

Ahead of International Day, UN rights chief urges governments to target hate speech, crimes

20 March 2017 – On the eve of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations human rights chief today reminded Governments around the world that they have a legal obligation to stop hate speech and hate crimes, and called on people everywhere to “stand up for someone’s rights.”

“Politics of division and the rhetoric of intolerance are targeting racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, and migrants and refugees. Words of fear and loathing can, and do, have real consequences,” the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, said.

The “Words of fear and loathing can, and do, have real consequences” UN High Commissioner’s statement comes ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, marked annually on 21 March. The theme for this year is ending racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including as it relates to people’s attitudes and actions towards migration.

At the Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016, UN Member States adopted a Declaration strongly condemning acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The Summit also sparked the UN’s Together initiative to change negative perceptions and attitudes aimed at refugees and migrants.

In his statement, Mr. Zeid said that States do not have any excuse to allow racism and xenophobia to fester.

States “have the legal obligation to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination, to guarantee the right of everyone, no matter their race, colour, national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law,” the senior UN official said.

He urged Governments to adopt legislation expressly prohibiting racist hate speech, including the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, and threats or incitement to violence.

“It is not an attack on free speech or the silencing of controversial ideas or criticism, but a recognition that the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities,” Mr. Zeid said.

To promote human rights, the UN High Commissioner’s office, known by its acronym OHCHR, is asking people around the world to , “Stand up for Someone’s Rights Today”. The campaign urges people to take practical steps in their own communities to take a stand for humanity.

UN aid 'pushed to limits' as 320,000 more civilians may flee west Mosul

20 March 2017 – Humanitarian agencies are bracing for the possibility that in coming weeks about 300,000 to 320,000 civilians may flee the western districts of Iraqi's Mosul city where Government forces are fighting to oust the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorists, a senior United Nations aid official in the country has said.

That is in addition to some 180,000 civilians who have already fled the fighting in western Mosul since mid-February.

The humanitarian operation in western Mosul is far larger and far more complex than in the east, said the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Lise Grande, in a news release issued yesterday by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The main difference, she explained, is that tens of thousands of families stayed in their homes in the east, but in the west, tens of thousands are fleeing.

We've been planning and preparing for the Mosul operation for months. But the truth is that the crisis is pushing all of us to our limits. We're going to be doing the best we can to ensure the people who need assistance receive it, said Ms. Grande.

Humanitarian agencies are deeply worried that civilians are at grave risk in western Mosul. The use of explosives in the densely populated Old City is likely to cause extensive damage, and people fleeing are telling humanitarian workers that it's very difficult to enter or leave the Old City, said Ms. Grande.

Families are at risk of being shot if they leave and they are at risk if they stay. It's horrible. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are trapped and they are in terrible danger, she said.

RELATED: Relief operations in western Mosul reaching 'breaking point'

The main supply route into western Mosul has been cut since mid-November. Families fleeing the city are reporting that shelves are empty and that the only food available is what they already have at home. Water and electricity supplies have been cut and medicines are running out.

Under the leadership of the Government of Iraq, a massive national effort is underway to address the crisis. Civilians fleeing the western districts in the city are being accommodated in 17 camps and emergency sites near the city. The Government and partners are rushing to construct and expand 10 of

these.

“Every day, more space is becoming available,” said Ms. Grande. “It’s a race against time. So far, families are receiving support and being sheltered. But if the number of people leaving the city increases faster than we can construct new plots, the situation could deteriorate very quickly.”

Since 17 October, over 330,000 people have been displaced by the Mosul crisis, over 70,000 of whom have returned to their homes. Humanitarian agencies have been working around the clock to provide life-saving support to more than 1.3 million people from eastern and western Mosul including families who have stayed in their homes, and those who have fled.

Ahead of International Day, UN and Smurfs team up to promote happiness and sustainable development

18 March 2017 – Every person – no matter how big, small or blue – can make the world more peaceful, equitable and healthy, the United Nations today told young people at a special ceremony for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that included the Smurfs and a handover of the key to Smurfdom.

Voice actors from the upcoming animated movie Smurfs: The Lost Village joined 1,500 students from the international Model UN conference to celebrate the upcoming International Day of Happiness, which focuses on personal well-being, and the SDGs, which include decent work for all, education and health services.

In a special blue carpet presentation, the United States stars of the movie – Demi Lovato, who voices Smurfette, Joe Manganiello who is Hefty and Mandy Patinkin or Papa Smurf – honoured three young students promoting the SDGs in their communities with a symbolic key to the Smurfs Village in recognition of their work.

“On behalf of all Smurfdom, thank you for your work in awakening everything, in your community, through you social media, all over the world, in the ways that you have chosen to encourage people everywhere to make this world a better place for those who are so vulnerable in every way imaginable,” Mr. Patinkin told Karen Jerath, Sarina Divan and Noor Samee.

VIDEO International Day of Happiness 2017 – Small Smurfs Big Goals

Ms. Jerath, who is 20 years old, invented a containment device that could prevent offshore oil spills and ensure the protection of marine life. She was joined by Ms. Divan, 17, who expanded a UN Foundation girl empowerment initiative at her high school and beyond, and Mr. Samee, also 17, a UNICEF blogger and advocate on social justice issues.

Given a giant key with the SDG multi-coloured logo by UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Cristina Gallach, the students were told “the world needs you to continue.”

“Never be afraid to speak up and to make this world a wonderful, beautiful, hopeful, optimistic place full of freedom, joy, justice and dignity, good food, good water, good opportunities for people everywhere, forever,” said Mr. Patinkin.

The “Small Smurfs Big Goals” campaign was created to encourage people to visit SmallSmurfsBigGoals.com to find out how to contribute to achieving the SDGs, and to share information, ideas and images on social media.

As part of today’s festivities, the UN Postal Administration unveiled a special edition stamp sheet featuring the Small Smurfs Big Goals campaign.

The stamps, which feature images of the Smurfs and the SDG logos, were presented by UN Assistant Secretary-General for Management, Stephen Cutts, and the Belgian Ambassador to the United Nations, Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve.

The event, held at the UN General Assembly in New York, was organized by the UN, UNICEF and UN Foundation, ahead of the International Day of Happiness marked annually on 20 March.

In 2015, the UN launched 17 SDGs that seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet – three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness.

Along with New York, celebrations were held around the world to mark the campaign and the SDGs.

On Monday, the film cast along with the UN, UNICEF and UN Foundation will be at the Empire State Building to turn the iconic tower blue in honour of the International Day of Happiness and the Small Smurfs Big Goals campaign.

[Smarter use of natural resources can](#)

inject \$2 trillion into global economy by 2015 – UN

17 March 2017 – The United Nations has found that smarter and more efficient use of the world's natural resources today can yield an "environmental win-win" by injecting \$2 trillion into the global economy by 2050 while also offsetting the costs of ambitious climate change action.

Citing new research from the International Resource Panel in a news release today, Erik Solheim, Head of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), called it "an environmental win-win."

The global population, which is set to grow by 28 per cent, is predicted to use 71 per cent more resources per capita by 2050. Without urgent steps to increase efficiency, the global use of metals, biomass, minerals – such as sand – and other materials will increase from 85 to 186 billion tonnes per year by 2050.

The report, "Resource Efficiency: Potential and Economic Implications," which was commissioned in 2015 and released in Berlin at the G20 meeting, found that while investment in ambitious climate action would cause a 3.7 per cent fall in per capita gross world product by 2050, more sustainable use of materials and energy would not only cover the cost of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius, but also add an extra \$2 trillion to the global economy by 2050.

"By making better use of our planet's natural gifts, we will inject more money into the economy to create jobs and improve livelihoods," Mr. Solheim stressed. "At the same time we will create the necessary funds to finance ambitious climate action," he added.



Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Erik Solheim. UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

The report analyzed four paths that countries could take over the next three decades, ranging from 'business as usual' to a scenario where they adopt both ambitious climate policies and improve resource efficiency.

For example, between 2005 and 2010, a programme in the United Kingdom recycled or reused seven million tonnes of trash destined for the landfill. This move saved six million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, close to 10 million tonnes of virgin materials and 10 million tonnes of water. It also increased business sales by £176 million, reduced business costs by £156 million and created 8,700 jobs.

Although other key findings point to uneven economic gains of resource efficiency and slower resource extractions, which would reduce revenues and

affect jobs in some industries – such as mining and quarrying – countries still stand to gain more by implementing compensation and transfer policies to ease the transition to more efficient practices, than by continuing to support inefficient activities, according to the report.

In addition to economic benefits, the analysis illustrates that resource efficiency and climate action would reduce global resource use by around 28 per cent in 2050 compared to current trends.

For G7 countries, resource efficiency, coupled with ambitious climate action, would increase Gross Domestic Product by \$600 billion in 2050 (\$600 per person, or 1 per cent).

The International Resource Panel is a group of experts in natural resource management hosted by UN Environment.

[UN Broadband Commission urges public-private partnerships to reach ‘the unconnected’](#)

17 March 2017 – New public-private partnerships are essential if broadband is to reach everyone and help accelerate the achievement of global sustainable development goals, members of the United Nations broadband commission said today.

“ICT [information and communications technology] and broadband are linking everyone and everything for the betterment of economies and societies,” said Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Co-Chair of the UN Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, during its spring meeting in Hong Kong.

“We are motivated by wanting to have the global community connected, especially the billions of unconnected. We will succeed when we work together: government, industry and civil society leaders,” he added.

The Broadband Commission was established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in May 2010 with the aim of boosting the importance of broadband on the international policy agenda, and expanding broadband access in every country as key to accelerating progress towards national and international development targets.

Following adoption of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, the Commission was re-launched as the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development to showcase and document the power of ICT and

broadband-based technologies for sustainable development.

According to a press release on the meeting, some 5 billion people are currently without mobile broadband access, meaning that the paths to access digital services and applications are blocked for much of the world's population – holding back progress on sustainable development.

RELATED: UN Internet Governance Forum closes with call to close 'digital divide'

The release also said that at the spring meeting, the need for a new deal between all players was roundly debated, with renewed commitment to work towards concrete actions that will effectively connect the unconnected with broadband – especially to support least developed countries.

In particular, emphasis was placed on remote and rural areas which represent the biggest challenge and where barriers to access need to be also viewed through the prism of affordability and content, notably local and multi-lingual content.

Houlin Zhao, ITU Secretary-General and Commission Co-Vice Chair, stated, "ICTs underpin vital achievements and modern services in many sectors, and governments and industry must increasingly work together to create the conditions so badly needed to facilitate the growth of broadband for sustainable development," he stressed.

Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General and Commission Co-Vice Chair, noted, "We must ensure the digital revolution is a revolution for human rights, in order to promote technological breakthroughs as development breakthroughs."