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Areas and the Cross Cutting
Themes of the United
Nations -Pakistan*

**UNITE to
combat
climate
change**



Humanitarian Assistance to IDPs

UN agency readies for health crisis in north-west Pakistan



Displaced people shortly after reaching Jalala camp in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan

13 May 2009 - The United Nations health agency said it is bracing itself for a humanitarian health crisis in north-west Pakistan as fighting between government forces and militants threatens to uproot a further 800,000 people taking the total number of displaced to well over a million.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has received over \$514,000 from the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) to meet the health needs of almost 550,000 people who had already been displaced by violence and natural disasters in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) between August 2008 and March 2009 before the current counterinsurgency operation started two weeks ago.

The CERF money will support projects targeting the prevention and control of communicable diseases, the strengthening of health systems, and the provision of clean water and hygienic conditions. The agency reported some 22 disease outbreaks of varying severity since August, including acute watery diarrhoea, bloody diarrhoea, measles, malaria, chicken pox and mumps. Fatalities related to waterborne diseases had also been recorded. WHO also reported that over 4,000 of the 20,000 children under the age of five that they had surveyed in NWFP suffered from acute malnutrition.

Underfed children and women with low immunity are more likely to contract communicable diseases, especially in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and districts with compromised water and sanitation systems, WHO warned.

Meanwhile, a cargo jet chartered by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) yesterday delivered 120 tonnes of additional relief supplies for immediate distribution to those fleeing the fighting. The supplies were taken to the agency's warehouse in Peshawar, and then distributed to various sites hosting displaced people.

UN refugee chief appeals for more aid to help uprooted Pakistanis



High Commissioner for refugees António Guterres (centre) meets with a group of displaced Pakistani civilians

14 May 2009 - The top United Nations refugee official issued a call for a massive surge in international assistance to help the over 800,000 Pakistanis recently displaced by clashes between Government forces and militants in the country's north-west.

"This is not a moment for small gestures," High Commissioner António Guterres said during a visit to the Yar Hussein camp in the Swabi district of North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

He kicked off a three-day mission to Pakistan to assess the emergency response of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), which has been rushing aid to the region, to stem the ongoing displacement crisis.

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Deploing the pace at which the displacement is occurring, Mr. Guterres emphasized that the time has come for the international community to repay Pakistan for its generosity in hosting millions of Afghan refugees over the years.

Since 2 May, over 835,000 people have been registered as displaced, with fewer than one-tenth of them sheltering in camps.

This is on top of the more than 500,000 people registered as fleeing their homes after earlier fighting in the north-west since last August.

Most of the uprooted are staying with relatives or friends, resulting in social and economic hardships, the High Commissioner said. "The dimensions of the problem are far out of proportion to the available resources." While at the Yar Hussain camp, he spoke with refugee families, saw the registration of new arrivals and met with Pakistani aid workers.

He also visited a World Food Programme (WFP) distribution centre, where he watched relief workers hand out food and UNHCR non-food items. Earlier, Mr. Guterres met with Najmuddin Khan, Minister for States and Frontier Regions, and Frida Wazir of the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees.

On Tuesday, UNHCR airlifted 120 tonnes of relief supplies – including 10,000 mosquito nets and 14,000 plastic sheets for emergency shelters – from its regional stockpile in Dubai. Additionally, the agency has been working with Pakistani authorities and organizations to register and help the displaced.

For its part, the World Health Organization (WHO) is working to support health services in camps as well as mobile outreach to cover those sheltering in host communities. Since 9 May, it has delivered 20 mini-emergency health kits – enough for 120,000 people for one month – to internally displaced persons (IDPs) at various sites in NWFP.

The agency has received over \$500,000 from the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) to meet the health needs of the half million people uprooted by violence and natural disasters in the Province between August 2008 and March 2009 before the current counter-insurgency operation started two weeks ago.

Number of uprooted in north-west Pakistan tops 1 million – UN refugee agency



UNHCR High Commissioner António Guterres visits IDPs in Kacha Gari camp near Peshawar.

18 May 2009 - The top United Nations refugee official has wrapped up a visit to Pakistan, where he appealed for urgent international assistance for people displaced by clashes between Government forces and militants – whose numbers topped 1 million over the weekend – in the South Asian nation's north-west. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) António Guterres characterized the displacement crisis as one of the most dramatic in recent times, noting that aid workers are struggling to reach out to the growing number of displaced people.

"It's like trying to catch something that's moving ahead of us because the number of people on the move every day is so big and the response is never enough," he told reporters before ending his three-day visit to the region.

"Leaving this population without the support they need – with such massive numbers – could constitute an enormous destabilizing factor," Mr. Guterres cautioned.

Most of the 1.17 million people who have escaped the violence are staying with relatives or friends, placing tremendous strain on the country, while over 130,000 others are seeking refuge in UNHCR-supported camps.

The over 1 million recently displaced join a further 555,000 Pakistanis uprooted by fighting since last August. During his visit to Pakistan, Mr. Guterres was told by internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps that they are anxious to return to their homes.

"Each person has suffered a lot, having to abandon their community, sometimes their families, houses and properties, coming with nothing, and sometimes having to witness family or friends die," he said. "The amount of suffering needs to be recognized by the international community."

Both the UN and the Pakistani Government will issue appeals for funding, the High Commissioner said, estimating the funds needed to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Calling for a massive response from donor nations, he stressed that "it's not only a matter of generosity, it's a matter of enlightened self-interest."

Last week, UNHCR airlifted 120 tons of relief supplies – including mosquito nets, plastic sheets and portable warehouses – to the area.

Displacement in Pakistan largest and fastest in years, says UN refugee agency



A displaced Pakistani girl carries a bucket of rice as her sister follows in Yar Hussain camp.

19 May 2009 - Almost 1.5 million people have escaped fighting between Government troops and Taliban militants in north-west Pakistan, the United Nations refugee agency said, calling the displacement the largest and fastest to occur anywhere in the world in recent years.

According to the Social Welfare Department of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), 1.45 million people have been registered in 89 centres since 2 May.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) António Guterres, who wrapped up a three-day visit to the area this weekend, has called on the international community for a massive

influx of support to assist the surging numbers of uprooted people.

"It's like trying to catch something that's moving ahead of us because the number of people on the move every day is so big and the response is never enough," he said. "Leaving this population without the support they need – with such massive numbers – could constitute an enormous destabilizing factor."

Fewer than 10 per cent of the displaced are seeking shelter in camps, and the 1.5 million who have become internally displaced persons (IDPs) recently join over 500,000 others who fled clashes last year, bringing the total number of displaced to just over 2 million.

UNHCR has set up a relief bank and distribution centre in the NWFP town of Nowshera to both receive and hand out supplies such as pillows and soap. Similar centres are slated to open in the cities of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

The agency, in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Pakistani Government, has set up humanitarian 'hubs' where IDPs can register, receive supplies and be directed into available shelter within local communities.

For its part, WFP is dispatching record amounts of wheat flour, rice, sugar and pulses, and plans to send enough supplies to feed 1.5 million people.

Agriculture, Rural Development, and Poverty

Ban urges steps to revitalize agriculture, ensure food security for all



13 May 2009 - Warning that the global food crisis is far from over, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Member States to agree on a set of decisions that will revitalize agriculture, support small farmers and promote food security for all.

"The food crisis is not yet behind us. Indeed, it may have widened its scope," Mr. Ban told the opening of the high-level segment of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York.

The two-week session of the Commission, which began last week, is expected to culminate in policy decisions in areas such as agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.

Mr. Ban said that high food prices mean 100 million people in low-income countries are at risk of joining the ranks of the malnourished. As a result, the World Food Programme (WFP) will need to increase its budget from \$500 million to \$750 million to maintain its operations.

At the same time, he noted that there is broad-based international support for addressing this issue. In particular, he was pleased with the Commission's initiative to convene a ministerial roundtable on a sustainable green revolution for Africa.

"Investing in an African green revolution will serve not just food security but progress across all the Millennium

Development Goals, including environmental sustainability," he said, referring to the set of anti-poverty targets global leaders have pledged to try to achieve by 2015, known as the MDGs.

"To achieve a Green Revolution, African farmers, must have access to land and security of tenure. They also need access to markets, technology and improved infrastructure," he stated, adding that this includes women farmers.

In the midst of a global recession, things can deteriorate "frighteningly fast," the Secretary-General pointed out, saying "it is but a short step from hunger to starvation, from disease to death."

The international community, he said, must offer short-term emergency measures to

meet critical needs. But it must also make longer-term investments to promote food production and agricultural development, enhance food security and maintain and accelerate momentum towards the MDGs.

"The decisions taken here must help to revitalize agriculture and support the productivity and resilience of small farmers, in particular, to achieve food security for all," Mr. Ban told delegates.

Urgent agricultural reform vital to avert looming African food crisis – UN report



Farming in Madagascar

14 May 2009 - With Africa's population set to rise by an additional one billion people over the next four decades, the continent risks being plunged into a deepening food crisis without urgent changes to the management of its natural resources, warned a new United Nations report.

Agricultural yields in Africa have already fallen in some cases by up to 50 per cent as a result of invasive pests, land degradation, erosion, drought and climate change, according to the report, released by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

It also underscored the increasing scarcity of water in Africa despite studies by UNEP and the World Agroforestry Centre that estimated there would be enough rainfall on the continent to supply the water needs for 13 billion people, twice the current world population.

However, little of the rainfall is collected or stored through sustainable methods, such as small and large-scale rainwater harvesting, stressed the "Environmental Food Crisis" report. "The economic models and

management regimes of the 20th century are unlikely to serve humanity well on a planet of 6 billion, rising to over 9 billion by 2050," warned UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

"This is particularly true with respect to agriculture and especially valid in Africa," he added.

Reversing environmental degradation and "investing in ecological infrastructure, such as forests, soils and water bodies is one part of the Green Economy solution," said Mr. Steiner. "The other key is managing them and the food chain in far more efficient ways."

The report pointed out that over half of food produced worldwide is lost, wasted or discarded as a result of inefficiency in the human-managed food chain, from the farm and the seas to the urban market and the kitchen.

Mr. Steiner also underscored the "enormous opportunity to diversify livelihoods and incomes" through emerging carbon markets, including renewable energy and farmers earning an income by conserving forests, soil and vegetation cover to sequester carbon.

Clean energy projects, such as wind, off-river hydro and solar power are beginning to take off in Africa, with an estimated 100 projects in over 20 countries up and running or in the pipeline, noted the report.

The head of UNEP noted that Kenya has plans to generate 1,300 Megawatts of geothermal electricity by around 2020, "But this is only scratching the surface."

Kenya is also a windy country, he said. In Turkana, in the north of the country, "a private consortium is developing an initial 300 Megawatts of wind energy, following the Government's introduction of new legislation, equal to around 25 per cent Kenya's current installed energy capacity."

Mr. Steiner said that by some estimates, Kenya might have enough windy sites to produce over 30 Gigawatts of wind energy for domestic consumption and export.

The UNEP report was launched at the 17th session of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development, which wraps up in New York on 15 of May. The meeting's main focus is on finding solutions to the current

environmental, financial and food crisis in Africa.

Ban to chair meeting on innovative financing solutions for development



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre) holds a cultural artifact during a visit at a micro credit programme in Bahrain

18 May 2009 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will preside over a meeting tomorrow in Geneva to identify pioneering financing solutions for development, as people in developing countries have been made more vulnerable by the current economic crisis which has intensified disparities between wealthy and poor nations.

The idea of innovative finance was first identified at the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development in 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, which resulted in the adoption of a landmark partnership agreement by developed and developing countries focusing on issues such as domestic resource mobilization, foreign direct investment (FDI), trade and debt relief.

Innovative financing aims to find sustainable sources of funding that do not substitute official development aid (ODA), and to date, has raised hundreds of millions of dollars worldwide.

Since the Monterrey gathering, major initiatives have been launched to help achieve development goals, and eight of them will be convening tomorrow. These include (Product) Red, which raises funds to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and is one of the largest consumer-based fundraising efforts by the private sector for an international humanitarian issue.

At tomorrow's meeting, Mr. Ban seeks to create a dialogue among the initiatives on

best practices, how to coordinate action, developing new projects and raising awareness about the need to develop innovative finance as a means to reaching development targets.

Also tomorrow in Geneva, the Secretary-General will address the Conference on Disarmament, participate in the World Health Assembly and meet with representatives of vaccine companies.

Mr. Ban arrived in Geneva from Bahrain, where he attended yesterday's launch of the "Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction" by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

The 200-page study finds that global disaster risk is on the rise because of unsafe cities, environmental destruction and climate change, jeopardizing the lives of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

While in the country, Mr. Ban held talks with the Foreign Minister of Sudan, and the two discussed Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the situation in Darfur, and Sudan-Chad-related issues. He also met with Bahrain's King and Prime Minister, as well as the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and those discussions centred on disaster risk reduction, climate change and the Middle East, including Gaza.

Also in Bahrain, the Secretary-General visited the country's Supreme Council for Women, where he reaffirmed his commitment to promote the empowerment of women.

"This effort is one of my highest priorities," he said in an address. "And it includes ending the appalling violence that so many women and girls face."

Education

UN announces launch of world's first tuition-free, online University



19 May 2009 - A leading arm of the United Nations working to spread the benefits of information technology announced the launch of the first ever tuition-free online university. As part of this year's focus on education, the UN Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technology and Development (GAID) presented the newly formed University of the People, a non-profit institution offering higher education to the masses.

"This year the Global Alliance has focused its attention on education [and] how ICT can advance education goals around the world," Serge Kapto from GAID told a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York. For hundreds of millions of people around the world higher education is no more than a dream, Shai Reshef, the founder of the University of the People, told reporters. They are constrained by finances, the lack of institutions in their region, or they are not able to leave home to study at a university for personal reasons.

Mr. Reshef said that this University opened the gate to these people to continue their studies from home and at minimal cost by using open-source technology, open course materials, e-learning methods and peer-to-peer teaching.

Admission opened just over two weeks ago and without any promotion some 200 students from 52 countries have already registered, with a high school diploma and a sufficient level of English as entry requirements.

Students will be placed in classes of 20, after which they can log on to a weekly lecture, discuss its themes with their peers and take a test all online. There are voluntary professors, post-graduate students and students in other classes who can also offer advice and consultation.

The only charge to students is a \$15 to \$50 admission fee, depending on their country of origin, and a processing fee for every test ranging from \$10 to \$100. For the University to sustain its operation, it needs 15,000 students and \$6 million, of which Mr. Reshef has donated \$1 million of his own money.

Health and Population

Influenza A(H1N1) cases now reported in 33 countries, says UN health agency



The A(H1N1) situation needs to be carefully monitored

13 May 2009 - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) said that 33 countries have reported 5,728 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza A(H1N1) infection as of today, with Cuba, Finland and Thailand the latest to join the list.

Mexico has reported 2,059 laboratory confirmed human cases of infection, including 56 deaths, while the United States has reported 3,009 cases, including three deaths. In addition, Cuba, Finland and Thailand have now been added to the list of countries that have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths.

Dr. Sylvie Briand of WHO's Global Influenza Programme told reporters in Geneva that several things about the virus are already known, including that the virus transmits easily and that most of the cases are mild and don't require treatment.

"However, we know also that there will be severe cases in people with underlying conditions, but also probably in young, healthy adults," she added.

"What we are trying to do at the moment is gather as much information as possible on the virus and to provide this information to countries so that they can assess their level of vulnerability and then put in place interventions that are needed to fight this disease," Dr. Briand stated.

Reliable information on new flu critical – WHO chief



WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan addressing the high-level consultation on pandemic influenza A(H1N1) in Geneva

18 May 2009 - Obtaining reliable information on the different aspects of the influenza A(H1N1) infection is critical to make informed decisions on how to manage the outbreak and prepare for a possible global pandemic, the head of the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) said.

"We are all under pressure to make urgent and far-reaching decisions in an atmosphere of considerable scientific uncertainty," Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO's Director-General, said in her remarks to the high-level consultation on pandemic influenza A(H1N1), held in Geneva.

As of today, 40 countries have officially reported 8,829 cases of the new flu strain, including 74 deaths. WHO's pandemic alert level remains at Phase 5 – on a six-point warning scale – meaning that sustained human-to-human transmission of the virus on a community level is restricted to one of the agency's geographic regions, in this case North America.

"What we need most of all, right now, is information," stressed Dr. Chan.

"We need information, at many levels of science, clinical medicine, and epidemiology, on the situation we are seeing.

We also need information to construct possible scenarios for the future. This, too, helps us assess and manage risks, and guides preparation measures."

She said she convened the high-level consultation to gather and share information.

"We are fortunate that the countries with the most confirmed cases to date have already

learned so much, and shared so much. All countries profit from this expression of solidarity," she stated.

In addition to protecting health, governments and health ministries need information for reliable communications with their citizens.

"The job of managing public perceptions and behaviours also falls on our shoulders," she pointed out. "We need to warn the public when necessary, but reassure them whenever possible. This is a difficult balancing act."

Dr. Chan emphasized that the prospect of an influenza pandemic rightly deserves the highest attention of governments, health ministries, public health officials, and industry.

"Under the unique conditions of our highly mobile and closely interdependent societies, the threat of a pandemic deserves attention from many other sectors of government, and many other partners," she noted.

The consultations included an update on the current situation from senior WHO officials, as well as presentations by experts from Mexico, the United States and Canada, who shared their experiences with the infection so far. The flu outbreak will be among the public health issues discussed at the World Health Assembly, which began its week-long session. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who is currently in Geneva, will address the gathering tomorrow as well as speak to reporters along with Dr. Chan. In her address to the opening of the Assembly, Dr. Chan noted that the prospect of the first influenza pandemic of this century is one of several crises the world is facing, along with the current financial turmoil and economic downturn.

She noted that 85 per cent of the burden of chronic diseases was concentrated in low and middle income countries, which meant that the developing world had by far the largest pool of people at risk for severe and fatal H1N1 infections.

Therefore, the international community must look at everything that could be done to collectively protect developing countries from bearing the brunt of an influenza pandemic, she said.

The Assembly brings together officials from WHO's 193 member countries for an annual

review of the agency's activities and to set new priorities for the future. Also on its agenda this week are implementation of the International Health Regulations; primary health care, including health system strengthening; social determinants of health; and monitoring the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Environment

Top UN officials exhort countries to take action on climate change



14 May 2009 - Warning that the clock is ticking towards a major United Nations conference in

Copenhagen this December where nations are expected to reach agreement on a new greenhouse gas emissions pact, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the world body's top climate change official urged the international community to pick up the pace of negotiations.

Addressing reporters in New York, Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), noted that the Denmark gathering is only 200 days away.

He said he is encouraged by progress made in the past 100 days, including the "very clear commitment of the new United States administration to the issue of climate change, to re-engage in the international negotiations to come to an agreement in Copenhagen in December, but also to put an ambitious domestic policy package in place."

Further, Mr. de Boer said he is heartened to see that many countries – China and the

Republic of Korea in particular – are seriously considering changing the direction of their economic growth as part of their recovery packages.

“Climate change as an issue has survived politically the financial crisis,” he said.

Even if there is “strong commitment” to conclude negotiations in December, Mr. de Boer cautioned that the limited amount of time remaining could threaten the comprehensiveness of any agreement.

The international community is “on track” to clarifying four key issues, Mr. de Boer said. Firstly, developed countries must lay out how much they are willing to slash emissions by 2020, and secondly, major developing countries must in turn identify what actions they are willing to take to curb their own emissions.

Thirdly, the topic of financial support for adaptation and mitigation for poorer nations is crucial. “I do not believe that developing countries will be willing to address climate change in a much more vigorous way unless there is international support,” he said. “They’ve made it clear that their overriding concern is economic growth and poverty eradication.”

Lastly, he called for the establishment of an international governance structure to oversee a long-term climate change regime.

Speaking at the launch of a report by the Commission on Climate Change and Development, comprising 13 renowned individuals, Mr. Ban emphasized that “climate change is happening, now.”

Stressing the necessity of leadership in reaching a deal in Copenhagen, he called attention to the need for adaptation for the world’s poor to help them to deal with some of the worst consequences of global warming.

New York teenagers take on challenge of boosting environmental awareness – UN



19 May 2009 - New York City teenagers have taken on the challenge of inspiring environmental action in a United Nations-backed contest, whose winners will be announced later this week.

A joint initiative of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Foundation (UNF), the New York City Department of Education, the New York Public Library and others, the

“One Planet, Many People” competition asks high school students to create Internet presentations, performances and products.

Winning entries will be announced on 21 May, with prizes including college scholarships, attendance at the UNF Youth Leadership Summit on Climate Change and summer internships at the Library.

“UNEP is proud to be affiliated with this initiative, and congratulates both the students and teachers for their commitment and hard work, which resulted in an impressive body of work that reveals a high level of environmental awareness,” said Amy Fraenkel, Director of the agency’s Regional Office for North America.

Throughout their spring semester, students from 17 high schools met in classrooms and libraries to work on their projects and had access to UN and Library resources.

“This project allowed me to get more in-depth with a topic I knew a little something about,” said Pedro Crespo, a 10th grader, whose report focused on globalization. “My view on how the world operates is now different. I now realize that when things happen to people how it influences decisions our politicians make.”

Disaster Risk Management

Ban exhorts nations to ramp up investment in disaster risk reduction



17 May 2009 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to all nations to bolster efforts to curb disaster risk, stressing that decisive action taken now can be “one of the best investments countries can make.”

Speaking at the launch ceremony in Bahrain of the first-ever “Global Assessment Report on

Disaster Risk Reduction,” Mr. Ban said stepped up spending in slashing risk is “critical to saving lives and livelihoods.”

Further, it is essential in reaching the aims set forth in both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline, and the Hyogo Framework for Action, the 10-year programme adopted in 2005 which calls for investing heavily in disaster preparedness and strengthening the capacity of disaster-prone countries to address the risks.

Increased investment by nations “is critical to saving lives and livelihoods,” he underscored. “We know the dividends,” the Secretary-General said. “Reducing disaster risk can help countries decrease poverty, safeguard development and adapt to climate change. This, in turn, can promote global security, stability and sustainability.”

He noted that last year alone, 236,000 people were killed more than 300 disasters, while 200 million others were directly affected, with damages totaling over \$180 billion.

The new report by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) finds that global disaster risk is on the rise because of unsafe cities, environmental destruction and climate change, jeopardizing the lives of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

Low- and middle-income nations are becoming increasingly susceptible to disasters because of the lack of government attention,

unplanned urbanization and deplorable economic conditions, it notes.

The 200-page study is based on a massive database, with information culled from UN, governmental, scientific and academic sources over a 32-year period from 1975-2007.

Disaster risk is highly concentrated in poorer nations with weaker governance, the report says, with just three countries –

Bangladesh, China and India – accounting for 75 per cent of mortality risk from floods. Meanwhile, nations with small and vulnerable economies, such as many small island developing States, have the highest economic vulnerability and low resilience to natural hazards.

Mr. Ban said that “our capacity to cope with natural hazards is much greater than we realize,” pointing to the 20-point action plan proposed by the report to curb disaster risk and its call for a transformation in development thinking by putting emphasis on resilience and pre-emptive measures.

Further, the study urges actions to limit the impact of disasters on populations by improving squatter settlements, providing land and infrastructure for the urban poor, strengthening rural livelihoods and protecting ecosystems, among other suggestions.

“Such measures have great potential,” the Secretary-General stressed.

Addressing reporters after the report's launch, he said that “progress has been made in early warning and preparedness programmes worldwide but much more needs to be done.”

While in Bahrain, he is scheduled to meet with Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, as well as other senior officials.

Cross Cutting Themes / Other issues

Secretary-General calls for ‘bold action’ to end human Trafficking



Grace Akallo (left), a former child soldier from Sudan addressing the Security Council on 29 April, 2009

13 May 2009 - If an unarmed nun can force rebel militia in Uganda to free over 100 abducted children, it must be within the capacity of United Nations Member States to take "bold and decisive action" against the global threat of human trafficking, Secretary-General Ban Kimoon said.

Addressing the General Assembly's thematic debate on human trafficking, Mr. Ban spoke of Grace Akallo, a young high school student who dreamed of being the first person from her village to go to university until she was forcibly taken by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) along with 138 other girls.

Mr. Ban said that when Grace told her story to the Security Council last month, he listened with "the heaviest of hearts. 'My spirit died,' she said, recounting how she was forced to kill and was repeatedly raped." The girls were followed into the bush by the school's headmistress, Sister Rachele, who confronted the rebels, Mr. Ban continued.

Instead of leaving after the LRA threatened to kill her in front of the girls, she "faced them down, risking her own safety" and rescued more than 100 girls.

"If this seemingly powerless educator from Uganda could face down armed rebels, surely we in this room can stand up to this threat with bold and decisive action."

Mr. Ban noted that trafficking in weapons, drugs and blood diamonds has long been on the UN agenda, but "now we must add people to that list."

Trafficking is not restricted to Africa, "examples could be drawn from any of a number of countries from Asia, across the Americas, to Europe," stressed Mr. Ban. "Millions are bought and sold like chattel, most of them women and children."

Highlighting the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) has released nearly two dozen children from the integrated armed forces and more 1,300 children have been liberated since January, Mr.

Ban said it was possible to stop human trafficking.

He underscored the need for collective action to criminalize human trafficking, prevent victimization by teaching people about their rights, reduce demand, end impunity and protect the victims.

"We will achieve nothing without uniting and speaking out. We will achieve nothing by offering fine rhetoric not matched by deeds. Moral outrage is all-too-easy. Real action takes real commitment."

Speaking at a star-studded event at UN Headquarters last night to mark the naming of American artist Ross Bleckner as a UN Goodwill Ambassador to Combat Human Trafficking, Mr. Ban urged the Security Council to take action against perpetrators he has "named and shamed" for recruiting children to fight in conflicts and abducting girls as sex slaves.

UN chief presents funds from benefit football match for children in conflict



13 May 2009 - Weeks after the final whistle had blown on a United Nations fundraising football match, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon scored the winning goal by passing a cheque for \$11,000 to children who have suffered the ravages of war in Sierra Leone.

Last month Ambassadors Heraldo Muñoz of Chile and Christian Wenaweser of Liechtenstein led out two teams of UN diplomats, who kitted up to raise money and awareness for an organization founded on the basis of Article 31 of the Convention on the

Rights of the Child, which stipulates that every child has the right to play.

Play31 provides children in countries torn apart by armed conflict with the basic necessity for play – a football – in the belief that the game has the unifying power to create peaceful societies.

The Secretary-General commended Jakob Lund, who founded Play31, at an event at UN Headquarters in New York where he handed over the funds raised, noting that there have been many examples where “soccer and sports in general have created a very important atmosphere [which is] politically conducive to reconciliation.” He commented that it was appropriate that he played defense, and sometimes goalie, in the match since, as Secretary-

General, one of his main jobs is “to defend defenceless people and speak for the voiceless people.”

UN partners with filmmakers to give voice to women suffering in silence



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses documentary film forum entitled "Envision: Addressing Global Issues through Documentaries"

14 May 2009 - There are women around the world suffering violence or the oppression of poverty who remain silent and invisible, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the opening of an international documentary filmmakers' forum aimed at bringing their stories into focus.

“Over the next two days you will watch and discuss documentaries on women and the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs],” Mr. Ban said at the inaugural *Envision: Addressing Global Issues through Documentaries* forum in New York.

Among the screenings are films showing how a Liberian woman “braved the tide of hate that was sweeping over” her war-torn country by bringing women together to sing for peace; how micro-credit is helping women climb out of poverty; and the struggles of girls and women in strongly patriarchal and traditional societies.

“We will also experience the suffering of a young girl in South Africa, victim of a vicious rape,” noted Mr. Ban. “We will witness the healing support she received, how she was encouraged to give voice to her pain, and how that helped to identify her attacker.”

The *Envision* forum, co-sponsored by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Independent Filmmaker Project (IFP), gathers the global movie-making community, entrepreneurs, activists, journalists, public policy makers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with UN experts.

This year's discussions will focus on the MDGs, a set of eight internationally agreed anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline, and their impact on women.

“Declaring these goals has galvanized an unprecedented level of support,” noted Mr. Ban. “We have made considerable progress, but there is still much work to do.”

Underscoring the need to increase awareness about MDGs, the Secretary-General recently launched the UN Creative Community Outreach Initiative, which acts as a liaison between the Organization and producers, directors, writers, and new media professionals who want to inform the public about critical global issues.

The Secretary-General called on the “many gifted storytellers in our community to help us tell our stories,” and to help the UN “shine a light on these important issues.”

He added that the *Envision* film and discussion series is one of his initiative's first projects and that he was confident it would make an impact.

Ban highlights 'timeless importance of mothers' on International Day of Families



A healthy mother with her newborn in India

15 May 2009 - In an ever-changing world facing multiple challenges, the timeless importance of mothers and their invaluable contribution to raising the next generation remains a constant factor, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said.

In a message for the International Day of Families, observed on 15 May, Mr. Ban stressed that mothers play a critical role in the family, which is a powerful force for social cohesion and integration.

This year's theme, "Mothers and Families: Challenges in a Changing World," focuses on the important role of mothers for families and communities around the world.

"The mother-child relationship is vital for the healthy development of children. And mothers are not only caregivers; they are also breadwinners for their families. Yet women continue to face major – and even life-threatening – challenges in motherhood," noted the Secretary-General.

While childbirth should be a cause for celebration, it is a grave health risk for too many women in developing countries, he pointed out. A woman in a least-developed country is 300 times more likely to die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than a woman in a developed country.

"We must make pregnancy and childbirth safer by enabling health systems to provide family planning, skilled attendance at birth and emergency obstetric care," stressed Mr. Ban.

In addition, he said it is also vital to combat violence against women, which remains "one

of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time," as well as to ensure universal access to education.

"The benefits of educating women and girls accrue not only to individual families but to whole countries, unlocking the potential of women to contribute to broader development efforts," he noted.

For more information on the United Nations and its activities, please visit the main UN website at www.un.org or the UN Pakistan website at www.un.org.pk

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