

Next gen, 'lightning' fast global communication network on track for 2020 entry – UN agency

23 February 2017 – A working group of the United Nations agency which coordinates telecommunication operations and services throughout the world completed today a cycle of studies on the key performance requirements of the next generation mobile networks (5G technology) for the International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT)-2020 systems.

According to the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 5G mobile systems would provide lightning speed, ultra-reliable communications for broadband and the Internet of Things (IoT).

“IMT-2020 will be the global cornerstone for all activities related to broadband communications and the Internet of Things for the future – enriching lives in ways yet to be imagined,” said the ITU Secretary-General, Houlin Zhao, in a news release.

The draft report – describing key requirements related to the minimum technical performance of IMT-2020 candidate radio interface technologies, including data rate, bandwidth, latency, area traffic capacity, energy efficiency and reliability – is expected to be approved at the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) 5G meeting in November.

Underscoring the importance of the IMT-2020 standard, François Rancy, Director of ITU's Radiocommunication Bureau said: “The standard is set to be the global communication network for the coming decades and is on track to be in place by 2020.” “The next step is to agree on what will be the detailed specifications for IMT-2020, a standard that will underpin the next generations of mobile broadband and IoT connectivity,” he added.

According to ITU, early technical trials, market trials and deployments of 5G technologies based on the foreseen developments slated for IMT-2020 are not anticipated.

These systems may not provide the full set of capabilities envisaged for IMT-2020, but the results of these early activities will flow forward into, and assist the development of, the final complete detailed specifications for IMT-2020, noted the UN agency.

ITU added that IMT is the on-going enabler of new trends in communication devices – from the connected car and intelligent transport systems to augmented reality, holography, and wearable devices, and a key enabler to meet social needs in the areas of mobile education, connected health and emergency telecommunications.

Members of the working group responsible for IMT systems, include key actors

from the technology industry, national and regional standards development organizations, regulators, network operators, equipment manufacturers, academia, research institutions and ITU member States.

[Central African Republic: Senior UN relief official urges access to civilians in north-eastern provinces](#)

23 February 2017 – Amid renewed violence that has led to “successive gross violations” of international humanitarian law in two north-eastern provinces of the Central African Republic (CAR), the most senior United Nations relief official in the country has called for free and unhindered access to civilians impacted by the clashes between rival armed groups.

“It is unacceptable for civilians to pay the price for rivalries between armed groups because of their religious beliefs or political affiliation,” said the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator for CAR, Aboubacry Tall, calling on parties to the conflict in the Ouaka and Haute Kotto provinces to respect and uphold international humanitarian law.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the country, since the beginning of 2017, there have been deadly clashes between rival armed groups in the Haute Kotto and Ouaka provinces to the detriment of civilians who are forcibly displaced.

The town of Bambari, the capital of Ouaka province, currently has 45,000 displaced persons out of a population of 160,000. Since the end of November 2016, about 20,000 new IDPs have been registered. The town of Maloum (63 kilometres north of Bambari), recently received an estimated 4,000 newly displaced persons due to clashes between armed groups in the Haute Kotto and Basse Kotto provinces as well as in the Ouaka province (Ndjoubissi, Ndassima, Ippy, Belengo, Mbroutchou and Atongo-Bakari).

In order to ensure the provision of assistance in compliance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, Mr. Tall reminded parties to the conflict of their obligation to “ensure unimpeded humanitarian access with no conditions.” He strongly urges armed groups not to obstruct “the free movement of civilians or humanitarian actors that humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the people in need.”

In a news release issued earlier this month, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) had stressed that two factions of the ex-Séléka armed group, namely the FPRC (*Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique*) coalition and UPC (*Mouvement pour l’Unité et la Paix en Centrafrique*), represent a threat for civilian populations and that

UN peacekeepers will respond in case of violence.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013.

[‘We need to start now’ on road to peace, UN envoy says as Syria negotiations open in Geneva](#)

23 February 2017 – Welcoming the representatives of the Syrian Government and its opposition to the United Nations-facilitated negotiations that opened today in Geneva, Staffan de Mistura reiterated the need to work together for a political solution.

“We face an uphill battle. It will not be easy,” the UN Special Envoy for Syria said, “but we must apply ourselves to this task.”

“Let’s try to work together to end this horrible conflict and lay the foundation for a country at peace with itself, sovereign and unified,” he noted.

Making reference to the Palais des Nations where the intra-Syrian negotiations are being held, he said the UN headquarters in Switzerland was a symbol “unifying all of us” given its history and could be the place where “Syrians started a long, hard journey to peace.”

He stressed that after six years of conflict, people are waiting for a relief from all suffering and dream “for a new road out of this nightmare.”

Mr. de Mistura is continuing to push for a resolution to the conflict based on UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) that endorsed a road map for peace process in Syria, including specific language on governance, constitution, elections, and even how negotiations should be timed.



On 5 August 2016 in Aleppo, Syria, a child with spinal muscular atrophy who needs special medical care, now lives on the streets, after fleeing with her family from attacks and intense fighting in the 1070 neighbourhood. Photo: UNICEF/Khuder Al-Issa

Today’s intra-Syrian negotiations follow talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, where participants agreed on how to monitor the ceasefire effort started in December 2016.

As in Astana, representatives of Russia and the United States are among the Security Council Member States present at the discussions.

Syrian women and children bearing the brunt

The Special Envoy also pledged to do everything to promote the role of Syrian women in the political efforts.

Earlier today, he was greeted by a group of Syrian women holding a vigil in Geneva for relatives and friends – sometimes children – who had been arrested, abducted or are still missing apparently as a result of the Government or the opposition.

Calling them Syrian mothers, wives and daughters, Mr. de Mistura said they were symbolic of everyone still missing “in this horrible conflict.”

He pledged to raise the issue of detainees, abducted and missing people as part of the ongoing discussions.

Meanwhile, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today urged participants to the talks to put Syria’s children first.

In a statement UNICEF Regional Director Geert Cappelaera said at least 20 children were reportedly killed in attacks in the country since the start of this year, and many more injured.

“The numbers are a grim indication that the cessation in hostilities announced last December has yet to result in real gains in protection and humanitarian assistance for all children in Syria,” Mr. Cappelaera said.

“What if these were your children?” he asked.

VIDEO: UN Special Envoy for Syria, Steffan de Mistura, has acknowledged the “long, hard journey” ahead, while calling on all sides to work together towards a political solution to the country’s protracted conflict.

[Millions in Lake Chad suffering ‘at no fault of their own’ need world’s support, urges UN aid chief](#)

23 February 2017 – Ahead of a major donors conference in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, seeking to generate global action to tackle the complex crisis in Africa’s Lake Chad Basin, the top United Nations relief official highlighted that investing in support for the region will in turn help strengthen broader security around the world for all to benefit.

"The opportunity we have at this gathering in Oslo [is for a partnership] between those who have been calling for enormous amounts of support [in the region and] to make sure that we can meet the needs of people as they go through terrible suffering, through no fault of their own," UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien told *UN News*.

The UN aid chief's comments come ahead of the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region, which will be held tomorrow and which will be hosted by Norway, together with Nigeria, Germany and the UN. Aiming to draw attention to the crisis, which has been largely overlooked, the event seeks to mobilize greater international involvement and increased funding for humanitarian efforts to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – the UN's relief wing – nearly 11 million people in the region, comprising Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, need humanitarian assistance suffer from severe acute malnutrition, among them, about half a million are very young children – babies.

The appeal, amounting \$1.5 billion will fund relief operations in the region, including, inter alia, providing life-saving food and nutrition support to 1.6 million people, livelihood support to 1.4 million, primary health care for 4.4 million, measles vaccinations for over one million children, education support for almost 300,000 girls and boys and safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene for 2.3 million displaced families and their host communities.

VIDEO: UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, has made a strong case for the need to urgently assist over 10 million people in Africa's Lake Chad Basin, noting that the humanitarian support "is an investment for all of us."

Of the total population in need (10.7 million), about 8.5 million are in north-eastern Nigeria which has seen years of violence as a result of Boko Haram militancy.

In particular noting the challenges in north-eastern Nigeria, Mr. O'Brien hailed the work of the humanitarian actors on the ground "they are staying, they are delivering – there have been some terrible and tragic losses of very brave and brilliant aid workers – and they continue working in some of the most atrocious and difficult conditions."

Pointing out that the 2016 appeal was only about 50 per cent funded, he underlined that it meant that "we can only do about half of what we know needs to be done," said Mr. O'Brien, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the head of OCHA.

Also, noting that the international community had to be a partner and show that it has enough capacity and enable relief programmes for those who need it the most, he said that the support would help ensure that "the people [in need] can get water and food; we can [avert] the terrible severe acute

malnutrition, we can seek to avert famine, which is exacerbated by some of the climatic events, and indeed, climate change.”



For the eighth consecutive year, civilians are suffering from Boko Haram violence in Africa’s Lake Chad Basin. These women live in a compound in Banki town, in Nigeria’s Borno state, close to the Cameroon border. They believe their husbands were killed and have no source of income. Photo: OCHA/0. Fagan



The activities of Boko Haram continue to undermine the peace and stability. Insecurity, especially in parts of Nigeria’s Borno and Yobe states, continues to hamper humanitarian operations. In areas that have recently opened up, civilians desperately need health, protection, shelter, water and sanitation. Protection needs in the countries north-east, particularly in newly accessible areas in Borno, remain severe. Photo: OCHA



While facing human rights violations and abuses including attacks, disappearances, forced displacement, about half a million children in Borno are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition this year. Famine-like conditions loom for over 120,000 people in the most affected parts of Borno and Yobe, while an estimated 11 million people in the region, comprising Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, need humanitarian assistance. Photo: OCHA



Although about one million displaced people have returned to their areas of origin since August 2015, and while the number continues to increase, many returnees remain stranded in other sites for displaced people because of ongoing insecurity, destroyed infrastructure and the absence of basic services. In Borno, for example, more than 470 health facilities are partially or completely destroyed. Photo: OCHA



The UN’s humanitarian response has increased over the past year. Food assistance grew from reaching 600,000 people in August 2016 to 2.1 million people by December. Despite this progress, immediate funding is urgently required to support the scale-up of humanitarian operations. Photo: OCHA

UN health agency reports depression now 'leading cause of disability worldwide'

23 February 2017 – Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, the United Nations health agency today reported, estimating that it affects more than 300 million people worldwide – the majority of them women, young people and the elderly.

An estimated 4.4 per cent of the global population suffers from depression, according to a report released today by the UN World Health Organization (WHO), which shows an 18 per cent increase in the number of people living with depression between 2005 and 2015.

“Depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life,” the WHO said.

According to the report, which was released today ahead of April’s World Health Day, prevalence rates seem to peak in adults at around 60 years of age, but are also seen in teenagers.

When long-lasting and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition leading, at its worst, to suicide. According to the report, some 800,000 people kill themselves every year, a significant number of them young adults between the ages of 15 and 29.

“Depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors,” WHO said, adding that depression can lead to more stress and dysfunction and worsen the affected person’s life situation.

To reduce depression, the UN agency recommends effective school-based programmes and exercise regimes.

Different psychological and psychosocial treatments were also noted in the report, which notes that health-care providers may offer behavioural activation, cognitive behavioural therapy [CBT], and interpersonal psychotherapy [IPT], or antidepressant medication (such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors [SSRIs] and tricyclic antidepressants [TCAs]).

Among the findings, however, the authors caution against using antidepressants to treat children or to quickly offer them to adolescents.

Some psychological treatment formats for consideration include individual and/or group face-to-face psychological treatments delivered by professionals and supervised lay therapists.