

As relevant as ever, UN Charter is 'our living template' for tackling global challenges – Guterres

The Principles outlined in the United Nations Charter remain the foundations of international relations and global harmony at a time when conflicts have come more complex, new threats and challenges have emerged and impacts of instability are felt far beyond their source, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Wednesday.

“So, while the Charter’s Principles are [as relevant as ever](#), we must continue to update its tools, we must use those tools with greater determination, and we must go back to the Charter’s roots for inspiration as we strive to deliver for ‘we the peoples’,” Mr. Guterres told a [ministerial-level briefing](#) of the Security Council on the purposes and principles of the [United Nations Charter](#).

Calling for rebalancing the approach to international peace and security, the UN chief underscored the need to help countries avert the outbreak of crises – both natural and man-made – as well as the importance of full commitment to all human rights and inclusion of women in peace efforts.

“Preventing crises is primarily the responsibility of Member States. [Chapter VI](#) of the Charter [on Pacific Settlement of Disputes] describes the tools that are available to them for that purpose – negotiation; enquiry; mediation; conciliation; arbitration; judicial settlement; and other peaceful measures and means,” stressed the Secretary-General, adding that the UN, including his own good offices, stand ready to help prevent, manage or resolve conflicts.

Mr. Guterres also highlighted the role of Chapters [VII](#) and [VIII](#) on action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression; and regional arrangements, respectively, and said that regional perspectives are critical in understanding challenges and regional ownership essential for sustainable solutions.

In that context, the UN chief noted the partnership between the Organization and the African Union on peace and security, and the alignment of the 2030 Agenda with Africa’s Agenda 2063.

“The Purposes and Principles of the Charter speak to today’s challenges as firmly as they spoke to people who had just lived through the most horrible war the world has ever seen,” said Mr. Guterres.

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“The Charter is our living template for serving “we the peoples”,” he added.

The UN chief began his remarks with an appeal for an immediate suspension of all war activities in Syria’s conflict-battered eastern Ghouta, where, he said, “a human tragedy is unfolding in front of our eyes [with] 400,000 people living in hell on earth.”

“I don’t think we can let things go on in this horrendous way,” said Mr. Guterres, explain that an estimated 700 people in the town, near the Syrian capital, Damascus, need urgent treatment that cannot be provided there. I pause in the violence would allow for evacuations and for other civilians to be treated on site.

He also noted that acknowledged that the liberation of Kuwait from the forces of Saddam Hussein took place 27 years ago this month. This anniversary – of an undertaking in which the international community used the collective security principles outlined in the [UN Charter](#) to address a breach of the peace – “is a fitting backdrop to today’s discussion.”



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses a Security Council meeting on maintenance of international peace and security. February 2018.

Speaking alongside Mr. Guterres, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, also highlighted that that the primary responsibilities in the Security Council to maintain international peace and security are “[needed now more than ever.](#)”

“In order to effectively respond to non-traditional and transnational security challenges such as climate change, terrorism and violent extremism, nuclear proliferation, and cross-border insecurity, the Security Council should undergo reforms to be more flexible in its decision-making process,”

he said.

Mr. Ban also noted that multilateralism cannot be upheld by only one Member State or a group of states and urged the UN system, including the Security Council to strive to overcome “whatever challenges may loom over the horizon.”

He also emphasized the need for the entire membership of the Organization to faithfully and thoroughly implement the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the Paris Agreement on climate change while coping with other new challenges including, among others, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.