MEDIA RELEASE

UN Secretary-General Addresses Sri Lankan Youth in Galle on
‘Reconciliation and Coexistence: Role of Youth’

Galle, 1 September 2016: This afternoon, the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon together with his wife, Mrs. Ban Soon-Taek, visited Galle in the South of Sri Lanka to attend an event titled ‘Reconciliation and Coexistence: Role of Youth’, organized by the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) – Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR), and the United Nations in Sri Lanka.

The event comprised of 100 young Sri Lankans from across the island, who are actively engaged in projects and programmes relating to peace, unity, reconciliation, and coexistence. The young participants showcased exhibits that displayed their work and ideas in how reconciliation and coexistence can be fostered through 8 thematic areas: 1) Arts & Culture, 2) Education, 3) Language & Identity, 4) Inter-faith, 5) Media & Communications, 6) Women & Gender, 7) Sports, and 8) Livelihoods and Psychosocial Support.

Earlier in the day the participants were given an opportunity to learn about each other’s work and find possible synergies for their future activities including through various projects of ONUR.

Speaking at the event, the Secretary-General, highlighted the important role of youth in the reconciliation process, stating ‘Young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow; you are the leaders of today. Your positive approach inspires me and gives me the energy to persevere. Working for and with young men and women is a priority for the United Nations…. I challenge all of you today to become true global citizens. Work together with young people from different neighbourhoods, ethnic groups or religions. Share your vision for a sustainable and peaceful future for this country and for our planet’

Following the address, the Secretary-General engaged in a discussion with the young participants. He also placed his signature on a peace pledge, among the signatures of the Sri Lankan youth, pledging for “shared prosperity, peace and partnership”.

Other dignitaries at the event included Minister of Parliamentary Reforms and Mass Media, Hon. Gayantha Karunatilake; Minister of Petroleum Resources Development, Hon. Chandima Weerakkody; Governor of the Southern Province, Hon. Dr. Hemakumara Nanayakkara; Chief Minister of the Southern Province, Hon. Shan Vijayalal De Silva; State Minister of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Hon. Niroshan Perera; District Secretary of Galle, Mr. S. T. Kodikara; UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Sri Lanka, Ms. Una McCauley; Chairman of the NYSC, Mr. Eranda Weliange; and officials from ONUR.

This is the Secretary-General’s second official visit to Sri Lanka, during which he is expected to meet the President, His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena; the Prime Minister, Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe; the Speaker of the Parliament, Hon. Karu Jayasuriya; Political Party Leaders, and representatives from civil society.

**Ends**

For more information:
Resident Coordinator’s Office/UNDP Communications Unit
0112580691 Ext. 1500, 0774448401 | info.lk@one.un.org | www.lk.one.un.org | @UNSriLanka