

International, independent probe of alleged violations in Yemen needed – UN deputy rights chief

23 March 2017 – Describing the situation in Yemen as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises – 'and one that is entirely man-made' – the United Nations human rights deputy chief today urged the national commission of inquiry to fulfill its mandate of investigating all alleged violations of international and Yemeni laws.

"We encourage the Yemeni National Commission to make progress on all aspects of its mandate to investigate all allegations of violations of international law and Yemeni law, including those that go beyond the extent of the Commission's cooperation with OHCHR [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights]," UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore told a UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva yesterday.

She said that OHCHR has re-established its engagement with the National Commission on a programme of joint activities and a list of thematic priorities. The first of these activities took place from 21 to 23 February, in Doha, Qatar, which was a capacity-building workshop on international humanitarian law, investigative methodologies and lessons learnt from UN commissions of inquiry.

The de facto authorities in the capital, Sana'a, have officially communicated their intention not to extend cooperation to the National Commission or to any OHCHR team tasked with implementing the Human Rights Council resolution.

In response, OHCHR has urged the authorities to reconsider that decision and called on all parties to follow through on their commitment to cooperate with the National Commission and OHCHR.

She said that calls for an international and independent commission of investigation have been dismissed by some as potentially undermining the National Commission.

However, there are no persuasive reasons to believe that an international and independent investigation could not operate alongside a national commission of inquiry as the existence of one does not exclude the other, she explained.

The National Commission's first publications failed to comply with internationally recognized standards of methodology and impartiality, she pointed out.

Still, Ms. Gilmore argued that the violations allegedly committed in the ongoing conflict are of such gravity that impunity simply cannot be accepted. In the absence of credible mechanisms for national remedy, international and independent alternatives are essential.

“The High Commissioner has no choice but to reiterate his call for an international and independent commission of inquiry into all allegations of violations of human rights and humanitarian law, regardless of the alleged perpetrators,” she said.

Such an approach would also support the efforts of the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Yemen to reach a negotiated and durable settlement of the conflict, she added.

Research shows link between temperature rise and human influence, says head of UN climate panel

23 March 2017 – Speaking today at a United Nations forum to invigorate political momentum on climate change, the head of a major UN panel on climate change underlined that human influence on the climate system cannot be disputed.

“[Research has] demonstrated the link between cumulative past, present and future carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and a given temperature rise,” Hoesung Lee, the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), stressed in his keynote address at the UN General Assembly High-Level action event today.

“Bigger emissions now mean higher temperature in the future,” he added.

In his address, Mr. Lee drew examples from the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) issued by the IPCC in 2014 and said that since then, warming has continued and global mean temperature rise has reached more than one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels in 2015 and 2016.

Such observed warming led at the centre of the climate model projections assessed in the Report, he explained.

Underscoring that climate change threatened development, impacted economic growth, made poverty eradication efforts all the more difficult and severely underlined food security, Mr. Lee said that rising temperatures also had a very detrimental impact on the environment.

“Oceans are continuing to warm, acidify and lose oxygen,” he said, “Warm water coral reefs are already under pressure and 90 per cent would suffer significant risk from global warming of 1.5 degree Celsius.”



Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Hoesung Lee

addresses the UN General Assembly. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Touching upon the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which will be completed with a synthesis report in 2022, said Mr. Lee that it will be ready in good time for the first global stocktaking under the Paris Agreement on climate change the following year.

He also said that scientific research has illustrated that efforts to address climate change and pursuit of sustainable development can support each other, he cited the following example: "If food waste was a country, it would be the world's third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases [therefore] reducing food waste globally can help fight poverty and hunger while stabilizing the climate."

He also said that in its subsequent reports, the IPCC seeks to improve its scientific understanding of the economics of addressing climate change, such as of the benefits on health from clean air or the impact on energy security, balance of payments and jobs from energy efficiency.

In his remarks he further mentioned that researchers are on working on new methods to better observe and understand the climate, these will be crucial to help improve weather forecasts and climate projections.

"This science underpins the IPCC's policy-relevant assessments and is essential for sustainable development planning," he noted, calling for continued support the vital research.

Concluding his address, Mr. Lee highlighted that the expression "business as usual" is often seen for not taking action on climate.

"Business will be very far from usual in a world of no mitigation, which could see temperatures rise by an average 40 or more over the century," he said stressing that economic development cannot be pursued by relying on high-carbon technology.

"Actions to limit climate change have a positive impact on the domestic economy and help improve human well-being, and adaptation reduces vulnerability, supporting inclusive and equitable development."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is an international body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Security Council and region must 'speak with one voice,' end suffering in South Sudan – UN chief

23 March 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today stressed the need for the leadership of South Sudan to achieve an immediate cessation of hostilities, restore the peace process and ensure unrestricted humanitarian access in order to pull the world's youngest country back from the abyss, and back from a widening famine.

"All the optimism that accompanied the birth of South Sudan has been shattered by internal divisions, rivalries and the irresponsible behaviour of some of its leaders," Mr. Guterres said during a Security Council briefing.

"As a result, a country that had seen a brief glimmer of hope for a better future has plunged back into darkness. We have to do everything in our power to change this," he stressed.

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 but a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and First Vice-President Riek Machar plunged the country into full blown conflict in December 2013.

Providing a detailed overview, Mr. Guterres said civilians continue to be subjected to horrendous attacks, including rape and the recruitment of children. More than 1.9 million people are displaced internally, more than 220,000 of whom are seeking safety in protection sites of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Some 1.6 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

"The humanitarian crisis continues to deepen. One hundred thousand people are enduring famine, one million are on the verge of that fate, and 5.5 million may be severely food insecure by this summer," he explained.

Moreover at least 7.5 million people across South Sudan – almost two thirds of the population – need humanitarian assistance. Three years of conflict have eroded livelihoods and disrupted farming, including in the Equatorias, the country's breadbasket.



Wide view of the Security Council Chamber during its meeting on South Sudan.
UN Photo/Manuel Elias

The UN chief also said that violence has spread to include previously stable areas of northern Jonglei.

Noting that the peace process remains at a standstill, Mr. Guterres said that Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, who

returned yesterday from a trip to South Sudan, emphasized the critical importance of an inclusive political process in ensuring the well-being of the country's people.

Mr. Guterres warned that despite the alarm sounded by the UN and the international community over this crisis, the Government has yet to express any meaningful concern or take any tangible steps to address the plight of its people.

"On the contrary, what we hear most often are denials – a refusal by the leadership to even acknowledge the crisis or to fulfil its responsibility to end it," he said.

Mr. Guterres underscored the need to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access, including freedom of movement for UNMISS and a future Regional Protection Force, which was authorized by the Security Council in August 2016.

"But no such force, and no amount of diplomacy, can substitute for the lack of political will among those who govern the country," emphasized Mr. Guterres, noting that there is a strong consensus that South Sudanese leaders need to do more to demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of the country's people, who are among the poorest in the world.

"If there is to be any hope of those leaders changing their current calculations, greater pressure is needed. This means first and foremost that the region and the Security Council must speak with one voice," he stated.

He also warned that the dangers of South Sudan's trajectory should not be underestimated. "Atrocity crimes have occurred with impunity, and the potential for serious deterioration remains very real. Credible mechanisms for accountability are a must," he said.

[Iraq a country of hope amid debris of war, says UNICEF chief wrapping up visit](#)

23 March 2017 – Children have the power to bring Iraq out of conflicts and into a peaceful future, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has said.

Anthony Lake wrapped up his visit to the crisis-torn Middle Eastern country on Wednesday. Upon finishing his visit, Mr. Lake said: "I leave Iraq at a time when the country is facing significant challenges and opportunities. Yet everywhere I visited – East Mosul, Baghdad, Fallujah, Erbil – children and their families told me of their dreams and their determination to make them

real.”

Some 1.4 million children have been displaced by the violence in Iraq and 200,000 children remain trapped in Mosul where heavy fighting between Government forces and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), persists.

“UNICEF is working hard to provide children and families affected by the crisis in Mosul with lifesaving supplies of water, access to sanitation facilities, psychosocial support and the opportunity to get back to learning as soon as possible,” stated Mr. Lake.

The UNICEF chief visited schools in Fallujah that had reopened amid the debris of war and met with students who said they had dreams of being engineers and doctors.

“We are working with the Government of Iraq to provide all children in Iraq, with the resources they need to reach those dreams — whether that means new classrooms, notebooks or accelerated learning programmes,” he said.

“Because it is these students who, if they have the skills in their heads and healing in their hearts, will move the country from the conflicts of the past towards a peaceful future,” he emphasized.

[UN envoy and Pope Francis meet on enhancing cooperation to protect children from violence](#)

23 March 2017 – The United Nations envoy advocating an end to violence against children has met with His Holiness Pope Francis to discuss greater cooperation on protecting children from sexual and other forms of violence.

“Accelerating progress in children’s protection from violence needs to be at the heart of the actions of every nation, every faith and every person,” said Marta Santos Pais, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, during a private meeting with the Pope this past weekend in Vatican City.

The also meeting provided an opportunity to enhance collaboration on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and she noted that in a world free from fear and from violence, “everyone counts and everybody is needed.”

The meeting was meant to strengthen cooperation between the office of Ms. Santos Pais and the Holy See, which has permanent observer status at the UN, alongside 193 Member States.

The Pontiff reiterated his call for a 'zero tolerance' policy and reaffirmed the high priority given by the Holy See to protecting the rights of all girls and boys who are victims of violence, neglect, maltreatment, abuse and exploitation.

"This is a plague, a hidden scream that should be heard by all of us," highlighted Pope Francis, further recognizing the need to "take all necessary measures to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated."

RELATED: With more than half of all children in danger, UN envoy Santos Pais highlights how to keep them safe

Ms. Santos and the Pontiff also discussed the perils endured by children on the move who are exposed to constant incidents of violence especially when traveling unaccompanied or separated from their families, and who often lack the support of a nurturing and protective environment and in many cases end-up locked behind bars.



Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General chats with Pope Francis in her private audience at the Apostolic Palace. Photo: L'Osservatore Romano

Pope Francis and Ms. Santos Pais also discussed the growing risk of the criminalization of children living in socially excluded and poor communities, who lack support to develop to their full potential and who often become an easy target for armed gangs and organized crime networks. Victims of marginalization and exploitation, these children are at high risk of deprivation of liberty, where they may be exposed to incidents of neglect, abuse and ill treatment.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a target, 16.2, that calls for an end to "abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children." As this is a top UN priority, this meeting provided a significant opportunity to identify ways of enhancing collaboration and supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda targets on violence against children.

Pope Francis and Ms. Santos Pais reaffirmed the importance of continuing to foster the cooperation between the UN and the Holy See in the promotion of children's rights and protection from violence, and in process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.