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UN Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect on the Situation in Kyrgyzstan

(New York - Tuesday 15 June, 2010) Two Special Advisers of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Francis Deng on the Prevention of Genocide and Edward Luck on the responsibility to protect, expressed grave concern on Tuesday over the recent eruption of violence in Kyrgyzstan. “I am extremely concerned about the violence in South Kyrgyzstan, which has broken out along ethnic lines. I encourage the Interim Government and international actors to do all in their power to stop the violence and ensure the protection of vulnerable minority communities,” stated Mr. Deng.

The Special Advisers have been monitoring the situation in Kyrgyzstan closely since April 2010, when the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev brought ethnic tensions to the surface, particularly between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the south. The Special Advisers noted that the violence that started on 10 June appears to have targeted ethnic Uzbeks in particular. “The pattern and scale of the violence, which has resulted in the mass displacement of Uzbeks from South Kyrgyzstan, could amount to ethnic cleansing,” warned Special Adviser Luck. He reminded all parties that the 2005 World Summit banned either the commission or the incitement of ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity.

Given the requests by the Interim Government for international assistance to the people of Kyrgyzstan, the Special Advisers called on the international community to operationalise its “responsibility to protect” by providing coordinated and timely assistance to stop the violence and its incitement. They underscored the urgency of ensuring that the violence does not spread to other regions of Kyrgyzstan or to neighbouring countries.

The Special Advisers called on the Interim Government, neighboring states, and the larger international community to take all possible steps to reduce the risk of violence along ethnic lines in the future. “The current crisis in Kyrgyzstan has revealed a clear ethnic fault-line that has developed over decades. Once they have curbed the violence, the Kyrgyzstan authorities should acknowledge and address its underlying causes in order to prevent any recurrence, put in place a process of reconciliation in collaboration with civil society, and work to preserve the country’s ethnic diversity and heritage. The United Nations and the international community stand ready to assist in these efforts.”

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