

30 OCTOBER 2014

# Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

## \*\*Burkina Faso

We will start off with a [statement](#) from the Secretary-General about the situation in Burkina Faso. The Secretary-General is following with great concern the deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso. He calls on all parties to end the use of violence, exercise calm and restraint, and use dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues. The Secretary-General is saddened over the loss of life resulting from recent events. He has requested his Special Representative for West Africa, Mohammed ibn Chambas, to visit Burkina Faso tomorrow and welcomes that this mission will be undertaken jointly with the African Union and ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States]. That statement is now available online.

## \*\*Kenya

The Secretary-General, as you will recall, is in Nairobi today. He [launched](#) the Global Media Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) with *The Guardian* and the Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin. He said that the media had a critical role in adding their voice to help end female genital mutilation in a generation. He paid tribute to the women and girls who fought against FGM and said they now need to be the norm rather than the exception. He said that ending female genital mutilation is part of the UN's unwavering campaign for the health, human rights and empowerment of women and girls. Earlier, the Secretary-General [addressed](#) the first Ministerial and Experts Conference on Sustainable Transport in Africa, along with President Uhuru Kenyatta. The Secretary-General said that, as the economies of Africa continue to grow, we have an opportunity to avoid the environmental, social and economic impacts of unsustainable transport. He called on the Ministers present to come up with a strong, forward-looking and concrete sustainable transport road map for Africa.

## \*\*Secretary-General's Travels

Also on Secretary-General's travels, he will arrive in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Saturday, 1 November. On Sunday, the Secretary-General will participate in the launch of the Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Secretary-General is also scheduled to meet with the Danish Prime Minister and other senior Government officials. He will also speak at the opening session of the Copenhagen Energy Security Dialogues.

The Secretary-General will then travel to Vienna, Austria, where, on Monday, he will address the second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries. He will also meet with Conchita

Wurst, winner of the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest. On Tuesday, the Secretary-General will speak at the second UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Forum on Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development. He will meet with Lamberto Zannier, OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] Secretary-General, and Thomas Greminger, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, before speaking at a meeting of the Council. While in Vienna, he will hold talks with Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, as well as with Neven Mimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation. And we expect to have the Secretary-General back in the office here on Wednesday.

## **\*\*Ebola**

Our regular Ebola update: The World Bank announced today an additional \$100 million funding in its Ebola crisis response to speed up deployment of foreign health workers to the three worst-affected countries in West Africa. Current estimates by the United Nations indicate that about 5,000 international medical, training and support personnel are needed in the three countries over the coming months to respond to the Ebola outbreak, including 700-1,000 foreign health workers to treat patients in the Ebola treatment centres. The World Bank's additional financing will help set up a coordination hub in Ghana in close cooperation with the three countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) to recruit, train and deploy qualified foreign health workers. As for the number of cases, the latest figures from the WHO report a total of 13,703 cases and 4,922 deaths.

The most intense transmission continues to occur in the Montserrado area, a region that includes the Liberian capital, Monrovia. But, the World Health Organization stresses that the capacity to capture a true picture of the situation in the country remains hamstrung by the underreporting of cases. The full situation report is available on WHO's website. Also, I would also like to flag for use here and on the web that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library launched an online Ebola Research Guide. The quick-start research guide brings together key information sources with a focus on policy and political issues around the epidemic. And Dr. David Nabarro, UN System Coordinator on Ebola, will be my guest tomorrow, Friday, at noon.

## **\*\*Security Council**

The Security Council [held](#) a meeting this morning on Syria, including on resolution 2139 (2013), concerning humanitarian access to that country. Speaking by videoconference from Geneva, Kyung-wha Kang, the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that armed violence continues to escalate in Syria and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. She said that 24 per cent of the hospitals in the country were deemed not to be functioning, while medical personnel have suffered from attacks. Ms. Kang said that in the past month, more than 3.9 million people had received food aid and hundreds of thousands had received other assistance. Cross-border assistance has allowed the UN and its partners to reach more people in need. And she added that humanitarian access to civilians in areas controlled by Da'esh continues to be difficult. Staffan de Mistura, the Special Envoy for Syria, is speaking with the Council members in consultations as we speak. He is expected to speak to you, either at the stakeout, in which case I will tell you, or we will bring him here, depending on the time.

## **\*\*Iraq**

Nickolay Mladenov, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, welcomed the recent liberation of the towns of Jurf al-Sakhr and of Zumar from Da'esh and associated armed groups. He said that Iraqi citizens in many other towns and villages are still fighting to defend their homes and

neighbourhoods from the control of terrorists. The people of Dhulhiya and elsewhere have heroically resisted Da'esh for months and should receive immediate support. Mr. Mladenov said that military operations reinforced by international and Iraqi air support must be conducted with the utmost care to avoid civilian casualties, and with full respect for fundamental human rights principles. He urged the Government to investigate and hold accountable those who may have committed human rights violations.

#### **\*\*Gaza**

A number of you have been asking me regularly on the issue of reconstruction and the reconstruction mechanism in Gaza. The Secretary-General is encouraged by today's first sales of construction materials for shelter rehabilitation to individual beneficiaries in Gaza under the framework of the Gaza reconstruction mechanism as led by the Palestinian Government of National Consensus. In addition, the entry today of cement, seven trucks of iron bar and many trucks of aggregate construction materials into Gaza is a further positive development. What is needed now is to continue to scale up the entry and sales of construction materials in order to expedite much needed reconstruction for Gaza before the onset of winter. We continue to count on the cooperation of all parties concerned to realize in good faith the implementation of the mechanism at the scale required. It is now all the more important for donors to honour their pledges at the Cairo conference in order to commence with much needed infrastructure projects, including some 106,000 shelters in need of repair, now that the mechanism has started to deliver construction materials to Gaza.

#### **\*\*South Sudan**

From South Sudan, colleagues from the UN Mission in the country (UNMISS) report that since yesterday, one child from the Mission's protection site in Bentiu in Unity State has been killed by a stray bullet, as a result of clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Opposition forces. Six displaced civilians have also been wounded by stray bullets and are receiving medical treatment inside the protection site. Meanwhile, the UN Mission says that fighting continued today in Bentiu and Rubkona, with clashes again reported in close proximity to the UNMISS protection compounds. The Mission is protecting nearly 50,000 displaced civilians in its Bentiu camp.

#### **\*\*Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Our humanitarian colleagues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued a new report today, saying that despite a 10-fold increase in the number of displaced people since late 2011, Katanga Province remains largely off the radar of the international community. A spiral of violence, largely caused by attacks by the Mayi Mayi armed group since late 2011, has forced more than 580,000 people from their homes in Katanga, leaving a bleak future for the province. Donors have given large sums to enable aid organizations to deliver aid to those in need, but now more funding is needed to cover remaining needs, including for some 300,000 returnees who want to pick up the pieces of their lives and return home.

#### **\*\*China**

As we have been mentioning, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos is in China. In Beijing today, she met with Government representatives to discuss ways of strengthening emergency preparedness and response. Among the officials she met was the Administrator of China's Earthquake Administration, Mr. Chen Jianmin. She also met with students at the Communications University of China.

## \*\*Disaster Risk Reduction

Also, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, is in Istanbul, Turkey, to attend the first meeting of the Safe School Leaders. Children and teachers are killed when schools collapse due to natural calamities and disasters, and these deaths account for a significant proportion of total disaster mortality.

## \*\*Appointment

Lastly, an appointment today: The Secretary-General has [appointed](#) Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, born in Uruguay and a United States national, as Controller and Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts in the Department of Management. She will succeed Ms. María Eugenia Casar, who has been appointed as Associate Administrator of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). Ms. Bartsiotas has most recently served as Director of Budget and Finance and Chief Financial Officer at the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] in Vienna. She brings with her a wealth of senior level international experience in programme planning, budgeting and financial management. There's more information on this appointment in my office and we welcome her to the Secretariat.

## \*\*Questions and Answers

Spokesman: Mr. Abbadi, and then Mr. Lee?

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. Yesterday, as you know, excuse me, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, acknowledged before the Council that recent heightened tensions over the unilateral actions, provocations and access restrictions at holy sites in Jerusalem are contributing to a volatile situation. And he also underscored the criticality of immediately defusing the escalating tensions in East Jerusalem without delay. Does the Secretary-General believe that in the absence of immediately defusing tension in the area, that this situation might lead to a threat to regional peace?

Spokesman: I think, you know, we're not going to speculate on where things may lead. But, we're, obviously, I think as Mr. Feltman said, and as the Secretary-General believes, that all sides need to do everything they can not to further an already tense situation. Calm must be effectively restored. And the parties must find a way back to the negotiating table in order to address the root causes of the conflict. So, obviously, I think we're seeing a very tense situation in Jerusalem. And I think we're very concerned by the recent violence. Mr. Lee?

Question: Sure. I want to ask, I guess, one follow-up on the Comptroller and then something about Darfur. On the Comptroller, thanks for confirming it. I wanted to ask what I tried to ask the other day, which is that a WikiLeaked cable when Ms. Bartsiotas was at the IAEA made it clear that the US [United States] was lobbying for her to get a similar financial post there. So, can you just, I guess, give some answer: did, in this case, as I'm sure happens, I would ask about other cases, did the US Mission play any role in the selection of Ms. Bartsiotas as comptroller of the UN?

Spokesman: The recruitment process is over. I'm not going to go into what has been said or not said in WikiLeaks. We're very happy to have her on board.

Question: Could I ask, just following up on the Executive Summary and statement you made yesterday? One is just a question for response. But, it seems like in the description, even in the

Executive Summary, it says that the UN... UNAMID [African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur] did not convey to New York threats by the Government to attack and also the Panel of Experts sanctions member was on the thing. So, what I wanted to know is: I guess, what can you say about that? How many... Is this review going to be extended to other missions to find out if there are other threats that are made that aren't conveyed? The reason I'm asking is because there remains outstanding, as to South Sudan, whether Peter Gadget said, "I'm going to shoot down the helicopter?" Has this been resolved after this many months?

Spokesman: I think you have the [statement](#) that we issued yesterday. Obviously, one of the big findings of the Mission was the challenge of reporting and not reporting well enough from the Mission to Headquarters and the issue of the press lines, of not being forward-leaning enough on the press lines. What has happened just before the release of the statement is that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations reminded all its Missions of its duty to report and to report clearly and to report timely on incidents. So, it's not as if this review is going to be expanded to other missions, but we took, shall we say, to speak in media terms, the hook of the review to remind all Missions of their duty and their responsibility to report.

Question: Fine. Thanks for this. I just wanted... How does this relate to the Peter Gadget thing? I think I e-mailed you a purported transcript of Peter Gadget saying, "We're going to shoot the helicopter."

Spokesman: I don't have anything on that specific incident. I'm just speaking more broadly on reporting. Yes?

Question: Do you know why the Secretary-General... the reason why he is meeting Conchita Wurst in Vienna on Monday?

Spokesman: I think the Secretary-General, when he travels, often meets with local cultural icons. And I think it's also a good way for him to reassert his support for LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] people and for them to ensure that they have... they enjoy the same Human Rights and protection that we all do. I think Conchita is a symbol in that sense and I think it's good for the Secretary-General for them to meet. Yes, sir? And then we'll go...

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. On the issue of Palestine, Sweden recently announced that they consider Palestine as a State. Is there any reaction to this from the Secretary-General? What does he think about this growing tendency of recognition?

Spokesman: The issue of recognition of one State to another is an issue that is within the purview of Member States themselves. The Secretary-General is, of course, very much aware of Sweden's decision; but, again, it's a decision made by Member States; it's not one that he will comment on.

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. Just do you have any sense around what time we can see Mr. de Mistura?

Spokesman: My ever-active and observant office is monitoring things. Either he will show up here from this door or I will tell you and you can go to the stakeout. As I understand, they're wrapping up their discussions inside. Yes, ma'am?

Question: The \$100 million new funding from the World Bank; now, is this going towards the \$998 million Ebola funding appeal, and if so, what is the new balance?

Spokesman: No. My understanding is that it is not being counted on it. But, as you know, we've unfortunately been somewhat numbers-challenged here. But, in an effort to bring some clarity to the numbers: we had requested \$988 million. We have funding of \$507 million, which is 51.4 per cent. The [Secretary-General's] Trust Fund, the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which is more for the Secretary-General to use as required, has \$59.7 million in commitments from Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, New Zealand, Romania, the [United Kingdom] and Venezuela and we have a further \$53.6 million in pledges. Pledges are checks that are in the mail and waiting for the checks to clear. And those come from Chile, China, Denmark, Germany, India, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Norway and Sweden. So, that's a total of \$116 million either committed or pledged. Evelyn, you've been waiting patiently.

Question: In South Sudan, Salva Kiir has sworn [inaudible]. Meanwhile, the rebels have seized the oil wells. Do you have any information that he's talking in real time?

Spokesman: No. What we're seeing on the ground right now is continued violence around UN compounds, which, I mean, obviously, puts UN peacekeepers and staff members at risk, but more dramatically puts the civilians who have sought shelter in our compounds at grave risk. And we have seen already one child today... one child yesterday killed by a stray bullet.

Correspondent: Sorry, I didn't use the microphone.

Spokesman: No problem. Mr. Abbadi and then Matthew?

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. Yesterday, you indicated that both the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General are traveling abroad away from Headquarters. Who is in charge of the house in the meantime?

Spokesman: Well, the Secretary-General remains in charge wherever he is, as he's got his mobile phone and his staff with him. But, here at Headquarters, the Chef de Cabinet. Mr. Lee?

Question: Sure. I wanted to ask about, well, the Philippines and also [the Democratic Republic of the Congo]. The Philippines has, I guess, confirmed that it will impose a 21-day quarantine on its peacekeepers returning from Liberia. I wanted to know, I've heard the general statement from the UN. What do they think about the... one, were the peacekeepers sufficiently in contact with people with Ebola to justify a 21-day quarantine? And given that they were serving the UN, is there any statement that this may be going too far?

Spokesman: No. I can't speak to the granularity of where each peacekeeper served. And obviously, some may have come in contact more than others. The Ministry of Defence in the Philippines has taken the decision that it's taken. I'm not going to comment on it.

Question: On the [Democratic Republic of the Congo], since there's a Mission there and Mr. [Said] Djinnit and everybody else, the Government said it is seeking bids to lease out 640,000 square kilometres, the size of France, a quarter of the country, arable land for agricultural development. I know the UN system, FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization] and IFAD [International Fund for Agricultural Development] have concerns about, sort of, some people call it a land grab, basically foreign investment. What do they think about this? And is the UN going to play any role in making sure that small farmers aren't pushed off? What do they think about this?

Spokesman: I think you're right in stating the position of the UN's system concern about that. I will see, I will follow up on these particular reports. Ms. Leopold?

Question: Yes, now I have the mic. In Liberia, the peacekeepers, if some of them, large groups of them are being quarantined, since they're the only functioning unit that's not in a hospital, but providing air support and ground support to the whole Government, how will that work? And also did Ambassador [Samantha] Power, on her return, is she going to be quarantined?

Spokesman: I think Ambassador... you will have to ask the US Government as to what will happen. Just to be clear, my understanding from the press reports is that these peacekeepers are going to be quarantined upon return. There is no quarantine of peacekeepers in Liberia in any peacekeeping operation.

Thank you all. And you should probably make your way to the stakeout, because Mr. de Mistura should be there shortly.