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Youth leaders ready to 'roll up their sleeves' and get to work at annual UN forum

29 January – Not content to follow old-school rules to tackle problems like climate change, poverty and inequality, today's youth – media savvy 'Millennials' and the 'Born in the 90s' cohort that can't remember life without the Internet – are using disruptive, new-school innovations to drive change; and they're heading to the United Nations to talk about building a better world for all.

At UN Headquarters in New York on 30 and 31 January, youth leaders from every corner of the world will lead discussions with government officials, civil society and other stakeholders on policy frameworks and innovative initiatives to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a 15-year plan to create a prosperous world for everyone on a clean planet.

Marie Chatardová, the President of the UN Economic and Social Council, the UN body that convenes the annual Youth Forum, has said that it is vital to empower young people to break cycles of poverty allow them to fulfil their potential to the fullest.

"If young people have the right support, education, and means, they can go on to build better societies. They have energy,



A group of young people at the Fifth Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. (file) UN Photo/Evan Schneider



creativity, and innovation to power entrepreneurship and create jobs for themselves and others,” she wrote in an opinion piece, published in the *Miami Herald* on Friday.

Citing examples of the youth taking action on pressing global concerns, such as on impacts of climate change or growing pollution, Mr. Chatardová said that young people do not wait idly for others to transform their ideas into reality.

“They are leaders who roll up their sleeves and work hard to transform their societies,” she added.

Around the world, the population of young people is now almost 1.8 billion – the largest ever. And it offers both immense potential as well as considerable challenges ranging from 71 million unemployed youth and an additional 161 million in situations of moderate or extreme poverty despite having a job.

In this situation, building on the work of young people to address the problems of the young people is critical, highlighted Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

“We will be discussing the issues [the youth] care about like sustainable energy for all, safe and inclusive cities, access to clean water and sanitation, protecting bio-diversity and forests and partnerships to achieve the [SDGs],” said Ms. Wickramanayake.

As a subset of the partnerships agenda, she explained, is the involvement of the youth in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

Started in 2012, the Youth Forum is the only gathering of its kind to bring together young people and senior Government officials in-charge of youth matters in their countries, such as youth ministries. This year’s overarching theme is *the role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities*.

In addition to discussing youth action for specific SDGs, the agenda also includes regional perspectives and a roundtable on means of implementation, including finance, technology, capacity building and trade.

The outcomes from the Youth Forum will flow into this year High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the global UN forum to which discusses and reviews the status of implementation of sustainable development.

Hunger continues to intensify in conflict zones, UN agencies report to Security Council



A mother, displaced with her family, feeds her 18-month-old daughter at a shelter in a village rural Damascus. (file) Photo: WFP/Abeer Etefa

29 January – Food insecurity – or lack of access to enough food – continues to worsen in places torn by conflict, United Nations agencies reported Monday, listing Yemen, South Sudan and Syria among the countries most affected by acute hunger.

Highlighting the extremely critical importance of humanitarian support for affected communities, the report was generated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) as part of bi-annual briefings to the UN Security Council on food security.

Conflict is a common factor undermining food security in all 16 countries covered in the report, according to which the intensification of conflicts is a key reason behind the recent resurgence of world hunger levels, following decades of steady declines.

The 16 countries that are monitored are: Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria,

Ukraine and Yemen.

Among them, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, CAR, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Somalia have a quarter or more of the population facing crisis or emergency levels of hunger.

In Yemen, 60 per cent of the population, or 17 million people, are affected by acute hunger. These figures are 45 per cent, or 4.8 million, in South Sudan, 33 per cent, or 6.5 million, in Syria, and 33 per cent, or 1.9 million, in Lebanon – a country hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees.

But these are far from being the only countries flagged as cause for concern.

In the DRC, where serious food security concerns have been overshadowed by crises in other parts of Africa, the situation is rapidly deteriorating, the report warns.

There, 11 per cent of the population is now in the crisis phase or above, adding up to 7.7 million people who are coping with acute hunger.

In Sudan, 3.8 million people are in the crisis phase or above. In Iraq, that figure is 3.2 million while in the Lake Chad basin, the number is 2.9 million people. In Burundi and Haiti, it is 1.8 and 1.3 million, respectively.

According to data released last October, the number of hungry people worldwide rose to 815 million people in 2016, up from 777 million the year before. The majority of the hungry, or 489 million people, live in countries wracked by conflict.

Peace in Syria must be built on dignity, human rights for all Syrians, UNHCR envoy Angelina Jolie

29 January – With nearly 5.5 million war-weary Syrian refugees sheltering in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, Angelina Jolie, the United Nations refugee agency's envoy, visited on Sunday Jordan's Za'atari camp, carrying the message that peace in Syria must be built on human rights.

“It is heart-breaking to return to Jordan and witness the levels of hardship and trauma among Syrian refugees as the war enters its eighth year,” said Ms. Jolie, Special Envoy for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

On behalf of UNHCR, she voiced appreciation to the country for its generosity and humanity, says that Jordanians are “an example to the world, at a time when solidarity with refugees is in short supply.”

She asserted that the Syrian crisis has raged for years, saying that UNHCR does not have the funds to fully provide even the most basic necessities for survival for many families.

“Last year, the UNHCR response for the Syria crisis was only 50 per cent funded. And so far in 2018, it is only seven per cent funded,” she elaborated, adding that there is nothing more devastating for UNHCR staff than to be unable to help the people.

After seven years of war, most Syrian refugees have exhausted any savings and the vast majority live below the poverty line, on less than three dollars a day.

“Imagine what that would mean for your family,” implored Ms. Jolie. “Here, it means families going without sufficient



UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie talks with Syrian children at the Za'atari camp in Jordan. Photo: UNHCR/Ivor Prickett

food; children unable to get medical treatment; young girls vulnerable to early marriage; and many Syrians facing their seventh winter without proper shelter.”

“This is the reality of those displaced by the conflict in Syria,” she added.

Thanking the journalists who bring the situation to the world, Ms. Jolie underscored the fundamental issue as being “the lack of a credible political and diplomatic process – based on human rights and international law – to bring the violence to an end.”

“A viable political settlement is the only way to create the conditions for Syrians to return to their homes, and to end the human suffering and the strain on host countries,” she stressed.

She maintained that humanitarian aid is not a long-term solution, underscoring “and to be clear, no one wants to get off aid relief more than Syrian families.”

“For such an educated, capable people, it is soul-destroying to be made this dependent,” she elaborated.

Recalling that the war began with Syrians’ demands for greater human rights, she pressed that peace must be built on that.

“It cannot be built on impunity for the targeting of civilians by all sides, the bombing of schools and hospitals, barrel bombs, torture, chemical weapons and rape used as a weapon of war,” she held sway, adding: “It must be built on accountability – for instance, justice and recognition for the years of violence that women in Syria have faced.”

Ms. Jolie summarized her message to the international community to do more to help meet the needs of desperate Syrian families and the hosting countries, but “above all,” to provide the leadership and strength needed to negotiate a principled end to this senseless war – without sacrificing the dignity and human rights of Syrian families.

“That is non-negotiable,” she concluded.

UN health agency finds high levels of antibiotic resistance to world's most common infections



Lab assistant growing culture viruses and bacteria in the “Infectious Room” of the Cancer Institute of Columbia. Photo: PAHO/WHO

29 January – Antimicrobials have been a driver of unprecedented medical and societal advances, but their overuse has resulted in antibiotic resistant bacteria, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting new surveillance data on Monday which reveals widespread resistance to some of the world’s most common infections, including *E. coli* and pneumonia.

“The report confirms the serious situation of antibiotic resistance worldwide,” Dr. Marc Sprenger, director of WHO’s Antimicrobial Resistance Secretariat, said at the launch of the agency’s new Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System (GLASS)

The most commonly reported resistant bacteria were *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, followed by *Salmonella* spp.

Although the system does not include data on the resistance of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which causes tuberculosis, WHO has been tracking and providing annual updates on it since 1994, in the Global tuberculosis report.

Among patients with suspected bloodstream infection, the proportion that had bacteria resistant to at least one of the most commonly used antibiotics ranged widely – from zero to 82 per cent – between different countries.

Resistance to penicillin, which has been used for decades to treat pneumonia, ranged from zero to 51 per cent among reporting countries. And between 8 to 65 per cent of *E. coli* associated with urinary tract infections presented resistance to the antibiotic commonly used to treat it, ciprofloxacin.

“Some of the world’s most common – and potentially most dangerous – infections are proving drug-resistant,” Dr. Sprenger observed.

“And most worrying of all, pathogens don’t respect national borders,” he added.

To date, 25 high-income, 20 middle-income and 7 low-income countries are enrolled in WHO’s Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System. For the first report, 40 countries provided information on national surveillance systems with 22 also providing data on antibiotic resistance levels.

“WHO is encouraging all countries to set up good surveillance systems for detecting drug resistance that can provide data to this global system,” Dr. Sprenger asserted.

The quality and completeness of data in this first GLASS report vary widely. Some countries face major challenges in building their national surveillance systems, including a lack of personnel, funds and infrastructure.

“The report is a vital first step towards improving our understanding of the extent of antimicrobial resistance. Surveillance is in its infancy, but it is vital to develop it if we are to anticipate and tackle one of the biggest threats to global public health,” explained Dr. Carmem Pessoa-Silva, WHO surveillance system coordinator.

WHO is supporting countries in setting up national antimicrobial resistance surveillance systems to produce reliable, meaningful data, with GLASS helping to standardize data collection for a more complete picture of patterns and trends.

Solid drug resistance surveillance programmes in tuberculosis, HIV and malaria have been functioning for years – estimating disease burden, planning diagnostic and treatment services, monitoring control interventions effectiveness and designing effective treatment regimens to address and prevent future resistance. GLASS is expected to perform a similar function for common bacterial pathogens.

Poverty eradication, inclusive growth focus of UN Social Development Commission’s 2018 session



Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, addresses the opening meeting of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

29 January – Countries must accelerate inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development that will not leave behind vulnerable populations, such as women and youth, the United Nations deputy chief told the Commission for Social Development, which opened its annual session on Monday.

“We have achieved impressive reductions in extreme poverty, and major improvements in providing access to schooling and healthcare, and promoting the empowerment of women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous populations,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed in her remarks to the 56th session of the intergovernmental body under the UN Economic and Social Council.

“However, the drop in extreme poverty remains uneven across regions, within countries and between various social groups,” she added, stressing a key role the Commission can play in addressing such challenges.

The Commission has been the key UN body in charge of the follow up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration

and Programme of Action adopted at the world summit for social development, held in the Danish capital in March 1995.

The theme of this year's gathering is 'Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all.'

Ms. Mohammed noted that while more than one billion people have risen above the \$1.90-a-day poverty line since 1990, millions slide back into the threshold annually because of economic, environmental, health or other shocks.

"Of particular concern are the persistently high levels of poverty and deprivation among women and children, indigenous groups, older persons and persons with disabilities," she said.

Among other things, she stressed the need to address unemployment and underemployment among the world's young people and inequality between and within countries.

She also said that it is imperative to promote social policies and protection that ensure the benefits of globalization and economic growth are shared by all, noting that globally, 45 per cent of the people who need social protection have access to just one social benefit, while the rest – some four billion people – go without.

"This is unacceptable – and underscores the challenge we face in upholding our promise to leave no one behind," she said, referring to the pledge made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by UN Member States in 2015.

"To fulfil that vision, I encourage the Commission to emphasize the imperative of accelerating inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, including full, productive employment and decent work for all," she added.

She also noted that the Commission can support the Secretary-General's efforts to reposition the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, and continue to serve as a space for policy debate and the sharing of experiences.

The upcoming adoption by the Commission of a resolution on its methods of work is an important step that will establish the Commission's identity for the period ahead, she said.

New UN funding to help sustain critical aid programmes for hundreds of thousands in Ethiopia



A severe drought in Ethiopia's Oromia region has left almost every family with hardly anything to feed themselves. (File Photo: OCHA/Charlotte Cans)

29 January – The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) – a pool of funding which supports critical relief operations around the world – has allocated \$10 million to help meet the life-saving needs of the most vulnerable people displaced due to conflict in Ethiopia.

Since early September, escalation of conflict along the country's Oromia and Somali regional borders has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes into about 370 sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs), where they are living with needs many times greater than the response.

"Today I visited two IDP re-settlement sites where I saw first-hand the critical importance of scaling up our support to meet their needs," said Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the head of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),

during a visit to the horn of Africa nation.

According to a news release issued by OCHA, the Ethiopian Government has also stepped up its response and is delivering vital food assistance to those in need. It is also working on efforts to facilitate voluntary returns and provide

alternative re-settlement sites.

“The CERF funds will complement the Government plan and will enable humanitarian partners to provide life-saving assistance, including shelter, clean water and sanitation services for those most in need among the displaced and host communities. The funds will also support solutions for displaced people to re-establish their lives,” said Mr. Lowcock, who manages the CERF on behalf of the Secretary-General.

In spite of having to brave acute crises, over the past decades Ethiopia has made remarkable strides in development and addressing hunger. However, its susceptibility to drought continues to plague its people with food insecurity, with rains having failed as recently as in 2016-2017.

And therefore, along with humanitarian response there is an urgent need to strengthen the country's long-term resilience to future shocks.

Highlighting this importance, Mr. Lowcock was joined during his visit by Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), to solidify humanitarian and development collaboration and to make joint recommendations for solutions to break the cycle of loss of development gains due to recurrent disasters.

“The international community must seize opportunities to support Ethiopia in strengthening Government-led sustainable development structures at all levels that can mitigate human risks and the threat from increasingly frequent and severe droughts,” added the news release, urging support to strengthen Government and civil society capacities for peace building and reconciliation.

Established by the UN General Assembly in 2006, CERF is a humanitarian funding mechanism that enables a faster and more effective response to vital needs of people affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, or under-funded crises.

Over the past two years, the Fund has provided \$49 million to aid programmes in Ethiopia, sustaining important relief efforts for those in dire need.

Bridging gap between relief and development can meet immediate needs, lessen vulnerability – UN chief



People living in the Melia IDP camp, Lake Chad, receiving WFP food. Most of the displaced come from the Lake Chad islands, that have been abandoned because of insecurity. Photo: WFP/Marco Frattini

28 January – A surge in conflict-induced needs in Africa and the Middle East, coupled with an increase in climate shocks that pummel the most vulnerable everywhere, have given fresh urgency to calls for the international community to work in a new way that not only ends humanitarian needs but reduces them over time, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said Sunday.

Addressing leaders gathered for a high-level event held as part of the African Union Summit, which has been running since last week in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, Mr. Guterres underscored that this new way of working is not about shifting funding from development to humanitarian programmes or vice-versa.

“It is about recognizing common goals and optimizing existing resources and capabilities to help all people in situations of risk, vulnerability and crisis. It is about working better together to reduce

humanitarian needs over the medium to long-term,” said the UN chief, spotlighting the aim of one of the key outcomes of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

Two years after the international community outlined the changes that are needed to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability, Mr. Guterres said it was clear the call to bridge the humanitarian-development divide will take time

and a diverse range of actors, including those outside the UN system.

“We must recommit to a focus on results and holding ourselves accountable by fully articulating collective outcomes,” he said.

Amid a surge in conflict-induced needs in Syria, Yemen the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan and elsewhere, the UN chief said he had launched a push in diplomacy for peace, including mediation, to end and prevent conflict.

As for the increasingly frequent and more intense climate shocks that are also creating record humanitarian needs, and heavily impacting the most vulnerable, the international community must redouble its efforts to address climate change, as well as to increase the resilience of those impacted by drought, floods and other disasters.

“We have a moral obligation to do better and we have the tools and knowledge to deliver on that obligation,” said the Secretary-General, underscoring: “We must break down the silos that have existed for too long between humanitarian and development actors.”

He said experience from countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, Yemen and Somalia, where the new approach is working, offers four valuable lessons:

1. The UN and development partners must strengthen the capacities of national and local actors to effectively respond to needs, risk and vulnerability;
2. Collectively start from a common understanding of the challenges and then sharing data, information and analysis;
3. Carry out risk-informed joint planning, with governments and all partners, to reach those furthest behind; and
4. Redesign the financing architecture to promote predictability, flexibility and multi-year financing, as well as engage international financing institutions and the private sector actors, including insurance actors, to develop innovative solutions.

Noting that the world spends much more energy and resources managing crises than preventing them, the Secretary-General said the UN must uphold a strategic commitment to a 'culture of prevention,' and he pledged to work with Africa “towards ending suffering and restore the human dignity of every person.”

At African Union Summit, Guterres lauds strong AU-UN partnership, outlines areas for more cooperation

28 January – Hailing the partnership between Africa and the United Nations as “solid, and grounded on sound principles of human rights and good governance,” Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres told leaders gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the African Union Summit, that with Africa in the lead, “we can and will do more” to bolster successful cooperation throughout the continent.

“I stand here on behalf of the United Nations system and reaffirm our strong commitment to the member states and the people of Africa,” Mr. Guterres told the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) on Sunday, adding: “I strongly believe Africa is one of the greatest forces for good in our world.”

The UN chief said that in just his first year in office, the Organization has entered a “new era” of partnership with the AU, recalling the holding of the first UN-AU Annual Conference at the summit level, as well as the signing of two landmark framework agreements, respectively on enhanced partnership in peace and security, and, just yesterday, on implementing the 2030



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres addressing the Opening of the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. UN Photo/Antonio Fiorente

Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Spotlighting these and other initiatives as key examples of the successful work the two organizations are carrying out across the continent, Mr. Guterres said this partnership could be further strengthened in five key areas: addressing corruption; cooperation in peace and security; inclusive and sustainable development; climate change; and international migration.

Combatting the “far-reaching and devastating” impact of corruption, tax evasion and illicit financial flows, a main theme of this year's AU Summit, “requires an unimpeachable commitment to transparency and accountability,” he said, commending the decision to highlight this scourge, and offering the strong support of the UN. He also welcomed the designation of 2018 as African Anti-Corruption Year.

Specifically on international migration, the UN chief expressed that the global phenomenon not only powers economic growth, reduces inequalities and connects diverse societies but also help ride the demographic waves of population growth and decline.

“We must maximize the benefits of orderly migration, while stamping out abuses and prejudice,” he said, highlighting the benefits of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration for all countries.

“I urge you to bring your moral leadership and unique experience to this important collective priority for 2018,” added Mr. Guterres.

On the peace and security sector, the UN chief expressed his appreciation to African governments for contributing troops and police to UN peacekeeping operations to help save lives and keep the peace around the world.

He, however, noted that UN peacekeeping is not the solution to all crisis situations, and said that partnership with the African Union and sub-regional organizations can be the means to address the varied contexts which necessitate peacekeeping, including peace enforcement and counter-terrorist operations.

On inclusive and sustainable development, Secretary-General Guterres expressed that the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and African Union's Agenda 2063 are mutually reinforcing, and underscored the need to ensure sufficient means of implementation to ensure sustainable development.

But he acknowledged that while poverty elimination is a shared priority across the two agendas, significant gaps persist, particularly with regard to industrialization, water, energy, infrastructure and the environment. “We must place quality education within the reach of all,” he underscored.

In that context, he urged all UN Member States to uphold their commitments to official development assistance (ODA), outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development.

Mr. Guterres also said the international community has a role to play in combating tax evasion, money laundering and the elimination of illicit financial flows that deprive Africa of its essential resources.

The UN chief also stressed that women and young people must lead the development agenda, stressing that: “Women's full participation makes economies stronger and peace processes more successful.”

He said that around the world, there is skepticism about multilateralism. But he strongly believed that moving forward together, “the United Nations and the African Union can show that multilateralism is our best and only hope.”

UN condemns massive vehicle bomb attack in Kabul that leaves scores dead and wounded



A view of Kabul, the centre of Afghanistan's social and political life.
Photo UNAMA/Fardin Waezi.

27 January – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, the Security Council and the UN in Afghanistan have strongly condemned Saturday's massive vehicle bomb attack on a street near Government buildings in the Afghan capital, Kabul, which reportedly left 95 people dead and scores wounded.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the deadly incident, in which the attackers reportedly used a vehicle painted to look like an ambulance, including bearing the distinctive medical emblem, what the UN Assistance Mission in the country, known as UNAMA, flagged as a "clear violation of international humanitarian law."

In a statement from his Spokesman, Mr. Guterres said that indiscriminate attacks against civilians are grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and can never be justified.

"Those responsible for today's attack must be brought to justice," he added.

The Secretary-General extended his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured. He also expressed solidarity with the Government and people of Afghanistan.

Separately, Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, noted that the explosion occurred near a High Peace Council facility in a civilian-populated area of Kabul.

"While the Taliban claim suggested the purpose of the attack was to target police, a massive vehicle bomb in a densely populated area could not reasonably be expected to leave civilians unharmed," he emphasized.

Calling the attacks "nothing short of an atrocity," the UNAMA chief said those who organized and enabled it must be brought to justice and held to account.

He reiterated that under no circumstances are such attacks justifiable, and he called on the Taliban to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, at all times.

Issuing its own condemnation, the UN Security Council said the "heinous and cowardly terrorist attack" resulted in at least 95 people killed and 158 injured.

The members of the Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice.

DR Congo: UN chief condemns killing of 'blue helmet,' calls on armed groups to lay down weapons

27 January – Condemning the killing today of a peacekeeper with the United Nations stabilization mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) who was ambushed in the vast country's restive east, Secretary-General António Guterres again called on armed groups there to lay down their weapons and seek to resolve their grievances peacefully.

A statement issued this afternoon by the UN Spokesman said the Pakistani peacekeeper deployed with the Mission, known by its French acronym, (MONUSCO), was killed following an ambush by members of an armed group near Lulimba, 96 kilometres south-west of Baraka, in the DRC's South Kivu Province.

At least one other peacekeeper was wounded in the attack.



UN peacekeeping mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) BMP armored vehicle on patrol. Photo: MONUSCO/Sylvain Liechti

“The Secretary-General extends his heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased and to the people and government of Pakistan,” said the statement, adding that Mr. Guterres wishes a speedy recovery to the injured and calls on those responsible for the attack to be brought to justice.

The Secretary-General reiterated his call on armed groups in the DRC to lay down their arms and seek to resolve their grievances peacefully.

“He reaffirms the readiness of MONUSCO and the United Nations system to continue working with the authorities of the DRC to help address the security challenges facing the country,” the statement concluded.

At African Union Summit, Guterres outlines UN-AU approach to combatting terrorism



Violent extremists have carried out bombings in the Somali capital of Mogadishu on various occasions. Shown here is the aftermath of a car bomb attack on the city's Banadir Beach hotel on 25 August 2016.

Photo: UN Somalia (file)

27 January – No single nation, institution, or organization can defeat terrorism in Africa or anywhere else, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres told a special meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Saturday, as he called for a sustained, cooperative and coordinated approach in tackling this complex, ever-evolving menace.

“The African Union (AU) is a vital partner in confronting the global challenge posed by terrorist groups, said Mr. Guterres, adding that he had been calling for a “higher platform of cooperation” with the AU, and he is proud the two organizations are indeed building that platform across the range of challenges and opportunities confronting the continent.

He recalled that in April 2017, the two organizations signed the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security,

which includes cooperation in the field of countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.

“I believe this work can be strengthened even further with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out a road map for future collaboration and capacity-building support on countering terrorism within the context of that Framework, he explained.

One of the first reforms Mr. Guterres instituted as Secretary-General was the creation of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, which, he told the African leaders, has worked closely with the AU and other partners to develop regional strategies and national action plans for the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism in the Horn of Africa and Africa, as well as central and southern Africa.

Looking ahead, the UN chief said he believed a comprehensive approach to combatting the transnational threat of terrorism in Africa can be developed around four key priorities:

- By addressing the deficit in international counter-terrorism cooperation at the global, regional and national levels. Mr. Guterres will in June convene the first-ever UN Summit of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies to build on Member States' priorities and his discussion today;
- Enhanced ratification of existing legal counter-terrorism instruments, conventions and protocols;
- Tackling the root causes and underlying conditions, including the lack of economic opportunities, extreme poverty, marginalization, exclusion and discrimination; and
- Placing a special focus on expanding opportunities for young people – especially since youth under the age of 25 form the largest demographic group in most developing countries and they are often the ones most at risk of being recruited and radicalized by terrorists.

Underscoring that terrorism is not only a threat to peace and security but also to sustainable development, Mr. Guterres called on the international community to mobilize resources in support of African countries as they strive to balance security and development.

“We face a serious challenge – but I believe it is one that we can meet with solidarity, common action and a shared resolve,” he said.

Security Council condemns 'barbaric' terrorist attack in central Mali that killed dozens on civilian bus



A wide view of the Security Council in session. UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz (file)

27 January – The United Nations Security Council has strongly condemned the “barbaric and cowardly terrorist attack” on 25 January against a bus transporting civilians near Boni, in central Mali, during which 26 people from Mali and Burkina Faso, including children, were killed.

In a press statement issued late Friday evening, the Council expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the Governments of Mali and Burkina Faso.

The members of the Security Council went on to express solidarity with Mali in its fight against terrorism and stressed the need to intensify regional and international efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism, which may be conducive to terrorism.

Underlining the need to bring the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts to justice, the Security Council urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Governments of Mali and Burkina Faso as well as all other relevant authorities in this regard.

The Security Council commended the efforts of the region, including through the development of a G5 Sahel Joint Force, to address the transnational dimension of the terrorist threat in the Sahel region, and encouraged further progress in this regard.

UN envoy for Syria to attend Russia-sponsored talks in Sochi



UN Special Envoy on Syria Staffan de Mistura speaking to reporters as Special Meeting on Syria wraps up at the UN in Vienna. Photo: Stanislav Jenis

27 January – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres will send his Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, to Sochi next week to attend the Russia-sponsored Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue, talks reportedly on a political solution towards ending the seven-year Syrian conflict.

Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the UN chief, who is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, attending the African Union Summit, was fully briefed by Mr. de Mistura, who himself just wrapped up two days of UN-facilitated talks with Syrian Government and opposition delegations in Vienna.

The Spokesman said that in making the decision to send his envoy, Mr. Guterres took into account Russia's assertion that the outcome of the Sochi meeting, which will be held on 29 and 30 January, would be

brought to Geneva as a contribution to the UN-backed intra-Syrian talks, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254.

Adopted in 2015, that resolution endorsed a road map for a political process to end the conflict in Syria, including specific language on governance, a constitution and elections.

“The Secretary-General is confident that the Congress in Sochi will be an important contribution to a revived intra-Syrian talks process under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva, based on the full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué and Security Council resolution 2254,” said Mr. Dujarric.

Closing out the constitution-focused special 9th round of intra-Syrian talks last night in Vienna, Mr. de Mistura told reporters that “the ultimate goal of a constitutional process is to enable the Syrian people to freely and independently determine their own future in UN-supervised parliamentary and presidential elections, meeting the requirements laid out in resolution 2254.”

Recalling that the only sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria is through “an inclusive and Syrian-led political process,” the Special Envoy said it was his assessment that any Constitutional Committee would “at the very least” comprise Government and Opposition representatives in the intra-Syrian talks, Syrian experts, civil society, tribal leaders and women; and that care would be taken to ensure adequate representation of Syria's ethnic and religious components.

The conflict is Syria, which erupted in the wake of massive popular demonstrations in 2011, has, according to the UN relief wing, been marked by unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life. Some 13.1 million people now require humanitarian assistance, including close to three million people in need trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

“I share the immense frustration of millions of Syrians, inside and outside the country, at the lack of a political settlement,” Mr. de Mistura said, expressing hope that the talks in Sochi will contribute to a revived and credible intra-Syrian talks process, which he plans to reconvene “in the near future.”

“Ultimately, what is required is political will. It is high time that diplomacy, dialogue and negotiation prevail for the interest of all Syrians,” he said.

In Addis Ababa, Guterres says partnership with African Union is fundamental to work of the UN



In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, sign a Framework Agreement between the two organizations. UN Photo/Antonio Fiorente

27 January – Strong cooperation with the African Union (AU) is essential for the United Nations to be able to fulfill its mandate, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Saturday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the two organizations signed a new agreement to bolster their collaboration on range of global issues.

“For the United Nations, the most important partnership is the partnership with the African Union,” Mr. Guterres said, alongside Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, at the start of a weekend of activities for the UN chief at the 30th AU Summit, which gathers leaders from across the region, this year under the theme ‘Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation.’

After signing the new AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the

Secretary-General said that across the three main pillars of the United Nations – development, peace and security, and human rights – the African continent is key to solving global problems.

“The international community would not be able to have successes in development if Africa does not succeed its development taking advantage of its youth ‘dividend’ youth,” he said, adding that neither world the global community secure lasting peace and security if Africa is not able to manage not only its conflicts, but above all, to make strong effort at conflict prevention and resolution.

“We will be side by side with the African Union in respecting African leadership in solving African problems to help in this [regard],” said the Secretary-General, adding that Africa has also made admirable strides in human rights.

“Today, we talk a lot about immigration. I have always seen African countries open their doors to refugees and migrants,” said the UN chief, adding that this is a lesson other parts of the world could learn from.

The agreement reached today, which follows the signing at UN Headquarters in April 2017 of a landmark framework to strengthen partnership between the UN and the AU on peace and security, and help the two organizations better respond to the evolving challenges of peace operations.

Tackling hunger vital to Africa’s efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goals

Among the other activities he participated in today, Mr. Guterres addressed a high-level event to take stock of progress on the renewed partnership to end hunger in Africa by 2025, where he noted that agricultural and livestock productivity on the continent are under threat and hunger rates continue to increase, and cited the close links among hunger, food insecurity and poverty.

“Sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth is vital to achieve both SDG1 [Sustainable Development Goal] on poverty and SDG2 on hunger, and also influences many other Goals,” he said, referring to the 17 Goals included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the action plan adopted by UN Member States in 2015, to ensure that all people live in peace, security and dignity on a healthy planet.

“This means adopting national agricultural policies and investment plans that focus not only on agricultural sector development, but on poverty, hunger and resilience to climate change,” he added.

He went on to draw a link between climatic shocks, environmental degradation, crop and livestock price collapse and

conflict.

“Climate change adaptation should be promoted as an integral part of conflict prevention, with special attention to sustainable agriculture and pastoralist and semi-pastoralist livelihoods,” he urged.

He flagged that the majority of undernourished people in Africa live in conflict-affected countries, where hunger is almost twice as high when the crisis is protracted – advocating for stronger commitment by governments, the AU and the UN to promote peace, human rights and sustainable development.

“During conflicts and protracted crises, we still need to assist people most at risk of hunger and malnutrition and support them to build more resilient livelihoods,” he emphasized, adding: “That means preventive interventions to break the link between food insecurity and conflict, such as shielding consumers and producers from food price shocks through price stabilization measures and social protection interventions.”

the UN chief said that over time, by helping vulnerable households manage risks better, social protection can support investments in livelihoods that enhance people's resilience to future threats and crises.

“To build and sustain peace and address hunger and poverty, we need community-based approaches that build social cohesion and the capacity of local institutions and actors. Improved governance that can deliver equitable services is essential,” he asserted.