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NOTE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
(through Ms. Malcorra)

DPI Weekly Press Review

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This week's press review examines the General Assembly's annual General Debate, and two of the biggest side events during the high-level period: Monday's meeting on United Nations peacekeeping and Wednesday's gathering on migration.

Global coverage of the UN was particularly intense this week, the culmination of a 10-day period where virtually every major element of the Organization's agenda entered the news spotlight, from sustainable development and climate change to peace and security and human rights, and with all corners of the world receiving attention.

More than 5,000 journalists attended, a record, and there were several moments during the week when all major international TV networks were reporting live from UN Headquarters. Social media platforms amplified the coverage found in traditional media outlets, and external partners – such as the Global Poverty Project with its Central Park concert – helped the UN make an impact with audiences beyond regular reach.

Many headlines focused on relations between Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin, or on apparently intractable conflicts and crises. Yet the tone of the reporting – whether on Syria, Iran, refugees, gender or LGBT rights – reinforced the idea that the UN is the pre-eminent forum for international leaders to discuss major challenges and problems.

The news on peacekeeping was extremely positive, with extensive reporting on the pledges at the summit and a more detailed understanding of the intrinsic value of UN blue helmets and the need for Member States to step up and provide greater contributions.

While the media focus on the migration meeting was particularly strong in Europe, there was a growing sense in both the reporting and commentary that the refugee crisis was of global rather than continental proportions. Interviews by senior UN officials in the lead-up helped build interest in the event, although the competing UN events on the day – especially the raising of the Palestinian flag – did dilute some of the coverage.

Turning to social media, the Twitter Mirror that was temporarily installed at UN Headquarters was especially popular: after the joint encounter with the Secretary-General and Pope Francis, nearly 40 heads of State, first ladies or foreign ministers, as well as numerous celebrities and business leaders, stopped by to have their photo taken.

Thank you.

Gallach
Cristina Gallach
2 October 2015

cc: The Deputy Secretary-General / Mr. Feltman / Mr. Khare / Mr. Kim / Mr. Ladsous / Mr. O'Brien / Ms. Mohammed / Mr. Amdur / Mr. Dujarric

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PRESS REVIEW

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UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: GREATEST POLITICAL SHOW ON EARTH

"The greatest political show on earth" – that was how **The Guardian** of London characterized the General Assembly's annual high-level debate at UN Headquarters this week. The same paper called the opening day of the debate "Massive Monday" in reference to the participation of the presidents of the United States, Russia, China, Iran, France and Brazil, among others. **France 24** labelled it "the 'can't miss' diplomatic diary entry of the year for world leaders." Russia's **Moskovsky Komsomolets**, in a nod to expectations of some confrontational speeches, reported in advance that "the fun begins" on 28 September.

Portions of the debate were streamed live by numerous outlets, including by **PBS**, **Time** magazine and Russian talk radio station **Echo of Moscow**, while others carried links to view the webcast, such as the **New York Times**. The **Press Trust of India** underscored that the gathering would see "an unprecedented attendance by global leaders... to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the UN." **China Daily** underscored that the series of meetings marking the 70th anniversary "will have a huge impact on international relations, the future role of the world body and the direction of global cooperation." In Austria's **Kurier**, Josef Votzi said this gathering will have an historic outcome.

Amid the multitude of issues under discussion around the UN, from US-Russian relations and the war in Syria to refugees and peacekeeping, the UN itself and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon were mainstays in the coverage. According to the **Los Angeles Times**, Ban "embodies the principle of international engagement." **The Guardian** noted that this week offered "a rare chance to see world leaders speak from the same podium – and sometimes interact with one another, too."

Ban kicks off historic GA

The Secretary-General's opening remarks – including his call for those gathered to "translate promises on paper to action on the ground" – were covered globally, including by Emirati news agency **WAM**, Nigeria's independent **Channels Television** and the **Buenos Aires Herald**. According to **AFP**, the UN chief opened the debate with a call for action on the current refugee crisis, urging "Europe to do more." **The Straits Times** of Singapore carried a similar call. **USA Today** reported that Ban pressed for a political solution to the war in Syria. His remarks about uniting against the "blatant brutality" of extremist groups, such as **ISIL**, also received wide pick-up, including by **AP**, **Fox News**, Israeli online news website **DEBKA file** and Kuwait's **KUNA** news agency.

Pakistan Today and the **Irish Times** reported that Ban, for the first time, had called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. **DPA** said the Secretary-General singled out Russia, the US, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey as key international players holding the key to a solution, as he called for an end to the "diplomatic paralysis." Iran's **Press TV** focused its dispatch on Ban's comments on the recent nuclear deal with Tehran.

Prior to the official opening of the high-level segment, the UN garnered some press attention for serving a vegetarian lunch which consisted of food that is normally discarded. **Le Figaro** reported that: "World leaders, accustomed to the best restaurants, had a delightful surprise... a meal fully designed from waste foods." The US edition of the **International Business Times** called the meal "a lesson on practising what they preach," to "dramatize the fact that more than a third of all produced is wasted."

The biggest news story in terms of column inches was relations between Moscow and Washington, and especially the meeting between Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin. In Italy's **Corriere della Sera**, Franco Venturini maintained: "At a UN General Assembly already rich in significant presence, the highest political stakes lie in... the meeting that Obama and Putin will be holding in the glass palace [UN Headquarters]." Some of the coverage extended beyond the narrow bilateral implications. The **Los Angeles Times** stated that the General Debate was becoming "a high-stakes squabble over the Syrian civil war and a refugee crisis that may illustrate the limits of world institutions and diplomacy," and the **BBC** reported that the Syrian conflict highlighted divisions at the Assembly. A number of US outlets – including **AP**, **NPR**, the **Christian Science Monitor** and **Fox News** – deemed it significant that the Russian leader was making his first appearance at the UN in a decade. Numerous articles, thanks mainly to wire reports by **AFP** and others, commented on the body language of Obama and Putin at the Secretary-General's high-level luncheon.

Security Council reform

The perennial topic of Security Council reform surfaced in the reporting. **The Press Trust of India** reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hosting a special summit on the topic in New York, emphasized the need to include the largest democracies and voices from all the major continents in the 15-member body. US business publication **Quartz** said "the disappointment with the UN's long-standing inability to carry out [Council] reforms may have contributed to Modi's decision to not address the UNGA during his US visit."

Elsewhere, according to **Russia Today**, Ukraine's Petro Poroshenko maintained that an additional non-permanent seat be given to Eastern European nations as they have doubled in numbers over the last two decades. **The Guardian** (UK) reported that Poroshenko accused Russia of using its veto as a "licence to kill" and continue Moscow's "hybrid war" against his country. In Saudi Arabia's **Arab News**, Seema Sengupta took an entirely different approach: "Putting more countries behind the shut doors of UNSC cannot help... having no closed door at all or permanent privileged status will enhance UN legitimacy." **Bloomberg** cited the Russian Parliament's approval of the country's use of force in Syria as a reminder that the Council is being bypassed as a forum for important decisions "such as whether to go to war."

The UN's 70th anniversary generated some interest, particularly in the Arab world, where commentators were sometimes sceptical of the Organization's utility. In Saudi Arabia's **Arab News**, Mahir Ali said "there can be little question that it [the UN] has served a useful – and in some cases outstanding" performance, while noting "serious shortfalls" as well. Rashmee Roshan Lall, writing in the UAE's **The National**, observed that "in 70 years, the UN has been reformed just once, a timid half-measure that merely added four non-permanent Security Council members to a rotating group that is by no means as powerful as the P5, the five countries that permanently have a veto on UN resolutions." Eyad Abu Shakra argued in **Asharq Al-Awsat** that the UN is "now in need of rejuvenation after its obvious failure to deal with several cases of international impasse caused primarily by spite, intentional obstruction and the abject disregard for the 'international legitimacy'."

Elsewhere in GA Week

Ban also drew press attention for some of his other major addresses during GA Week. Following a speech to the Security Council on tackling the maintenance of international peace and security, Iran's **Mehr** news agency and **Prensa Latina** reported that the Secretary-General considered the Middle East and North Africa as the regions with the deadliest conflicts and worst humanitarian emergencies today.

Meanwhile, while speaking at a LGBT event, the **Times of India** said that Ban pushed for equal rights and urged governments to end discrimination as **The Independent** (UK) and South African daily **The**

Sowetan reported that Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe used the podium to attack homosexuality. In Kenya's **Daily Nation**, Charles Onyango-Obbo noted that "most leaders, except Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, are carrying themselves with a sense of solemn burden."

Some commentators used the high-level debate as an opportunity to criticize the UN. In the **Irish Times**, the chief executive of international organization Goal, Barry Andrews, opined that "the next three months will decide whether the UN is capable of discharging its mandate or... is heading the way of the League of Nations." Memphis Barker, an editor at **The Independent**, noted UN delegates' lack of accountability: "Bureaucrats can smile and applaud as more goals are announced, and shrug their shoulders as to why Syrians, Somalians and all the rest remain poor and at risk of their lives."

PLEDGES FOR PEACEKEEPING

The US-led high-level meeting on peacekeeping on Monday drew global headlines, with the primary focus being on all the new pledges. With more than 50 countries represented in the event, many media outlets used their reports to zero in on their own country's individual commitment. Before the event, **Voice of America** reported that the UN was "hoping for commitments of perpetually scarce helicopters and the crews who can operate them." **Foreign Policy** said the UN was desperately short of niche capacities, including engineering, airlift, medevac, intelligence, and surveillance. Much of the coverage framed the summit within the growing and ever-present needs of UN peacekeeping. **Foreign Policy** columnist James Traub described it as: "UN peacekeeping, by its very nature, is always in crisis, but the crisis is even worse now than usual. Peacekeepers are expected to do far more, in far more difficult places, than they were in the past." Traub went on to say that the conference was "the best news for peacekeeping in years."

Some of the reporting echoed the call of US President Barack Obama for the modernization of UN peacekeeping operations and the possible creation of a rapid reaction force. Obama's stated goal to "make every new peace operation more efficient and more effective than the last" was picked up widely, including by **Reuters**, South Africa's **Defence Web**, Nigeria's **News Express** and the **South China Morning Post**.

Ban's call heeded

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks received strong pick-up. **Deutsche Welle** included the following quote: "The situations into which peacekeepers are deployed have never been more challenging, as tasks multiply and we face extremists, criminal groups and others who show no regard for international humanitarian or human rights law." Ban's assertion that "the demand for peacekeeping has never been greater" was also spotlighted by many, including Liberia's **New Dawn**, Belarus' **BelTA** news agency and Thailand's **The Nation**.

Xinhua and India's **IANs** news agency reported that Ban highlighted four main needs for peacekeeping, including solid political backing. Nigeria's **NAN** news agency underscored that he had urged Member States to provide key military assets and more female staff. According to **The Guardian**, the UN chief noted that peacekeeping operations were sheltering 200,000 civilians in South Sudan, monitoring a fragile peace agreement in Mali and working to prevent further violence in the Central African Republic. Ban's comment that pledges made at the summit to send more personnel represented "an unprecedented collective commitment to strengthen UN peacekeeping" received widespread coverage, including in Japan's **Kyodo** and Rwanda's **RNARI** news agency, as well as **NAN** and **IANs**.

Your pledges please

The size and scope of the pledges was the biggest storyline. In addition to all the major international newswires, a range of media outlets – such as **Al Jazeera** and Norway's **Oslo Times** – reported that

more than 50 countries had committed some 40,000 troops. The **New York Times** reported that Obama said the US would "provide more logistical support, including air-and sea-lift capacity... and train peacekeepers to counter improvised explosive devices." According to **AP**, the US leader's steps to improve UN peacekeeping revealed "no sign the US would put more of its own troops into the field."

The **Washington Post** provided a list of pledging nations, while noting that "Rwanda, which became a lasting symbol of UN failure," said "it would contribute two infantry battalions and a female police unit." **Reuters** noted "more than a dozen European countries stepped up." **AFP** and Switzerland's **Le Temps** said that the UK would send hundreds of troops to Somalia and South Sudan. In Warsaw, **TVN24** news channel and **TVP1's Wiadomości** news programme noted that of the pledges which were made, "none were from Poland."

The **New York Times** reported that just hours before the summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping "sought to steal some of the thunder" by announcing in his General Assembly speech that Beijing would put together an 8,000-strong peacekeeping standby force and contribute \$1 billion over the next 10 years to a UN peace and development fund. **AP** called it "perhaps the largest commitment." The **Guardian** carried China's warning against the misuse of Security Council peacekeeping mandates by countries pursuing their own agenda.

Tokyo's **Kyodo** reported an expanded role for Japan under a new domestic law enabling greater participation in peacekeeping. The **Nation** (Bangkok) underscored the Thai Prime Minister's offer to dispatch military staff officers, development units and engineers upon request from the UN. The **Kiev Post** said Ukraine was ready to send six military helicopters to Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

AP reported that at the end of the meeting, US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power announced that countries had pledged more than 40 helicopters, 15 engineering companies and 10 field hospitals. **AFP** reported those pledges as well, in addition to bomb-detonating experts who "are desperately needed to bolster UN peace missions." France's **Libération** noted that the pledges were made as UN peacekeeping missions were increasingly overstretched and vulnerable. The **Guardian** also reported that "it remains to be seen how many countries follow through on their promises."

Beyond the pledges

Looking beyond the pledges, some outlets featured the wider context of peacekeeping, flagging particular angles such as equitable troop contribution, sexual abuse and exploitation and specific national issues. US-based website **Rapid News Network** reported that India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out that too few nations were bearing the burden of providing troops. The **Guardian** and Canada's **National Post** newspaper carried Modi's comment: "If somebody wants soldiers to go in and fight, they should hire mercenaries, not take UN soldiers."

Noting the impact the pledges would have in relation to sexual abuse and exploitation by UN peacekeepers, **AFP** reported that they would give Ban "the leeway to remove units whose soldiers face accusations and replace them without weakening a mission." **Reuters** reported that amid a stream of allegations of misconduct and sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in the CAR, "US officials say the surplus troops will also allow the UN to exercise more discretion with its 16 current missions."

While Russian news agency **TASS** emphasized that the summit advocated for the protection of civilians, **AP** said, on the absence of Russia's President Vladimir Putin from the gathering, that he was "the only leader of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council... not to be there."

MIGRATION: GLOBAL RESPONSE SOUGHT

Wednesday's high-level meeting at UN Headquarters on refugees and migrants drew front-page headlines, especially in Europe. The BBC carried live an interview with the Deputy Secretary-General ahead of the meeting. An AFP story reporting that Ban Ki-moon opened the meeting of some 70 countries with an appeal to keep borders open, combat xenophobia and integrate refugees and migrants received widespread pick-up – including in France 24, Times of Israel, Pakistan's Urdu-language TV channel Dunya News and the Manila Times. Voice of America said the UN chief appealed to the world to approach Europe's refugee crisis with "creativity, compassion, and courage." DPA reported that Ban called on countries to protect refugees, treat them without discrimination and cooperate to increase the number of resettlement areas. Russia's Rosbalt news agency said he called the situation "a crisis of global solidarity." Ban's stance against building fences or walls was picked up by AP, and by Australia's Sky News and Russian-language Ru Economics news agency.

Radio Pakistan said Ban outlined an eight-point plan that included managed migration and legal channels for refugees. BelTA news agency (Belarus) said the Secretary-General's plan was to improve overall preparedness. The Los Angeles Times reported that Ban mobilized "what he hopes will be a 'humane, effective and rights-based response' to the crisis." India Blooms News Service reported that UN envoy Peter Sutherland said the issues being discussed were not going to go away, and would likely only grow. According to IPS, Sutherland said the European crisis was an international responsibility.

UN refugee chief in demand

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, garnered his own stream of media interest. The New York Times reported that "over the last four years the High Commissioner pleaded in vain with global leaders to take their plight more seriously. But suddenly, at the GA this week, leaders of the world's most powerful countries want to meet with him, all of them deeply worried about the refugee crisis. So what has changed? Well, nothing, Mr. Guterres said, 'except refugees came to rich countries,' expanding the crisis from nations like Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan to those in Europe." This story was picked up by Singapore's Today Online and South Africa's Times Live.

News that German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier corralled his G7 counterparts to pledge aid for Syrian refugees sparked a flurry of stories. Guterres' appreciation for their \$1.8 billion pledge to UN aid agencies dealing with the refugee crisis was covered by AFP, Turkey's Daily Sabah and Voice of America.

The Guardian said Guterres believed that a reduction in Western funding had triggered the summer's refugee influx to Europe. Swiss daily Blick and the Middle East Eye picked up the High Commissioner's complaint that UN aid agencies "were broke" and could not even afford the "bare minimum" for the refugees. The BBC noted his frustration in the following quote: "It's a tragedy to see people moving from border to border, never knowing which border will be open tomorrow." Meanwhile, the international newswires reported on the UN refugee agency's projection that 1.4 million migrants would arrive in Europe over 2015-16.

Some commentators proffered advice. Michael Doyle of the Global Policy Initiative suggested in the Huffington Post that UNHCR's capacity be enhanced to issue free travel visas for those who meet a preliminary determination of refugee status, noting that "these visas would free families from the smugglers by certifying them for legal travel to potential asylum countries." In Xinhua, Zhu Junqing upheld that Europe, the United States and the international community together must address symptoms and root causes. In an op-ed published by Project Syndicate, the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, wrote: "Waiting for a solution to the Syrian situation is no answer; while lesser steps will not resolve Europe's predicament, they could make it manageable."

Hungary's comments stand out

An AFP story, picked up by South Africa's **Independent Online** and **New Delhi Television** among others, reported that Hungary warned that Europe's migrant crisis was threatening the continent's stability. **DPA** and **Le Monde** reported that Prime Minister Viktor Orban called for a global quota system to share refugees. According to the **Press Trust of India** and the **Wall Street Journal**, Orban said that Europe could not cope, and called on Ban to launch negotiations on setting up a global system.

Reuters reported that Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó rejected criticism of his country's handling of migrants and said the decision to build borders was not done "for fun," but to protect the European Union. **Deutsche Welle** reported that he called the quota system "nonsense," while, according to Romania's **Revista 22**, Szijjártó said the migrant crisis could not be solved without pragmatic cooperation with Russia.

As leaders agreed that the crisis needed a global response, **India Blooms News Service** said the meeting provided "an important opportunity for Member States to discuss the challenges and responsibilities, as well as the opportunities, that large migrant and refugee movements bring." In **Foreign Policy**, Siobhan O'Grady observed that only a handful of reporters gathered to hear the results of the world body's summit on migration – noting that "the lack of interest in any announcement from the high-level meeting... may be a symptom of how little was accomplished when world leaders gathered to discuss steps forward this week." A **Boston Globe** editorial saw the glass as half full, asserting that a unified approach to immigration "could be the silver lining of this terrible situation today."

Crisis also flagged from General Assembly podium

Away from the migration meeting itself, the issue surfaced in speeches made by leaders during the General Assembly's high-level debate. **Russia Today** said US President Barack Obama called on the world to assist the flood of refugees from the Middle East, adding that the US was to increase the number of refugees it was accepting. **PBS** flagged European Council President Donald Tusk's statement in which he said: "Everyone can offer help to the refugees." Canada's **ICI** radio reported that French President François Hollande said, "Europe is based on values and principles, and the right to asylum is part of foundation." **Xinhua** noted that Finnish President Sauli Niinistö said "the international community must now show that we do care." Turkey's **Today's Zaman** reported that Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu highlighting the need for a collective response to the crisis. **AFP** reported that the Turkish leader also demanded a "safe zone" be created in Syria to protect fleeing civilians.

Bulgaria's **Sofia Globe** reported that Estonia's President Toomas Hendrik Ilves emphasised the need to deal with the root causes of the migration crisis, noting that he added: "But this truly biblical movement of peoples demands a global response." According to the **Huffington Post**, Denmark's Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen understood the migrants' hopes, while also flagging that "mass migration is obviously an immense challenge for our societies."

Jordan's **Hala News** reported that the country's King asserted that "it is high time the international community acts collectively in facing this unprecedented humanitarian crisis." Russia's **TASS** reported President Vladimir Putin as saying that "the only way to solve this problem at a fundamental level is to restore the statehood where it has been destroyed." While **Japan Times** featured Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's statement that "now more than ever, Japan wishes to offer that wealth of experience, unstintingly," multilingual news channel **Euronews** said Abe "brushed off" any suggestion that Japan, "which accepted just 11 of around 5,000 asylum-seekers last year," would take in any Syrian refugees.

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