

UN announces interagency group to coordinate global fight against antimicrobial resistance

16 March 2017 – The United Nations today announced the establishment of an Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance, which will be co-chaired by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan.

“As we enter the era of sustainable development, I would like to emphasize that antimicrobial resistance really does pose a formidable threat to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in our developing countries,” Ms. Mohammed told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York.

Antimicrobial resistance happens when microorganisms (such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites) change when they are exposed to antimicrobial drugs – antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals, antimalarials, and anthelmintics. Microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are sometimes referred to as “superbugs.”

As a result, says WHO, the medicines become ineffective and infections persist in the body, increasing the risk of spread to others.

Ms. Mohammed said the creation of the UN joint agency group to combat AMR and advise on the global effort, is a sign of how seriously UN Member States were taking the threat.

Last September, Member States adopted the Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance that contained a request for the UN Secretary-General to establish such a body.

She said AMR is a “multi-sectoral problem” affecting human and animal health, agriculture, as well as the global environment and trade. Clean water, sustainable food production and poverty alleviation are but a few of the challenges it poses.

“Many UN agencies will need to engage in this fight, as will other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and critically, the general public,” she explained, welcoming the Secretary-General’s establishment of the group, which would seek to provide practical guidance on the ways to combat AMR and to recommend how global efforts could and should be better coordinated.

AUDIO: Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed speaks about drug-resistant microbes ‘formidable threat’ to SDGs *Credit: UN News*

WHO chief Chan said antibiotic resistance is already prolonging illness worldwide, and the political declaration was a vital commitment to help tackle the scourge globally.

She said the inter-agency group would support governments across the world, as well as advising on the “use and abuse” of antibiotics for people, and livestock.

Ms. Chan promised that the group, appointed by the Secretary-General, would “get to work right away.”

RELATED: UN health agency lists antibiotic-resistant bacteria which pose human threat

The group will be comprised of high-level representatives from relevant UN agencies, other international organizations, and individual experts across different sectors, including animal health, agriculture, and environment.

It will produce a report to the Secretary-General for the UN General Assembly session starting in September 2018.

[Guterres grateful for US support as largest UN contributor; will work with Member States on reform](#)

16 March 2017 – Secretary-General António Guterres is committed to reforming the United Nations and stands ready to discuss with the United States and any other Member State how best to create a more cost-effective Organization that can tackle the enormous challenges facing the international community, his spokesman said today.

A statement from Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the UN has seen the blueprint of the 2018 budget released by the White House and notes that the budgetary process in the US is complex and lengthy and it needs to be completed.

Media reports suggest that the proposed budget would seek major cuts in US diplomacy and foreign aid, among other areas.

“The Secretary-General is grateful for the support the United States has given to the United Nations over the years as the Organization’s largest financial contributor,” said that statement.

The statement goes on to say that the Mr. Guterres is totally committed to reforming the United Nations and ensuring that it is fit for purpose and

delivers results in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

However, abrupt funding cuts can force the adoption of ad hoc measures that will undermine the impact of longer-term reform efforts, it adds.

“The Secretary-General stands ready to discuss with the United States and any other Member State how best we can create a more cost-effective Organization to pursue our shared goals and values,” underscored the statement.

It goes on to note that the UN chief fully subscribes to the necessity to effectively combat terrorism, but believes that it requires more than military spending.

“There is also a need to address the underlying drivers of terrorism through continuing investments in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, countering violent extremism, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, sustainable and inclusive development, the enhancement and respect of human rights, and timely responses to humanitarian crises,” it states.

“The international community is facing enormous global challenges that can only be addressed by a strong and effective multilateral system, of which the United Nations remains the fundamental pillar,” the statement concludes.

Employers must address all aspects of gender-based violence in workplace – UN Women chief

16 March 2017 – Tolerating violence against women in the workplace will have a huge cost to employers, including lost productivity, legal expenses, high turnover, sick leaves and harm to corporate reputation, panellists today told a United Nations-hosted discussion, urging Governments and institutions alike to take responsibility for putting in place adequate standards and measures to prevent such practices.

“Violence against women has long-term consequences,” UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said, explaining that children who watched their mothers and sisters beaten up at home could become perpetrators themselves or unhappy persons when they grow up.

She also said that women could die from violence and experience various forms of suffering, including physical and emotional damage, trauma, stigma, and limited access to the labour market. Employers will also have to pay the heavy price in the form of lost productivity, legal cost, high turnover, sick leaves and damaged reputation.

To prevent violence against women, institutions must take responsibility for addressing the issue at the macro-level by setting standards and putting in place preventive measures, she stressed.

The panel discussion, titled 'Ending Violence against Women: Prevention and response in the world of work,' was sponsored by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women, formally known as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

VIDEO: During the 61st Commission on the Status of Women, ILO expert Manuela Tomei, at a panel discussion on violence against women at work, highlights the importance of prevention, protection, and assistance to the victims, adding that the issue requires interventions and commitment from employers and workers.

The event was held on the sidelines of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women, known as the largest inter-governmental forum on women's rights and gender equality. The theme this year is on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Manuela Tomei, Director of ILO's Working Conditions and Equality Department, said that violence against women is a violation of human rights, a threat to women's security and health, and a threat to women's empowerment.

She said that a survey conducted by ILO and Gallop found that one of the top three challenges women find in workplace is "abuse and harassment."

The world of work goes beyond the physical workplace to include commutes, social events and home, she said, stressing the importance of addressing the issue through an integrated approach that includes prevention, protection and assistance to victims.

She said ILO is leading efforts to set a new global standard by 2019 or 2020 against violence and harassment in workplace.

[Relief operations in western Mosul reaching 'breaking point' as civilians flee hunger, fighting – UN](#)

16 March 2017 – The United Nations and its humanitarian partners in Iraq are scrambling to get emergency sites ready amidst a mass exodus from West Mosul, with nearly 700,000 civilians still living in the city where Iraqi forces are fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), according to

the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the country.

“The number of people is higher than expected,” Lise Grande told journalist in New York via videoconference from Iraq. “If the pace accelerates further, it’s going to stretch us to the breaking point.”

She added that if 50,000 civilians flee in a single day, the current system would not work properly. The UN and its partners have already started to set up large warehouse size structures which will house the families as they await “the dignified support they deserve,” said Ms. Grande.

According to the latest figures she disclosed, there are still an estimated 650,000 to 680,000 civilians in Mosul’s Old City.

“We fear the civilians there might be trapped in an extremely difficult situation. Families that chose to stay are at risk, families that leave are also at risk,” said Ms. Grande, noting that ISIL is targeting people who try to flee what is expected to be a prolonged siege.

Meanwhile, people who stay are without food and water. No steady supplies have been able to reach the city since mid-November, Ms. Grande said.



Iraqi women and children displaced from the Mosul corridor line up to receive food in Debaga Displacement Camp in Erbil Governorate. Photo: UNICEF/Anmar

Families with resources are trying to trade what they can to eat even one meal a day, according to stories from people who were able to flee, while some people go for days without meals.

“Whether you stay or whether you go there are significant risks to the civilians,” Ms. Grande noted. “The greatest problem is water.”

When the military operation to oust terrorists from the area began on 17 October 2016, some 1.5 million civilians were living in Mosul. In the eastern part of the city, some 345,000 were displaced – of whom about 70,000 returned home because “conditions are ready and safe to do so,” journalists were told today.

The western part of Mosul is more densely populated, however. There is hope that civilian casualties will be limited because the Iraqi forces adopted a so-called “humanitarian concept of operations” which prohibits artillery strikes, requires civilians to remain in their homes, and provides humanitarian exit corridors wherever necessary.

Those who do flee are screened at the Hammam al Alil site, with the men separated from the women and children. Once interrogated and cleared, the families are reunited.

The senior UN official said the Organization and its humanitarian partners are working “around the clock” in support of the Iraqi Government to quickly

get sites ready for the displaced civilians. Aid workers receive the site, set up tents and mattresses, clear and construct sanitation areas, and then transfer the areas to Iraqi military, who move in civilians on civilian buses.

Ms. Grande said that there are concerns about water and sanitation at the screening sites, and that the Government has asked for additional support to help it correct those conditions.

The UN and its partners are supplying food, water and other services to the sites, with more than 1.4 million people reached.

Coordination between the UN, its partners and the Government is good, but "complicated," Ms. Grande acknowledged, noting that the UN is part of 19 daily coordination forums, which include a range from local to national officials.

[UN appeals for nearly \\$170 million to aid pastoralists in northern Kenya](#)

16 March 2017 – The United Nations and its humanitarian partners today appealed for \$166 million to aid Kenyan pastoralists and farmers whose livestock and crops are suffering amid what the Government declared a national drought disaster.

With these funds, humanitarian actors will provide life-saving food, health, water and sanitation services to 2.6 million vulnerable Kenyans over the next ten months, said Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya.

Half of the country is affected by the drought brought on by a third consecutive year of unreliable rains.

Below average rains are causing thirst and hunger, decimating livestock, destroying livelihoods, spreading disease, and causing large movements of people, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The latest flash appeal is a complement to Kenya's ongoing nine-month response plan which faces a funding gap of \$108 million, OCHA said.

Earlier this month, OCHA's head, Stephen O'Brien visited Kenya to highlight the risk of famine facing people there, as well as in Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

Reporting his observations to the Security Council upon his return, the UN

Emergency Relief Coordinator said the international community is facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the UN.