of delegation also noted that the country has actively supported the UN since it was founded, and expressed his support to Secretary-General António Guterres’ vision for the Organization.
New Zealand, at General Assembly, urges reformed UN to ‘do better’ to solve global problems

25 September – The United Nations is crucial to tackling the plethora of problems confronting the world – from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear programme to global development and climate change – but it can and must do better, New Zealand told the General Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate today.

“The United Nations is unique in its ability to convene the world in order to tackle problems that require collective action,” the Head of Delegation Craig Hawke said. “Widely recognized rules, buttressed by an effective United Nations, are the best guarantors of our security and our economic well-being, particularly for small States.”

Guarantees are also the best means of ensuring decent treatment and decent conditions for the world’s citizens, thereby reducing conditions that lead to unrest, conflict and misery, he added.

“But we all recognize that the United Nations can do better, and to do so must be more relevant, effective and fit for purpose,” he declared, noting that Secretary-General António Guterres’s reform agenda provides an opportunity to make this a reality.

“Important work lies ahead for us to reform the development and peace and security pillars. The United Nations needs to invest a much greater proportion of its resources and effort in preventing conflict, rather than focusing primarily on the consequences of conflict,” he concluded, calling for management reform.

“It is our sincere hope that reform can achieve our collective goal of better reflecting the ideals of the UN Charter and, ultimately, ensuring that the UN delivers better outcomes for our generation and those to come.”

At General Assembly, Mozambique calls for reformed UN, greater aid from wealthy States

25 September – Only a reformed United Nations and a greater commitment from wealthier countries to help the developing world can confront “the overwhelming challenges of our times,” Mozambique told the General Assembly on the last day of its 72nd annual general debate today.

“We live in a world confronted by challenges that demand global responses,” Delegation Chairman Antonio Gumande said. “The relevance of the UN, the lodestar of multilateralism, over the last 72 years of its existence has always rested in its ability to reform and re-invent itself to respond more suitably to the challenges of continuously changing world it serves.”

He warned that “multiple and complex challenges threaten to constrain gains already made in fostering global peace and stability, stall and reverse advances made in fostering social and economic wellbeing, and cause irreversible damages to our planet.
“The experiences we gained and the challenges we faced in the implementation of other globally agreed development goals in the past underline the need for a greater commitment of our development partners to scale-up and honour their assistance and for funding pledges made for climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation, as well as for disaster prevention efforts,” he stressed.

“This support is of paramount importance to mitigate the effects of climate variability whose devastating effects have been laid bare in several Member States of this august body in the last two months,” he said.

**Allow people to be ‘dignified agents of their own destiny,’ Holy See tells UN debate**

*25 September* – The Observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary of Relations with States, speaking on the final day of the United Nations General Assembly’s annual debate praised this year’s theme – ‘Focusing on People: Striving for peace and a decent life on a sustainable planet’— saying that Pope Francis “never tires of insisting on people first, especially those who suffer, those who are excluded, marginalized and left behind.”

The Archbishop underscored the importance of protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms as the foundation of peace, security and integral human development. The Holy See sees reforming the UN development system as an additional opportunity to place people at the centre of its actions, recounting the Pope’s message to ‘allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny.’

Turning to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, he said that while Pope Francis defined the Agenda as an “important sign of hope,” he warned against “assuaged consciences,” saying: “We must not rest until the legal commitments have been truly accomplished and the political promises have been fulfilled in the lives of people.”

The duty to prevent wars and violent conflicts is an essential component of the ‘responsibility to protect,’ he continued. Against that backdrop, the Archbishop stressed the need for an environment of trust saying that “prevention requires, first of all, restoring faith in the capacity of humankind for dialogue.” He encouraged all countries to take urgent steps back from military preparations, exhorting that “all the diplomatic and political means of mediation should be engaged to avoid the unspeakable.”

Another great challenge facing the international community is trafficking in persons. The Archbishop pointed to conflicts, extreme poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion along with the lack of education and employment as being at the root of this and other contemporary forms of slavery.

“Pope Francis calls on all, in particular the competent authorities, to address such a heinous crime through effective juridical instruments, to punish those who profit from it, to assist the healing and the reintegration of its victims, and to eradicate its root causes,” he stated, adding “our response must be commensurate to this great evil of our time.”
Uruguay joins other nations addressing General Assembly in calling for stronger, more flexible UN

25 September – In his speech to the General Assembly’s annual general debate, Rodolfo Nin Novoa, Foreign Minister of Uruguay, said strengthened international coordination bodies are needed more than ever, urging respect for the principle of sovereignty.

“The United Nations must become stronger,” and the General Assembly must gain greater prominence, he said. He noted that Uruguay’s foreign policy is based on the pillars of democracy, human rights, the defence of international law, and pursuit of peace. Such principles retained prominence despite the changes of political power in the country, he said, underscoring Uruguay’s commitment to making its voice heard on the international stage.

More broadly, he noted that unprecedented violence, arms proliferation, and the increase in terrorism, cyberattacks, hunger and climate change require a strong commitment from the international community. Today, millions are affected by armed conflict, with hundreds of thousands killed and millions displaced. “We should not get used to standing idly by,” he stressed.

He urged all countries to increase efforts to combat human trafficking, and ensure development and social growth, citing inequality and the persistence of international forces as drivers of those threats. He expressed support for the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, noting that Uruguay had recently presented its Voluntary National Report to the Economic and Social Council’s High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Peru, at UN, calls for more inclusive globalization based on multilateralism and dialogue

25 September – Underscoring Peru’s endurance in its combat against terrorism, corruption, as well as its vulnerability to the effects of climate change, the country’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, said today that the Organization is fundamental for a “peaceful and sustainable” future in Peru, the region and beyond.

Enduring such challenges, he said in his address to the General Assembly’s annual debate, therefore means Peru welcomed special attention given to sustainable peace, and prevention of humanitarian crises, adding that access to weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups “is a real threat.”

In addressing issues of climate change, he reaffirmed the nation’s commitment to the Paris Agreement, and the progress it could mean for a coastal country inundated by torrential rains wrought by El Niño, and the losses of biodiversity and ecosystems to extreme weather phenomena.

Turning to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ambassador Cuadra expressed concern about the threat of corruption at the global level, calling it an attack that “erodes democratic governance and legal stability of our countries.” He said corruption “triggers disenchantment and distrust in institutions, and bolsters inequality.”

Expressing concern for neighboring Venezuela during this heightened time of social instability, he said that while the
answer to resolving the country’s crisis lies with Venezuelans themselves, the issue nevertheless requires international solidarity and support.

In Bangladesh, UN refugee chief warns influx of Rohingya outpaces capacities to respond

25 September – The United Nations refugee chief today called for ramped-up support for an estimated 436,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar in the last month, warning that the massive influx of people seeking safety far outpaces capacities to respond.

“Theyir situation remains desperate, and we risk a dramatic deterioration if aid is not rapidly stepped up,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a press release, following a visit yesterday to Kutupalong refugee camp and other areas along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border where people have made their own shelters on tiny slivers of land.

“Despite every effort by those on the ground, the massive influx of people seeking safety rapidly outpaced capacities to respond, and the situation has still not stabilised. More is needed, and fast, if we are to avoid further deterioration,” Mr. Grandi said.

UNHCR has now airlifted three planes loaded with relief items into the country, and is distributing emergency shelter kits, kitchen sets and solar lamps.

Its experts are working closely with the Government of Bangladesh to set up an organised site with water, sanitation and other facilities, and to register the new arrivals. Other international agencies and civil society partners are also on the ground.

Mr. Grandi arrived in Bangladesh on Saturday to see conditions for himself. He spoke with families living in the camp near Cox’s Bazar.

“They had seen villages burned down, families shot or hacked to death, women and girls brutalized. Many of the refugees said they would like to go home, but there needs to be an end to violence, and a restoration of rights inside Myanmar,” Mr. Grandi said.

“Solutions to this crisis lie within Myanmar. But for now, our immediate focus has to be to dramatically increase support to those who are so desperately in need,” Mr. Grandi said, stressing the importance of a proper registration system that could help ensure everyone is eventually able to exercise the right to return.

In the country’s capital, Dhaka, Mr. Grandi was scheduled to meet several senior officials, including the foreign minister as well as the ministers for home affairs and disaster management and relief.

Mr. Grandi thanked Bangladesh for keeping the border open. “In today’s world, that is something that cannot be taken for granted and should be appreciated.”

Meanwhile, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said yesterday that a consignment of its emergency supplies for hundreds of thousands of refugee Rohingya children and their families has arrived in Dhaka.

The cargo plane arrived from Copenhagen with 100 tons of supplies comprising water purifying tablets, family hygiene kits, sanitary materials, plastic tarpaulins, recreational kits for children and other items.
“Safe water for drinking and washing is absolutely essential in order to protect them against diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases,” said Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh, warning that this is “a very real threat” especially amid the current heavy rains.

Other consignments – consisting of school bags, tents, early childhood development kits, family hygiene and dignity kits, tarpaulin and nutrition materials – were also on their way to Bangladesh.

New UN report details grave human rights violations in Crimea

25 September – The human rights situation in Crimea has significantly deteriorated under Russian occupation, a United Nations report says, detailing how residents there were affected when Ukrainian laws were substituted by those of Russia, including the imposition of Russian citizenship.

“Grave human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, ill-treatment and torture, and at least one extra-judicial execution were documented,” notes the report published today by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

“The citizenship issue has had a major impact on the lives of many residents of Crimea,” High Commissioner Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in a press release.

“As the report states, imposing citizenship on the inhabitants of an occupied territory can be equated to compelling them to swear allegiance to a power they may consider as hostile, which is forbidden under the Fourth Geneva Convention,” the High Commissioner added.

The report reiterates that the imposition of Russian citizenship affected tens of thousands of people, particularly three groups: those who formally rejected citizenship; civil servants who had to renounce their Ukrainian citizenship or lose their jobs; and Crimean residents who did not meet the legal criteria for citizenship and became foreigners.

“Persons holding a residency permit and no Russian Federation citizenship do not enjoy equality before the law and are deprived of important rights,” the report says. “They cannot own agricultural land, vote and be elected, register a religious community, apply to hold a public meeting, hold positions in the public administration and re-register their private vehicle on the peninsula.”

The report makes 20 recommendations to the Russian Government, urging it to respect “its obligations as an occupying power,” uphold human rights for all, and effectively investigate alleged torture, abductions and killings involving members of the security forces and Crimean self-defence.
25 September – Continuing settlement expansion, most notably in occupied East Jerusalem, is making the two-State solution increasingly unattainable and undermining Palestinian belief in the international peace efforts, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council today.

“In addition to illegal settlements, the practice of demolishing Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and displacing Palestinians undermines the prospects of peace,” said Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

Briefing the 15-member body on the latest developments, Mr. Mladenov reported that since June, Israel’s illegal settlement activities have continued at a “high rate,” a consistent pattern over the course of this year. Activity during this period was concentrated primarily in occupied East Jerusalem, where plans were advanced for over 2,300 housing units in July, 30 per cent more than for the whole of 2016.

The reporting period witnessed the eviction of a Palestinian family in Sheikh Jarrah, residents for over 50 years, after a protracted legal battle. The building is located in a section of the neighbourhood in which several settlement plans were among those promoted in July.

“The United Nations considers all settlement activities to be illegal under international law and an impediment to peace,” the Special Coordinator stated.

He went on to note that violence persisted as one of the main obstacles to resolving the conflict. Although the reporting period was characterized by relatively low levels of fatalities, a number of incidents occurred, resulting in the deaths of 19 Palestinians and eight Israelis. Settler-related violence and punitive demolitions of Palestinians homes by the Israeli authorities also continued.

“Continued violence against civilians and incitement perpetuate mutual fear and suspicion, while impeding any efforts to bridge the gaps between the two sides,” said Mr. Mladenov.

“I once again urge both Palestinians and Israelis to demonstrate their commitment to rejecting violence, inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions.”
Parties to Afghan conflict show renewed interest in political engagement, UN envoy says

25 September – Although efforts over the past few years to reach a political solution to the Afghan conflict have led to little progress, the top United Nations envoy in the country today reported a renewed interest in political engagements for peace.

“I am convinced that a political settlement is possible,” Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, told the UN Security Council in his latest briefing, citing progress, still daunting challenges, and opportunities for political engagement.

“We should not let another fighting season begin without progress towards substantive negotiations. Opportunities will be lost, with the cost paid in thousands of Afghan lives and at tremendous financial cost.

“I appeal to the countries in the region to conduct a profound reassessment of their strategic interest and renew work towards a viable peace process leading to an Afghan-owned solution to the conflict. If requested, the United Nations stands ready to assist all parties to achieve this goal.”

Mr. Yamamoto said the United States announcement in August of a continuing, conditions-based commitment has removed some uncertainties, while regional countries and key States are actively seeking to promote regional engagements for peace, adding that preparations leading to a peace process are complex and efforts must be pragmatic and flexible.

“The security situation continues to be a major concern,” he stressed, citing the persistence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) in the east of the country, with new Da’esh activity reported in the north as well as in Kabul, the capital, making the situation more complex.

“The human cost of this violence is high, disproportionately impacting women and children,” he said, noting that current Afghan security planning foresees that by 2020 Afghan forces will reach sufficient strength to reverse recent Taliban gains, while the Taliban continue to resist appeals to negotiate with the Afghan Government.

At the current rate of deaths due to conflict, by 2020 tens of thousands more Afghans will have been killed.

Mr. Yamamoto, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), reported some progress on key reforms, with the battle against corruption beginning to bear results after many years in which this debilitating issue was ignored.

There has also been progress on the organization of parliamentary and district council elections scheduled for next July. “It is imperative that we hold the elections according to the plan,” he stated, noting that timely elections will enhance the credibility of the political system.
New lab will boost UN efforts to keep harmful insects at bay

**25 September** – The United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) today opened the doors of a new laboratory to help countries use a nuclear technique to keep harmful insects, such as mosquitoes and fruit flies, at bay.

The modern Insect Pest Control Laboratory (IPCL), located in Seibersdorf, Austria, will boost the Agency’s ability to assist Member States in applying the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) to combat insect pests that spread disease and damage crops.

“With new and modern facilities, the IPCL will in future be able to do even more to help Member States control insect pests that endanger our crops, our livestock and our health,” IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano said during the inauguration ceremony.

The environmentally-safe SIT, a form of insect birth control, uses radiation to sterilize male insects, which are reared in large numbers and released in a target area to mate with wild females. Since they do not produce any offspring, the pest population is reduced over time, according to the Agency.

Along with additional space to train experts to support the transfer of SIT to countries, the new lab will facilitate research on the application of the technique for different insects, including mosquitos that transmit malaria, Zika and other diseases.

“The IPCL offers a very tangible example of the enormous practical benefits of nuclear science and technology,” noted Mr. Amano.

Earlier this year, the IAEA, in partnership with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), assisted the Dominican Republic in using SIT to eradicate an outbreak of the Mediterranean fruit fly – one of the most damaging agricultural pests in the world that attacks several types of fruits and vegetables.

Thanks to this assistance, the country was able to eradicate the fly within two years, and to regain access to export markets worth $42 million a year.

Top UN envoy to Somalia welcomes parliamentary review of media law

**25 September** – The top United Nations envoy to Somalia today welcomed the recent introduction of legislation that would amend the 2016 media law, and urged lawmakers to give due consideration to the concerns raised by prominent members of Somalia’s news media about the existing law and the proposed amendments.

According to a press release from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo’s cabinet approved a package of amendments to the media law in July that fulfilled a commitment he made to Somalia’s leading media associations within weeks of taking office.

The amendments drew criticism from those media associations and some international human rights groups for their limited scope and the introduction of new restrictions on existing press freedoms, the Mission noted.

“A free and independent news media is essential for accountability and democracy,” said the Special Representative of the
Secretary-General for Somalia and head of UNSOM, Michael Keating.

“Some provisions of the current media law do not appear to comply with international standards of media legislation and regulation. A careful and comprehensive review of the law and the proposed amendments will allow all key stakeholders to present their views.

“I hope the outcome of such a legislative process will promote a better environment for Somali journalists to practice their profession without fear.”

The proposed changes to the media law will be taken up by the Federal Parliament in the coming weeks.

**UN chief voices concern over ‘potentially destabilizing effects’ of Kurdish referendum**

25 September – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres voiced concern about the “potentially destabilizing effects” of today’s referendum in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

“The Secretary-General respects the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Iraq and considers that all outstanding issues between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government should be resolved through structured dialogue and constructive compromise,” his Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said in a statement.

“The Secretary-General expects that United Nations-mandated activities across Iraq, including in the Kurdistan region, will be allowed to continue unhindered.”

Last week, both Mr. Guterres and the Security Council voiced their concern that the referendum was scheduled to be held amid ongoing operations to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) – in which Kurdish forces have played a critical role.

The referendum could also detract from efforts to ensure the safe, voluntary return of over three million refugees and internally displaced persons, they noted.

**Storm-ravaged Dominica in urgent need of food and water, finds UN assessment team**

25 September – A United Nations disaster assessment official visiting the small island nation of Dominica, which was battered by Hurricane Maria, said today that an estimated 60,000 to 65,000 people, or 80 per cent of the total population, have been affected and that food and water are the most immediate needs.

“There is a big, big urgency to get water and food,” said Sergio Da Silva, UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team leader, who spoke to reporters in New York by phone from the ground, adding that inaccessibility to remote areas has made it difficult to ascertain just how many people have been affected.

“And when you fly over, you see all the trees are down…debris everywhere and people are homeless,” he added.
Created in 1993, UNDAC is designed to help the UN and governments of disaster-affected countries during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency.

Maria made landfall on the tiny island of 72,000 on the evening of 18 September, with maximum sustained winds of nearly 160 miles per hour.

Mr. Silva said he has been in Dominica since Thursday, assisting in the coordination of incoming international relief.

Along with food and shelter, getting clean water is a priority, he said, as water in the river is not consumable. Work is also under way to restore hospitals.

Delivering humanitarian aid to remote villages remains a huge challenge as many roads were destroyed.

**UN Secretary-General condemns killing of peacekeepers in Mali**

*24 September* – Secretary-General António Guterres has condemned today’s attack against a convoy of the United Nations mission in northern Mali that killed three Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

Mr. Guterres reaffirmed the UN's determination to support efforts aimed at restoring lasting peace and security in Mali and urged the Government and the signatory armed groups to expedite the implementation of the peace agreement, according to a statement issued by his spokesperson.

Media reports said a convoy of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) hit an explosive device while traveling in the Gao region. At least, three Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed and five others were seriously injured.

“The Secretary-General recalls that Security Council resolution 2374 of 5 September 2017 provides for the imposition of sanctions against entities or individuals obstructing the implementation of the peace agreement and attacking United Nations personnel,” the statement said.

The Secretary-General extended his condolences to the Government of Bangladesh and to the bereaved families, and wished swift recovery to the injured.
In the headlines:

- UN rights experts urge Member States to ‘go beyond statements,’ take concrete actions to help Rohingya
- Global ‘learning crisis’ threatens future of millions young students – World Bank report
- The only world safe from use of nuclear weapons is a world completely free of them – UN chief
- Amid cholera outbreak in north-east Nigeria, UN steps up aid, warns pregnant women most vulnerable
- Mali: Security Council strongly condemns deadly attack on UN peacekeepers
- Warring parties in South Sudan show ‘little interest’ pushing peace process forward, UN envoy warns
- Civilians pay ‘very heavy price’ amid unfolding violence in western Central African Republic – UN
- UN envoy condemns killing of Israeli security personnel by Palestinian in West Bank

UN rights experts urge Member States to ‘go beyond statements,’ take concrete actions to help Rohingya

26 September – A month on from counter-terror operations following attacks on police outposts in Myanmar’s Rakhine province, seven United Nations rights experts have called on the Government to stop all violence against the minority Muslim Rohingya community as well as on the global community to “go beyond” statements and take action to save them.

“There have been credible allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses committed against the Rohingya, including extrajudicial killings, excessive use of force, torture and ill-treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, and forced displacement, as well as the burning and destruction of over 200 Rohingya villages and tens of thousands of homes,” said the experts (see end for list) in a news release issued today by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In the news release, the experts, including the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, recalled the briefing last week by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, in which she urged the international community to learn along with the country’s Government, the possible reasons behind the current exodus from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

“No one chooses, especially not in the hundreds of thousands, to leave their homes and ancestral land, no matter how poor the conditions, to flee to a strange land to live under plastic sheets and in dire circumstances except in life-threatening situations,” stressed the experts.
According to estimates, more than 430,000 people have crossed into Bangladesh since the violence erupted.

Further in the release, the experts also called on Myanmar authorities to ensure unfettered access to humanitarians to the affected locations and displaced people as well as for rights monitors, including the Human Rights Council Fact-Finding Mission for an independent and impartial assessment of the situation on the ground.

They further urged the state Counsellor to personally meet the Rohingya.

Concluding the news release, the rights experts also called on UN Member States to “go beyond statements and start taking concrete action” to stop the military and security forces from what they noted “accomplishing their so-called ‘unfinished business’ of getting rid of the Rohingya minority from Rakhine state.”

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis across the border, in Bangladesh continues to worsen by the day.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), one of the UN humanitarian entities involved in the response, reported that despite every effort by those on the ground, the massive influx of people seeking safety has been outpacing capacities to respond, and the situation for these refugees has still not stabilized.

“Many of those who have arrived recently are deeply traumatized [and] despite having found refuge in Bangladesh, they are still exposed to enormous hardship,” Adrian Edwards, a UNHCR spokesperson, said at a media briefing in Geneva today, urging for a redoubling of the international humanitarian response in Bangladesh.

UNHCR along with other UN agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) are also on the ground and assisting in the response efforts.

WFP and UNICEF are distributing food and therapeutic nutrition interventions (such as high-energy biscuits) and have set up child-friendly spaces. WHO is providing critical medical supplies for over half of the 38 mobile medical teams covering refugee settlements and camps.

The UN human rights experts noted above include Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Fernand de Varennes, Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing; Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the rights of internally displaced persons; Mutuma Ruteere, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council – the highest intergovernmental forum in the UN system on rights issues – 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.
Global ‘learning crisis’ threatens future of millions young students – World Bank report

26 September – Schooling without learning is a terrible waste of precious resources and of human potential, the World Bank said today, warning in a new report that millions of young students in low and middle-income countries face the prospect of lost opportunity and lower wages in later life because their primary and secondary schools are failing to educate them to succeed.

Warning of ‘a learning crisis’ in global education, the World Development Report 2018: ‘Learning to Realize Education’s Promise’ said that schooling without learning is not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children and young people worldwide.

“This learning crisis is a moral and economic crisis,” World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said in a press release on the report’s launch.

The report argues that without learning, education will fail to deliver on its promise to eliminate extreme poverty and create shared opportunity and prosperity for all. Even after several years in school, millions of children cannot read, write or do basic math.

“When delivered well, education promises young people employment, better earnings, good health, and a life without poverty. For communities, education spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. But these benefits depend on learning, and schooling without learning is a wasted opportunity. More than that, it’s a great injustice: the children whom societies fail the most are the ones who are most in need of a good education to succeed in life,” underscored Mr. Kim.

Learning crisis is widening social gaps, not narrowing them

According to the World Bank, this learning crisis is widening social gaps instead of narrowing them. Young students who are already disadvantaged by poverty, conflict, gender or disability reach young adulthood without even the most basic life skills.

The report recommends concrete policy steps to help developing countries resolve the crisis by using stronger learning assessments as to what works and what doesn’t to guide education decision-making; and mobilizing a strong social movement to push for education changes that champion ‘learning for all.’

While not all developing countries suffer from such extreme learning gaps, many fall far short of levels they aspire to.

Leading international assessments on literacy and numeracy show that the average student in poor countries performs lower than 95 per cent of those in high-income countries. Many high-performing students in middle-income countries – young men and women who achieve in the top quarter of their groups – would rank in the bottom quarter in a wealthier country, explained the World Bank.

The report, which was written by a team directed by World Bank Lead Economists Deon Filmer and Halsey Rogers, identifies what drives these learning shortfalls – not only the ways in which teaching and learning breaks down in too many schools, but also the deeper political forces that cause these problems to persist.

The report notes that when countries and their leaders make ‘learning for all’ a national priority, education standards can improve dramatically. For example, from a war-torn country with very low literacy rates in the 1950s, South Korea achieved...
universal enrolment by 1995 in high-quality education through secondary school – its young people performed at the highest levels on international learning assessments.

“The only way to make progress is to ‘find truth from facts.’ If we let them, the facts about education reveal a painful truth. For too many children, schooling does not mean learning,” said World Bank Chief Economist Paul Romer.

After extensive consultations with governments, development and research organizations and the private sector in 20 countries, the report offers the three policy recommendations: assess learning, so it can become a measurable goal; make schools work for all children; and mobilize everyone who has a stake in learning.

The only world safe from use of nuclear weapons is a world completely free of them – UN chief

26 September – The only world that is safe from the use of nuclear weapons is a world that is completely free of them, Secretary-General António Guterres said today as the United Nations marked the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

“A world free of nuclear weapons is a global vision that requires a global response,” Mr. Guterres told a high-level General Assembly meeting held in commemoration of the International Day, observed annually on 26 September.

Although the goal of such a world is universally held, he said, it has lately been subject to numerous challenges, including a series of provocative nuclear and missile tests conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

He added that the States possessing nuclear weapons have a special responsibility to lead by taking concrete steps, including those agreed at various review conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Expensive campaigns to modernize nuclear weapons – combined with the absence of planned arsenal reductions beyond the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between Russia and the United States – make it difficult to see how disarmament can make progress, Mr. Guterres said, warning against misguided assertions that prevailing security conditions do not permit disarmament initiatives.

“It is true that we live in challenging circumstances, but this can be no excuse for walking away from our shared responsibility to seek a more peaceful international society,” he said.

The General Assembly declared 26 September as the International Day devoted to furthering the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons through a resolution adopted in December 2013.

Also addressing the event was Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who noted that thousands of nuclear warheads still exist and they are being stored across three different continents. More than half of the world’s population lives in countries which have nuclear capabilities, or are member of nuclear alliances, he added.

Since the designating the International Day, the world has witnessed three nuclear tests.

“One nuclear test is one too many. Six nuclear tests in the 21st century is, frankly, alarming. So too is the reckless rhetoric we are witnessing. It can bring us all to the verge of a cliff, which we cannot afford to fall off,” he said.

Last week, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was opened for signature. Not everyone agrees that this was the right step to take, but it demonstrates a determination, which is beyond dispute, he said.
“We can live in a nuclear-free world, as long as we all believe that it is possible. And as long as we are all willing to work to make it possible,” he concluded.

**Amid cholera outbreak in north-east Nigeria, UN steps up aid, warns pregnant women most vulnerable**

26 September – Large-scale displacement and a health system in tatters as a result of persistent violence by the Boko Haram terrorist group have left many – most worryingly, pregnant women and their unborn babies – vulnerable to cholera in the wake of an outbreak in August, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned.

“Studies show that cholera infections during pregnancy can lead to sudden loss of the foetus, premature delivery, stillbirth and an increased mortality and morbidity, both for the baby and the mother,” said Homsuk Swomen, a UNFPA reproductive health specialist in Maiduguri, north-eastern Nigeria, one of the worst affected areas by the Boko Haram violence.

Due to the ongoing conflict, many pregnant women are malnourished, aggravating their vulnerability to cholera and the consequences if they fall ill.

Furthermore, the “traditional role” played by women and girls in the region is making them all the more susceptible to the disease.

According to Sylvia Opinia, a UNFPA expert in gender issues, it is usually women and girls who care for sick family members, clean latrines, fetch and handle untreated water, and prepare food for the family.

“We need to understand that cholera is not gender neutral,” she underscored.

On its part, the UN agency is working with local health staff, community and social workers in the camps to impress upon them the need to include women and girls in education messages on the disease, and especially targeting pregnant women with those messages. It is also engaging health workers to identify vulnerable women and girls, including pregnant women, for referral to appropriate care.

But funds are needed.

Last Sunday, the UN and partners launched a $9.9 million appeal to respond to the current outbreak in Borno state (north-east Nigeria) and to prevent further outbreaks in high-risk areas. A Cholera Response and Prevention Plan has been developed to address the immediate needs of 3.7 million people that could be affected by the outbreak.

In related news, the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN health agency, concluded an oral cholera vaccination campaign around Maiduguri this weekend, inoculating some 844,000 people in affected areas.

According to WHO, it takes those immunized about a week to develop the immune response that should protect against the disease, and most individuals vaccinated should be protected for up to six months.

As of 25 September, 3,934 suspected cases of cholera including 54 deaths have been reported in and around Maiduguri. About 14 million people are affected by the crisis in north-eastern Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states), of whom 6.9 million need health assistance.
Mali: Security Council strongly condemns deadly attack on UN peacekeepers

26 September – The United Nations Security Council has strongly condemned the attack by unknown assailants against a UN mission convoy in the region of Gao, northern Mali, on 24 September, that left three Bangladeshi peacekeepers dead and injured four others.

Through a press statement, the Council expressed deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims, the Government of Bangladesh and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), according to a statement.

Calling on the Malian Government to swiftly investigate the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice, Council members underlined that “attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law.” Moreover, they stressed that involvement in planning, directing, sponsoring or conducting attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers constitute a basis for sanctions designations pursuant to Council resolutions.

The members of the Council went on to reaffirm that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of the reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.

Reiterating full support for MINUSMA and the French forces that support it, the Council also reiterated “strong support” for Mission chief Mahamat Saleh Annadif, and recognized the determination of the Group of Five Sahel States (G5) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – to address the impact of terrorism and transnational organized crime, including through the conduct of cross-border joint military counter-terrorist operations.

The Council members went on to express their concern over the security situation in Mali along with the transnational dimension of the terrorist threat in the Sahel region. They urged the Malian parties to fully implement the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation without further delay, noting that its full implementation and the intensification of efforts to overcome asymmetric threats can contribute to improving the security situation across the country.

Warring parties in South Sudan show ‘little interest’ pushing peace process forward, UN envoy warns

26 September – A window of opportunity for compromise over the 2015 peace agreement by warring parties in South Sudan is narrow, the United Nations envoy for the country said today, stressing the urgency to find a political solution and for international support to the process.

“The parties have shown little interest in engaging in serious negotiations on the way forward, despite the various initiatives aimed at finding a political solution to the conflict,” David Shearer, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for South Sudan, told the Security Council.

With only a few months remaining in the transitional period stipulated under the peace agreement, external momentum to support peace is not keeping pace with developments in the country, he added.
He urged the international community to show a unity of purpose to support an implementable peace process that leads to credible elections in due course, but only after a period of transition marked by inclusivity and stability.

Political mediation through the high-level revitalization forum of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) must be the central conflict resolution strategy, he said.

IGAD comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

On the humanitarian situation, Mr. Shearer said the total number of people in need of aid in the country has risen to 7.6 million, citing UN agencies assessment.

The number of people displaced in South Sudan rose to nearly four million during the first half of this year, with two million of them having fled to neighbouring countries – Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Within the national border, some places, such as parts of the Greater Upper Nile region, parts of the Equatorias, and areas south and west of Wau, are inaccessible due to the ongoing government military operations against the SPLA in Opposition.

The splintering of opposition forces also has a negative consequence for humanitarian efforts. For example, the World Food Programme’s regular convoys to Yambio – two days’ travel from the capital, Juba – now requires 13 separate permissions from armed groups along its route, he said.

Increasingly, civilians and aid convoys are being targeted along major roadways. This year, 18 aid workers have been killed in South Sudan.

Mr. Shearer, also the head of the UN Mission in South Sudan, said the Mission will soon open a permanent presence in Yei and reinforce presence in Torit and Yambio to deter violence and human rights abuses, and build confidence for people to be able to safely return to their homes.

The small Melut protection site in the country’s north is closing in coming weeks as people there want to return to their homes, he said. Further downsizing of protection sites in Wau and possibly even Bor are also being considered.

But ultimately, this movement critically depends on how the government and opposition forces behave, he said. Where those forces continue to prey on civilians, the POC sites will remain a necessary refuge, he added.

The deployment of the UN-mandated Regional Protection Force will enable peacekeepers to extend their reach into areas most in need. This includes establishing a permanent presence in Yei, and reinforcing troops in Torit and Yambio in the Equatorias to deter violence and human rights abuses and build confidence among local communities, Mr. Shearer said.
Civilians pay ‘very heavy price’ amid unfolding violence in western Central African Republic – UN

26 September – Since the beginning of September, the humanitarian situation in western Central African Republic (CAR) has deteriorated as armed groups have taken over several localities – particularly Bocaranga and Niem – which has forced thousands of people to flee into the bush where they cannot access aid, the United Nations relief wing reported today.

“Again, civilians continue to pay a very heavy price for clashes between the armed groups,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator in the CAR, Najat Rochdi.

The vast majority of the 15,000 Bocaranga inhabitants and the 8,000 from Niem took refuge in the bush, rendering them inaccessible to humanitarian assistance. As these incidents occurred, acts of violence against relief workers also prompted several organizations to temporarily suspend their activities in the area.

“While fleeing, the population is not only cut off from much needed assistance but is also more vulnerable to the adversity and abuse by armed groups and the destruction of their properties,” added Ms. Rochdi.

The Humanitarian Coordinator warned against a new outbreak of violence in the west, but also in the east of the country, threatening new humanitarian needs.

Ms. Rochdi recalled that the operational capacities of the humanitarian community are already under intense pressure in a context marked by the lagging funding.

“The simultaneous emergence of new outbreaks of tension in several regions will undoubtedly exacerbate the already fragile situation of thousands of displaced people and the communities that are barely recovering from repeated crises,” she stressed.

The persistence of violence in the CAR since the beginning of 2017 and the dramatic rise in needs have led the aid community to revise the Humanitarian Response Plan.

The statement noted that to date, only 30 per cent of the required funding has been secured. If not addressed, this would lead to a quantitative and qualitative reduction of the humanitarian response.

In some regions, a number of actors have had to withdraw because of the financial shortfall – halting the only assistance available to those in need.

Ms. Rochdi called on the international community “not to abandon the [CAR] where half the population needs assistance for its survival.”
UN envoy condemns killing of Israeli security personnel by Palestinian in West Bank

26 September – The United Nations envoy for the Israel-Palestine peace efforts has condemned today's fatal shooting attack by a Palestinian perpetrator against Israeli security personnel in the West Bank, deploring that such an incident undermines the prospect of a peaceful future for both sides.

According to preliminary reports, one Israeli policeman and two security guards were killed, and another was seriously injured in the attack that took place this morning in the Har Adar settlement in the occupied Palestinian territory.

“It is deplorable that Hamas and others continue to glorify such attacks, which undermine the possibility of a peaceful future for both Palestinians and Israelis. I urge all to condemn violence and stand up to terror,” said UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, in a statement.

He expressed condolences to the families and friends of all victims and wished the wounded a full and speedy recovery.
In the headlines:

- ‘Time to stamp out human trafficking,’ says Guterres; UN pledges action to eradicate ‘heinous crime’
- Syrian parties should join next round of Geneva talks ‘without preconditions’ – UN envoy
- At Security Council, UN official urges greater cooperation for more effective aviation security
- UNICEF expands relief efforts in Latin America and Caribbean after month of ‘relentless’ natural disasters
- UN chief welcomes Saudi Arabia’s decision to lift ban on women drivers
- Colombia: New UN Mission begins operation; focus on reintegrating ex-fighters
- North Africa set to adopt 5-year plan to boost youth employment – UN labour agency
- UN rights office issues business standards on treatment of LGBTI employees; major companies on board
- Sustainable tourism can advance global development, UN agency highlights on World Day
- France must bring counter-terrorism law in line with international rights obligations – UN experts
- Hanging of 42 prisoners in Iraq raises concern over flawed due process – UN rights chief

‘Time to stamp out human trafficking,’ says Guterres; UN pledges action to eradicate ‘heinous crime’

27 September – With tens of millions of human trafficking victims worldwide, “now is the time to stand together and stamp out this abominable practice,” Secretary-General António Guterres today told a high-level meeting at which Member States adopted a political Declaration reaffirming their commitment to implement a United Nations action plan to end the scourge.

“Human trafficking is all around us, in all regions of the world,” said Mr. Guterres, referring to such practices as forced labour, sexual servitude, recruitment of child soldiers and other forms of exploitation and abuse.

The Assembly’s high-level meeting, convened to examine progress achieved and challenges remaining in the implementation of the seven-year-old Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, opened today and closes tomorrow.

In the Declaration, adopted without a vote, UN Member States demonstrated their strong political will to take decisive concerted action to end the heinous crime.
In recent years, rising conflict, insecurity and economic uncertainty have brought new tests.

“As millions of children, women and men spill out of their countries towards safety, they find themselves at the mercy of merciless people,” Mr. Guterres said.

These criminal networks are global, well-organized, technologically savvy, and highly proficient in taking advantage of gaps in governance and weaknesses in institutions, he added.

Fighting human trafficking requires greater use of relevant instruments, including the UN conventions against transnational organized crime and against corruption, and next year’s expected adoption by the General Assembly of a global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration is a further potential milestone, he said.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by Member States in 2015, also addresses some of the root causes that make people vulnerable to trafficking. Often, trafficking is abetted by poverty and inequality.

“Fighting trafficking and advancing sustainable, inclusive development go hand in hand,” Mr. Guterres said.

Also addressing the meeting, Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), said “this appraisal and the adoption of the political Declaration can help us take this commitment forward and sharpen responses to an odious crime that continues to exploit and victimize the most vulnerable, in all parts of the world.”

To build a robust evidence base, UNODC is currently working with the academic community to develop innovative methodologies to measure the size and scope of the trafficking problem, he added.

General Assembly President Miroslav Lajcak also addressed the meeting, as did Ms. Mira Sorvino, UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the global fight against human trafficking and Grizelda Grootboom, a civil society representative and victim of human trafficking.

**Syrian parties should join next round of Geneva talks ‘without preconditions’ – UN envoy**

27 September – The United Nations is set to convene the next round of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva by the end of October or in early November, the UN mediator told the Security Council today.

“The time has come for the focus to return to Geneva, and the intra-Syrian talks under the auspices of the United Nations,” said UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, urging the Government and the opposition to assess the situation with realism and responsibility to the Syrian people and prepare to participate in the talks without preconditions.

Mr. de Mistura said the Government should show a genuine interest in having negotiations about credible, inclusive local and central governance, a schedule and process for a new constitution, and UN-supervised elections.

For its part, the opposition should show its unity and readiness to speak in one voice, he said, urging opposition groups to seize the opportunity presented by Saudi Arabia to convene a conference for them to overcome differences.

“There is no
substitute for an internationally supported process based on a comprehensive and inclusive approach that also helps Syrians to re-discover a modicum of trust and social cohesion after the bitterest of conflict.”

Following the 10-15 July round of the UN-facilitated talks, the envoy said the conference ended with incremental progress but no breakthrough.

Intra-Syrian talks focus on the “four baskets”: a credible non-sectarian transitional government; a future constitution; early and free parliamentary elections within 18 months; and a united war against terrorism within Syria.

Also briefing the Council on the humanitarian situation there, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said “Syria continues to face deep and difficult challenges, and the Syrian people remain trapped in a cycle of violence that must be broken.”

Following a comprehensive UN review, Deir ez-Zor and the 93,500 people in the city are being removed from the list of those besieged, he said, explaining that after three years of besiegement by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), Syrian Government forces in early September gained road access, marking the end of costly airdrops.

Now an estimated 419,920 people remain besieged in 10 locations across Syria. Of these, 95 per cent are besieged by the Government, two per cent by non-State armed groups, and three per cent by both non-State armed groups and the Government of Syria. “These sieges must be lifted,” said Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

So far in September, 9,000 people in the three besieged towns of Foah, Kefraya and Yarmouk have been reached, and 25,000 people were reached in East Harasta, Misraba and Modira. In total, under the August and September access plan, the UN has reached 280,500 of the 1.23 million people it requested to provide assistance to, he added.

At Security Council, UN official urges greater cooperation for more effective aviation security

27 September – Highlighting multifaceted threats to aviation security in the context of international peace and security, the head of the United Nations civil aviation body urged greater cooperation among Member States, at all levels, to make global aviation security more effective.

“We must find a way to identify and judiciously share essential elements of information necessary to implement appropriate measures at the proper level,” Fang Liu, the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), told the Security Council today at its meeting on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

In her briefing, Ms. Liu informed the 15-member Security Council on the new ICAO Global Aviation Security Plan, which focuses extensively on the threat of terrorism to civil aviation and aims to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of global provisions, and the sustainable implementation of preventative measures.

The Global Plan, which she referred to as a major milestone for civil aviation security contributing to the UN global counter terrorism strategy, has five priority areas: enhancing risk awareness and response; establishing a better-defined security culture; improving technological resources and fostering innovation; improving oversight and quality assurance; and increasing cooperation and support.

“It will only be by virtue of sustained political will, especially at the highest levels of governments and industry, that the [Global Plan] will succeed,” the IACO chief added.
Also in her briefing, Ms. Liu spoke of threats from cyber space; Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), especially in conflict areas; and improvised explosive devices in portable electronic devices.

Concluding her remarks, the head of ICAO also urged the Security Council to allocate a portion of the counter terrorism funds as well as to encourage UN Member States to increase their contributions to aviation security projects, in particular for capacity building and training to enhance the effective implementation of ICAO Standards.

**UNICEF expands relief efforts in Latin America and Caribbean after month of ‘relentless’ natural disasters**

27 September – To help children and families affected by the series of natural disasters that have devastated countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today said it has scaled up its humanitarian response the region.

“Children in Latin America and the Caribbean have faced several natural disasters of epic proportions in September,” said Grant Leaity, UNICEF Deputy Director of Emergency Programmes.

“With four successive hurricanes – including Hurricane Irma, the largest ever recorded over the Atlantic – and two major earthquakes in Mexico, the past few weeks have been relentless,” he added.

In the past month, four major hurricanes – Category 3 or higher – have churned through the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean. Hurricanes Irma, Jose, Katia and Maria caused major damage to island nations in the Caribbean, as well as continental North and Central America, devastating the lives of millions of people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless and displaced.

Since two earthquakes – 12 days apart – caused widespread damage and destruction in central Mexico, the region has experienced over 4,000 aftershocks, including a 6.1 magnitude quake as recently as 23 September. Up to seven million children live in the affected areas and thousands have been left homeless, with no access to basic services.

Across the region, UNICEF has urgently scaled up its emergency response to reach vulnerable children with protection services, water, sanitation and hygiene, health and education initiatives.

“It’s absolutely vital that children who have lived through these traumatic events get the psychosocial support they need,” said UNICEF Mexico Ambassador Thalia, who visited UNICEF operations centre this week to learn more about UNICEF’s response.

In Mexico, UNICEF is working with its partners in earthquake-affected areas to establish temporary schools, promote school safety guidelines, train teachers in psychosocial support, and distribute education supplies and early childhood development kits to teachers and caregivers.

“Through child-friendly spaces UNICEF is able to provide children with a safe place, to play, learn and begin to heal their psychological wounds,” Ambassador Thalia underscored.

For children and families affected by the hurricanes, UNICEF is working with partners and local governments to provide immediate relief including access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, provision of psycho social support for children and working to ensure children and able to get back into education as soon as possible.

To support its humanitarian response in Mexico, Cuba, the Eastern Caribbean and Haiti,
UNICEF is appealing for $18.1 million.

**UN chief welcomes Saudi Arabia’s decision to lift ban on women drivers**

27 September – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed the decision by Saudi Arabia to allow women to drive cars in the country.

In a tweet, the UN chief noted that ending the restrictions represents an “important step in the right direction.”

According to reports, under the new law, women can legally obtain a driving licence without asking a male guardian for permission.

Also welcoming the announcement, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) “expressed hope that the move would “start the journey” to substantive equality for women and girls in the country, with more access to public spaces and life, increased participation in the job market and a life free of violence in all spheres.

“Women being able to apply for a driver’s licence in Saudi Arabia, and subsequently drive, is a long-awaited milestone in the [country], that puts them at par with their male counterparts in this one area of public life and gives them a right to a lifesaving skill that they should never have been denied,” said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director UN Women, in a statement today.

“The ability to move independently within their country is a vital step to the other freedoms that are their right as economic, political and social actors, and that bring benefits to all of society,” she added.

**Colombia: New UN Mission begins operation; focus on reintegrating ex-fighters**

27 September – The second post-conflict United Nations mission in Colombia has started its operations, succeeding the UN entity which was mandated to verify the implementation agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) concerning the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, and laying down of arms.

“We are pleased that the laying down of weapons has been successfully concluded,” said Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Colombia and the head of the UN Verification Mission in the country, in a news release yesterday.

Noting that the transition has offered an opportunity to redouble efforts to bring peace to all corners of the country, he added: “Through our follow-up and verification activities, [we] will continue to support Colombia in its process of building a firm and lasting peace.”

Established by the UN Security Council in July, the purpose of the Mission is to accompany the parties and verify their commitments regarding points 3.2 and 3.4 of the Final Peace Agreement on the reintegration of former FARC-EP members.
and the implementation of measures of protection and security for communities in territories most affected by the conflict.

Across the country, the Mission will have ten regional offices and will continue to maintain presence at the twenty-six Territorial Area for Training and Reincorporation. In addition, it will also establish seven sub-offices in different parts of the country.

The Verification Mission starts its activities immediately upon the conclusion of the mandate of the first UN Mission in Colombia, which was established by the Security Council in January last year 2016. That Mission was mandated with the verification of the Agreement between the Government and FARC-EP on the Bilateral and Definitive Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities and Laying down of Arms (Ceasefire Agreement).

**North Africa set to adopt 5-year plan to boost youth employment – UN labour agency**

27 September – With a youth unemployment rate at 28.8 per cent – twice the global average – countries in North Africa need to adopt a broader, more concerted response to tackle the crisis, the United Nations labour agency warned today.

“Arguably the single biggest global development challenge in the decades to come will be the need to integrate hundreds of millions of young people into the labour market,” International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General Guy Ryder told a two-day international conference in Geneva, which is expected to adopt a new five-year action plan to enhance youth employability in the sub-region.

An ILO press release issued today said that in North Africa, only 16.6 per cent of young women and 46.8 per cent of young men are economically active, meaning that they are employed or seeking work.

Among those active, 29.3 per cent – 24.1 per cent for young men and 44.4 per cent for young women – are unemployed; and around 25 per cent of working youth are estimated to be living in poverty.

“In order to fill the youth employment gap in the North African region, we call on social partners, governments, workers and employers’ organizations together with development partners, to renew their commitment and action on youth employment,” ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy Deborah Greenfield said at the event, calling for a strong policy response to reverse these trends.

Young workers are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. What’s more, North Africa has one of the largest gender imbalances in labour market participation.

At the conference, which ends today, representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia, as well as development partners and major stakeholders are expected to adopt “Roadmap for Youth Employment in North Africa.”
UN rights office issues business standards on treatment of LGBTI employees; major companies on board

27 September – Drawing on good practice from around the world, the top United Nation human rights official today launched an unprecedented set of global standards to support the business community in tackling discrimination against lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex people (LGBTI).

“Social change requires the active involvement of all parts of society – including, critically, the business community,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, speaking to business leaders, activists and journalists at Microsoft’s New York City headquarters.

Mr. Zeid called on the private sector to play its part in promoting LGBTI inclusion in the workplace and beyond.

“The decisions that companies take – whether in respect of human resources, investment, supply chains, even marketing – can have a real and, in some cases, profound impact on human rights,” he told the audience.

The new standards set out actions for companies to protect the rights of LGBTI employees, such as eliminating workplace discrimination; making sure business operations do not contribute to discrimination against customers, suppliers or members of the public; and working with business partners to address discriminatory practices up and down the supply chain.

They also encourage companies to stand up for the rights of LGBTI people in the countries where they operate – including through advocacy and support for local organizations.

“There is growing evidence that, besides being the right thing to do, standing up for equal rights for LGBTI people is also in the private sector’s commercial interest,” the High Commissioner noted, adding: “Excluding any group slows us all down. Eliminating discrimination is the key to unlocking talent and maximizing productivity.”

The product of a year-long process of consultations facilitated by the UN Human Rights Office and the Institute for Human Rights and Business, including regional meetings with leading business representatives in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, Accenture, Baker McKenzie, BNP Paribas, The Coca-Cola Company, Deutsche Bank, EDF, EY, Gap Inc., Godrej, IKEA Group, Microsoft, Oath, Orange, SAP, and Spotify are among the supporting companies.

In the coming months, the standards will be presented at launch events globally, including in Mumbai on 12 October, London on 30 October, Hong Kong on 14 November, Geneva on 29 November and Melbourne in 5 December.
Sustainable tourism can advance global development, UN agency highlights on World Day

27 September – On World Tourism Day, the United Nations underscored the potential of sustainable tourism to advance economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainable development.

On World Tourism Day, the United Nations underscored the potential of sustainable tourism to advance economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainable development.

“This year’s celebration comes at a very special time,” said Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) at the official UN celebration of the Day in Doha, Qatar, pointing out that 2017 is the UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

“It is] a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come together and promote travel and tourism, as one of the most effective transformative human forces of the 21st century,” he added.

Noting the connection between air transport and tourism, he stated: “Both are a force for development and have major responsibilities in building a better and more sustainable world. Both are interlinked, as over half of the people travelling the world today arrive to their destination by air, thus the economic impacts of tourism and aviation are linked.”

Acknowledging global challenges, such as climate change, migration and security, the UNWTO chief said, that 2016, 1,235 million travellers crossed international borders in one year. That was almost one-sixth of the people of the world making an international trip every year, “and while doing so, tourism is bringing tremendous benefits to communities, economies and societies.”

Generating $3.2 billion of spending worldwide every day, tourism creates one-tenth of jobs globally, represents 10 per cent of world’s gross domestic product (GDP) and is 30 per cent of world trade in services. As the third largest export industry, travel and tourism fuel UNWTO’s long-term forecasts showing that by 2030, the number of travellers will reach 1.8 billion.

“But beyond the numbers and the economic benefits, travel and tourism is today a major contributor to a transformation that slowly and gradually is bringing us together, as humans, like never before, in a fast, globalized world,” he stressed.

Breaking down stereotypes and enabling people to celebrate rich cultural diversity, is “tourism’s greatest contribution to a better world,” according to Mr. Rifai.
France must bring counter-terrorism law in line with international rights obligations – UN experts

27 September – Warning of possible “discriminatory repercussions,” especially for Muslims, two United Nations rights experts expressed concern over a new law that may perpetuate the emergency measures France introduced in 2015 – establishing a permanent state of emergency.

“The normalization of emergency powers has grave consequences for the integrity of rights protection in France, both within and beyond the context of counter-terrorism,” said the Special Rapporteur on the protection of human rights in the context of countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, today in a statement calling on France to honour its international human rights commitments and obligations while debating the new draft law.

The draft law “to Strengthen Internal Security and the Fight Against Terrorism” was approved by the Senate on 18 July and is currently being debated by the National Assembly.

On 22 September in a letter to the French Government, Ms. Ní Aoláin drew attention to several provisions of the draft that may adversely impact people’s rights to liberty and security as well as freedoms of movement, peaceful assembly, expression and religion.

Echoing these concerns, the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Michel Forst, reiterated his fear that, if adopted, the law would impair rights to liberty, security, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and others.

“As France is strengthening its fight against terrorism, the draft bill includes a number of security measures, which will incorporate into ordinary law several restrictions on civil liberties currently in place under France’s state of emergency,” Ms. Ní Aoláin pointed out.

She underscored that both regional and international human rights institutions affirm that the means open to the State to regulate terrorism by law are limited by its compliance with international human rights standards. The duration of the state of emergency must be time-bound, revised regularly, and meet the criteria of necessity and proportionality.

The two UN experts expressed concern about the vague wording in certain provisions of the draft bill – particularly the definitions of terrorism and threats to national security – that gives the authorities powers that may be used in an arbitrary manner and non-judicial officers – specifically prefects and police officers – broad discretion and a wider scope for control practices, which may have discriminatory repercussions for French residents, particularly Muslim.
Hanging of 42 prisoners in Iraq raises concern over flawed due process – UN rights chief

27 September – The mass hanging of 42 prisoners on Sunday in a prison in southern Iraq raises massive concerns over the country's use of the death penalty, the UN human rights chief said Wednesday.

“I am appalled to learn of the execution of 42 prisoners in a single day,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a press release from his Office (OHCHR), referring to the hanging at Al Hoot prison in the city of Nasiriyah.

“Under international law, the death penalty may only be imposed after a strict set of substantive and procedural requirements have been met,” he added.

Mr. Zeid said it was “extremely doubtful” that these strict due process and fair trial guarantees – including the men's rights to effective legal assistance and a full appeals process, and to seek pardon or commutation of their sentence – had been met in every one of these 42 individual cases.

Iraqi government officials have stated that the executed prisoners were Iraqis affiliated to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) or al-Qaeda, who had been charged under anti-terrorism laws with offences including kidnapping, killing members of the security forces, carrying out armed robberies, and detonating improvised explosive devices.

However, no information has been released about their names, places of residence, exact crimes, trials, date of sentencing, or the appeals processes which Iraqi officials say they have exhausted.

Iraqi officials have stated that around 1,200 of the estimated 6,000 prisoners held in Nasiriyah have been sentenced to death.

OHCHR has repeatedly warned that the Iraqi justice system as a whole is too flawed to allow for any executions, expressing concern over reports that Iraq may be planning to expedite the process of executing prisoners already sentenced to death while urging the Government to step back from its policy of accelerated or mass executions.

Mr. Zeid called on the Government to establish a special judicial oversight body to make recommendations on legal reforms that would ensure respect for due process and fair trial standards, as well as to monitor any future trials related to capital punishment.

He also urged the authorities to halt all imminent executions and to establish an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty.
**In the headlines:**

- Rohingya refugee crisis a ‘human rights nightmare,’ UN chief tells Security Council
- Lake Chad Basin: Vulnerable people ‘a step away from starvation,’ says UN aid chief
- Major new UN report sets course towards ‘pollution-free planet’
- At Security Council, top counter-terrorism officials stress ‘All of UN’ approach to tackle scourge
- DR Congo: UN mission deploys ‘blue helmets’ to protect civilians and refugees
- UN maritime agency spotlights link between shipping and sustainable development
- On World Day, UN announces global initiative to end deaths from dog-transmitted rabies by 2030
- Some 25 million unsafe abortions occur each year, UN health agency warns
- UN chief urges all parties to refrain from acts that could escalate tension in Cameroon
- Horrific accounts of sexual violence against Rohingya ‘just tip of the iceberg’ – UN agency

---

**Rohingya refugee crisis a ‘human rights nightmare,’ UN chief tells Security Council**

28 September – Noting that the humanitarian crisis that has resulted in displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas from Myanmar not only provides a “breeding ground” for radicalization, but also puts vulnerable people – including young children – at grave risk, United Nations Secretary-General called for “swift action” to prevent further instability and find a durable solution.

“The situation has spiralled into the world’s fastest developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare,” Secretary-General António Guterres said today at a Security Council meeting on the situation in Myanmar.

At least 500,000 civilians have fled their homes in the country’s northern Rakhine state since late August and sought refuge in Bangladesh. According to estimates, some 94 per cent among them are members of the minority Muslim Rohingya community.

There have also been reports of burning of Muslim villages, as well as looting and acts of intimidation. Authorities in Myanmar have indicated that at least 176 of 471 Muslim villages in northern Rakhine have been totally abandoned.

“We have received bone-chilling accounts from those who fled – mainly women, children and the elderly,” added the UN chief, noting that testimonies pointed to serious violations of human rights, including indiscriminate firing of weapons, the presence of landmines and sexual violence.
“This is unacceptable and must end immediately.”

Failure to address the violence could result in a spill-over into central Rakhine – where an additional 250,000 Muslims could potentially face displacement – Mr. Guterres warned, stressing that Government must ensure the safety and security of all communities and uphold rule of law without discrimination.

In his briefing, the Secretary-General also underscored that UN agencies and their non-governmental partners must be granted immediate and safe access to all affected communities.

Speaking also on the need to ensure safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of the refugees to their areas of origin, Mr. Guterres noted that the 1993 Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Myanmar could be a useful starting point, but it is not sufficient in the present circumstances, in particular as it does not refer to resolving the root cause of displacement as well as because it requires documents that the refugee Rohingya may not be able to provide.

“Ensuring the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees to Rakhine – in line with international refugee law – will require the restoration of mutual trust among the communities,” he said, noting that improved inter-communal relations forms a critical part of a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Mt. Guterres further noted that the issue of protracted statelessness must be resolved.

“The Muslims of Rakhine state should be granted nationality,” he stated, adding that while the present Myanmar citizenship legislation only allows it partially, an effective verification exercise should be conducted in the interim to allow those entitled be granted citizenship based on the present laws.

“All others must be able to obtain a legal status that allows them to lead a normal life, including freedom of movement and access to labour markets, education and health services,” he added.

In his remarks, the UN chief also spoke of a donor conference to be convened by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as well as noted efforts by regional actors to help address the crisis.

“I look forward to effective and credible follow-up to the authorities’ stated commitment to greater access, including for the international community, the media and humanitarian actors,” he said, noting: “The regional cooperation with Myanmar will also be essential, and the United Nations fully stands behind this.”

Lake Chad Basin: Vulnerable people ‘a step away from starvation,’ says UN aid chief

28 September – The scale up of international assistance to the Lake Chad Basin this year has averted a famine in north-east Nigeria, even though millions of people are still suffering, according to the United Nations aid chief.

Having visited Niger and Nigeria earlier this month, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, told reporters today at UN Headquarters in New York: “There are still millions of people who have suffered a lot and continue to suffer, many of them just a step away from starvation.”

He said that in field visits to Ngagam in Diffa – “the poorest region in the poorest country in the world” – and to Maiduguri, Pulka, and Gwoza in Borno state in Nigeria, he met “extremely vulnerable
people” displaced by conflict.

“Those people want to go home, they want a chance to rebuild their lives. But they want to do that when it’s safe to do so,” stressed Mr. Lowcock.

About 1.8 million people in Niger are food-insecure. Some 800,000 children are affected by acute malnutrition and almost 250,000 people are either internally displaced persons, returnees or refugees from Nigeria, he highlighted.

In north-east Nigeria, around 6.5 million people need life-saving assistance. Nearly 5.2 million are severely food-insecure and 450,000 children will suffer from severe acute malnutrition, this year.

The crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, which covers Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad, is complex as countries grapple with insecurity, climatic shocks, extreme poverty, the legacy of inadequate governance across vast parts of the region.

“But the way forward is also clear,” he asserted, highlighting the need to sustain the effective humanitarian response, and to ensure see better protection for people.

“Access has improved in many towns, but there’s also been a recent upsurge in horrific attacks on civilians in all four countries. In Niger, hostage-taking has increased, while in Nigeria children have been used as ‘human bombs,’” he said.

Turning to other areas of the world, Mr. Lowcock said “so far in Somalia, famine has been averted” while in South Sudan, there was “a famine declaration in a couple of counties in Unity state, that affected about 50,000 people earlier in the year, but that situation was brought under control pretty quickly.”

Calling it the world’s biggest humanitarian crisis, Mr. Lowcock pointed out that in Yemen, “we have so far again averted formal famine declaration, but the levels of suffering in Yemen are really astronomical. I mean, there’s a really dreadful situation.”

Major new UN report sets course towards ‘pollution-free planet’

28 September – While pollution has considerably negative impacts on human health and ecosystems, it is controllable and avoidable through political leadership, high-level champions and commitments, as well with local level action, says a new report launched today by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The report, Towards a pollution-free planet, was launched during the first Conference of Parties for the Minamata Convention, which addresses mercury issues and ahead of the annual UN Environment Assembly, to be held in early December.

“Pollution is a universal challenge [but] the good news is that we already know what we need to do to prevent and reduce it,” UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim said, stressing that “now the responsibility is on governments, businesses, cities and local authorities, civil society and individuals around the world to commit to act to beat pollution in all its forms.”

Outlining the negative impacts pollution has especially on the poor and the vulnerable and its direct threat to human rights; limited responses by governments, business and citizens to existing pollution; and the challenges of the current actions, the report suggests five overarching actions.
A global compact on pollution would make pollution prevention a priority for all;
Environmental governance needs to be strengthened at all levels;
Sustainable consumption and production, through improved resource efficiency and lifestyle changes, should be promoted; waste reduction and management must be prioritized;
Investment in cleaner production and consumption will help to counter pollution; and
Multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations are vital for the innovation, knowledge-sharing and transdisciplinary research needed to develop technological and ecosystems-based solutions.

Also proposed in the report are 50 concrete actions to curb pollution in various forms, with a call for strong high-level political commitment and engagement of local government, civil society and other stakeholders.

The report stresses that although some forms of pollution have been reduced as technologies and management strategies have advanced, approximately 19 million premature deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of the way societies use natural resources and impact the environment to support production and consumption.

“If consumption and production patterns continue as they are, the linear economic model of ‘take-make-dispose’ will seriously burden an already-polluted planet, affecting current and future generations,” the report’s foreword concludes.

At Security Council, top counter-terrorism officials stress ‘All of UN’ approach to tackle scourge

28 September – Addressing the Security Council, the head of the newly-created United Nations counter-terrorism office today outlined a framework to devise a cohesive, well-coordinated programme to support Member States as well as the priority areas of such work.

“We must recognize that there are four important spheres of UN activity that need to be aligned if we are to effectively develop a coherent and well-coordinated ‘All of UN’ framework for our future counter-terrorism efforts,” Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), said at a briefing to the 15-member body on the threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

These four spheres are the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies; the General Assembly; the UN Secretariat headed the Secretary-General; and the 38 UN entities that directly or indirectly contribute to counter-terrorism efforts, Mr. Voronkov said.

Today’s meeting marked the 16th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1373, which was adopted on this day in 2001, following the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States.

He said that he had more than 50 high-level meetings with Member States and international and regional organizations last week in the margins of the General Assembly’s annual debate and that he listened carefully to the statements delivered in the Assembly, in which counter-terrorism was clearly a priority for many UN Member States.

An effective, future-oriented and balanced counter-terrorism programme to support Member States would be built on six key areas; strengthening international counter-terrorism cooperation; preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism; addressing the terrorist use of the Internet; enhancing the foreign terrorist fighters’ threat; and increasing the sharing of information and good practices.

Also briefing the Council was David Scharia, Officer-in-Charge of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), who discussed how CTED’s work can contribute to the “All of UN” approach to combating terrorism.
He said that CTED provides the Counter-Terrorism Committee, a subsidiary body of the Security Council, with neutral and independent expert assessments of Member States’ implementation of Council resolutions on terrorism. To date, CTED has conducted 133 visits to 96 Member States, including 16 this year.

This process, Mr. Scharia said, helped these countries to enact new laws, establish new institutions and strengthen capacities.

“Yet, many States still do not have all counter-terrorism measures in place,” he added, expressing an expectation that the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism will shorten the time period between CTED assessments and the delivery of assistance.

He noted that the entire UN system should benefit from CTED analysis, “which is probably the most updated and comprehensive research-based analysis in the UN system on counter-terrorism trends and developments.”

“Together, we have achieved a great deal since the adoption of resolution 1373 in 2001,” he said. “However, the terrorist threat continues to evolve at an alarming pace.”

CTED recently updated the Technical Guide to the implementation of Council resolutions on terrorism.

**DR Congo: UN mission deploys ‘blue helmets’ to protect civilians and refugees**

*28 September* – Responding to the worsening security situation near a major town in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations mission in the country has deployed peacekeepers to deter any attacks on the city and to prevent escalation in clashes.

According to the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC, known by its French acronym MONUSCO, clashes had occurred in the area of Uvira, in South Kivu province, between presumed armed groups and the Congolese national army (FARDC).

Noting that the response is guided by the Mission’s mandate, Maman Sidikou, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, said: “[We are] strongly committed to the protection of civilians, including vulnerable groups such as refugees and displaced people.”

He called on the armed groups to immediately cease this hostility including all forms of violence against constituted authority and innocent civilians.

“All perpetrators, in particular those who sponsor armed groups as well as those who bear command responsibility, will be held accountable for human rights abuses,” he added.

Uvira is the second largest town in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
UN maritime agency spotlights link between shipping and sustainable development

28 September – Marking the World Maritime Day, the head of the United Nations maritime agency today highlighted contributions the shipping industry can make to the achievement of the global development goals.

“Shipping and ports can play a significant role in helping to create conditions for increased employment, prosperity and stability through promoting maritime trade. The port and maritime sectors can be wealth creators, both on land and at sea,” said Kitack Lim, the Secretary-General of International Maritime Organization (IMO), in his message for the Day, observed annually on 28 September.

To highlight this potential, the theme of the Day for this year is ‘Connecting Ships, Ports and People.’

“It will enable us to shine a spotlight on the existing cooperation between ports and ships to maintain and enhance a safe, secure and efficient maritime transportation system,” Mr. Lim said.

The benefits of a free and efficient flow of goods and trade extend far beyond the ships and ports themselves, and an effective interface between them can improve the lives of people everywhere, especially in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by UN Member States in 2015.

But, to be sustainable, human activities have to be balanced with the oceans’ capacity to remain healthy and diverse in the long term. The so-called ‘blue economy’ is a large and growing industrial sector; and, as it grows, it must remain safe and secure and not threaten the environment, he noted.

Ultimately, more efficient shipping, working in partnership with a port sector supported by governments, will be a major driver towards global stability and sustainable development for the good of all people, he concluded.

On World Day, UN announces global initiative to end deaths from dog-transmitted rabies by 2030

28 September – The largest global anti-rabies initiative to end human deaths from dog-transmitted rabies by 2030 was announced, today, World Rabies Day, making it a priority disease for key international organizations and governments, according to the United Nations health agency.

“The plan ensures support to countries in developing national plans, and provides innovative training and education tools across regional rabies networks,” said Dr. Bernadette Abela-Ridder today in a press statement on behalf the United Against Rabies collaboration, consisting of the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC).

The plan Zero by 30: The Strategic Plan centres on a ‘One Health’ approach, addressing the disease in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner while highlighting the important role veterinary, health and educational services play in rabies prevention and control.
“Vaccines are a key component of the global plan and a trigger for national programmes. The United Against Rabies collaboration provides leadership and advocates for resources critical to reaching zero human rabies deaths by 2030,” Dr. Abela-Ridder added.

Rabies – a viral disease that occurs in more than 150 countries and territories – is usually fatal once symptoms appear. Dog-transmitted rabies accounts for about 99 per cent of human rabies cases. It is estimated that 59,000 people die every year from the disease.

The statement pointed out that rabies is 100 per cent preventable, saying that the world has the knowledge, technology and vaccines for its elimination.

The alliance aims to prevent and respond to dog-transmitted rabies by improving awareness and education, reducing human rabies risk through expanded dog vaccinations and improving access to healthcare, medicines and vaccines for populations at risk.

Dr. Ren Minghui, WHO Assistant Director-General for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases maintained, “Working across sectors to eliminate human rabies aligns with WHO’s mission to leave no one behind by building a better, healthier future for people all over the world.”

The plan will generate and measure impact by implementing proven effective guidelines for rabies control, and encouraging the use of innovative surveillance technologies to monitor progress towards ‘zero by 30.’

“No increased efforts report are needed, especially in developing regions, to ensure access to contraception and safe abortion,” says Bela Ganatra, a scientist and the lead author of the study, *The Lancet*, released today by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Guttmacher Institute.

Expressing FAO’s enthusiasm in being part of the development of the initiative, Ren Wang, FAO Assistant Director-General said, “Rural communities suffer the most from this preventable disease. Rabies puts not only their own health and wellbeing at risk, but also that of their animals, which can be a major or sole source of their livelihoods.”

“FAO has been supporting vaccination campaigns and the development of community-based programmes to prevent and eliminate rabies. This new initiative will enhance that work and can play an essential role in FAO’s overall goal to build stronger rural communities,” Mr. Wang stressed.

**Some 25 million unsafe abortions occur each year, UN health agency warns**

28 September – About 25 million unsafe abortions, accounting for 45 per cent of all abortions, occurred every year from 2010 to 2014 worldwide, with 97 per cent of those unsafe procedures occurring in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, a new United Nations study has found.

“Increased efforts report are needed, especially in developing regions, to ensure access to contraception and safe abortion,” says Bela Ganatra, a scientist and the lead author of the study, *The Lancet*, released today by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Guttmacher Institute.

“Despite recent advances in technology and evidence, too many unsafe abortions still occur, and too many women continue to suffer...
and die,” added Ms. Ganatra of WHO’s Department of Reproductive Health and Research.

For the first time, the study includes sub-classifications within the unsafe abortion category as less safe or least safe. The distinction allows for a more nuanced understanding of the different circumstances of abortions among women who are unable to access safe abortions from a trained provider.

The risk of severe complications or death is negligible if procedures follow WHO guidelines and standards. About 55 per cent of all abortions from 2010 to 2014 were conducted safely.

Some 31 per cent of abortions were “less safe,” meaning they were either performed by a trained provider using an unsafe or outdated method such as “sharp curettage,” or by an untrained person using a safe method like misoprostol, a drug that can induce an abortion.

About 14 per cent were “least safe” abortions provided by untrained persons using dangerous methods, such as introduction of foreign objects and use of herbal concoctions. Complications from “least-safe” abortions can include a failure to remove all of the pregnancy tissue from the uterus, haemorrhage, vaginal, cervical and uterine injury, and infections.

The study also found that in countries where abortion is completely banned or permitted only to save the woman’s life or preserve her physical health, only one in four abortions were safe; whereas, in countries where abortion is legal on broader grounds, nearly 9 in 10 abortions were done safely. Restricting access to abortions does not reduce the number of abortions.

Most abortions that take place in Western and Northern Europe and North America are safe. These regions also have some of the lowest abortion rates.

The proportion of abortions that were safe in Eastern Asia, including China, was similar to developed regions. In South-Central Asia, however, less than one in two abortions were safe. In Latin America, only one in four abortions were safe. Less than one in four abortions in Africa, excluding Southern Africa, were safe.

UN chief urges all parties to refrain from acts that could escalate tension in Cameroon

28 September – Expressing “deep concern” over the deteriorating security situation in parts of Cameroon as well as heightened tensions related to planned events this Sunday, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called all parties to refrain from acts that could lead to further tensions and violence.

According to a statement attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres encouraged the Cameroonian authorities to continue their efforts to address the grievances of the Anglophone community.

“He urges the authorities to promote measures of national reconciliation aimed at finding a durable solution to the crisis, including by addressing its root causes,” the statement added.

It also noted that the UN chief supports upholding the unity and territorial integrity of the country and believes that genuine and inclusive dialogue between the Government and the communities in the South-West and North-West regions is the best way to preserve the unity and stability of the country.

The Secretary-General stands ready to support these efforts, including through the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), the statement read.
Horrific accounts of sexual violence against Rohingya ‘just tip of the iceberg’ – UN agency

28 September – Warning that the horrific accounts of rape and sexual assault against Rohingya women and girls fleeing unrest in Myanmar could be “just the tip of the iceberg,” the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) underscored the need to ensure that such violence is prevented and called for additional resources so that it can reach all those in need of assistance.

“Gender-based violence, including rape and sexual assault, is a key concern that has emerged from the ongoing humanitarian crisis,” said UNFPA in a news release today.

The UN agency noted that it has already provided a range of services, including medical and psychosocial counselling assistance, to more than 7,000 Rohingya women refugees.

However, many victims have not reported their ordeal out of concerns over safety, confidentiality, shame and stigma, it added.

“This is what makes it challenging to come up with accurate numbers of gender-based violence survivors.”

According to UNFPA, the lead UN agency on addressing gender-based violence in humanitarian crisis and emergencies, more than 480,000 Rohingya refugees – over half of them women and girls – have poured into Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar since August 25, having fled their homes since violence erupted in Myanmar’s northern Rakhine province.

Some 120,000 among them are women of reproductive age and 24,000 are either pregnant or breastfeeding.

UNFPA has set up five ‘Women Friendly Spaces’ – areas which women can access at anytime for safety or to access information, education, support or other services – and plans to scale it up to fifteen by the end of the year.

It has also helped set up community watch groups and medical camps with psychosocial counselling assistance amid what it noted are “incredibly challenging circumstances.”

However, given the scale of the crisis, UNFPA and other UN agencies as well as partners, are struggling in need of resources. UNFPA alone needs an additional $13 million to meet the demand for services over the next six months.

Humanitarian crises across the world suffering the blight

The scourge of sexual and gender violence, unfortunately, is not only limited to the Rohingyas who fled Myanmar. Humanitarian crises globally are affected, with women and girls disproportionately affected, their specific needs not addressed adequately.

And it is therefore of paramount importance, underscored UNFPA, that each and every survivor of gender-based violence who needs such services must receive them in an environment that respects their right to self-determination, privacy and confidentiality, ensuring safety and, in so doing, helping them regain or strengthen their sense of dignity.

“All women and girls, regardless of their ethnicity or religious affiliations, must have access to health care and other essential services without discrimination, and they must be protected from all forms of violence, including sexual assault,” emphasized Natalia Kanem, the Acting Executive Director of UNFPA.

“The health and safety of women and girls must be protected.”
In the headlines:

- Half a million Rohingya arrive in Bangladesh; UN agencies rush to provide shelter, clean water
- New UN Day honours unsung heroes who ensure diplomats are 'on the same page'
- Aid community launches $31 million appeal for 'badly battered’ Dominica; UN food relief agency steps up support
- UN Human Rights Council wraps current session, adopts texts on Myanmar, Yemen, Burundi
- Over half of schools remain closed in epicentre of Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria – UNICEF
- In less than two week, 72 States sign UN voluntary compact on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse
- UN health agency recommends large-scale deworming to improve children’s health

Half a million Rohingya arrive in Bangladesh; UN agencies rush to provide shelter, clean water

29 September – The United Nations refugee agency announced today that it has started distributing plastic sheeting and essential relief items to Rohingyas arriving in from Myanmar into neighbouring Bangladesh, as part of a massive effort to cut the time refugees spend in the open.

“The latest estimate of the number of Rohingya who have arrived in Bangladesh since violence erupted in Myanmar has crossed the half million mark, at 501,000 as of Thursday,” Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told reporters at today’s regular press briefing in Geneva.

“Giving the newly arrived refugees the ability to construct their own shelter, begin cooking for themselves and taking care of their families is an important first step on the road to healing,” he added.

The 2,000-acre (809 hectare) extension site on the outskirts of Kutupalong Camp in southeast Bangladesh is becoming more organized, turning into a series of communities as UNHCR and its partners supporting the Bangladesh Government deliver more emergency relief items.

From its $4.2 million budget, UNHCR is contributing $2 million to support Bangladesh in constructing a road for easier aid delivery into Kutupalong extension site and shipping in 23 vehicles to assist aid efforts.

UNHCR nutrition experts estimate that approximately 18 per cent of new arrivals suffer from acute malnutrition.
“This is due to more than lack of food,” said Mr. Mahecic. “We witness dire need for psycho-social support and counselling among refugees,” he said adding that many breastfeeding mothers are “severely traumatised, sick and malnourished.”

UNHCR is working with its partner Action Against Hunger to provide warm meals as private donors conduct ad hoc food distributions, which is also becoming more structured.

“As Bangladesh shoulders the full extent of this refugee crisis, UNHCR calls on all countries in the region to show solidarity and do their part in keeping their borders open and protecting refugees who are fleeing discrimination, persecution and violence in Myanmar,” concluded Mr. Mahecic.

**UN Migration agency reports at least 23 dead in Bay of Bengal boat tragedy**

More tragic details have emerged about yesterdays’ reports that Rohingya refugees died when the boat they were using to reach safety in Bangladesh capsized in the Bay of Bengal’s rough seas.

An International Organization for Migration (IOM) local field team travelled to the scene to assist survivors and assess any further response needed. Today, they report that, having checked with police and the owner of a grocery shop located close to where the incident occurred, the total confirmed dead is now 23.

**Clean water and sanitation needed**

Meanwhile, IOM is partnering with UNHCR and other aid agencies to provide clean water and sanitation for an estimated half a million people who have fled to Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh.

As tens of thousands of new arrivals live with little or no shelter, food or access to healthcare, daily rain flooding campsites has left pools of water – numerous contaminated with faecal matter – as the only accessible water source, posing a lethal threat of waterborne diseases like cholera.

The Inter Sector Coordination Group, which, hosted by IOM, is managing the response, says that approximately 59 million litres of safe water are now needed every day to meet the basic needs of the new arrivals.

Since the influx began on 25 August, IOM has installed 1,532 emergency latrines in three sites to serve some 19,350 people and 17 mobile toilets to serve an estimated 850 people.

The IOM Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team has also bored six deep tube wells, with installation completion due in two weeks to provide 3,000 people in the Kutupalong expansion site with clean water.

While agencies have been able to reach only 141,070 people in Cox’s Bazar with WASH assistance, its engineers say some 18,000 emergency latrines are needed as basic emergency sanitation for all the new arrivals.
Aid community launches $31 million appeal for ‘badly battered’
Dominica; UN food relief agency steps up support

29 September – Emergency supplies from the United Nations food relief agency are being delivered to Dominica as people face “huge challenges in their lives” in the wake of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria, which ripped through the small Caribbean island last week.

“Dominica has been badly battered and needs to be rebuilt,” said World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Barreto.

The mountainous island has suffered nearly 30 deaths, about 80 per cent of its buildings damaged and many roads blocked or impaired.

“We’re working with the Government to support the people who are facing huge challenges in their lives” added Mr. Baretto, who has visited in recent days.

Some 10 metric tons of WFP high-energy biscuits were transported by ship to the eastern Caribbean island this week and then delivered to communities in the remote interior by helicopter and to coastal communities by boat.

Overall, WFP plans to provide a range of food assistance to some 25,000 people for three months as it discusses with the Government a system to supply hurricane-affected people with food vouchers to be used in local markets once they reopen.

WFP is also providing critical logistics, air service and telecommunications support to Dominica and the humanitarian relief response. Its Emergency Telecommunications Team – with expert support from the Ericsson Response Team and the Government of Luxembourg – has set up connectivity in Dominica to some 400 registered users including the Government Emergency Operations Centre, the island’s airports and hospitals, and the Dominican, Venezuelan and French fire brigades.

Mr. Barreto and the UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados, Stephen O’Malley, visited some of the worst-hit areas and have held discussions with Dominica’s Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerrit.

“We’ve been talking to the Government about how to help them get their systems up and running again,” said Mr. O’Malley. “People want to go back to their normal lives and we can help them do that.”

The UN food agency’s emergency efforts are part of a larger UN operation to provide a range of assistance including disaster relief, humanitarian coordination, shelter and water.

On the logistics side, the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Panama and the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) – both managed by WFP – are providing support to humanitarian partners in Dominica and the region.

UNHRD has been airlifting critical emergency supplies, including mobile storage units and pallets, tarpaulins, boats, and electric generators while UNHAS has been providing regular flight services to humanitarian workers, government officials and partners.

A nation crippled

For its part, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) pointed out in a press statement that while this is the fifth time on record that Dominica has taken a direct hit from a hurricane, it has never faced a storm of such ferocity and strength.
One of the Eastern Caribbean’s poorest countries, Dominica’s poverty rate is estimated at 28.9 per cent, or approximately 21,000 people, with some of the hardest-hit parishes also being among the poorest.

In consultation with the Government, the humanitarian community launched today a Hurricane Maria Flash Appeal for Dominica, asking for $31.1 million to reach 65,000 people over the next three months to address challenges, such as a lack of fresh running water and electricity along with road damage and communication black-outs.

**Over half of schools remain closed in epicentre of Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria – UNICEF**

**29 September** – About 57 per cent of all schools are closed in Nigeria's Borno state, worst hit by the Boko Haram insurgency and the subsequent humanitarian crisis, leaving an estimated 3 million children in need of emergency education support, even as the new school year begins, the United Nations child agency said today.

“Children in northeast Nigeria are living through so much horror,” said Justin Forsyth, Deputy Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), in a press release on his three-day visit to Maiduguri, the epicentre of the crisis.

Since 2009, over 2,295 teachers have been killed and 19,000 have been displaced across the northeast. Almost 1,400 schools have been destroyed with the majority unable to open because of extensive damage or because they are in areas that remain unsafe.

The use of children as human bombs has sown a climate of mistrust among communities in the northeast, and a cholera outbreak has affected more than 3,900 people, including over 2,450 children.

“In addition to devastating malnutrition, violence and an outbreak of cholera, the attacks on schools are in danger of creating a lost generation of children, threatening their and the countries future,” Mr. Forsyth added.

However, some displaced children in Borno state are benefiting from education for the first time in their lives. In the Muna Garage camp on the outskirts of Maiduguri, an estimated 90 per cent of students are enrolled in school for the first time.

In the three most-affected states of northeast Nigeria, UNICEF and partners have enrolled nearly 750,000 children in school this year, establishing over 350 temporary learning spaces, and distributing almost 94,000 packs of learning material that will help children to get an education.

UNICEF is also working with partners to rehabilitate schools and classrooms and training teachers to build a stronger education system for the future.

UNICEF's life-saving emergency programmes in northeast Nigeria remain underfunded. With only three months left in the year, UNICEF has a 40 per cent finding gap in its needs for 2017.
UN health agency recommends large-scale deworming to improve children’s health

29 September – The suffering of those infected with parasitic intestinal can be drastically reduced with periodic deworming programmes with a single-tablet treatment, according to new guidelines approved by the United Nations health agency.

“There is now global evidence-based consensus that periodic, large-scale deworming is the best way to reduce the suffering caused by intestinal worms,” said Dirk Engels, Director of the Neglected Tropical Diseases Department at the World Health Organization (WHO), which also noted that such programmes can also protect the 1.5 billion people currently estimated to be at risk.

WHO aims to eliminate the harm caused by worm infections in children by 2020 by regularly treating at least 75 per cent of the estimated 873 million children in areas where prevalence is high. In 2016, WHO Member States treated 63 per cent of children requiring treatment.

“No that the world has agreed standards for deworming at-risk populations, we are in a better position to reach this target,” Antonio Montresor, who heads WHO’s global deworming programme.

The guidelines have been approved by WHO’s Guidelines Review Committee.

Four main species of intestinal worms, also known as soil-transmitted helminths, affect almost a quarter of the world’s poorest and mostly marginalized people. The worms disrupt people’s ability to absorb nutrients and impede the growth and physical development of millions of children.

Large-scale deworming programmes use medicines donated by pharmaceutical companies. These medicines are shipped to countries requesting them, and distributed during mass treatment campaigns.

“Providing medicines to populations at risk reduces the intensity of intestinal helminth infections,” said Francesco Branca, Director of WHO’s Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, adding however that improving basic hygiene, sanitation, health education and providing access to safe drinking-water are also keys to resolving the health and nutritional problems caused by intestinal worms.

Many countries combine deworming activities for pre-school children with other health campaigns, such as vaccination, child health and vitamin supplementation days.
New UN Day honours unsung heroes who ensure diplomats are ‘on the same page’

29 September – Recognizing the unsung heroes behind international diplomacy, the United Nations is celebrating – for the first time – International Translation Day, paying tribute to the work of the language professionals who play a vital role in facilitating dialogue and understanding among peoples and nations.

The simultaneous issuance of UN documents in the six official languages of Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish is made possible by UN translators who, transpose content from the original texts into their main language.

Katherine Durnin, head of the UN English translation service, explained to UN News how her work ensures that Member States are using the correct texts during their discussions, thereby contributing to the overarching goals of the Organization.

“We ensure that when they are debating any subject, they all understand the same message, enabling their discussion to move forward in the language they know,” Ms. Durnin said.

“In that way, they can reach the proper agreement because with the translations they are all on the same page,” she added.

In declaring the International Day earlier this year, the General Assembly affirmed that “professional translation, as a trade and an art, plays an important role in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and cooperation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security.”

Ms. Durnin noted that this recognition has lifted morale “amongst translators, interpreters, editors… anyone who works on documentation.”

“We play a behind-the-scenes role and we understand that,” she stated. “The idea of being a translator is that someone doesn’t actually know that the text they are looking at is a translation; we are supposed to be invisible.”

“But,” she added with a smile “it is great to have that recognition now and then. Once a year, now we can pat ourselves on the back before we recede back into the background.”

Ms. Durnin also admitted that it is nice to be acknowledged outside of the profession, saying “we ourselves understand the difficulty of the work that we do, but it is great to have that recognition across the UN in general.”

Professional translation also includes interpreters, verbatim reporters and terminologists.

Translators handle a range of documents that cover every topic on the UN’s global agenda – with new issues arising every day. They not only command multiple languages, but are also well versed in the proper way to go about translating them – indispensable in a political climate.

“We spend a lot of time doing research, becoming sort of experts in the areas that we are translating from,” said Ms. Durnin. “A lot of the behind-the-scenes work that we do involves clarifying, understanding the message and understanding the meaning that was intended,” she explained, adding that they often have to do research or go directly to the experts for explanations.

“It is very exacting, difficult work to do,” she stated, adding that interpreters have to understand and clearly express what the
speaker intends to say during meetings – in real time.

**Translation at the UN**

The UN is one of the world's largest employers of language professionals. Several hundred such staff work in UN offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, or at the UN regional commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva and Santiago.

Translators are only one type of “language professionals” employed at the UN. They also include: interpreters; editors; verbatim reporters; terminologists; reference assistants; and copy preparers/proofreaders/production editors.

Some of the first UN translators had no official training, but instead spoke multiple languages at home. Over the years that has changed, and to be hired now as a UN translator one must meet several criteria, including educational requirements and passing a language exam.

Fortunately, more universities are training translators with the UN in mind. A number of them have signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN to ensure that their curriculums cover the different areas needed by the Organization.

“That has really helped to create a pipeline of new young well-trained translators, who even as they are graduating, already have a good grounding in the type of work we need for the United Nations,” Ms. Durmin said.

Asked about modern-day apps and software programmes that offer instant translations, her response was enthusiastic: “I think they’re wonderful!”

She credited them with bringing people on holiday together, “to communicate with the locals,” making travellers “so much more aware of the beauty of communicating with other people.”

However, she pointed out, while they do well with small segments of texts, they will not replace a professional translator, who will provide “the full complete message in proper English.”

Ms. Durmin confirmed the use of computer-assisted translation at the UN, but only to help with efficiency.

“That human language is always going to be more complex than something that machines can deal with,” she noted. “If you want to have an agreement between countries on nuclear non-proliferation, I don’t think you want to leave it up to a machine.”

**UN Human Rights Council wraps current session, adopts texts on Myanmar, Yemen, Burundi**


Among the highlights of the final day the Council’s work for the session, the 47-member body adopted a resolution in which it extended the mandate of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar. It also adopted a text on cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

The Council also decided to extend for a year the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and recommended that the UN Recommends that the General Assembly submit the
Commission’s most recent report on the human rights situation in Burundi “to all relevant UN bodies for its consideration and appropriate action.”

The Council requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch a team of three experts to engage with the Burundian authorities and all other stakeholders in order to collect information, establish the truth, and ensure that the perpetrators of deplorable crimes are all accountable to the judicial authorities of Burundi.

Also today, the Council took several actions regarding Yemen, adopting a resolution condemning ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in the country, including those involving the widespread recruitment and use of children by parties to the conflict.

It also requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish, no later by the end of 2017, a group of eminent international and regional experts for a period of at least one year to monitor and report on the situation on human rights in Yemen and to carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of human rights.

In less than two week, 72 States sign UN voluntary compact on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

Secretary-General António Guterres. UN Photo/Mark Garten (file)

29 September – More than 90 United Nations Member States have signed or intend to sign the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, answering the call of Secretary-General António Guterres to address the scourge.

“This represents an unprecedented demonstration of solidarity and a firm commitment to addressing the issue comprehensively and effectively, ensuring full implementation of the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy,” said UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric at the daily press briefing in New York.

The Secretary-General introduced the compact at a meeting on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse held last week in the margins of the UN General Assembly's annual high-level period. The meeting charted an ambitious strategy aimed at comprehensively addressing sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel.

At the meeting, the Secretary-General reaffirmed to Member States that the UN would “not tolerate anyone committing or condoning sexual exploitation and abuse” and would “not let anyone cover up these crimes with the UN flag.”

To date, 72 Member States have signed the compact, with 19 more having formally indicated that they will do so soon.

Through the compact, the Secretary-General and Member States reaffirm their mutual belief that sexual exploitation and abuse runs counter to their shared values and erodes the trust of those the UN serves.

The compact also sets out specific commitments for the Secretary-General and Member States to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, to hold individuals accountable and to respect the dignity of those who have been victimized by providing them with meaningful support.

The document remains open for signature and the Secretariat encourages all Member States that have not signed to add their voice to this important initiative.