

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.

Erosion of other people's human rights will sooner or later lead to the erosion of our own

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.

Teleworking from home may seem easier, but it could disrupt your work-life balance – UN reports

15 February 2017 – Using smartphones, laptops and other technology to work from home can be a blessing – it does away with rush hour traffic, for example – but it also diminishes personal space and contact with colleagues, according to a new study released today by the United Nations labour agency and a private sector partner, which recommends how to address these work-life disparities.

This report shows that the use of modern communication technologies facilitates a better overall work-life balance, said the Jon Messenger, co-author of the joint report by the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) and Eurofund.

The study, *Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work* is based on interviews with workers and experts in 10 European Union member states, Argentina, Brazil, India, Japan and the United States.

It highlights positive effects of teleworking, such as greater autonomy on working time and better work-day organization, and reduced commuting time resulting in a better overall work-life balance and higher productivity.

On the down side, teleworking blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, depending on the place of work and the characteristics of different occupations, Mr. Messenger said.

People teleworking have a tendency to work longer hours, and have higher levels of stress as a result of overlapping paid work and personal life.

As telework becomes more prominent so too has the need to disconnect in order to separate paid work and personal life, with France and Germany beginning to look at arrangements at the company level, and at existing and new legislation, such as the right to be disconnected (*le droit à la déconnexion*) in the most recent revision of the French Labour Code.

According to the report, there are distinctions between home-based teleworkers who seem to enjoy better work-life balance and 'high-mobile'

workers who are more at risk of negative health and well-being outcomes.

The report recommends promoting formal part-time teleworking so that people working from home can maintain their ties with co-workers and improve their well-being.

UN chief Guterres announces steps towards reforming Organization's peace and security architecture

14 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the establishment of an internal review team that will take forward the reforms to the UN Secretariat peace and security strategy, functioning and architecture, which he outlined when he was appointed the Secretary-General last year.

According to a statement issued today by the UN chief's office, the team will be led by Tamrat Samuel, an Eritrean national who held numerous senior UN appointments.

The review team has been tasked to submit recommendations to the Mr. Guterres by June this year, which will then initiate a process of consultations with UN Member States and other relevant entities.

In the statement, he further noted that pending those evolutions, the mandates of senior officials working in the peace and security pillar would be maintained for until 1 April next year.

"The mandates of Jeffrey Feltman, as Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, as Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, and Atul Khare, as Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, will be extended for one year until the 1 April 2018," the statement read.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, of France, takes helm of Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Also in the statement, Mr. Guterres announced his intention to appoint Jean-Pierre Lacroix, of France, as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for one year beginning 1 April. He is currently the Director for the UN and International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France and has over 25 years of political and diplomatic experience, mostly handling multilateral organizations, UN activities and programmes.

Mr. Lacroix succeeds Hervé Ladsous, who informed Mr. Guterres that he would be unavailable for an extension at the end of its current term, until end-

March.

"I would like to express my gratitude [to Mr. Ladsous] for his service to the United Nations, his tireless efforts and dedication to peacekeeping, especially in modernizing capacities both to address multidimensional crisis and protect civilian populations," said Secretary-General Guterres.

UN food relief agency working with Sri Lanka to end hunger and malnutrition

14 February 2017 – Sri Lanka is making efforts to achieve zero hunger and zero undernutrition, having launched a national review of food security and nutrition with the United Nations emergency food relief agency.

The review fulfils "the country's potential to feed its own people" said the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), Ertharin Cousin, who participated in the official launch during a visit to Sri Lanka.

"This strategic review provides a framework for the partnerships across sectors that are vital to translate global aims into local actions," Ms. Cousin said.

The Executive Director praised all the Government officials with whom she met – including President Maithripala Sirisena – saying that they are "clearly committed to developing sustainable food systems."

In addition to Government officials, Ms. Cousin called for partnerships with the private sector, civil society, academia, non-governmental organizations and the UN system.

The launch is part of Sri Lanka's effort to reach the second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which aims to end hunger, achieve improved food security and nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030.

During her visit, Ms. Cousin also travelled to Monaragala, one of the country's poorest districts, to view WFP's work to boost the resilience of vulnerable communities. She visited cash for work programmes involving organic home and community gardens and elephant fencing, designed to prevent the loss of lives homes and farms due to elephant-human conflict, which is likely to be exacerbated by the current drought.

According to the press release, WFP and the Government are planning to expand existing cash and food for work programmes to support farmers and rural communities who risk falling deeper into food insecurity because of the current drought, which means the upcoming Maha harvest could be the worst main agricultural harvest in decades.