

In a period of 'profound uncertainty', stand up for human rights, urges UN rights chief in global appeal

15 February 2017 – Urging action for greater freedoms, stronger respect and more compassion, the United Nations human rights arm today launched a \$253 million appeal – its largest to date – to bolster its 2017 work programme to protect and advance the rights of people around the world.

In numerous countries, even the rules are under attack – xenophobia and calls for racial and religious discrimination have entered mainstream discourse and every day, seemingly, are more widespread and more deeply rooted, said Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a news release issued by his office (OHCHR) announcing the appeal.

More and more people are suddenly realizing we can no longer afford to be complacent about human rights, and that the erosion of other people's human rights will sooner or later lead to the erosion of our own.

According to OHCHR, the extra-budgetary funds will augment its work in providing in-country assistance, supporting UN independent rights experts and the Human Rights Council, as well as contribute to a number of trust funds on issues such as torture, rights of indigenous peoples and contemporary forms of slavery.

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Through human rights advocacy, advice on laws and constitutions, training of State authorities as well as of non-governmental organizations, fact-finding and hard-hitting investigations that lay the groundwork for accountability and amplify the voices of victims of human rights violations – through these and other means, [OHCHR] helps in the push for better human rights protections for all, said High Commissioner Zeid.

The Office has some 60 field presences in different locations around the globe. These include country, regional and stand-alone offices, human rights advisers, and human rights components of UN missions.

However, it also struggles with – dramatic and chronic – underfunding.

More than ever, we need strong partners to stand with us [...] We need to broaden our financial support base to include more Member States, and encourage participation from a much broader range of private donors, said Mr. Zeid, calling for their support to help prevent human rights crisis

from escalating as well as contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"We can advocate a broad, open democratic space and impartial rule of law institutions in every country [...] we can push back against the current assaults on values, and act swiftly to uphold the human rights laws and principles we fought so hard to build," he highlighted, adding:

"The time to stand up for human rights is now. We are counting on your support."

VIDEO: UN Human Rights Appeal 2017. Source: OHCHR

[UN emergency food agency to feed some 220,000 people in conflict-affected Ukraine](#)

15 February 2017 – Access to food is becoming harder in eastern Ukraine as prices are outpacing incomes, the United Nations emergency food agency today said, warning that without longer-term intervention, more people will need humanitarian aid in the months and years to come.

"Food prices are increasing at a time when household incomes are impacted by unemployment, and we see many families resorting to negative coping strategies in the face of economic hardship," said the World Food Programme (WFP) in Ukraine, Dorte Ellehammer.

The UN agency said there are about 70,000 people in eastern Ukraine considered "most vulnerable." This group includes the elderly, families headed by a single mother, people with chronic illnesses or disabilities, and people who do not receive other humanitarian aid.

In addition, there are up to 150,000 people considered "moderately food-insecure," meaning that they struggle to find or buy enough food on a daily basis, according to WFP.

"As the conflict has continued, many Ukrainians have become more vulnerable due to the lack of sufficient social benefits to cover food and other living expenses," the agency said in a press release.

To help Ukrainians cope, WFP said that it would scale up its use of cash-based transfers in areas where the banks are functioning properly and there is food in the stores.

During the coming spring and summer, the agency said that it plans to

implement small-scale early recovery projects to increase incomes, diversify crops and help to inject some money into local businesses.

WFP has urgently requested more than \$30 million to provide much-needed food aid to eastern Ukraine through the end of 2017.

[Former provincial Party chief sentenced to 15 years](#)

Zhou Benshun, former Party chief of northern China's Hebei Province, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for corruption, a court in southeast China's Xiamen city said Wednesday.

According to Xiamen Municipal Intermediate People's Court, Zhou's personal assets, worth 2 million yuan (US\$291,545), will be seized, along with other illegal gains and property.

The court found that Zhou took advantage of his official posts from 2000 to 2015 to seek benefit for others in real estate development, project payments, fire control project approval, bank loans and personnel promotions.

He accepted bribes of over 40 million yuan directly for himself or through his family.

The court decided to hand down a lighter penalty to Zhou as he confessed to his crimes, expressed remorse and cooperated in returning the bribes.

Zhou said he would not appeal.

[Polar and ski parks are coming to Shanghai](#)

A huge polar-themed ocean park will open in July 2018 in the Lingang area in Shanghai's southeast – part of a Pudong master plan to revamp the area.



As well as a skiing park and planetarium, the master plan will see two new universities opening and other colleges setting up campuses, officials said.

With these new facilities, the Lingang area in the Pudong New Area aims to attract 450,000 residents and 10 million tourists annually by 2020, according to the Lingang management committee.

Shanghai Polar Ocean World, which is planned to cover 300,000 square meters, will include four marine animal interactive programs, three theaters and a further 15 entertainment facilities, its developer said. Upon completion, the park aims to showcase a broad range of Arctic and Antarctic wildlife. It's a 90-minute drive from People's Square in the city center.

Land preparation work has started on the skiing park named WinterStar near the polar park, which is planned to become one of the world's largest indoor skiing resorts, according to the committee.

Construction has also started on Shanghai Planetarium, which is scheduled to open in 2020 to become the world's largest planetarium.

Several universities will open campuses in the Lingang area, and two new ones are setting up shop – the Sino-French arts and design management school of the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, and the Sino-British International Low-carbon College. Both will start enrollment in September.

Construction is under way for a new campus for the Shanghai University of Electric Power.

A yacht training base has also been planned in Lingang, the committee added. Construction has also begun on modern office buildings, hotels, shopping malls and convention centers.

The port area of the city aims to develop itself into a new town featuring science and technology, culture, finance, trade and tourism.

The committee has announced that professionals in the area will be encouraged

to apply for local hukou, or household registration, in a move aimed at attracting talented personnel to help to realize its ambition.

Such professionals will also enjoy preferential housing prices, low rents and accommodation subsidies.

In the future, Lingang will promote an 18.9 kilometer, medium-capacity traffic system, along with electric buses, as well as vehicle and bicycle sharing programs to create a green and efficient public transport system, the committee said.

[China's new aircraft carrier to be launched this year](#)

China's second aircraft carrier is scheduled to be launched later this year and is expected to enter the service by 2020, Xu Guangyu, a retired Chinese military officer and consultant to the China Arms Control and Disarmament Assn, said in an interview with Beijing Media Network.

China's first home-made aircraft carrier, designed to be a base for fighter jets and helicopters, is now near completion. The aircraft carrier is the first of the Type 001A class, and represents an important step in advancing China's naval power.

"The aircraft carrier is being built as planned. Most of its major construction and design work has been completed. Its hull has already been assembled in a shipyard. The ship will soon be equipped with aviation, radar and other facilities," said Chinese Defense Ministry Spokesperson Wu Qian in October 2016, when he was responding to media inquiries on alleged aircraft carrier images circulating online.

Yin Zhuo, a Chinese naval expert, also confirmed in a CCTV interview that China's first home-made aircraft carrier is expected to be launched in water in early 2017.

There is still a large amount of work to do at the carrier's outfitting stage after its launching. It will take about one to two years to carry out functional debugging for its devices as well as weapons and equipment. The new aircraft carrier could begin its sea trial by early 2019, Xu said.

Xu also mentioned in the interview that Chinese carrier pilots are also under training, with an expectation of forming two aviation units.