

Mental health ‘neglected issue’ but key to achieving Global Goals, say UN chiefs

Mental health remains one of the most neglected global health issues, even though it is critical to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders, top United Nations officials have said at an event in London.

“One in four people experience a mental health episode in their lifetime, but the issue remains largely neglected,” said UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) in his opening remarks to a roundtable discussion on mental health, co-organized by his office, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), and the Wellcome Trust, a charitable foundation that supports scientists and researchers.

“The UN is committed to working with partners to promote full mental health and wellbeing for all,” Mr. Guterres added.

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The roundtable discussion, held Wednesday evening, included Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, [UN Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF) Executive Director Henrietta Fore, and some 20 others from academia, government and civil society.

A main message coming out of the discussion was growing support for the notion that there can be “no health without mental health” and there is a need to look beyond the health sector, for creative solutions to tackle the root causes of deteriorating mental health.

Inadequate care does not come about in a vacuum, and there are societal as well as environmental factors involved, the roundtable heard.

Ms. Mohammed explained that mental health is not just an issue for the health sector because it also related to equality and basic individual rights. In this regard, she called for greater cross-sectoral investment to address the problem.

The event was held on the margins of the annual meeting of the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) – one of the semi-annual meetings that brings together, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, the executive heads of 31 agencies and specialized UN organizations.