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News on Thematic Working  
Areas and the Cross Cutting  
Themes of the United  
Nations -Pakistan*



United Nations  
P a k i s t a n 

*Improving lives and helping people*



## Humanitarian Assistance to IDP's in Pakistan

### **Princess Haya of Jordan calls on donors to support UN relief efforts in Pakistan**

25 June 2009 - Characterizing the ongoing crisis in north-west Pakistan as the largest humanitarian emergency in the world today, United Nations Messenger of Peace Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Jordan has called for a massive international response to aid the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people forced to live in makeshift shelters.

In a televised message across the Middle East and elsewhere, Princess Haya urged the public to step up donations to UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) operations, which provide support for over 2 million Pakistanis who have escaped the conflict between Government forces and militants in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

"Millions have been forced to leave, abandoning their homes,

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their communities and their loved ones," said Princess Haya. "They arrive needing everything: shelter, food, and medical care."

UNHCR said it is seeking to ease congestion by expanding camps, where the agency says around 10 per cent of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) have fled, and ramp up assistance to people taken in by families in local communities. High Commissioner António Guterres has said that hundreds of millions of dollars will be needed for the overall relief effort as a shortage of resources is already reducing the amount of shelter and other aid items reaching IDPs, the agency said in a press release.

"Only with your help, can UNHCR revive hope, assist with shelter and meet other basic needs. Please help UNHCR," said Princess Haya.



A family in Pakistan gets ready to take away the relief items they have received from UNHCR [File Photo]

To date, only 36 per cent of the \$533 million Humanitarian Response Plan, launched last month, has been funded, according to a news release issued by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Islamabad. UN agencies in Pakistan pointed to the difficulties in gaining access to all IDPs requiring assistance in NWFP as a result of the scale of displacements and the unstable security situation in the region.

"Humanitarian agencies are working hard to assist all of those who are in need, but we have a long way to go," said Humanitarian Coordinator Martin Mogwanja. Mr. Mogwanja warned that the most vulnerable, including women, children, the disabled and elderly, are often the hardest to reach, and "we have to redouble our efforts where these groups are concerned."

### **Pakistan: UN agency refutes media claims of large-scale return of displaced**

26 June 2009 - Despite local media reports of widespread returns of some of the 2 million people uprooted by the conflict between Government forces and militants in north-west Pakistan, the United Nations refugee agency said that there was no large-scale movement out of the makeshift camps housing the displaced.

Most displaced families in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) have not visited their place of origin and those that did, returned on a "go and see basis" to harvest crops, secure cattle or check on homes, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson William Spindler told reporters in Geneva.

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**IDPs at UNHCR-provided tents in Swabi District, Pakistan (file)**

A UNHCR rapid survey of over 4,000 displaced persons sheltering in a camp in Swabi District found that some internally displaced persons (IDPs) had gone back to help bring other family members to the Yar Hussain camp, especially the elderly who were left behind because they could not move quickly enough, said Mr. Spindler.

The displaced said they would not return without 'improvements in security conditions' and 'restored peace,' said Mr. Spindler, noting that the destruction of houses and infrastructure, such as electricity supply, as well as concerns over education and the provision of food were also preventing returns.

In the meantime, an average of 1,800 IDPs a day continue to flow into the renowned Jalojai camp, in Nowshera district, which is being expanded as other camps in the NWFP are full, said UNHCR.

The new arrivals include people who were previously staying with host families and those referred on from camps which are full.

"In all the organized camps, we are continuing to improve conditions, building shade structures over tents to relieve the heat and privacy walls around groups of tents. We are also improving infrastructure like lighting and fencing," said Mr. Spindler. In preparations for monsoon season in mid-July, UNHCR is reinforcing drainage systems, and many people are protecting their family tent by building up low brick walls or draining canals, he added.

Through humanitarian hubs run by the World Food Programme (WFP) and with help from

the Sarahd Rural Support Programme (SRSP), UNHCR has distributed relief aid – including mats, plastic sheets, jerry cans and kitchen sets – to 24,700 people staying with host families and in schools in Charsadda, Nowshera and Mardan districts.

WFP reported that it has set up banks for food and relief items in five major cities with the support of the corporations TNT, Agility and Pakistan International Airlines. In Quetta, Peshawar and Karachi, WFP has established two relief bank warehouses and another two are planned for Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Lahore. "Setting up these relief banks provide all Pakistani individuals, families and businesses with a prompt and reliable means to donate food and relief goods for the many families and people who have been displaced by the fighting in NWFP," said WFP Pakistan Country Representative Wolfgang Herbinger.

### **UN health agency urges greater funding for displaced in Pakistan**

30 June 2009 - Extra funding is urgently needed to strengthen disease control efforts, re-stock rapidly dwindling supplies of essential drugs and improve access to reproductive health services in north-western Pakistan, where some 2 million people have been uprooted by violence, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) says. Eric Laroche, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Health Action in Crises, warned that the agency could run out of supplies of some key drugs within two or three weeks without an injection of funding.



**A displaced family arrives in Sugar Mill new camp, in Charsadda district, Pakistan**

Dr. Laroche is currently in Pakistan to assess the situation and support the agency's efforts

to bring relief to civilians in North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Fierce fighting between Government forces and armed militants, especially in the Swat Valley, have displaced waves of people this year, and left UN agencies scrambling to assist. Dr. Laroche said that while he has been impressed by the level of services he has seen inside camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), he remains concerned about the vast majority of displaced who are now living with host communities in Pakistani towns and villages.

"The problem is, how we can reach these people," Dr. Laroche said in an interview with UN Radio. "How can we make sure these people are going to be served the proper way?"

Dr. Laroche said it was vital to reinforce existing support structures and therefore to increase the number of health-care and other workers who can help the displaced, particularly women.

The Assistant Director-General noted that ethnic Pashtun women prefer not to be treated by male doctors or medical staff.

"Therefore we need to have other women, Pashtun women doctors, Pashtun women workers, health workers, to be taking care of them... This is a major challenge."

But he stressed that a lack of donor support for the health response to the situation in north-western Pakistan is particularly worrying.

"We have gotten only 27 per cent of what we were asking for. And what we are asking for is not even 10 per cent of the overall [total]. We are asking for \$4 million."

## Agriculture, Rural Development, and Poverty Reduction

### Financial crisis pushes more of world's poor into hunger, warns UN body

25 June 2009- The United Nations committee tasked with building alliances in the global fight against hunger has warned that the world financial crisis will aggravate malnutrition among the most vulnerable in developing countries.

According to the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), recent estimates suggest that soaring food prices combined with the global economic meltdown will push more than 1 billion of the world's poorest people into hunger in 2009. The group is pressing governments to invest in programmes that increase the productivity of smallholder farmers, strengthen the livelihoods of the poorest households, and supply local markets with affordable and safe foods for a healthy diet, in the margins of the upcoming summit of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations in

Italy. "Experience from previous food crises show that the first move by poor households is to reduce food expenses and cut down on non-staple food consumption," the UNSCN said in a news release.

"These coping mechanisms first affect the diversity and safety of diets, the size of portions and ultimately the energy intake," it added.



Fighting hunger

With the global economy expected to shrink by 1.7 per cent, gross domestic product (GDP) growth in developing countries forecast to slow to 2.1 per cent and recession predicted for those nations, a "shocking" 53 million people will join the ranks of extremely poor in 2009, on top of the jump from 130 to 155 million in the previous three years, said the Committee.

The poor economy coupled with rising food prices in many countries has meant that the working hours needed to feed a household of five increased by 10 hours a week or more, and with higher unemployment the number of family members supported by wage-earners is growing. The Committee said that the resulting malnutrition has economic and social consequences for any population, including deterioration in the ability to work, lower potential incomes for individuals and households, and higher health costs in the short and long term.

## Health and Population

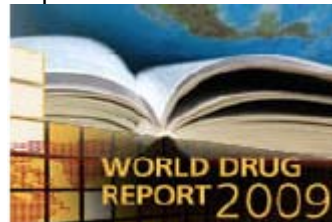
### UN official urges greater investment in drug control and treatment to cut scourge

24 June - Amid an increasingly brutal struggle for a bigger slice of the \$50 billion global cocaine market between Central American drug cartels, the head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has warned that legalizing narcotics would be an "historic mistake," in a call for a global boost in drug treatment and crime control.

UNODC Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa, acknowledged that laws controlling narcotics have created a huge black market for illicit drugs that thrives on violence and corruption.

However, "a free market for drugs would unleash a drug epidemic," said Mr. Costa, as UNODC launched its 2009 World Drug Report in Washington, DC. "Proponents of legalization can't have it both ways," he said. "Legalization is not a magic wand that would suppress both mafias and drug abuse." Mr. Costa stressed that attempts to remove drug-related crime by decriminalizing illicit drugs – as some have suggested – would be an "historic mistake" because of the danger narcotics pose to health. "Societies should not have to choose between protecting public health or public security. They can, and should, do both," he said in a call for more resources for drug prevention and treatment, and stronger measures to fight drug-related crime.

The international cocaine market is undergoing seismic shifts, with purity levels and seizures in the main consumer countries going down, prices on the rise, and consumption patterns in a state of flux, noted Mr. Costa. "This may help explain the gruesome upsurge of violence in countries like Mexico. In Central America, cartels are fighting for a shrinking market." Over 40 per cent of the world's cocaine is seized, mostly in Colombia, compared to less than 20 per cent of opiates – opium, morphine and heroin – captured, according to the World Drug Report.



In West Africa, a major transportation hub for trafficking to Europe, a decline in seizures seems to reflect lower cocaine flows after five years of rapid growth, the report said.

"International efforts are paying off," said Mr. Costa, who launched the report along with newly appointed Director of the US Office of National Drug Control Policy, Gil Kerlikowske. Yet drug-related violence and political instability continue, especially in Guinea-Bissau, he added. "As long as demand for drugs persists, weak countries will always be targeted by traffickers," said Mr. Costa, adding that if "Europe really wants to help Africa, it should curb its appetite for cocaine."

The new UNODC study reported that opium cultivation in Afghanistan, where 93 per cent of the world's total is grown, declined by 19 per cent in 2008, and Colombia, which produces half of the world's cocaine, saw an 18 per cent decline in cultivation and a 28 per cent decline in production.

"The more opium is seized in Afghanistan's neighbourhood, the less heroin on the streets of Europe, and vice versa, the less heroin is consumed in the West, the more stability there will be in West Asia," said Mr. Costa who plans to bring the message to a Group of Eight industrialized nations (G-8) ministerial

conference on Afghanistan later this week in Italy.

Mr. Kerlikowske said that US President Barack Obama's Administration is "committed to expanding demand reduction initiatives," adding that through "comprehensive and effective enforcement, education, prevention, and treatment, we will be successful in reducing illicit drug use and its devastating consequences."

The Report provides a number of recommendations on how to improve drug control, including the treatment of drug use as an illness.

"People who take drugs need medical help, not criminal retribution," said Mr. Costa, appealing for universal access to drug treatment with the argument that people with serious drug problems provide the bulk of drug demand and treating this problem would contract the market.

Mr. Costa also called for an end of what he characterized as the "tragedy of cities out of control," pointing out that most "drugs are sold in city neighbourhoods where public order has broken down. Housing, jobs, education, public services, and recreation can make communities less vulnerable to drugs and crime."

Government enforcement of international agreements against organized crime, such as the UN Conventions against organized crime and corruption, and greater efficiency in law enforcement with a focus on the large volume of petty offenders, would also help international drug control efforts, he said. Mr. Costa noted that in some countries, five times as many people are imprisoned for drug use compared to drug trafficking. "This is a waste of money for the police, and a waste of lives for those thrown in jail. Go after the piranhas, not theminnows."

### **Global economic crisis direct threat to gains in AIDS response, says UN official**

24 June 2009 - The global economic crisis that has forced cutbacks in Government spending also threatens efforts to mount an

effective response to HIV and AIDS, according to the head of the United Nations agency coordinating the fight against the epidemic.

"This crisis is a direct threat to progress in health and development and to our fragile gains in the AIDS response," Michel Sidibé told the governing board of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) yesterday.



In a wide-ranging address to the board, his first as the agency's Executive Director, Mr. Sidibé noted that almost \$14 billion was spent on AIDS last year. While calling for full funding to reach universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, he said the world can no longer afford to keep AIDS in isolation. "We must reposition UNAIDS in a crowded global health landscape. We must ensure that our future leaders stay focused on AIDS – not fatigued by it," he stated.

The challenge in the midst of the current crisis, said Mr. Sidibé, is not only how UNAIDS can do more with less, but how it can leverage existing resources and partnerships to produce more measurable results. Presenting his vision for future action at the agency, the Executive Director, who took up his post six months ago, committed UNAIDS to act on three fronts: to increase results and their impact, to optimize and expand partnerships, and to transform UNAIDS into a more efficient and effective organization.

In this regard, he highlighted the new Outcome Framework, which commits UNAIDS to stand by people living with HIV and to enhance progress to ensure that people receive treatment. A key objective of the plan is to "break the trajectory of the epidemic" by

putting the focus back on HIV prevention, which Mr. Sidibé said has been “systematically underinvested.”

In a related development, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Dr. Paul De Lay and Ms. Jan Beagle as the Deputy Executive Directors of UNAIDS. Dr. De Lay will be responsible for overseeing the agency’s programmatic aspects and Ms. Beagle for management and external relations.

### **On International Day, Ban urges greater efforts to curb illicit drug trafficking**

26 June 2009- This year is the centenary of drug control, with the Opium Commission having met in Shanghai, China, 100 years ago to bring an end to an opium epidemic, and Mr. Ban said that in more recent years, United Nations conventions have played a role in tackling the challenge of drug abuse and curbing its “terrible toll” on people worldwide. “Drug abuse can be prevented, treated and controlled,” he said, appealing to Member States to incorporate drug treatment into their public health programmes.



**Cocaine haul**

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) around 5 million people die annually from tobacco-related illnesses, 2 million from alcohol and 200,000 from drugs. In his message, the Secretary-General also called for the full implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the UN Convention against Corruption, which can “help in the effort to prevent and control drug-related crime that is posing a serious security threat in many parts of the world.”

In countries vulnerable to drug trafficking, increased development assistance and bolstering the rule of law are required, the

Secretary-General said. “Absent these essentials, these states risk instability and will face even greater challenges in reaching the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs],” he added, referring to the eight anti-poverty targets, agreed on by world leaders, which have a 2015 deadline.

“Clearly, when you compare drugs to other addictive substances, control is working,” said Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of UNODC, which earlier this week issued a report showing that global markets for cocaine, opiates, and cannabis are either holding steady or are in decline.

Mr. Costa cautioned that in the face of an increasingly brutal struggle for a bigger slice of the \$50 billion global cocaine market between Central American drug cartels, legalizing narcotics would be an “historic mistake, urging a global boost in drug treatment and crime control.

“Societies should not have to choose between protecting public health or public security. They can, and should, do both,” he said in a call for more resources for drug prevention and treatment, and stronger measures to fight drug-related crime.

Over 40 per cent of the world’s cocaine is seized, mostly in Colombia, compared to less than 20 per cent of opiates – opium, morphine and heroin – captured, according to the World Drug Report.

In West Africa, a major transportation hub for trafficking to Europe, a decline in seizures seems to reflect lower cocaine flows after five years of rapid growth, the report said.

## **Environment**

### **Ban calls on G8 to combat climate change, boost support for development**

24 June 2009- Climate change and development top the list of challenges requiring action that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has laid out in a letter to leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations ahead of their upcoming summit.



In the letter, Mr. Ban asks G8 governments to take the lead on the issue of climate change by making “ambitious and firm commitments” to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 25-40 per cent, the levels the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says are required on the part of industrialized countries to ward off the worst effects of global warming.

“He says that he hopes that G8 governments will commit to a specific timetable and modalities to deliver the billions of dollars needed during the next few years to assist the poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to climate change,” his spokesperson, Michele Montas, said.

Resources must be committed to help the poorest and most vulnerable adapt to climate change as well as to “seal the deal” on an ambitious new pact in December in Copenhagen to replace the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period ends in 2012, the letter says.

On the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline, the Secretary-General writes that annual aid to Africa is still at least \$20 billion below the targets set at the G8 summit in Gleneagles, United Kingdom, in 2005.

“He urges the G8 to set out, country by country, how donors will scale up aid to Africa over the next year to make the Gleneagles commitments real,” Ms. Montas said. This year’s G8 summit will be held from 8-10 July in the Italian city of L’Aquila.

### **‘Green’ economy vital to promoting development in midst of crises – UN agencies**

25 June 2009- Nearly two dozen agencies of the United Nations system have banded together to issue an urgent call for nations to

‘green’ their economies to address the multiple crises that are dampening progress towards reaching development targets. In a statement to the high-level UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, currently underway in New York, 21 agencies joined forces to underscore the need for a shift to a green economy that can spur job creation and curb a multitude of threats ranging from current crises related to food, water and climate change.

“The solidarity of the international community is being tested,” said the statement. “Let this economic recovery be the turning point for an ambitious and effective international response to the multiple crises facing humanity.”

The ultimate test, the agencies pointed out, will come in December when nations are expected to wrap up negotiations in the Danish capital on a new climate change pact that will replace the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period expires in 2012.

“Let Copenhagen be the turning point for ushering in a global green economy,” they said.

The statement underscored the need for fiscal reforms which can encourage green investment, as well as phasing out “perverse” subsidies which result in the excessive use of fossil fuels in agriculture and fisheries.



“The revenues saved by phasing out such subsidies could be reallocated towards the development of green job skills, the provision of clean, affordable energy alternatives for the poor, and support to other green sectors with broad economic benefits,” it noted.

The agencies also highlighted the importance of reviving trade to boost development and the transfer of environmentally friendly technologies to make clean energy affordable to poorer nations and support climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“Early conclusion of the Doha Round trade negotiations can facilitate a green recovery, in particular the negotiations on environmental goods and services, fisheries subsidies, and reforming agriculture rules that would be conducive to fostering food security for all.”

Further, the joint statement underlined the need for education to pave the way for sustainable development through training for new job skills and for newly-required health systems.

“Delivering a transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient Green Economy cannot occur without the creativity, vision, actions and support of a broad cross-section of society,” said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). “This rapid harmonization of perspectives from so many agencies reflects their determination to be agents of change towards a sustainable 21st century,” Mr. Steiner, who presented the statement on behalf of all 21 agencies, said.

Among the agencies signing on to the statement are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank Group.

### **Secretary-General welcomes new UK climate change financing scheme**

29 June 2009- Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the new initiative announced by the Government of the United Kingdom on financing for climate change, ahead of this December’s meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, where countries are expected to wrap up negotiations on an ambitious new pact to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

According to media reports, last Friday, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown unveiled the “Roadmap to Copenhagen” proposal for \$100 billion to be raised annually to finance mitigation and adaptation measures, especially in the world’s poorest nations. “This initiative comes at a critical time, and is precisely the kind of leadership developed countries must demonstrate” if talks on a new climate change framework, seeking to replace the Kyoto Protocol whose first commitment period ends in 2012, are to succeed, Michele Montas, Mr. Ban’s spokesperson, said.

“Without a serious commitment on financing from developed countries, a deal in Copenhagen is unlikely,” she added.



The UK proposal’s focus on adaptation, the Secretary-General believes, is especially crucial since the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries are suffering most acutely from climate change.

“He also welcomes the reaffirmation of the principle that additional public funding, beyond existing pledges for development assistance, is necessary to finance adaptation,” Ms. Montas noted.

Mr. Ban also voiced hope that the UK scheme will spur discussion and financing commitments from other Member States.

Last week, he invited heads of State and government to attend an “unprecedented” global summit at UN Headquarters to propel action towards “sealing the deal” on a new global warming accord in Copenhagen. “Climate change is the greatest challenge facing this and future generations,” he said at a press conference in New York. “Emissions are rising and the clock is ticking.”

The high-level meeting will be held on 22 September, just over two months before the start of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) talks in the Danish capital.

## Cross Cutting Themes / Other Issues

### Human rights must figure prominently in tackling financial crisis, UN summit told

25 June 2009 - The top United Nations rights official has joined several of the world body's independent experts in calling on delegates attending a high-level General Assembly summit to prioritize human rights in formulating a response to the global financial slowdown. Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development that a human rights perspective brings tremendous value in developing national and international responses to a crisis.

"It identifies critical vulnerabilities due to multiple forms of marginalization and inequality, including discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and nationality," she said. "Government responses to economic hardship that do not seek to address such asymmetries of power and status by levelling the playing field are both short-sighted and unjust."

She noted that the economic crisis, in addition to those relating to food and fuel, are not only crises of development, but of human rights as well.



Food prices are still high in many poor countries

"Undoubtedly, their negative impact is disproportionately being felt by the already marginalized sectors of the population in many countries where the enjoyment of

human rights, including the right to work, housing, food, health, education and social security, is severely curtailed or undermined altogether," she told the gathering in New York, which is set to conclude tomorrow.

In spite of the recent focus on the economic meltdown, the crisis posed by high food prices must not be forgotten, said Olivier De Schutter, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, calling on those attending to take decisive action.

"Just like the collapse of large banks, widespread hunger entails systemic risks. Less wholesome and less nutritious diets create an economic liability for the future development," he said, citing a recent projection by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that the number of people on the brink of starvation is set to reach a record high of 1 billion in 2009.

"The right to food is not the right to be fed after an emergency," the Rapporteur noted. "It is the right to access the means to produce food or the means to an income that enables the purchase of adequate food." The current crisis has underscored how neglecting the right to social security has resulted in millions of people worldwide being mired in poverty, said Magdalena Sepúlveda, the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty.

Although \$18 trillion has been allocated around the world to rescue financial markets, that sum is in stark contrast to the "continuous failure to honour long-standing commitments to reduce poverty and inequality," she added.

In a briefing note to the Assembly summit, which is being attended by representatives from nearly 150 Member States, Ms. Sepúlveda appealed to States to create long-lasting social protection systems in a move towards debunking the myth that they are "unaffordable and unworkable in low-income countries." For his part, Cephias Lumina, the Independent Expert on foreign debt, warned that countries already struggling to carry out their rights obligations will be further

thwarted in their goals due to dwindling national funds and increasingly stringent loan contract conditions.

“States must address the indebtedness of low- and middle-income countries as a matter of urgency and support the establishment of an international debt dispute resolution mechanism, as part of a longer-term solution to the debt problem,” he said in his paper to the meeting, which was organized by General Assembly President Miguel D’Escoto.

Speaking at a news conference in New York, Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, who chairs an expert panel convened by the Assembly President on reforms of the international monetary and financial system, stressed that the fact that the summit is being held in the first place shows how developing countries – who are among “the innocent victims” – have been deeply impacted by the crisis. The current turmoil has affected even those poorer nations with sound regulation, he said.

Mr. Stiglitz added that the UN gathering is complimentary to the efforts of other bodies, including the Group of 20 (G20), to address problems.

But the world body’s meeting is both “more representative and more inclusive” than the G20 meeting, in that the latter confers on tax evasion and other matters that are not the primary concerns of developing countries, which are more concerned over corruption and secret bank accounts, he pointed out.

### **UN officials urge States to put an end to torture on International Day for victims**

26 June 2009 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon led United Nations officials in calling on governments to go on the offensive in the fight against torture, stressing there can be no justification under any circumstances for such “cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment,” in a message marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

“I urge all United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to ratify and implement

in good faith the Convention against Torture (CAT),” Mr. Ban said in the message.



**High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Navi Pillay**

He said that the International Day was an opportunity to express solidarity with victims and their families. “Let us step up the fight against torture and cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment and punishment, wherever they occur.” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said that no exceptional “circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, maybe invoked as a justification of torture,” citing the Convention. In her message for the Day, she stressed that no one should be let off the hook for torture, including the policy-makers and public officials who define the policy and give the orders.

A total of 146 States have ratified the Convention since its adoption in 1984, or three-quarters of the world, noted Ms. Pillay, urging the remaining countries to sign up and current signatories to abide by its “very clear” rules. “Many States that have ratified CAT continue to practice torture, some of them on a daily basis,” she said, adding that other States enable torture by sending back asylum-seekers to countries they know carry out torture, which is also clearly prohibited by the treaty.

The High Commissioner noted that the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 resulted in some States backsliding on commitments not to practise or condone torture, looking for “ingenious ways to get around CAT, or stretch its boundaries. “The Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prisons, in particular, became high-profile symbols of this regression,” she said. “New terms such

as 'water-boarding' and 'rendition' entered the public discourse, as human rights lawyers and advocates looked on in dismay."

Welcoming United States President Barack Obama's decisions to close Guantanamo and ban methods of interrogation that amount to torture and contravene international law, Ms. Pillay said that leadership plays a crucial role in upholding the total prohibition of torture.

"As CAT makes clear, people who order or inflict torture can not be exonerated, and the roles of certain lawyers, as well as doctors who have attended torture sessions, should be scrutinized," she said, urging States to ensure acts of torture are criminalized under law and to help victims recover. Ms. Pillay said that Guantanamo was "reprehensible" but it paled in comparison to the scale and nature of torture taking place in prisons, police stations and other government premises in countries all around the world.

There are thousands of such places and tens of thousands of victims, including child criminals and street children, she said, not just suspected terrorists and political activists. "I call on leaders across the world to send a clear and unequivocal message that torture will no longer be tolerated."

A number of independent UN experts called attention to persons with disabilities, who continue to "run an increased risk of falling victim to abuse and neglect," in a joint statement. "Many are involuntarily confined for long periods, at times without legal basis and proper review mechanisms and in inadequate conditions."

Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse, including sexual abuse inside the home, at the hands of family members, caregivers, health professionals and members of the community, the group of experts wrote.

The statement came from the UN Committee against Torture; the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the Board of Trustees of the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

### **Ban ranks among most trusted world leaders, says new survey**



29 June 2009 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is one of the world's most confidence-inspiring political leaders, according to a new survey made public.

Mr. Ban ranked second to United States President Barack Obama in the poll by the nongovernmental organization WorldPublicOpinion.org, in which nearly 20,000 people in 20 countries were surveyed.

On average, his evaluations across all countries polled were positive, particularly in Africa, and Western Europe.

Some 90 per cent of respondents in the Republic of Korea gave the Secretary-General positive confidence scores, while in Kenya and Nigeria he polled at 70 and 69 per cent, respectively.

WorldPublicOpinion.org, which conducted the poll between 4 April and 12 June of this year, is a collaborative research project bringing together research centres from around the world, and is managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

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