

Libyans must make 2017 the 'year of decisions,' UN envoy tells Security Council

8 February 2017 – Still seeking to implement a political accord signed more than a year ago, Libyans must make 2017 “the year of decisions” and political breakthrough, the United Nations envoy for the North African country urged today.

“We are beginning to see an emerging consensus among parties. 2017 must be a year of decisions and political breakthrough,” Martin Kobler, the Secretary-General Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), told the UN Security Council.

He noted that 2016 was spent seeking to implement the agreement and begin the re-establishment of State authority across the country.

Despite some gains, “Libyans are not in a position to address the root causes of divisions,” he cautioned, stressing that some important decisions must be taken, including on possible amendments to the political agreement, on ways to form a strong army and police force, and on how best to utilize the revenues from oil and gas exports for the benefit of all Libyans and end the dire humanitarian situation in the country.

Mr. Kobler said many meetings have taken place to discuss amendments to the agreement, including the question of the Supreme Commandership of the army and the future composition and role of the Presidency Council.

On the security front, he said that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorist group, which one year ago was expanding its territory in Libya, now controls none. However, it still poses a threat and the fight against terrorism is far from over, he added.

“The country’s borders remain porous. Terrorists, human and weapons traffickers and criminal gangs continue to exploit the security vacuum,” he warned, welcoming the initiative of the neighbouring States to form a panel of experts to develop recommendations on how to improve regional border security.

The on-going formation of the Presidential Guard is a step in the right direction but is a transitional measure until a unified Libyan army is formed.

Turning to the economy and finance, he said that despite its wealth and abundant natural resources, the country saw living conditions and public services deteriorate over the past years. However, oil production has increased to over 700,000 barrels per day, and the 2017 budget has been agreed at 37.5 billion Libyan dinars (about \$26 billion).

“This is an opportunity to address much-needed service delivery,” in particular in the area of health, he said.

Mr. Kobler also voiced concerns about the human rights abuses against migrants, especially those in detention centres.

In January, a workshop was held in Malta with Libyan experts and activists, to establish a roadmap for national reconciliation. “A process is needed to heal the wounds of years of conflict and oppression,” he said.

“I am hopeful that with bold decisions and actions we will witness a political breakthrough that can place Libya on the path of peace, prosperity and stability,” he concluded.

[With UN support, surgeon Denis Mukwege and Panzi Hospital aid rape survivors in Guinea](#)

8 February 2017 – The United Nations office working to end conflict-related sexual violence helped to bring world-renowned surgeon Denis Mukwege and a team from his Panzi Hospital to Conakry, Guinea, to provide medical and psychological treatment for 30 of the women and girls raped in politically-motivated violence in 2009, it was announced today.

In a statement, Under-Secretary-General Zainab Hawa Bangura, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, called the visit “an innovative example of how South-South cooperation can contribute to enhancing capacities and assisting victims of conflict-related sexual violence.”

Dr. Mukwege, a surgeon and gynaecologist, and his team, aided 30 survivors of sexual violence between 23 and 27 January, according to the statement.

The Congolese doctor also met with high-level officials, including from the health and justice ministries, to discuss the need for sustained health support and the importance of investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the 2009 violence.

On 28 September 2009, civilians organized an opposition rally in a soccer stadium in Conakry when Guinean security forces opened fire on demonstrators. A UN-led International Commission of Inquiry found that at least 156 people were killed and 109 women and girls raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence.

In July 2015, the head of the country at the time of the attacks, Moussa

Dadis Camara, was indicted, but remains in Dakar awaiting extradition.

The indictment was part of an international effort aided by the team of legal experts working under Ms. Bangura, who have provided technical assistance to Guinean authorities since 2012, according to the UN office.

Seven years since the incidents, Special Representative Bangura today said that she is convinced “that we are closer to seeing the delivery of services, justice and reparations to victims.”

The visit of the Panzi Hospital took place at the invitation of the Guinean Government and with support from the Guinean Association of Victims, Parents and Friends of September 28, 2009 (AVIPA).

Dr. Mukwege, who co-founded the Hospital, was among the 2008 awardees of the UN Human Rights Prize, an honorary award given to individuals and organizations in recognition of outstanding achievement in human rights.

[Security Council, UNAMA condemn attack near Afghanistan’s Supreme Court](#)

8 February 2017 – The Security Council and the United Nations political mission in Afghanistan have joined Secretary-General António Guterres in condemning the deadly attack outside of the Supreme Court in Kabul.

“This attack is nothing short of an atrocity. Those responsible for planning and carrying out this horrendous act must be brought to justice,” the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, said in a statement issued earlier today.

Mr. Yamamoto, who is the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), noted that the attack fits a pattern of violence against judicial authorities in recent years. Since 2015, UNAMA documented at least 74 attacks, which killed 89 people and injured 214 others.

The Mission “reminds all parties that judges and staff of civilian courts including the Supreme Court are civilians,” the statement said. “Attacks intentionally targeting civilians are tantamount to war crimes.”

At least 20 civilians, mostly female employees of the Supreme Court, were killed yesterday when a suicide attacker detonated a device outside the Court. No person or group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

Calling the killings “heinous” and “cowardly,” the Council members late last night reiterated their serious concern at the

threats posed by groups such as the Taliban, Al-Qaida, and the Islamic State (ISIL), on the local population, National Defence and Security Forces and the international presence in Afghanistan.

They also stressed that “no violent or terrorist acts can reverse the Afghan-led process along the path towards peace, democracy and stability in Afghanistan, which is supported by the people and the Government of Afghanistan and by the international community.”

[Yemen: UN, partners seek \\$2.1 billion to stave off famine in 2017](#)

8 February 2017 – The United Nations and humanitarian partners today launched an international appeal for \$2.1 billion to provide life-saving assistance to 12 million people in Yemen in 2017 – the largest-ever humanitarian response plan for the war-torn country.

“Two years of war have devastated Yemen... Without international support, they may face the threat of famine in the course of 2017 and I urge donors to sustain and increase their support to our collective response,” said UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien in a press release on the launch of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen in Geneva.

“Humanitarian partners are ready to respond. But they need timely, unimpeded access, and adequate resources, to meet the humanitarian needs wherever they arise,” said Mr. O’Brien, who is also the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

Without international support, they may face the threat of famine in the course of 2017

He noted that since March 2015, violent conflict and disregard by all parties to the conflict for their responsibility to protect civilians have created a vast protection crisis in Yemen and millions of people face threats to their safety and basic human rights every day. In addition, deliberate war tactics are accelerating the collapse of key institutions and the economy, thereby exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities.

This has left an alarming 18.8 million people – more than two thirds of the population – in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which also estimates that 10.3 million people are acutely affected and nearly 3.3 million people – including 2.1 million children – are acutely malnourished.

“We remain committed to the principle that our plans must be grounded both in evidence and actual capacity, and I ask donors today to help Yemen in its moment of great need,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick.

In 2016, 120 national and international partners including UN agencies and non-governmental organisations working out of humanitarian hubs in Aden, Al Hudaydah, Ibb, Sana’a, and Sa’ada assisted more than 5.6 million people with direct humanitarian aid.



Source: OCHA 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen

[PHOTO FEATURE: Twenty years of protecting children affected by conflict](#)

7 February 2017 – Following an era in which graphic images of child soldiers had become commonplace in the media, the United Nations General Assembly created a mandate dedicated to better protect children affected by armed conflict.

That was twenty years ago in December.

Leila Zerrougui recalls that in 2012, when she became the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, she inherited a mandate with a strong legal framework and mechanisms to generate positive change for these children.

The following story is based on her insights.



Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Leila Zerrougui with the Sudan Government technical committee in charge of implementing the Action Plan to end the use of children in national security forces, #ChildrenNotSoldiers. Photo: UN Photo: Stephanie Tremblay

In March 2014, Ms. Zerrougui and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) launched the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign to turn the page on the recruitment and use of children by national security forces in conflict situations.

The campaign has helped to reach a global consensus among Member States that children should not be recruited and used in conflict, and that they should

be protected from all grave violations.



Child soldiers guard a military base in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Photo: UNICEF LeMoynes

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a country that had become emblematic for its army of “kadogo,” or child soldiers, the Government has taken tough action towards making its armed forces child-free, highlights Ms. Zerrougui.

The Government has also become a dedicated partner to fight the massive recruitment of child soldiers by dozens of armed groups that are active in the restive east of the country.

Recently, a DRC army general said that they have changed how they look at children and that they are no longer being recruited.



Recruited at age 13, this 15-years-old boy was recently released from an armed group in South Sudan. UNICEF estimates that 17,000 children have been recruited in the country since 2013.

Photo: UNICEF/ Rich

Over the past twenty years, crucial work to end the use of child soldiers has helped to lay the foundation to address other grave violations, such as curbing sexual violence in conflict.

There is also a strong international mobilization to protect schools and hospitals, including through preventing their military use. Additionally, children’s special protection needs are increasingly being included in peace processes.



Many children who once worked for armed groups need reintegration help, according to children’s rights NGOs. Photo: Naresh Newar/IRIN

In Colombia for example, this has led to an agreement between the parties to release all children associated with the FARC-EP and to provide them with specialized services to facilitate their return to a normal life in their communities.

According to Ms. Zerrougui, this agreement also illustrates how the protection of children, the universal desire to build a better future for boys and girls, can truly serve as an entry point to negotiate peace.



Displaced women and men in Chad celebrate 'circumcision' days for girls by dancing together. During that time, several 11-years-olds were mutilated. Photo: UNHCR/ H  l  ne Caux

In spite of the undeniable progress over the past twenty years, the UN Special Representative notes, daunting challenges remain. In countries like Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Iraq children face a variety of threats.

Dangers, such as violent extremism, mass detention, attacks on schools and indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in civilian neighborhoods are just a few of the perils faced each day.

Entering the third decade of this mandate, there are three areas of action that can directly impact the lives of thousands of children.



Taung Paw camp in Myebon, Myanmar, is cut off from any access to the outside world. Photo: UNOCHA/ David Ohana

Denying humanitarian access to civilians trapped in or displaced by conflict has increasingly become a tactic of war. It is imperative to combat this by strengthening the respect for international law, underscores Ms. Zerrougui.

The international community must collectively resolve to act in defense of international humanitarian and human rights law.



Girls collect water at a pump station in the Dar es Salam camp in Chad. On 25 August 2016, UNICEF said more than 1.4 million Nigerian children had been uprooted by attacks by the terrorist group, Boko Haram. Credits: UNICEF/Sylvain Cherkaoui

The vast majority of parties responsible for grave violations against children are non-State actors. As the 2016 annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict lists 51 out of 59 parties to conflict as non-State armed groups, it is essential to exploit new opportunities to engage with these players.

According to the Special Representative, commanders of non-State armed groups are beginning to realize the legal and political risks associated with recruiting boys and girls, many of whom have reached out to her office and other UN entities for assistance to end the practice.



As part of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDR) process, former rebels in Liberia wait to exchange their weapons for cash. They will also attend training for reinsertion into civilian life.

Photo: UNHCR/ H. Caux

Once a child soldier is released, the biggest challenge is to provide him or her with a new life. The trauma and stigma they carry often make it difficult for them to return to their communities and to begin or resume their education.

Although psychosocial assistance and help for them to reclaim their lives through educational and vocational opportunities are vital, ensuring sufficient resources and expertise for these services remains a challenge in every country, according to Ms. Zerrougui.

These children should be treated as victims and not security threats.



Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Leila Zerrougui (Centre) during a visit to Yola, Nigeria. Photo: UN Photo/ Andrew Esiebo

In the past two decades, the action generated by the General Assembly's mandate has represented a beacon of hope for millions of children.

Since 2000, more than 115,000 child soldiers have been released.

But more must be done, notes Ms. Zerrougui, including the improvement of how the international community works together. This will have a decisive impact for the future of boys and girls who cannot wait any longer for the protection they have been promised.