

At Munich Security Conference, UN chief Guterres highlights need for 'a surge in diplomacy for peace'

18 February 2017 – Highlighting the complex and interlinked challenges confronting the global community that also compound the suffering of the most vulnerable, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for a boost in preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts, as well as for a strategy to address root causes of such conflicts in the world.

“There are things that are obvious: the alignment of the sustainable and inclusive development with the sustaining peace agenda,” said Mr. Guterres in his remarks to the Munich Security Conference, noting also their importance in preventing conflicts.

He also drew attention to the need to address the fragility of states and to support states, institutions and civil societies to become stronger and more resilient to diminish the tendency for states to be involved in conflict situations.

Noting the centrality of climate change and strain on resources in increasing the probability of conflicts and dramatic humanitarian crises, Secretary-General Guterres called on the international community to rally behind the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as to focus attention on population growth, especially in Africa.

“And for me, a key condition to address it is the combination of education and the empowerment of women and girls,” he said, noting: “This is probably the best way to be able to address the problems of excessive population growth that is impacting dramatically in some parts of the world.”

Further in his remarks, the UN chief noted the need for strengthened global multilateralism and the need for responsive reform to enhance confidence and capacity of multilateral institutions to better respond to global challenges and to meet the expectations of the world’s peoples.

In the case of the UN, the Secretary-General noted that the organization has been engaged in reforms to its peace and security strategy, operational setup and architecture; its development system; and its management.

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Also in his address, Mr. Guterres noted that while the world prepares for responding to the crises it faces today, it is equally important to consider that the problems of peace and security in the future will have new dimensions for which we need to be prepared.

Noting the already existing challenges related to cyberspace and lack of instruments to address those, Mr. Guterres highlighted that developing a capacity of analysis, discussion, and to be able to think about models of governance for new areas of scientific and technological development, such as artificial and intelligence genetic engineering will be crucial in the near future.

“I believe that when people will meet herein 10 or 20 years’ time in Munich, we will probably be discussing other things in relation to the priorities of today, but I hope we don’t get to those discussions too late and [having done] too little,” he said.