

## UN experts urges Poland to ensure unrestricted 'civic space' during climate talks

Poland's new law designed to address safety concerns during the United Nations climate change conference to be held there later this year could infringe on the privacy of environmentalists and curtail their rights to protest peacefully, the world body's human rights experts said Monday.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) will take place in a southern Polish city of Katowice from 26 November to 16 December.

"For the COP24 to be a true success, the Polish Government must do its utmost to prepare and hold the meeting in a manner that facilitates the climate change negotiations and also ensures [meaningful civic space](#) that is free from undue surveillance and restriction," said a group of UN experts in a news release issued by the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR).

These experts – including Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and Joe Cannataci, Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy – raised the issue, as the Polish Government briefed officials about COP24 at a preparatory meeting being held in Bonn, Germany.

"All eyes are on the Polish Government to see how, as the host and the president of COP24, it will honour its human rights obligations and uphold its responsibility to ensure free and unfettered access for broader participation," the experts said.

Specifically, Article 17 of the new legislation appears to give sweeping surveillance powers to the police and secret services to collect and process personal data about all COP24 participants, and Article 22 appears to prevent spontaneous peaceful assemblies in Katowice.

The UN experts encouraged the Government to [clarify](#) these matters.

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## UN chief condemns deadly attack on

## voter registration centre in eastern Afghanistan

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has strongly condemned an attack on a mosque being used as a voter registration centre in Afghanistan's Khost province and underscored his support to the country as it prepares for elections later this year.

"The Secretary-General extends his solidarity to Afghan citizens seeking to exercise their constitutional rights and take part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections," said a [statement](#) attributable to the UN chief's spokesperson.

In the statement, Mr. Guterres also extended his condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

According to reports at least 17 people were killed and 37 were wounded in the attack, which took place Sunday afternoon (local time).

There have been a number of attacks on voter registration centres as Afghanistan prepares to hold parliamentary elections in October.

On 22 April, [a suicide attack struck](#) a voter registration centre in the capital, Kabul, killing at least 30 people.

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## Hottest April day ever recorded – maybe: World Meteorological Organization

Deadly storms in India and record temperatures in Pakistan are an indication that more extreme weather events are happening globally owing to climate change, United Nations weather experts said on Friday.

Amid flash-floods in the East and Horn of Africa – and sand and dust storms in the Arabian Gulf – Clare Nullis from the [World Meteorological Organization](#) (WMO) told journalists at UN headquarters in Geneva that this week's storms in northern India had reportedly left more than 100 dead.

" We've never seen a temperature above 50 degrees C in April."  
– Clare Nullis (WMO)

What may well be the hottest temperature ever recorded for April, was registered this week in Pakistan, she added. A weather station in the city of Nawabshah registered 50.2 degrees Celsius on Monday; or 122.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

"This is April – not June and July – this is April," she exclaimed. "We don't normally see temperatures above 50 degrees: in fact, as we're aware, we've never seen a temperature above 50 degrees C in April."

Moving considerably further south, to another climatic region of the world, A WMO committee of experts also announced on Thursday that a record high temperature recorded for the Antarctic which was set back in in March 2015, still stands.

The record high reading, was under threat of being surpassed by a temperature recorded at a nearby weather station, in the same period of warm weather, and in more or less the same location.

The existing record of 17.5 degrees Celsius was recorded at the Argentine Research Base Esperanza, near the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, on 23 March.

The rival reading which, if verified, would have set a new record, was registered a day earlier in the same area, at an automatic weather station established by the Czech Republic on Davies Dome. But polar meteorology experts examined the data closely and made their long-awaited announcement on Friday that the existing record still stands.

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## [UN leaders vow to stamp out workplace sexual harassment](#)

Leaders from across the UN system on Friday pledged to increase efforts to stamp out sexual harassment within their ranks; ensuring a zero-tolerance approach where abusers are held accountable, and staff feel safe to report incidents.

UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), according to a [note to correspondents](#) issued by his Spokesperson, "reiterated that he was seriously concerned by all allegations of sexual harassment at the United Nations and has made addressing this issue a top priority."

"Harassment of any kind offends the principles of what we stand for as an organization and undermines our core values and our work," Mr. Guterres told the Chief Executives Board (CEB), which has been meeting this week in London, and brings together 31 chief executives of UN agencies, funds and programmes.

The board meeting, which began in the UK capital on Wednesday, included a special session on addressing sexual harassment, led by the UN chief.

He restated his personal commitment to uphold a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

In a CEB statement, the chiefs said that sexual harassment results from a culture of discrimination and privilege, based on gender inequality, and that it has no place in the UN system.

They also reiterated their collective commitment to zero-tolerance of harassment cases; to strengthen victim-centred prevention and response efforts; and to foster a safe and inclusive working environment.

They also pledged to drive action in three key areas – reporting, investigation and decision-making. Measures include providing mechanisms such as 24-hour helplines for staff to report harassment and access support; as well as instituting fast-track procedures to receive, process and address complaints and providing mandatory training.

The Secretary-General, the note said, “is putting greater power into the hands of women” throughout the UN, with more women than men now in the [Senior Management Group](#).

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## Midwives ‘lead the way with quality care’, as world marks International Day

Midwives are vital to driving sustainable development and key to helping mothers, and expectant-mothers, make informed, healthy choices, said the United Nations health agency’s chief nurse on Friday.

WHO’s Chief Nursing Officer, Elizabeth Iro, said ahead of the International Day of the Midwife, marked on Saturday, that communities everywhere were best served by letting midwives work together with mothers and their newborns, to provide continuity of care, as children develop.

“This is based on research that demonstrates that not only is [continuity of care preferred by women but also that there are profound impacts](#), including a 24 per cent reduction in pre-term births,” said Ms. Iro.

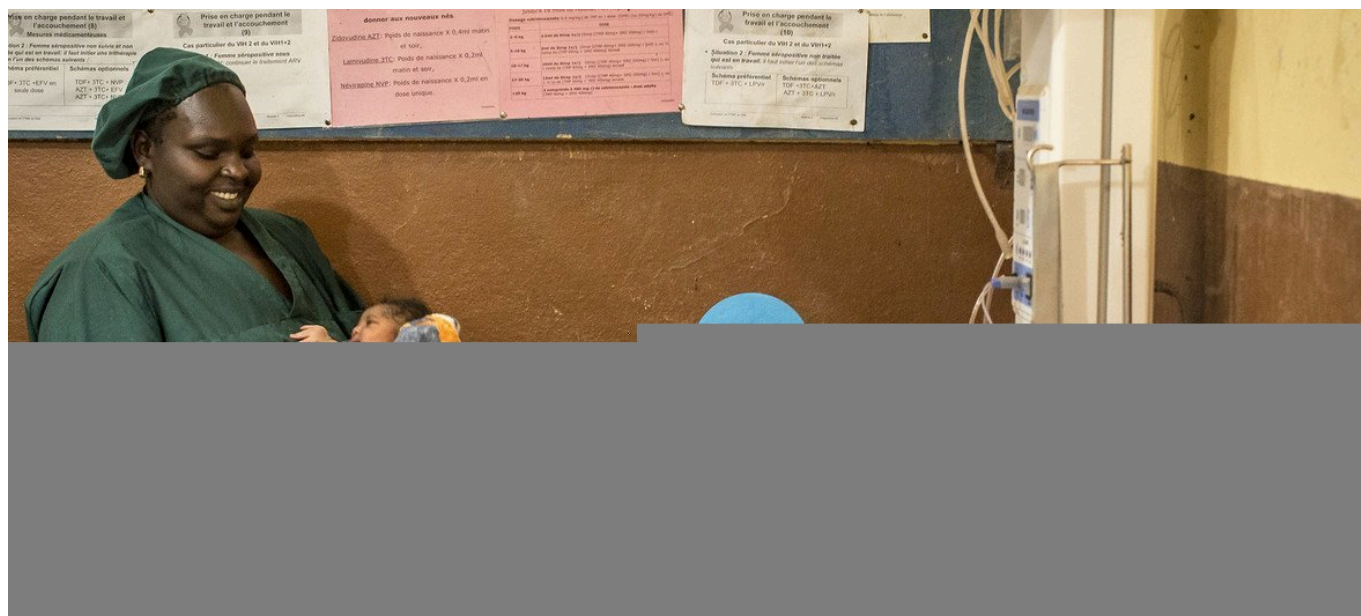
Evidence has also found that professionally-qualified midwives are able to meet 87 per cent of the needs of women and newborns, she added.

The International Day of the Midwife, observed each 5 May, recognizes the

vital role these healthcare professionals have in preventing maternal and newborn deaths and empowering women to make the best choices for themselves and their babies.

The theme for this year's celebration of one of the world's oldest and most important professions is: "Midwives leading the way with quality care."

In her message, Ms. Iro also highlighted the importance of the role of midwives in delivering on the globally-agreed [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Key health targets to meet development goal 3, include progress on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health.



UNICEF/Keïta

Midwife Fadimata Maïga holds a newborn infant before placing it beneath an infant radiant warmer in order to proceed to a newborn health assessment at the Baraouéli Health Center in Baraouéli, Ségou region, Mali.

At health facilities and in communities, midwives help women and newborns work together to improve child health overall.

"This puts midwives at the centre of delivering this agenda," highlighted the WHO official.

"As midwives we have come a long way" she said, "to help all women, newborns and their families to not only survive but to thrive and transform the world we live in."

## Safe hands save lives

Hand Hygiene Day is also being marked on 5 May, highlighting the importance of the simple but beneficial act of washing your hands regularly to ward off infections or disease.

"It's in your hands: prevent sepsis in health care", is the theme this year.

According to Ms. Iro, it's a practice that is all the more important for midwives, as [sepsis](#) – a life-threatening condition – affects three million newborns, can kill up to five hundred thousand before they are a month old, and causes one in ten maternal deaths.

“Join us and be a champion [promoting hand hygiene and preventing sepsis in health care](#),” she said.