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Office of the High Commissioner for the Human Rights

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Corinne Momal-Vanian, Director of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, chaired the briefing, which was attended by the Spokespersons for United Nations Refugee Agency, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, International Organization for Migration, World Health Organization and the World Food Programme.

**Iraq**

Ms. Shamdasani said that the human rights team of the United Nations Mission in Iraq had released figures on the number of civilians who had been killed and injured in Iraq over the previous month, bringing into stark focus the terrible toll on civilians of the ongoing insurgency.

In June, a total of at least 1,531 civilians had been killed. The last time such a high number of civilians had been killed in a single month was in 2007. An additional 886 members of the Iraqi security forces had been killed. Another 1,763 civilians had been injured in June. Those figures did not include the Anbar province, where 244 civilians had been reportedly killed, according to official figures, and 588 civilians had been injured.

OHCHR condemned in the strongest terms the upsurge in violence and killings. International law required parties to the conflict to take all possible measures to ensure that civilians were protected from violence. However, OHCHR was consistently receiving reports of civilians being targeted, kidnapped, harassed and killed by the forces of the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL), and of indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas. OHCHR had also received reports that ISIL forces had been going door to door in Mosul trying to forcibly recruit young men to fight against the official Iraqi forces.

Ms. Shamdasani said that the OHCHR urged all parties to the conflict to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law and called on the Iraqi authorities to hold accountable those responsible for such violations.

Asked why the victims from the Anbar province were not included in the total count, Ms. Shamdasani said that those figures were provided in addition to the total count, but there was no one from the OHCHR on the ground to verify the numbers. The number for the Anbar province thus came from the Iraqi authorities.

Elisabeth Byrs, for the World Food Programme (WFP), answering a question, said that despite the challenging security situation and displaced people on the move, the WFP was distributing food to 90,000 displaced people who had fled the violence in Mosul. Most of WFP food distribution for displaced had taken place in the Kurdistan regional government area.

**Israel/Palestine**

Ms. Momal-Vanian read the statement of the Secretary-General, issued the night before on the murder of the three Israeli teenagers, who condemned it in the strongest terms. There could be no justification for the deliberate killing of civilians. The Secretary-General hoped that Israeli and Palestinian authorities would work together to bring the perpetrators swiftly to justice, and extended his deepest sympathy to the families of the victims.

The Secretary-General believed that such a heinous act by enemies of peace aimed to further entrench division and distrust and to widen the conflict. It must not to be allowed to succeed. The Secretary-General called on all parties to abide by their obligations under international law and to refrain from any actions that could further escalate this highly tense situation.

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that the OHCHR mourned the killing of the three Israeli teenagers who had gone missing in the West Bank on 12 June. OHCHR extended its condolences and sincere sympathy to the families of the three teenagers, and called for the perpetrators of that crime to be brought to justice.

OHCHR called on all Israelis and Palestinians to exercise maximum restraint and to prevent the situation from worsening further. The previous night, a Palestinian teenager had been killed by Israeli forces in the north West Bank, bringing to seven the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank, including three teenagers, since 12 June. OHCHR’s condolences went to all of their families. Also, the previous night, at least six Palestinians had been injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank. OHCHR had also noted an increase in rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and air and sea strikes by Israeli forces in Gaza, additional movement restrictions and incidents of settler violence in the West Bank.

Ms. Shamdasani said that OHCHR reiterated its call for strict adherence to international law by all relevant actors, to avoid further loss of life, injuries and negative impact on human rights. OHCHR urged all parties to refrain from punishing individuals for offences they had not personally committed or by imposing collective penalties.

**Pakistan/Waziristan**

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), stated that the United Nations and non-governmental humanitarian organisations were responding to the needs of more than 468,000 internally displaced people in North Waziristan in Pakistan on the border with Afghanistan. An estimated 74 per cent of the displaced were women and children.

The displacement, which also had seen more than 95,000 people moving into Afghanistan's Khost province, had been triggered by operations of the Pakistani military against armed insurgents in the North Waziristan Agency tribal area. A full-scale military operation against armed groups had been announced on 15 June and in the space of one week some 400,000 people had left their homes to avoid being caught up in fighting. Thousands were expected to remain displaced as the military operations were expected to be extended to other parts of the Agency.

Mr. Laerke said that the Regional Disaster Management Authorities had established two camps but only a small percentage of the 468,000 IDPs were seeking shelter assistance in camps. They preferred to stay with relatives or friends or in rented accommodation where they had better access to running water and electricity.

The Government had increased cash assistance to the IDPs to USD 400 at registration to cater for their medical needs, rental support and other necessities, including a Ramadan package. Each family would receive USD 150 per month after that. The international community was supporting the displaced who needed food, medicines, immunization, water, sanitation and hygiene services. There was also need for educational supplies.

Elisabeth Byrs, for the World Food Programme (WFP), said that the WFP had increased its operations in Pakistan. The distribution of food would increase, and the ultimate goal was to provide assistance to all registered households, 468,000 people according to the latest figures.

Ms. Byrs added that the WFP was distributing food from six distribution points, four in Bannu, one in Lakki Marwat and one in Tank (South of Bannu) and that more distribution points were being set up in D.I. Khan. The Logistics Cluster, led by WFP, through which the humanitarian community coordinated relief efforts, had set up mobile storage units in D.I. Khan and Bannu.

As of 29 June, the last date from which the WFP had been updated, 11,300 families (about 158,000 individuals) in Bannu and Lakki Marwat had received a two-week ration consisting of 80 kg wheat flour, 8 kg pulses, 4 kg fortified vegetable oil and 1 kg salt, as well as high-energy biscuits. Ms. Byrs explained that the average family size (between 11 and 13) was higher than usual, which was why a normal one-month ration was being calculated as a two-week ration. Refugees were also spilling into Afghanistan’s Khost Province. Some 450 households had received food assistance from the WFP Afghanistan to date.

The Government of Pakistan had already provided the WFP with 25,000 metric tons of wheat. Key donors had provided funds to mill, fortify, bag, transport and distribute the Government-donated wheat. With those donations, the WFP could continue its assistance until early September. The WFP Pakistan needed USD 29 million for its relief operations until the end of 2014.

**Migrants in the Mediterranean**

Christiane Berthiaume, for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), reminded that the previous weekend, another tragic event had taken place in the Mediterranean Sea. The Italian Navy had rescued a boat with from 200 to 300 people on board, while 30 people had been found dead.

Ms. Berthiaume declared that following that event, the IOM was calling for more financial assistance to help fund lifesaving operations in the Mediterranean Sea. The IOM was also asking for human traffickers to be sued and held accountable.

Human traffickers had been increasingly using small illegal boats which were overloaded with passengers who had to endure harsh conditions. To avoid taking up space where more migrants could be stacked, for instance, no lifesaving jackets were kept on board.

Ms. Berthiaume reminded of the existence of *Mare Nostrum*, an operation put in place by the Italian authorities in October 2013 after the tragic death of 368 migrants a few miles off the coast of Italy. It had been an expensive operation but thanks to it, 60, 000 migrants had been able to safely reach the continent. Also thanks to that operation, there had been fewer deaths so far in 2014 (50 in 2014 against 700 in 2013). However, one had to remain sceptical about the figures for those deaths and exactly how many migrants had lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea would never be known.

**Ebola**

Dan Epstein, for the World Health Organization (WHO), informed about the meeting on the subject of Ebola taking place in Accra. It was a technical and ministerial meeting at the same time with the view of providing an update on what was happening and how to best address the challenge. The objectives of the meeting also included agreeing on a comprehensive operational response plan for controlling the outbreak, working on priority preparedness activities to be implemented by countries at risk, and empowering national authorities to optimally respond to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The participants would include Ministers of Health and Directors of Disease prevention and control from Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. A number of partner organizations involved in fighting the outbreak, such as the Médecins sans Frontières, Institute Pasteur and the European Union, would also take part.

Mr. Epstein specified that the focus would be on three major patterns of transmission – rural communities, where the patterns of transmission were prompted by traditional cultural practices, such a burials; areas around large cities; and cross-border transmission of Ebola, along the borders of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Efforts would be made to see how a response to disease outbreak could be heightened, including through epidemiology, lab work, and prevention work. Other issues would include logistics, shipping medicines, and social mobilization. Two Ebola survivors would also take part in the meeting.

Asked about possible cases in Ebola in Europe and the WHO response, Mr. Epstein said that there had been an alleged case reported in Spain, which had turned out not to be Ebola. Looking into the alleged case in Italy, Mr. Epstein could not confirm if the lab work results were out yet. He stressed that there was close cooperation with Ministries of Health in various countries of Europe.

Glenn Thomas, also for the World Health Organization, added that Fadela Chaib would be going to Accra and would be the communications focal point there.

**Statelessness**

Adrian Edwards, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), stated that the UNHCR and the UN Office for Legal Affairs were holding a special treaty event in Geneva on 1 July, at which Belgium, Gambia, Georgia and Paraguay were expected to accede to one or both of the UN statelessness conventions. That event would be the largest number of accessions on a single occasion ever. It reflected growing recognition among Governments that international action was needed to address statelessness, which was an overlooked source of suffering and denial of human rights for at least 10 million people worldwide.

UNHCR was promoting accession to the two conventions in the lead-up to the planned launch on 15 September of a worldwide campaign to end statelessness. Increasing the number of States parties to the two conventions was a key part of that campaign. With the accessions of 1 July, there would be 82 States party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and 58 States parties to its sister Convention, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

The treaty event would bring to 24 the number of States that had acceded to one or both conventions since 2011. That recent increase was due in large part to the impact of advocacy with Governments since UNHCR had organized a ministerial meeting on refugees and statelessness in December 2011. Thirty-four governments had made pledges to accede in 2011 and 40 per cent of those would have so far been implemented. UNHCR encouraged Governments that had pledged to accede to accelerate their efforts to finalize accession, and urged all States that had yet to do so to bring their nationality laws into line with those conventions.

Statelessness, in UNHCR’s view, ought not to exist in the 21st century. Most stateless people lived in the shadows, with little or no access to education, health care, social services or employment. Many were unable to move freely because of the lack of identity documents. The 1954 Convention – which was 60 years old this year – was designed to ensure that stateless persons enjoyed a minimum set of rights until such time as they could acquire a nationality. The 1961 Convention set out rules to be implemented through States’ national laws and procedures to prevent individuals from becoming stateless, reducing the prevalence of statelessness over time.

**Geneva activities**

Ms. Momal-Vanian informed that the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) had commenced its session on 30 June. It was considering the report of Peru today, to be followed by India on 2 July, Mauritania on 3 July and Syria on 4 July.

The Committee for Civil and Political Rights would start its session at the Palais Wilson on 8 July, during which it would consider country reports of Chile, Sudan, Malawi, Georgia, Ireland and Japan. A background release would be issued on 3 July.

Ms. Momal-Vanian said that the heads of the World Food Programme, Ertharin Cousin, and the United Nations Refugee Agency, Antonio Guteres, would brief the media on food shortages for refugees in Africa, today at 3 p.m. in Press Room III.

On 2 July, at 11:30 a.m. in Press Room I, the Director of the World Food Programme Office in Ethiopia, Abdou Dieng, would brief the press on WFP programmes in Ethiopia.

A press briefing on tuberculosis elimination in low tuberculosis incidence countries, organized by the World Health Organization, would take place on 2 July at 10:30 a.m. in Press Room I. The speaker would be Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of the WHO Global TB Programme.

Gabriela Sotomayor, President of the Association of Correspondents Accredited to the United Nation (ACANU), bid farewell to Kyra Nuñez, a fellow journalist, who was leaving her post after 28 years.

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The representatives of the International Labour Organization, United Nations Children’s Fund and the Universal Postal Union also attended the briefing, but did not brief.

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