

Responses to global ills must integrate peace and sustainable development, UN Member States told

24 January 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today highlighted the importance of recognizing the links between sustainable development and sustaining peace amid such intertwined global challenges as rising inequality, protracted conflicts and climate change.

“We need a global response that addresses the root causes of conflict, and integrates peace, sustainable development and human rights in a holistic way – from conception to execution,” Mr. Guterres told the UN General Assembly high-level dialogue, on ‘Building sustainable peace for all: synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace.’

The universal nature of the 2030 Agenda – adopted by the Assembly in September 2015 as a plan to tackle poverty, inequality and other global challenges – and its pledge to leave no one behind ties it to sustaining peace, he explained.

“Our priority is prevention – prevention of conflict, of the worst effects of natural disasters, and of other manmade threats to the cohesion and wellbeing of societies,” Mr. Guterres stressed, noting that the best means of prevention, and of sustaining peace, is inclusive and sustainable development.

Investing in sustaining peace means investing in basic services, bringing humanitarian and development agencies together, building more effective and accountable institutions, protecting human rights, promoting social cohesion and diversity, ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls in all areas of society and moving to sustainable energy, he said.



A wide view of the Trusteeship Council Chamber during the General Assembly high-level dialogue on building sustainable peace for all. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

The Secretary-General cited two overriding challenges.

“First, education; education is a prerequisite for both peace and economic development. Good quality education systems can help transform societies, especially those affected by conflict [...] Second, youth unemployment deprives millions of young people of the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and plays a part in violent conflict and the rise of global terrorism.”

To tackle these global challenges, the United Nations must also be ready to reform, in particular in three major areas, including its strategy and

approach to peace. Indeed, he said, while peacekeeping missions consume about 70 per cent of the Organization's regular budget, many of them are deployed where there is no peace to maintain.

"We must prioritize the prevention of violent conflicts and the perpetuation of peace," he continued, also underscoring the need to reform the UN development system, as well as its administration.

Together with these reforms, it is crucial to build a new generation of partnerships, with governments, civil society, regional organizations, international financial institutions, academia and the business community and to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, he said.

In his remarks, General Assembly President Peter Thomson said that the history of the United Nations has been punctuated by both notable successes and some truly regrettable failures.

AUDIO: UN Secretary-General António Guterres says investing in education, finding decent jobs for young people and promoting social cohesion are just some of things that can be done to make the world safer, more resilient and sustainable. *Credit: UN News*

In April of last year, the General Assembly and the Security Council decided to advance a new approach to peace by adopting the so-called 'sustaining peace' resolutions in their respective chambers, thereby signalling a new cross-sectoral, comprehensive, and integrated approach to the maintenance of international peace and security.

He explained that those texts emphasize the importance of sustainable development to sustaining peace, and give special place to conflict prevention, gender equality, addressing root causes of conflict and protecting human rights.

"Taken in tandem, the 2030 Agenda and the [resolutions] make it clear that Member States regard sustainable development and sustaining peace are two agendas that stand or fall together," Mr. Thomson said, noting that today's dialogue is a tangible step to mutually reinforce commitment to that end.

[With international agreement on ceasefire monitoring, UN envoy praises](#)

Syrian delegations in Astana

24 January 2017 – The talks to strengthen the ceasefire in war-torn Syria ended today in Astana, Kazakhstan, with agreement on how to monitor the effort started last month and praise from the United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

“Let me commend Russia, Turkey and Iran for their decision to establish a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire,” Mr. de Mistura said, adding that the agreement is a “concrete step” towards implementation of Security Council resolutions on the issue.

In addition to representatives from the three countries, the two-day talks were the first time that Syrian opposition participated in the discussions alongside representatives of the Syrian Government.

Mr. de Mistura, who was a conduit for many of the discussions, praised the delegations noting that “it has required political courage from them to sit in the same room and listen to their respective demands.”

He added that both Syrian parties had told him that “their immediate priority was and remains to strengthen the ceasefire.”

With more than 650,000 people in besieged areas in Syria, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the ceasefire is expected to allow greater humanitarian aid to areas previously cut off by the fighting.

“The ceasefire can additionally help the fight of the international community against terrorism in Syria and the wider region,” Mr. de Mistura said.

In addition, the ceasefire is expected to help create “a supportive environment” for engagement between the Syrian parties ahead of the 8 February talks in Geneva, the UN Special Envoy noted, adding that he will head to New York to consult with the Secretary-General and brief the Security Council ahead of those talks.

The discussions in Switzerland will be held under the auspices of the UN and include issues of governance, constitution and elections in the context of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which endorsed a road map for a peace process in Syria.

“We cannot allow another ceasefire to dissolve because of a lack of a political process. Now is the time for the international community in all its dimensions to come together and support one integrated political negotiating process, as provided for in SCR 2254,” he said.

UN chief Guterres pledges commitment to achieving world free of nuclear weapons

24 January 2017 – Disarmament can play an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the outbreak of new strife, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said today, pledging to actively pursue the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction and the strict regulation of conventional weapons.

“I am committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons,” the Secretary-General declared in a video message to the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, which opened the first segment of its three-part 2017 session yesterday.

Recalling that upon taking office he had described a world of new and old conflicts woven in a complex, interconnected web, Mr. Guterres said today that those conflicts have precipitated gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

As such, while disarmament can play an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the outbreak of new strife, disarmament and arms control processes provide the breathing space for confidence to be built, stability to be strengthened and trust to be established.

“This was true during the Cold War and it is true now,” continued the UN chief, stressing that the need for breathing space is more urgent than ever as global tensions are rising, “sabres have been rattled and dangerous words spoken about the use of nuclear weapons.”

As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, “the world looks to the Conference to provide rationality and diplomatic solutions, to promote security through peaceful action, and to create the instruments we need to develop confidence, trust and international stability,” Mr. Guterres told the 65-member panel, adding: “You have a responsibility to all States and all peoples. Now is the time to live up to it.”

“I encourage you to work hard to find compromise and to make the most of your partners in civil society and academia. The United Nations will be your ally and assist however we can,” he concluded.

The Conference on Disarmament, established in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, is not formally a UN body but reports annually, or more frequently as appropriate, to the UN General Assembly. Michael Møller, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, serves as Secretary-General of the Conference, as well as Mr. Guterres’ personal representative to the body.

Currently, the consensus-based body focuses primarily on the following issues: cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters; prevention of an arms race in outer space; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons including radiological weapons; comprehensive programme of disarmament and transparency in armaments.

[In Helsinki, UN appeals for nearly \\$5B to help Syrians and host communities](#)

24 January 2017 – The United Nations and partners today appealed at an aid conference in Finland for \$4.63 billion to help people inside Syria, those who fled and the communities hosting them.

“Unless these additional funds are promptly secured, the UN and its partners will have to scale back life-saving assistance, not only for Syrians but also refugees and host communities, with catastrophic consequences,” said Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien.

“It will force families to try to survive with inadequate food intake; it will stop short nutrition programmes to bring babies back to health; it will mean families having to sleep without even plastic sheeting to protect them,” added Mr. O’Brien, who also heads the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) which co-organized the conference alongside the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Hosted by Finland, the *Helsinki Conference on Supporting Syrians and the Region* focuses on key humanitarian priorities: saving lives, protection, and building resilience, according to a press release from the organizers.

“The international community must send a clear message that it stands with them and provides the urgently needed support,” Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said in reference to displaced Syrians and host communities in remarks ahead of the funding appeal.

Some 13.5 million people urgently need protection and life-saving aid, according to OCHA, including 2 million children under the age of five.

Within Syria, there are 13 besieged areas with some 650,000 men, women and children cut off from aid.

Those people who have been able to flee to neighbouring countries continue to

struggle, along with their host communities, to meet the challenges of the political, economic and social spill-over from the Syria crisis.

“As millions have fled Syria, we have seen extraordinary generosity and solidarity on the part of host countries and communities and they must not be left to cope alone,” said Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP. “UN agencies and NGO partners are committed to helping governments and host communities build resilience in the face of this crisis. We’ve made important strides, but we need more support.”

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for 2017 and 2018 launched today aims to assist over 4.7 million refugees from Syria and 4.4 million people hosting them in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

The appeal is in addition to the \$3.4 billion that the 2017 humanitarian response plan.

[UN, partners voice deep concern about 750,000 civilians as battle sets to begin in western Mosul](#)

24 January 2017 – A hundred days after the start of military operations to retake Mosul from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) militants, humanitarian partners are expressing deep concern about the plight of the estimated 750,000 civilians who are currently living in the western sections of the city where fighting is expected to start in coming weeks.

Up until now, eastern Mosul has been the main battleground. To date, 180,000 people have fled the city’s eastern sections; more than 550,000 civilians have stayed in their homes.

“We are relieved that so many people in the eastern sections of Mosul have been able to stay in their homes. We hope that everything is done to protect the hundreds of thousands of people who are across the river in the west. We know that they are at extreme risk and we fear for their lives,” said Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, in a statement signed also by other humanitarians from UN agencies and the civil society.

“The reports from inside western Mosul are distressing,” said Ms. Grande, noting that humanitarian partners are unable to access these areas and the prices of basic food and supplies are soaring. Water and electricity are intermittent in neighbourhoods and many families without income are eating only once a day. Others are being forced to burn furniture to stay warm, she added.

“We don’t know what will happen in western Mosul but we cannot rule out the possibility of siege-like conditions or a mass exodus,” said Ms. Grande. “They can be killed by booby-traps and in cross-fire and could be used as human shields.”

The Iraqi security forces have adopted a humanitarian concept of operations putting civilian protection at the centre of their battle plan. Humanitarian partners welcome this approach and renew their collective call on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and ensure they have access to life-saving assistance.

“The world’s attention is fixed on the military campaign in Iraq. But once this is over, there will still be a humanitarian crisis,” Ms. Grande said, noting that as many as three million Iraqis, maybe even four million depending on what happens in Mosul, Hawiga and Tel Afar, may be displaced from their homes as a result of the conflict.

“These families will need to make crucial choices about how to rebuild and re-establish their lives. And we will need to be here to help them. We hope and trust that the international community will not walk away after Mosul. It would be a mistake – a very big one – if this were to happen,” she added.