

## **‘Radio provides accessible, real-time medium to bridge divides,’ UNESCO says on World Day**

13 February 2017 – Radio has never been so dynamic, engaging and important in the midst of deep change in ways to share and access information, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said today, World Radio Day.

“At a time of turbulence, radio provides an enduring platform to bring communities together,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova in her message on the Day.

“On the way to work, in our homes, offices and fields, in times of peace, conflict and emergencies, radio remains a crucial source of information and knowledge, spanning generations and cultures, inspiring us with the wealth of humanity’s diversity, and connecting us with the world,” she said.

Radio is a force for human rights and dignity and a powerful enabler of solutions to the challenges all societies face, she said, calling for nurturing the power of radio to foster the conversations and the listening needed for cooperation to tackle the challenges all humanity faces.

Radio plays an important role in taking forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, advancing fundamental freedoms and bolstering good governance and the rule of law. It can help tackle new challenges, such as climate change and discrimination, by providing an accessible and real-time medium to bridge divides and strengthen dialogue.

This requires a new commitment by all, including broadcasters, regulators and audiences, she said, noting that radio can provide “a beacon” for innovative solutions to local problems, and continue to advance human rights, gender equality, dialogue and peace.

In January 2013, the UN General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO’s proclamation of World Radio Day, 13 February, the day UN Radio was established in 1946.

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## **Amid unprecedented needs, UN and partners launch \$1.6 billion aid**

# appeal for South Sudan

13 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan due to a combination of conflict, economic decline and climatic shocks, the United Nations together with relief partners have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 5.8 million people across the country.

“We are facing unprecedented needs, in an unprecedented number of locations, and these needs will increase during the upcoming lean season,” said Eugene Owusu, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in a news release issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Humanitarian organizations estimate that some 7.5 million people across South Sudan are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including some 3.4 million people who had been forced to flee their homes since conflict began in December 2013.

While disturbing accounts of violence and atrocities, including sexual violence, continue to be reported, food insecurity and malnutrition have skyrocketed. Furthermore, the risk of famine looms over thousands of people in conflict-affected communities and food deficit areas.

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“With needs rising rapidly, we have rigorously prioritized the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan to target those who most urgently require assistance and protection,” added Mr. Owusu.

Under the Plan, 137 aid organizations, including 62 non-governmental organizations (an increase of 55 per cent over the number in 2016) aim to respond to the most urgent life-threatening needs of the target population. The objectives include:

- Saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those most in need of assistance and protection
- Protecting the rights and upholding the dignity of the most vulnerable
- Supporting at-risk communities to sustain their capacity to cope with significant threats

## ***Swift action during the dry season essential***

According to OCHA, delivering supplies in the country depends, in a large part, on good weather conditions.

Humanitarian organizations strive to maximize the window of opportunity provided by the dry season to deliver supplies by road. Once rain set in –

usually in May – most roads become impassable and supplies must be delivered by air, multiplying the cost of the humanitarian operation, which is one of the largest and most complex in the world.

“It is imperative that this appeal is funded early, and funded fully, so that the aid workers deployed across South Sudan can respond robustly and rapidly,” said Mr. Owusu.

“I appeal to the international community, which has given so generously to this young country, to support us now. If we fail to act swiftly, lives may be lost.”

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## **UN and partners launch multimillion dollar appeal for DR Congo**

13 February 2017 – The United Nations and humanitarian partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have appealed for nearly \$750 million to aid 6.7 million people this year.

“It is vital that the world does not forget the urgent and massive humanitarian needs,” said Rein Paulsen, Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the country.

The 2017 appeal is for \$748 million, as part of a new three-year action plan “to respond to the humanitarian needs of millions of civilians affected by one of the world’s most acute and protracted crises,” according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The three-year strategy aligns with development plans created by national authorities, the United Nations system, the World Bank and other bilateral partners.

The appeal also targets the needs of more than 2.1 million displaced people, including half-a-million of children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition, according to OCHA. Hundreds of thousands of people are also facing measles, cholera and other diseases.

“While over 60 per cent of the humanitarian needs are located in the eastern part of the country, western and central provinces suffer from generalized poverty that calls for solutions that go beyond humanitarian assistance,” OCHA said.

In addition to the needs of the Congolese, violence in the country is also affecting refugees from South Sudan living in the north-eastern part of the country.

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## **UN chief Guterres visits Saudi Arabia's relief aid centre, stresses its catalytic role in region**

12 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today visited the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, as part of his first major trip to some Arab countries.

"I was very encouraged today to see the centre developing its activities, with a strong commitment to humanitarian principles, not only in Syria and Yemen, but in so many countries around the world," Mr. Guterres said after being briefed on the activities of the center, which was established in May 2015, under the sponsorship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

On the importance of partnership between the centre and the UN, Mr. Guterres said that the dramas and suffering in today's world are so big that no one can do anything alone. "Together we can do a lot. So, partnership is a key word," he said, noting that the centre can play an important role as a catalyst around the world and the region.

On Sunday, the Secretary-General was expected to meet with King Salman, Crown Prince and Deputy Crown Prince, as well as senior officials before travelling to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in the late evening.

Mr. Guterres visited Turkey en route to Saudi Arabia. He is also scheduled to visit Oman, Qatar and Egypt and Germany.

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## **Afghanistan: UN mission expresses grave concern at high civilian casualties in Helmand**

12 February 2017 – The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today expressed its grave concern at the recent escalation of violence in Helmand province, which reportedly claimed the lives of at least 25 civilians, mostly women and children, and injured many more.

On 9 and 10 February, international military forces conducted airstrikes in Helmand's Sangin District reportedly targeting anti-Government elements,

according to a news release. UNAMA's initial enquiries suggest that the airstrikes killed at least 18 civilians, nearly all women and children. UNAMA notes that Resolute Support has initiated an investigation into the incident.

On 11 February, Taliban conducted a suicide attack targeting Afghan National Army soldiers outside of Kabul Bank in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand. The attack killed at least seven civilians, and at least as many were injured, mainly child vendors outside the bank, the release added.

The people of Helmand have suffered greatly due to the armed conflict in Afghanistan, with 891 civilians killed or injured during 2016. This figure was the highest in the country in 2016 outside of Kabul.

UNAMA reiterated the need for all parties to the conflict to strictly adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law to take all feasible measures to protect civilians from harm while expressing its sincere condolences to the families of victims and hopes for a speedy recovery to those injured.

Afghanistan has been in protracted conflict for some 35 years, which has seen an ever-growing number of civilians killed and poverty reduction and development efforts seriously hampered.

UNAMA is mandated to support the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as a political mission that provides 'good offices' among other measures. 'Good offices' are diplomatic steps UN takes publicly and in private, drawing on its independence, impartiality and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading.

UNAMA also promotes coherent development support by the international community; assists the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights and the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation.