Rhéal LeBlanc, Chief of the Press and External Relations Section at the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), chaired the hybrid briefing, attended by spokespersons of the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

45th Human Rights Council

Rhéal LeBlanc, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), reminded that the urgent debate on the situation on Belarus was taking place at the Human Rights Council this morning. All HRC meetings can be followed live online at webtv.un.org.

Yemen talks

Rhéal LeBlanc, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), said that both Yemeni delegations had arrived to Switzerland and the talks on the exchange of prisoners would commence today. The talks were co-chaired by the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Prisoners’ Exchange Agreement Committee aimed to fulfill the stated commitments in the prisoners’ exchange agreement concluded by the Parties in
Stockholm in December 2018 and what the Parties further agreed in Amman in February 2020.

**Syria briefing**

Speaking on behalf of the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, Rhéal LeBlanc, informed that the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen, would brief the Security Council today at 4 p.m. Geneva time. The briefing would be open and the Office of the Special Envoy would distribute the transcript when the briefing concluded. Furthermore, Mr. Pedersen would also be available to brief the Palais journalists on 22 September. More details would be shared soon.

**Ukraine**

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that in eastern Ukraine, the ceasefire that had come into force on 27 July 2020 had contributed to the longest period of relative calm since the beginning of the conflict in 2014. There had been a 53-per cent drop in security incidents, month-to-month between July and August. There had been five reported civilian casualties in August, compared to 13 in July; no private houses along the contact line had been damaged in August. The improvement had given people on both sides of the contact line a sense of normality.

However, no changes in terms of humanitarian access had been observed. Only two of the five official crossing points on the contact line currently allowed people to cross. The result of those closures was that the humanitarian needs of the people in Donetsk and Luhansk were aggravated, as many people depended on their pensions and social benefits from the other side of the contact line.

**Update on Lesbos**

Shabia Mantoo, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), informed that efforts were continuing to shelter asylum seekers made homeless in a series of fires that had devastated the Moria Reception and Identification Centre in Lesbos the previous week. Close to 5,000 people were now being housed in the new emergency facility in Kara Tepe, which had the capacity to accommodate some 8,000 people, while works were ongoing. A police operation, which had started on 17 September, was ongoing to transfer asylum seekers to the new site. As of today, as a result of mass testing, there were at least 150 positive cases.

UNHCR teams were assisting with site planning and mapping to facilitate the shelter allocation and the provision of information and distribution of relief items for all those who entered the site. Refugees seemed relieved to have found basic assistance but were still worn out from being on the street for several days and worrying about the future.

UNHCR welcomed the decision of the Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum to transfer all unaccompanied children living on the islands (around 400) to proper accommodation and care on the mainland, with which the UNHCR and the IOM were assisting. UNHCR also hoped that the forthcoming European Commission Pact on Migration and Asylum would be an opportunity for the EU and Member States to address those issues and ensure more support, solidarity and responsibility-sharing with countries like Greece.

Full briefing note is [here](#).

**Update on COVID-19 and food security**

Tomson Phiri, for the World Food Programme (WFP), said that David Beasley, the WFP Executive Director, had briefed the Security Council the previous day.

Mr. Phiri said that COVID-19 left few lives and places untouched, but its impact was harshest for those groups who had already been vulnerable before the crisis. WFP was extremely concerned about countries where it was seeing the colliding crises of conflict, climate change and COVID-19, such as in the
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, the north-east parts of Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conflict and instability had already forced 15.5 million people unable to put food on their table into crisis levels of food insecurity. Due to an upsurge in violence, coupled with COVID-19, record levels of hunger were now expected with nearly 22 million people, an increase of 6.5 million people.

In Yemen, a country of 30.5 million people, 80 per cent of the population needed humanitarian assistance. Yemen had one of the worst fatality rates of COVID-19 in the world; 28 per cent of confirmed cases were dying as healthcare system had collapsed after five years of war.

In Nigeria, COVID-19 was also forcing more people into food insecurity; in the northeast of the country, 4.3 million people were food insecure, up by 600,000 largely due to COVID-19.

In South Sudan, 6.5 million people were expected to face severe food insecurity at the peak of the hunger season in July. The Jonglei State was drowning in flood waters, economic challenges, conflict and COVID-19.

Even a short burst of conflict had far-reaching consequences. Finally, in Burkina Faso, an uptick in violence meant that the number of people facing crisis levels of hunger had tripled to 3.3 million people, as COVID compounded the situation with displacement, security and access problems.

**Geneva announcements**

Catherine Huissoud, for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), informed that the new UNCTAD Trade and Development Report would be presented today at 2:30 p.m. during a hybrid press conference. The *Trade and Development Report 2020: From Global Pandemic to Prosperity for All: Avoiding Another Lost Decade*, embargoed until 7 p.m. on 22 September, would be presented by Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General, and Richard Kozul-Wright, Director Division on Globalization and Development Strategies. All the documents were available in UNCTAD’s virtual room.

Rhéal LeBlanc, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), informed that 21 September would be the International Day of Peace, and the Secretary-General’s message on that topic had been distributed to the press corps.

On the same occasion, the Geneva Peace Talks would take place on 21 September from 3 to 5 p.m. The event, with an impressive line-up of speakers, would be fully virtual; registrations were open, and the event could be watched live here.

The Conference on Disarmament would have a public plenary meeting today to close its 2020 session and adopt its annual report to the General Assembly.

Finally, Mr. LeBlanc spoke about the 75th United Nations General Assembly agenda. There would be several high-level events the following week; the highest number ever of Heads of State and Government would address the Assembly, but none of them would be there in person. All the information on the UNGA is available here.