

New UN supply chain system to slash delays, save lives in large-scale health crises

9 March 2017 – New UN supply chain system to slash delays, save lives in large-scale health crises

In collaboration with partners and as a part of a global supply chain network, the United Nations emergency food relief agency has set about developing the first-ever information platform to better manage supply chains and efficiently match deliveries with demand in responding to large-scale health emergencies such as pandemic outbreaks.

“The creation of this new platform is a prime example of the amazing endeavours that are possible when the public and private sectors work together,” said Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in a news release announcing the undertaking.

The new system will bring together supply chain and logistics information and enable end-to-end tracking of pandemic response items such as protective clothing and medical equipment within a country facing an outbreak, thereby helping ensure quick and appropriate delivery of supplies to people in need.

It will also provide analysis on supply inefficiencies, promote timeliness and cost efficiency in continuous improvement to the supply chain network.

According to WFP, the system will help overcome challenges witnessed in the response to the West Africa Ebola outbreak, such as severe warehousing and distribution capacity constraints, limited visibility of the overall supply and demand of critical items, access constraints caused by border closures, and a lack of public-private sector coordination.

Furthermore, learning lessons from the Ebola outbreak, the UN as well as Government, academic and private institutions established the Global Pandemic Supply Chain Network and have been working together in unprecedented fashion to develop a framework for improving pandemic preparedness and response.

The partnership also complements other efforts that are underway to strengthen national and international systems that prevent and manage future pandemics.

“In order to achieve any one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, we must all do our part, lending our unique expertise and experiences to innovating solutions to global problems,” added Ms. Cousin, hailing the work being done by the Network.

The end-to-end supply chain information system is being developed in collaboration between WFP and the NEC Corporation, a Japanese multinational provider of information technology services and products. The Japanese

Government has provided financial support that will be used as seed funding for the new platform.

[Next intra-Syrian talks set for late March – UN envoy](#)

9 March 2017 – The next round of the United Nations-facilitated intra-Syrian talks is expected to convene on 23 March to discuss issues related to governance, constitution, elections and counter terrorism, the UN Special Envoy for Syria has said.

“My current intention is to bring the invitees back to Geneva for a fifth round with a target date of 23 March,” Staffan de Mistura told reporters yesterday at the UN Headquarters in New York after he briefed the Security Council on the outcome of the fourth round of the discussions, which ran in the Swiss city from 23 February to 3 March.

He said the fourth round of the Geneva talks “achieved much more than many people had imagined we could have.”

“No one left, everybody stayed. They were focused, we got an agenda, we got a timeline, we got some agreement on substance,” Mr. de Mistura said, noting that the fifth round of talks will build on the outcome of the previous one and that counter terrorism is now part of the agenda laid out in UN Security Council resolution 2254.

In parallel with the UN-facilitated intra-Syrian talks, Kazakhstan has been hosting talks on a ceasefire in its capital, Astana “diplomatic efforts led by the so-named ceasefire guarantors, Iran, Russia and Turkey.

On the Astana talks, Mr. de Mistura said that although the responsibility of their success is in the hands of these guarantors, the UN dispatches a technical team to the process, because without a strong ceasefire, the UN-facilitated Geneva talks would be fragile.

The UN envoy urged the Security Council to continue to support his efforts.

[1st national park gets strong legal](#)

and financial support



A shepherd takes his flock to graze on a grass-covered slope in the Yushu Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai province.[Photo/Xinhua]

China's first national park will develop rapidly this year, with stronger legal and financial support from Qinghai province, the top provincial official said on Wednesday.

The plan for Sanjiangyuan National Park will set specific targets for environmental protection, Wang Guosheng, Party chief of Qinghai province, said on Wednesday at a group discussion of the ongoing session of the national legislature.

"Both are important legal measures: To build the national park and support environmental protection in this key regions," said Wang, adding that they will also make special plans for major natural resources in the region.

The province plans to allocate 1 billion yuan (US\$144.8 million) in 2017 for infrastructure construction, said Li Xiaonan, head of the park's administration bureau.

Under management of the national park, herders and farmers will be major forces behind environmental protection, said the provincial Party chief.

The work is expected to provide jobs, boost farmers' incomes and give them an incentive to protect the environment, he said.

Sanjiangyuan National Park, covering 123,100 square kilometers in Qinghai, is home to the headwaters of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang (Mekong) rivers, which run through more than 20 provincial regions in China, making the region critical for water resources in the country.

UN experts call for sensitive and timely response to online gender-based abuse

8 March 2017 – Urgent attention, creativity and cooperation are needed to address online gender-based abuse, but authorities should be careful to avoid curtailing freedom of expression in doing so, two United Nations human rights experts said today.

“Online gender-based abuse and violence are undeniably a scourge, and governments and companies should be taking action against it”, David Kaye, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of freedom of expression, said in a news releases that coincides with worldwide commemoration of International Women’s Day.

However, Mr Kaye added that poorly formulated laws prohibiting nudity or obscenity could have an adverse impact on conversations about gender, sexuality and reproductive health. “Censorship and undue restrictions on content could end up undermining the rights of the very women for whom governments and corporate actors may seek to provide redress.”

Significant numbers of women have experienced gender-based abuse online, according to surveys and reports. These attacks include blackmail, intimidation, stalking and dissemination of private content without consent.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Dubravka Simonovic said: “Women victims and survivors need transparent and fast responses and effective remedies which can only be achieved if both States and private actors work together and exercise due diligence to eliminate online violence against women.”

The experts called on governments and private actors to provide training on the problems related to online abuse and violence, in addition to greater transparency in the private sector in regards to reports of abuse and the steps taken to address them.

Research into the scope, manifestations and impact of the abuse, as well as a strengthened emphasis on protection of privacy by online platforms, is also required.

“Ensuring an internet free from gender-based violence enhances freedom of expression,” Ms. Simonovic said, “as it allows women to fully participate in all areas of life and is integral to women’s empowerment.”

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

[Viet Nam: UN experts urge Government to release blogger 'Mother Mushroom'](#)

8 March 2017 – A group of UN human rights experts has urged the Government of Viet Nam to immediately release a popular blogger, known as Mother Mushroom, who has been detained since October last year.

Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, a 37-year-old environmental human rights defender, is accused of spreading propaganda against the Government. The charges are linked to her online activities that were critical of the Government.

“We are deeply concerned that Ms. Quynh is being detained because of the exercise of her right to freedom of opinion and expression on a matter of public interest,” the experts emphasized in a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

“We fear for her physical and psychological integrity, and denounce the violations of her fundamental right to due process, in particular her being detained incommunicado, the denial of her right to legal counsel and the banning of visits from her family,” they added.

Among the issues she tackled was an incident involving the dumping of toxic chemicals in April 2016, which polluted local waters and killed a large number of fish.

“As an environmental human rights defender, Mother Mushroom should be honoured for her courage and perseverance in defending the environment and human rights for years without fear,” the experts stressed.

The experts are Special Rapporteurs: John H. Knox, on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; Maina Kiai, on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; David Kaye, on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Michel Forst, on the situation of human rights defenders, and Baskut Tuncak, on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes.

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