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Humanitarian Assistance to IDP's in Pakistan

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Protection:Registration of IDPs from Orakzai as well as Kurram in Kohat and Hangu resumed on 4 March at two registration points, one in Kohat and the other in Hangu. The Protection Cluster and other agencies will facilitate the registration and provision of humanitarian assistance.

During the reporting period, over 400 cases with protection concerns were identified through the 15 Welfare Centres in Swat and Lower Dir. These included families and individuals in need of psychosocial support, legal assistance, registration and food distribution assistance. Follow-up on the referred cases was carried out to ensure that assistance was provided.

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The Protection Cluster is working to improve basic facilities at the humanitarian hubs. The waiting areas, latrines and shelters will be improved to adequately accommodate the IDPs. Separate areas for women will also be provided.

A one-day gender sensitisation workshop was organised by UNHCR on 17 February at UNHCR's sub-office in Peshawar. The 25 participants included representatives of implementing partners and government authorities. The training workshop aimed to sensitise participants about gender issues, domestic violence, etc.

Over 270 Child-Friendly Spaces or Child Protection Offices are functional in camps and return areas providing services to over 76,000 children and 9,200 women.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Displacement in Hangu and Kohat

Just under 23,000 families (approx. 130,000 individuals) from Orakzai were registered as displaced up to 18 Jan, around 16,000 of these families have been verified (approx 100,000 individuals) in the neighbouring districts of Hangu and Kohat .

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Agriculture, Rural Development, and Poverty Reduction

UN warns of harmful impact on poor farmers of narrow focus on biotechnology



FAO calls for a new approach to agricultural research

1 March 2010 – An over-dependence on genetically modified organisms to boost agricultural production eclipses other biotechnologies and their potential to benefit poor farmers in developing countries, warned the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (**FAO**) today.

“Modern and conventional biotechnologies provide potent tools for the agriculture sector, including fisheries and forestry,” said FAO Assistant Director-General Modibo Traore.

“But biotechnologies are not yet making a significant impact in the lives of people in most developing countries,” Mr. Traore told the FAO-sponsored conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries in Guadalajara, Mexico.

He told participants at the four-day gathering, co-hosted by the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), that most poor nations currently lack appropriate and useful technologies, policies, technical capacities, and the necessary infrastructure for the development, evaluation and deployment of biotechnologies.

Biotechnological innovations – such as rice hybrids for Africa that have doubled yields and the use of artificial insemination to raise dairy cattle milk production in Bangladesh – can contribute significantly in doubling food production by 2050 and in addressing the uncertainties of climate change, according to FAO.

However, the agency noted that there is often an emphasis on genetically modified organisms only, underscoring the need for a new approach to agricultural research and development which supports a wider use of biodiversity to promote development and improve food security.

“New technologies should make their contributions also through efficiency gains from better management of inputs and biodiversity,” said Mr. Traore. “This will require greater involvement of farmers, institutions and communities.

“It will require other enabling factors such as policies, institutional support, and investment in human and physical capital and in-country capacity building,” he added, urging the international community to play a key role in supporting developing countries.

In addition to taking stock of how agricultural biotechnologies can contribute to help developing countries, this week’s conference will explore opportunities and partnerships to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to choose and use appropriate biotechnologies.

Stable commodity prices crucial for revenue for poorer countries – UN official

UNCTAD Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi

22 March 2010 – Limiting fluctuations in the prices of crude oil and other commodities that many developing countries depend on for economic growth is crucial to ensure steady sources of revenue to fund poverty-alleviation programmes, the head of the United Nations trade and development agency said today.

More than 85 developing countries depend on commodities for at least 50 per cent of the of their export earnings, said Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (**UNCTAD**), noting that the commodities’ boom that began in 2002 after more than two decades of declining

prices had raised hopes that producers could reinvest higher profits into reducing poverty and diversifying their economies.

"But then the boom turned to bust as the global recession struck in 2008," Dr. Supachai told delegates attending UNCTAD's inaugural Global Commodities Forum in Geneva.

Prices are only now beginning to recover, but immense challenges remain for commodity-dependent countries seeking to meet the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**) and other poverty-reduction targets, Dr. Supachai said.

In addition to seeking ways to increase stability in commodities markets, he said, the Forum will highlight how countries - both importers and exporters - can limit their exposure to commodity price volatility and mitigate the detrimental effects of commodity price swings.

Delegates at the two-day conference stressed that a better mix of policies and market mechanisms by governments, producers, those involved in international financial and credit markets would be required to tame the volatile price shifts.

The Forum will also address other pressing issues in the commodities' sector, including recent developments in the extractive industries; investment in improving the productive capacities of the commodities sector; options for mitigating risks in commodities production and trade; commodity finance and related legal issues; and policy options for minerals and metals producers.

Jean Feyder, ambassador of Luxembourg and president of UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board, told the meeting that the Forum is intended to provide a neutral, high-level platform for reaching a convergence of views on price volatility and other commodities issues. The relationship between commodities exports and prices and poverty reduction also must be discussed, he said.

Health and Population

UN enlists travellers to do 'massive good' for global health



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) and Special Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton

4 March 2010 – The United Nations wants to raise big money online for the global fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria by asking for small donations through the MassiveGood Initiative – which kicks off today in the United States – that will allow people to make voluntary contributions when they buy a plane ticket, or reserve a hotel room or car.

"The individual contributions may be small. But the thinking is big. Through this partnership between UN agencies and the travel business, ordinary people will have the opportunity to do massive good for global health," **said** Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at today's launch, at which he was joined by his Special Envoy for Haiti and former US president, Bill Clinton.

The idea is that this will be an easy way to give, making the shopper more likely to give. "A small box with a small click" at the bottom of a travel website, as described by Philippe Douste-Blazy, UN Special Advisor on Innovative Finance for Development, at a press conference in New York.

The MassiveGood Initiative is a programme of the Millennium Foundation, an independent not-for-profit that is helping the UN achieve the three health-related Millennium Development Goals which world leaders agreed to meet by 2015, which involve improving maternal and child health, and reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

All donations will go to UNITAD which is engaging with the UN to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria – which kill 4.4 million people worldwide each year, according to the World Health Organization (**WHO**). “Five clicks will save a life,” said Bernard Salomé, Managing Director of the Millennium Foundation for Innovative Finance for Health, noting that five clicks – the equivalent of \$10 – were enough to buy a bed net which would curb exposure to malarial mosquitoes. According to the Millennium Foundation website, it takes only \$2 to treat two children against malaria, \$24 to cure an adult of tuberculosis and \$40 to provide life-sustaining treatment for an HIV-positive child. The initiative will be launched in different countries in the coming months, including the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, Spain and Germany.

Lack of clean water impacts children’s learning and health, UNICEF warns



5-year-old Yupa washes her hands with classmates in the child-friendly bathrooms at her school

5 April 2010 – Many schools in poorer countries lack adequate water and sanitation facilities, affecting children’s educations and even claiming lives, the United Nations Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**) warns in a new report.

“Millions of children in the developing world go to schools which have no drinking water or clean latrines – basic things that many of us take for granted,” **said** Sigrid Kaag, the agency’s Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, at the publication’s launch today in Dubai.

Produced with the UN World Health Organization (**WHO**) and partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the report notes that 1.5 million children under the age of five die every year of diarrhoea due to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and lack of hygiene.

Better water, sanitation and hygiene – collectively known as WASH – could reverse the trend of nearly 300 million school days being missed worldwide due to diarrhoea, it states. Improved hygiene will lead to less risk of disease, which in turn will result in stepped up school attendance and ultimately nations’ economic growth. WASH also enhances girls’ continuation of their education, notes the new publication, entitled **Raising Clean Hands: Advancing Learning, Health and Participation through WASH in Schools**.

Ms. Kaag pointed out today that improving sanitation in schools will help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**), notably the targets of reducing child mortality and halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation.

Providing WASH in schools, the report says, will require the involvement of all segments of society, including communities, media, students and the private sector.

Environment

Climate change and poisonous chemicals focus of new UN study



12 March 2010 – A major new United Nations study will examine the influence of climate change and some of the world's most hazardous chemicals on human health and the environment.

The 12-month study, announced by the Secretariat of the **Stockholm Convention**, will provide the scientific community and policymakers with a better understanding of the effects of climate change on emissions, environmental distribution, toxicity and exposure to what is known as persistent organic pollutants (POPs). The Stockholm Convention targets hazardous pesticides and industrial chemicals that can kill people, damage the nervous and immune systems, cause cancer and reproductive disorders and interfere with normal infant and child development.

Over 20 substances are already banned under the 2001 Convention, whose objective is to protect human health and the environment from POPs.

According to Fatoumata Keita-Ouane, a scientist with the UN Environment Programme (**UNEP**) who is leading the study, some data suggest that higher temperatures can make wildlife more sensitive to exposure to certain pollutants.

In the Arctic region, climate change can be expected to alter the exposure levels of marine mammals such as seals or the polar bear to toxic substances through a variety of means, including the melting of the ice caps. "Exposures to POPs in combination with other factors, such as the expanding range of disease vectors and immune suppression, could also have a detrimental effect on certain organisms, the food web and biodiversity," said Dr. Keita-Ouane.

Also, a rise in the levels of POPs found in air and water due to releases from melting ice and snow, combined with possibly higher emissions induced by climate change, would augment the vulnerability of exposed organisms including humans, either directly or through the food chain, resulting in greater adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

The study, which will involve more than 10 organizations in five countries reviewing the latest science to inform the assessment of current and new POPs, was announced to coincide with Europe's 5th Environment and Health Ministerial Conference in Parma, Italy, which ends today.

Unsafe water kills more people than war, Ban says on World Day



Piped water, but is it safe?

22 March 2010 – More people die from unsafe water than from all forms of violence, including war, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, calling for better protection and sustainable management of one of the Earth's most precious resources on the occasion of **World Water Day**.

"These deaths are an affront to our common humanity, and undermine the efforts of many countries to achieve their development potential," Mr. Ban said in his **message** for the Day, which this year focuses on "Clean Water for a Healthy World" as its theme.

"Our growing population's need for water for food, raw materials and energy is increasingly competing with nature's own demands for water to sustain already imperilled ecosystems and the services on which we depend," he noted.

"Day after day, we pour millions of tons of untreated sewage and industrial and agricultural waste into the world's water systems. Clean water has become scarce and will become even scarcer with the onset of climate change," added the Secretary-General.

In his message, Mr. Ban highlighted that water is vitally linked to all UN development goals, including maternal and child health and life expectancy, women's empowerment, food security, sustainable development and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

As such, the General Assembly recognized 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action "Water for Life."

In doing so, it called for a greater focus on water-related issues at all levels and for the implementation of water-related programmes to achieve internationally agreed upon goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**) – an agenda for poverty reduction agreed to by world leaders in 2000.

The Secretary-General said that the poor "continue to suffer first and most from pollution, water shortages and the lack of adequate sanitation," even while world leaders have the "know-how to solve these challenges and become better stewards of our water resources."

In order to address these gaps and with the looming 2015 deadline to fulfil the MDGs, the UN will host a high-level thematic debate in September to coincide with the opening of the Assembly's annual General Debate in New York.

The Secretary-General has called on Member States to approve and incorporate an accelerated action plan during the summit, saying an inability to meet the MDGs would be an "unacceptable failure, moral and practical."

Every day around the world, 2 million tons of sewage and industrial and agricultural waste are poured in the earth's waters, while one child under the age of five dies every 20 seconds from water-related diseases, according to the UN Environment Programme (**UNEP**).

In a new report, the agency points out that an investment of \$20 million in low-cost water technologies, such as drip irrigation and treadle pumps, could potentially lift 100 million poor farming families out of extreme poverty.

The publication, entitled **Clearing the Waters: A focus on Water Quality Solutions**, found that repairing leaky water and sewage networks can not only secure water supplies, but also lower pollution and boost employment.

In some poorer nations, more than half of treated water is lost to leaks, but by some estimates, saving just half of the water could benefit 90 million people without additional investment.

"Human activity over the past 50 years is responsible for unprecedented pollution, and the quality of the world's water resources is increasingly challenged," said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

"It may seem like an overwhelming challenge but there are enough solutions where human ingenuity allied to technology and investments in nature's purification systems – such as wetlands, forests and mangroves – can deliver clean water for a healthy world."

In another report also launched today, UNEP said that transforming wastewater – a combination of fertilizer run-off, sewage and other wastes – into clean resources poses a key challenge, as the world undergoes rapid urbanization, industrialization and stepped up demand for meat and other foods.

Sick Water?: The Central Role of Wastewater Management in Sustainable Development noted that many substances that make wastewater a pollutant, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, can be used as fertilizers for agriculture. It can also generate gases to fuel power stations and for cooking.

Currently, some 10 per cent of the global population is eating food grown using wastewater for irrigation and fertilization, and with better management and farmer training, the report said, this could be increased substantially.

Three-day celebrations for World Water Day in Nairobi, Kenya, kicked off on 20 March, bringing together scientists, policy-makers and others to discuss how to address the challenges posed by degrading water quality worldwide.

The General Assembly designated the first World Water Day in 1993, and on 22 March every year since, the focus has been on a different aspect of freshwater sustainability, including sanitation and water scarcity.

The 192-member body today is holding a day-long interactive dialogue on water and the "Water for Life" International Decade, featuring three panel discussions on the MDGs, climate change and peace and security.

"Access to clean water and adequate sanitation are a prerequisite for lifting people out of poverty," Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said at the event in New York.

At present, seven out of 10 people without improved sanitation live in rural areas, but the number of people without adequate sanitation is set to soar as urban populations grow, she said. Cooperation and public participation, Ms. Migiro stressed, are vital in managing transboundary water issues. Assembly President Ali Treki told reporters today that he hopes today's dialogue will "contribute to efforts for a global solution," underscoring the need to "take stock of where we stand" at the midway point of the International Decade.

Cross Cutting Themes / Other Issues

Global economic crisis exposed human rights violations, says top UN official



High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay

1 March 2010 – The top United Nations human rights official said today that the economic and financial crises have exposed existing violations and increased the number of victims of abuse and hardship.

"The financial and economic downturns – together with food shortages, climate-related catastrophes and continuing violence – have shattered complacent or over-optimistic notions of expanding security, prosperity, safety and the enjoyment of freedoms by all," High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said in her opening [statement](#) to the 13th session of the Human Rights Council, which runs until 26 March. She recalled that she addressed the Council for the first time last year against the background of worsening financial and economic crises.

"These sudden and cascading upheavals exposed and exacerbated existing violations of human rights. They also widened the areas and increased the number of victims of abuse and hardship," she noted.

The UN General Assembly created the Council in 2006 with the main purpose of addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.

"To counter deeply rooted and chronic human rights conditions in many countries, such as repression, discrimination, and strife, as well as rapidly unfolding man-made and natural challenges to human welfare, such as those we have recently experienced, five years ago the United Nations initiated a process of reform that proposed several innovations, including the creation of the Human Rights Council," said Ms. Pillay.

"This new institution was conceived as a forum where responses to inequality, repression, and impunity could be crafted and advocated to help build a world in larger freedom," she told the 70 dignitaries in Geneva for the 1 to 3 March high-level segment.

"The review of the Council, now forthcoming, would help the international community to assess whether the fundamental principles of this body's mandate had been solidly and consistently upheld," she added.

Ms. Pillay praised the Council's accomplishments thus far, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years.

Despite its accomplishments, the High Commissioner noted areas of improvement for the Council, including improved coordination among various human rights mechanisms and the Council's ability to influence policy change in human rights situations.

"No matter how well intentioned, determined, and incisive the Council's action is, this body cannot by itself or through remote control, change realities on the ground. Producing this change is, primarily, the responsibility of States which need to act in partnership with civil society and national protection systems," she said.

UNAIDS launches plan to empower women and girls to prevent HIV



2 March 2010 – The lead United Nations agency tackling the AIDS epidemic, along with rock and roll icon Annie Lennox, today launched an action plan to empower women and girls to protect themselves against HIV. Known as the Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, **Gender** Equality and HIV (2010-2014), the five-year plan partners the UN with governments, civil society and development partners to address **gender** inequalities and human rights violations that put women and girls at risk for HIV infection. “The operational plan that we are launching this morning has been needed for some time now,” Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said today at a meeting on women and HIV.

“For too long, the inequalities that affect women and girls have made them more vulnerable to HIV. For too long, societies have been unable – or unwilling – to talk about these inequalities as drivers of the epidemic. For much too long, cohesive action to address these inequalities have been lacking,” she stated.

More than 33.4 million people have been living with HIV worldwide since December 2008, half of them women. In sub-Saharan Africa, 60 per cent of people living with HIV are women.

“I believe we need a broad movement for change,” said Ms. Lennox, an advocate since taking part in an HIV and AIDS event with Nelson Mandela in South Africa in 2003. “I see this Agenda for Action as a great opportunity to bring the realities faced by many women and girls to the forefront and to call attention to the injustices faced by many women and girls, placing them at a bigger risk of HIV.”

Speaking at a news conference in New York, Ms. Lennox noted that the face of the epidemic has changed from “the intravenous drug users, sex workers and the gay community” in the 1980s to that of a heterosexual young woman who is at risk of infection from rape or from her husband.

She also called for long-term commitment, not only from governments to follow through on their commitments, but from the media to keep HIV and AIDS issues and stories in the spotlight.

“I’ve been trying to think how we can get the message across, especially to people in the Western countries so that they can understand that AIDS has not disappeared. HIV has not disappeared. It’s still here and it’s very, very strong,” she stated.

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), said today’s launch was about creating a new movement around **gender** equality and HIV and AIDS issues, and mobilizing people for urgent action.

“Urgency which is about stopping violence against women. Urgency which is about making sure that HIV/AIDS response will target more access [for] women to services which are available. Urgency which will call for a new mobilization of leaders to reduce the number of new infections among girls,” Mr. Sidibé said at the same news conference.

Combating HIV and AIDS and reaching **gender** equality are among the eight Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) world leaders have agreed to achieve by 2015. The UN General Assembly will review progress made on the goals at a special meeting in September.

Today’s launch comes on the sidelines of the 54th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women being held in New York until 12 March. This year’s session marks the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 – which remains the most comprehensive global policy framework to achieve the goals of **gender** equality, development and peace.

Speaking at today’s **meeting** of the General Assembly to commemorate the Platform for Action, Ms. Migiro noted that there are many good and promising practices to build on, from legislative change, policy development and capacity building to sector-specific initiatives and efforts to improve data collection. The challenge is to expand and apply such practices more systematically, replicate them wherever possible and use them as the basis for better policies and programmes, she stated, adding that “we are all determined to finish the task set out in Beijing.”

Afghans top global list of asylum applicants in 2009 – UN agency



Asylum-seekers from various countries gather near the northern French port of Calais

23 March 2010 – Afghans overtook Iraqis as the nationality with the largest number of asylum applicants in 2009, according to a report issued today by the United Nations High Commissioner for **Refugees** ([UNHCR](#)). Last year, 26,800 Afghans submitted asylum applications, a jump of 45 per cent from 2008 figures. Iraqis submitted some 24,000 claims in 2009, with Somalis coming at third with 22,600 applications. Russians, Chinese, Serbians and Nigerians also submitted large numbers of applications.

UNHCR defines an asylum-seeker as an individual who has sought international protection and whose claim for refugee status has not been determined. A person is considered a refugee, the agency said, if he or she fulfils criteria set out in the [1951 Refugee Convention](#).

In its [annual report](#), UNHCR analyzes asylum levels and trends in the 27 European Union (EU) member States and more than one dozen other countries, including the United States, Canada, Turkey, Australia and Japan.

It found that the overall number of asylum-seekers in industrialized nations remained constant in 2009, with 377,000 applications, with most originating from Asia and the Middle East.

"The notion that there is a flood of asylum-seekers into richer countries is a myth," [said](#) High Commissioner for **Refugees** António Guterres. "Despite what some populists claim, our data shows that the numbers have remained stable."

The number of asylum applications rose in 19 countries, but fell in 25 others.

The Nordic region saw a 13 per cent spike, receiving 51,000 requests, the highest in six years. By contrast, the number from Southern Europe dropped one third, down to 50,100 claims, with the greatest decreases recorded in Italy, Turkey and Greece.

The US remained the main destination for the fourth year running, with 13 per cent of the claims, or 49,000 people, mostly from China. France came in second with 42,000 new applications, representing a 19 per cent increase from the previous year, due mainly to increasing claims from Serbian citizens originating mostly from Kosovo.

Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany rounded out the top five destination countries, which together received nearly half of the total claims recorded in 2009.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34163&Cr=asylum&Cr1=&Kw1=refugees&Kw2=&Kw3=>

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