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

November 1, 2017

United Nations Meetings Coverage

https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/db171101.doc.htm

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

\*\*United States

As you will have seen, shortly after the attack in downtown Manhattan yesterday, the Secretary-General tweeted: “Our hearts go out to the people of our great host city; today all of us at UNHQ are New Yorkers.” He extends his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to all those injured, as we mentioned in a statement issued yesterday. And this morning, the Secretary-General spoke to Ambassador Nikki Haley to express his condolences — sorry that was yesterday evening. This morning, he spoke to Mayor Bill di Blasio a few hours ago to reaffirm his solidarity with the people of New York City.

\*\*Democratic Republic of the Congo

I have a number of senior appointments so please bear with me. The Secretary-General has appointed Kim Bolduc of Canada as his Deputy Special Representative for the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). She will also serve as Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Ms. Bolduc succeeds Mamadou Diallo of Guinea, who completed his assignment in October and to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his leadership and dedicated service during his tenure. Ms. Bolduc brings to the appointment more than 30 years of experience in international development and humanitarian work, as well as a demonstrated record of management and leadership. As you know, she has served since 2014 as the Special Representative and Head of Mission in MINURSO in Western Sahara.

\*\*Haiti

And today, the Secretary-General is also appointing Susan D. Page of the United States as his Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to his Deputy Special Representative, Mamadou Diallo, who has provided excellent leadership since the establishment of the Mission, and to former Special Representative Sandra Honoré, who successfully led MINUSTAH for four years until its closure on 15 October, contributing to the many achievements that made the transition to MINUJUSTH possible. Ms. Page brings to the position extensive managerial and leadership experience in diplomacy, international development and rule of law. She has served as Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law in MINUSTAH since January of this year. Her full bio is in the office.

\*\*Iraq

And we are also appointing today — not we but rather the Secretary-General — Alice Walpole of the United Kingdom as his new Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance in the UN [Assistance] Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Ms. Walpole succeeds György Busztin of Hungary, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his dedicated service since 2011. Ms. Walpole brings diplomatic and other relevant experience to the position, including serving for a two‑year period as British Consul-General in Basra, Iraq. She most recently served as British Ambassador to Mali, and prior as Ambassador to Luxembourg. Her bio is in our office.

\*\*Police Adviser

The Secretary-General is also appointing today Luis Carrilho of Portugal as UN Police Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. He succeeds Stefan Feller of Germany. The Secretary-General appreciates Mr. Feller’s dedication, professionalism and leadership on UN policing issues. Mr. Carrilho is Chief Superintendent with the public security police in Portugal. He also served as UN Police Commissioner in three UN peacekeeping operations: notably in Timor Leste, in Haiti and most recently in the Central African Republic.

\*\*Sexual Harassment

In a letter to staff circulated yesterday evening, the Secretary-General and the heads of the UN staff councils and unions reiterated their commitment to eliminating sexual harassment from the Organization. While the UN has a clear policy on sexual harassment and a process to investigate allegation, the letter said that this in itself is not enough — we all have a duty and an obligation to create an environment that is welcoming to all, where everyone feels valued and where each colleague can perform at their best regardless of who they are or where they are from. Many staff, both victims and witnesses, accept harassment as an everyday reality. But this should not be so. The Secretary-General and the other signatories said that we should all reflect on our everyday behaviour and what we can do better as staff and as manager, understanding that harassment covers a wide range of actions. We must support colleagues who are harassed and call it out where we see it and we must fight it together, they said.

\*\*Energy

Earlier today, the Secretary-General spoke at the High-Level Symposium on Global Energy Interconnection: Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. He said that a growing population and the increasing effects of climate change underline the need to transform the world’s energy systems so they can fulfil needs without polluting the environment. He noted that the world is still far from achieving the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 7 of affordable and clean energy for all, with some 1 billion people still living without access to any electricity and 3 billion people still cooking and heating their homes without clean fuels. He urged all governments and all stakeholders around the world to step up investments in energy efficiency, clean energy and renewable energy to make progress on the issue.

\*\*Middle East

Turning to the Middle East, UN Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, welcomed the full return of the Gaza crossings to the control of the Palestinian Authority. He said that this is a landmark development in the implementation of the intra-Palestinian agreement, signed in Cairo on 12 October. The positive momentum should be maintained and the Palestinian Government must be fully empowered to function in Gaza. Mr. Mladenov said that the return of the crossings should facilitate the lifting of the closures, while addressing Israel’s legitimate security concerns, and unlock increased international support for Gaza’s reconstruction, growth, stability and prosperity. He reminded all factions in Gaza of the importance of maintaining security and ending militant activities that undermine peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis alike. His full statement is online.

\*\*South Sudan

From South Sudan, the Special Representative in that country, David Shearer, was in Akobo today, a remote area in the north-east of the country, close to the border with Ethiopia. Speaking from there, Mr. Shearer said that the needs of people in Akobo are immense and that the UN mission is looking at ways of extending a presence in the town. Some 71,000 displaced people are currently living in Akobo and the surrounding area after fleeing fighting between government and opposition forces. Mr. Shearer said that peacekeepers are expected to reach vulnerable people in remote parts of South Sudan as the UN mission takes a more nimble and proactive approach. The mission has already been stepping up flights into Akobo, sending in peacekeepers and UN staff on temporary assignments.

\*\*Press Conference

Lastly, at 1:30 p.m., Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi of Italy, who will preside over the Security Council for the month of November, will be here to speak to you and answer your questions, as I will do now. Madame.

\*\*Questions and Answers

Question: Any words on the 28 protesters killed in Eritrea last night?

Spokesman: No, we've seen the reports, but we've not been able to… to get any information. Yes, sir.

Question: Yes. Recent reports have examined a document that was signed actually several years… several… several months ago between the UN — about a dozen agencies — and Palestine, entitled something like The Framework for Development: Palestine 2018‑2020. And the focus of some of these reports have been on the allocation of millions of dollars of development assistance to help to support the Palestinians' use of international fora to bring a legal action against Israel. In light of the Secretary‑General's statements about past examples of bias against Israel and the fact that I'm not aware of any other State that has been targeted with UN money to institute legal actions against it, what would be the Secretary‑General's comment on… on… on the… on this particular aspect of the document signed by at least a dozen UN agencies?

Spokesman: The… it's… the… and I should have had some guidance. For some reason, it's not in here. But I know… and I'll have something a bit more expansive for you later. But the report is a public… the document is a public document. It's a framework… development framework, which was signed in… in… on a regular basis as part of our humanitarian… our humanitarian agreements. So, it's a standard development framework. I mean, we've seen the reporting of… of the issue. As I said, the… the Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine, which covers… projects the years… years 2018‑2022, as I said, is a public document that was published in August of this year. As per regular practice, when the United Nations development agencies are active, the UN Country Team develops a joint multi‑year plan, in coordination with local governments, which aims to align UN activities and funding targets for donors. The 2018‑2022 UNDAF for Palestine aims "to enhance development prospects for the people of Palestine" and reflects the development priorities outlined by the Government of Palestine in its National Policy Agenda. A number of the articles and publications issued last week have mistakenly quoted the Palestinian's National Policy Agenda as being part of UNDAF [United Nations Development Assistance Framework], so they're two… they're two separate documents. The Palestinian document, the Government strategy, is a basis for the Framework, but it is not the document that was signed by the UN itself. The UN form… the UNDAF, the UN document, forms the basis of cooperation between the UN and the Government of Palestine on development programming for a five‑year period. The Framework is in line with overall UN policy on the Israel‑Palestine conflict and the Middle East Peace Process with a goal of a two‑state solution, consistent with Security Council resolutions, in which a viable Palestinian State exists alongside Israel in peace and security.

Question: Okay. I do have to follow up on that, because I know it's a public document, and I have… I have reviewed that document. And, without belabouring it, there are… you know, there are sections in that document, that UN document, that do talk about training and support and assistance for the bringing of legal actions to hold Israel accountable under international law, and that the UN itself should undertake such activity. That's in the UN document. So it wasn't mischaracterized. And, in comparing it to the previous Framework that it's replacing, there weren't such advocacy programmes using UN assistance, UN funding. So, I… again, I ask you how the Secretary‑General squares that with his comments that Israel should be treated like any other Member State.

Spokesman: I think the Secretary‑General's comments concerning how Israel should be treated like any other… like any other Member States with the same rights and the same responsibilities stands unabated and unchanged. As for questions on the details of the agreement, I would refer you to our Country Team colleagues in… in the occupied Palestinian territory. Yes, sir.

Question: Sure. I want to ask you about Yemen. There are these reports of a Saudi‑led airstrike killing over 20 — some people say 29 or 26 — in Sahar in Sa’ada. And I wanted to know, one, if the UN is aware of it and, two, if there's any comments from the Secretary‑General, this being the day after his report was presented, which said that the… Saudi Arabia's taking all steps or some steps to prevent… many of the people in this hotel that was hit were children. So, what's his comment?

Spokesman: We've seen… we've seen the reports that an airstrike by the Saudi‑led Coalition took place in Sa’ada, as you mentioned, including the report of 26 deaths and many more injured. As a general comment, we remain deeply concerned that civilians, including children, continue to bear the brunt of the conflict. We underscore that all parties to the conflict must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law — including the fundamental rule of proportionality, distinction, and precaution — to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure against attack. The Secretary‑General, I think, was very clear as was… was Ms. Gamba in her preparation… in her statement yesterday. And I think the report that the Secretary‑General issued also makes his position clear. What we're continuing to see in Yemen, very unfortunately, is the continuing suffering of the civilian population, of men, women, and children, whether it's from attacks or whether it's from a denial of access to humanitarian aid. And this only redoubles our… our efforts to finding a political solution.

Question: I guess… thank… thanks. I just want… given… at least… it's said that most of these people that were killed were in a either hotel or motel or kind of internally displaced people, and it's right next to a public market. So, it becomes… in terms of the steps being taken, it's hard to imagine a legitimate military target that's next to a public market and a hotel…

Spokesman: We're not arguing. I'm not here to defend… whether it's… I'm not here to speak on behalf of the Coalition, the Houthis or anyone else. What we're witnessing here is a continued killing of civilians. Yes, madam, and then James.

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. You're probably aware of the fact that Bill Clinton was appointed for a year by Ban Ki‑moon. Clinton referred to himself as the hired help here. Is there a possibility that the Secretary‑General, who's immensely concerned about the situation in North Korea, could appoint former President Jimmy Carter, whose understanding and respect for the position in North Korea will make him acceptable to them and, even though the Trump Administration…?

Spokesman: I… we are aware of… keenly aware of the situation regarding the tensions on the Korean Peninsula. When we have something to announce in terms of a diplomatic initiative or so forth, we will do so. But I will not speculate at this point. Mr. Bays.

Question: Just as a follow‑up, it would seem that Jimmy Carter is the only person…?

Spokesman: I… that's… that's a… I mean, I have… I'm… your question can change. My answer will remain. Mr. Bays.

Question: Can I have a follow‑up question, please?

Spokesman: Not now. Not now. Not now. Mr. Bays.

Question: It's about Syria and the Syrian political process. I know you've been asked about Sochi before, but can you be clear about this meeting, this Syrian Congress, the Russians are organizing in Sochi? Does the UN support this meeting? Will the UN be attending this meeting? Because it's pretty clear there are members of the Security Council who are very skeptical and believe it's a significant deviation from the UN‑led process set out in resolution 2254 (2016).

Spokesman: We… we… the meeting is not a UN‑led meeting. We have seen… we've seen reports. We're aware it's taking place. We're continuing to study and take a look at the issue.

Question: Does the UN believe it's helpful?

Spokesman: As I said, we're continuing to study the issue. Abdelhamid.

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. First Israel decided to build a settlement in the village of Qalandiya. Qalandiya is very adjacent to Ramallah, the most populous town. And yet we didn't hear anything from the Special Envoy. Why is that? Isn't that in violation of resolution 2334 (2016)?

Spokesman: I haven't seen particular details of this announcement, whether… at what stage the announcement is in. The Secretary‑General's position, the Special Envoy's position on settlement remains the same. So when we've… I think, if you look at the… the latest briefing by… during the Middle East session in the Security Council, I think that position was made very clear.

Question: When you say Israel should be treated just like any other State with the same duties and responsibilities, is there any country in the world that is in violation of Security Council resolution, General Assembly resolution, and ICJ opinion as much as Israel to be treated as a normal State?

Spokesman: Every Member State of this organization, if I get this right, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe — is that from A to Z? — has the same rights and the same responsibilities, has signed on to the same Charter, has signed on to the same documents. And they all have the same… the same rights and the same responsibilities. Mr. Lee.

Question: Sure. Want to ask you something about Canada and something about journalists. As… as you know, Canada had made a… had said that it would be making some pledge to UN peacekeeping. There's been a lot of back‑and‑forth about it. Now they have a conference coming up on 14 November in Vancouver. So, some people are saying that's kind of a deadline. I wanted to know if you have any response to… they're committing police to Colombia but not through… apparently through the UN Mission there. They seem to see that it's… they think it would be better to do so bilaterally. And can you give any up… do you have any… do you think that that's the right way for countries to go given that there's a UN Mission there? And do you have any update on… on discussions between the UN and Canada in terms of getting the… something real…

Spokesman: The discussions are continuing. We will have the Head of our Peacekeeping Department and I believe the Head of the Field [support] Department, Mr. Lacroix and Mr. Khare will both be in Vancouver for this meeting.

Question: Right. Do you think…? I mean…

Spokesman: And as… as for Colombia, I think… I would have to know a bit more about the details of their… their deployment to comment on it.

Question: The Foreign Minister of Canada was here recently. She was up at the… did… did… are you aware of any UN discussion with her about this peacekeeping proposal? There's some talk that they're going to come out with a women peace and security announcement.

Spokesman: I'm not aware. Doesn't mean it's not happening. I'm just not aware. Yes, madam.

Question: Thank you. A letter was sent to the Secretary‑General by the DPRK requesting an independent panel of legal experts to determine the legitimacy of the sanctions. And, as a follow‑up, what is the Secretary‑General's comment about Rapporteur Quintana's statement that chemotherapy used to treat cancer patients is being prevented from getting to patients in North Korea because of the sanctions? And there are actually a list of… of items, humanitarian items, the wheelchairs, other equipment for disabilities.

Spokesman: A few things to say. As you know, Special Rapporteurs speak in their… in their own name. The Secretary‑General and his various interventions on the situation in North Korea has highlighted the humanitarian situation. The UN is present in the DPRK to help alleviate the dire humanitarian situation. I think the Secretary‑General also outlined his position on sanctions during a recent Security Council meeting saying that the sanctions should not be an end unto themselves. The issue of sanctions and how they are administered is in the hands of the Security Council. Abdelhamid.

Question: Yes. Updated agreement between the PA and Gaza going into effect this morning and listening to the statement of Mr. Mladenov: he, I think, failed also to mention there is an escalation on the Israeli side. I mean, there was a kind of de facto truce between Gaza and Israel, yet Israel killed last night eight Palestinians in… in an unprovoked manner. Why…

Spokesman: What is the question, Abdelhamid?

Question: Why Mr. Mladenov didn't even refer to the dangers that…

Spokesman: I think we referred… you may not have been here, but we referred to that case in yesterday's briefing. Yes, sir.

Question: Sure. I wanted to… I noticed that the Secretary‑General met with Ambassador Delattre and some others about this protection of journalists. So, I wanted to… I mean, I guess you don't read out meetings with… with Permanent Representatives, but I wanted to ask you, given… and I'll use Cameroon as an example. As CPJ and others have said, there are any number of journalists sitting in jail for reporting on… on the very conflict that he discussed with… or mentioned with President Biya. Did the issue… can you say in that meeting whether any issue of press freedom was raised given that…

Spokesman: In the meeting with President Biya?

Question: In the meeting with President Biya. Yes.

Spokesman: No, as I said, I will stick to the readout I gave you in the meeting with President Biya.

Question: So how is it… because I saw the readout that the idea was to plan together how to forward protection of journalists. And so, how is it forwarding protection of journalists if the Secretary‑General meets with a Head of State whose named by CPJ and others as a major arrestor of journalists misusing counterterrorism legislation, not raising it, how does that…

Spokesman: A, I didn't say he didn't raise it. And, B, I think it's important for the Secretary‑General of the United Nations to have a dialogue with just about any leader on this planet.

Correspondent: No, no, I'm saying…

Spokesman: Thank you.