

UN health agency announces list of bacteria for which new antibiotics are urgently needed

27 February 2017 – The United Nations health agency today published its first-ever catalogue of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that pose the greatest threat to human health.

The list of priority pathogens consisting of 12 families of bacteria was drawn up to guide and promote research and development (R&D) of new antibiotics, as part of the World Health Organization (WHO)'s efforts to address growing global resistance to antimicrobial medicines.

"This list is a new tool to ensure R&D responds to urgent public health needs," said Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Health Systems and Innovation in a news release.

"Antibiotic resistance is growing, and we are fast running out of treatment options. If we leave it to market forces alone, the new antibiotics we most urgently need are not going to be developed in time," she warned.

The list highlights in particular the threat of 'gram-negative' bacteria that are resistant to multiple antibiotics. These bacteria have built-in abilities to find new ways to resist treatment and can pass along genetic material that allows other bacteria to become drug-resistant as well.

The WHO list is divided into three categories according to the urgency of need for new antibiotics: critical, high and medium priority.

Priority 1: CRITICAL

- *Acinetobacter baumannii*, carbapenem-resistant
- *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, carbapenem-resistant
- *Enterobacteriaceae*, carbapenem-resistant, ESBL-producing

The most critical group of all includes multidrug resistant bacteria that pose a particular threat in hospitals, nursing homes, and among patients whose care requires devices such as ventilators and blood catheters. They include *Acinetobacter*, *Pseudomonas* and various *Enterobacteriaceae*, including *Klebsiella*, *E. coli*, *Serratia*, and *Proteus*. They can cause severe and often deadly infections such as bloodstream infections and pneumonia.

These bacteria have become resistant to a large number of antibiotics, including carbapenems and third generation cephalosporins – the best available antibiotics for treating multi-drug resistant bacteria.

G20 health experts will meet this week in Berlin. The list is intended to spur governments to put in place policies that incentivize basic science and advanced R&D by both publicly funded agencies and the private sector investing in new antibiotic discovery.

While more R&D is vital, alone, it cannot solve the problem. To address resistance, there must also be better prevention of infections and appropriate use of existing antibiotics in humans and animals, as well as rational use of any new antibiotics that are developed in future.

[In Geneva, UN urges upholding human rights amid rising populism and extremism](#)

27 February 2017 – Disregard for human rights is a disease, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today told the opening session of the UN Human Rights Council, urging Member States to uphold the rights of all people in the face of rising populism and extremism.

Addressing the top UN human rights body for the first time since becoming Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres appealed to world governments to speak up for human rights in an impartial way.

Disregard for human rights is a disease, and it is a disease that is spreading North, South, East and West, the Secretary-General told the high-level segment of the 34th regular session of the Human Rights Council, alongside UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. The Human Rights Council must be part of the cure.

Having lived under the dictatorship of Portugal's António de Oliveira Salazar, Mr. Guterres explained that he was 24 before he knew democracy. Denying his compatriots their human rights had oppressed and impoverished many of them, resulting in a mass exodus, and also brought bloody civil wars to Portugal's former colonies in Africa.

Calling today's world more dangerous, less predictable, more chaotic, the Secretary-General called for making prevention a priority, tackling root causes of conflict and reacting early and more effectively to human rights violations.

He highlighted the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the treaties that derive from it, and urged the Council to be fully engaged on the issues that require their attention.

We are increasingly seeing the perverse phenomenon of populism and

extremism feeding off each other in a frenzy of growing racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other forms of intolerance,” Mr. Guterres said.

“Minorities, indigenous communities and others face discriminations and abuse across the world,” he added, noting abuse targeting refugees and migrants, and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex (LGBTI).

Among other issues raised, Mr. Guterres also called for protection of the human rights defenders and of journalists who are “essential” to the checks and balances of any society.

In his address, UN High Commissioner Zeid denounced “reckless political profiteers” who threaten the multilateral system or intend to withdraw from parts of it.

“We have much to lose, so much to protect,” the UN High Commissioner said.

“Without a commitment to fundamental human rights, to the dignity and worth of the human person and to the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, our world will become chaos, misery and warfare,” he warned. “Of all the great post-war achievements, it is this assertion of the universality of rights in human rights law that may be the most noteworthy.”

Speaking directly to the political actors, Mr. Zeid said “the sirens of historical experience ought to ring clear” and pledged that “we will not sit idly by” in the face of violations.

“Our rights, the rights of others, the very future of our planet cannot, must not be thrown aside by these reckless political profiteers,” he added.

For his part, the President of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, called for greater dialogue and cooperation for peace among Governments, the UN system, civil society and the private sector.

He lauded the Human Rights Council as “essential” to bridging divides, and called for advancing “with common purpose” towards sustainable peace.

“Just as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda recognizes human rights as a cornerstone for sustainable development, so too does the concept of sustaining peace,” stated Mr. Thompson, urging the Council members to put forward their best ideas, well-honed skills and most determined will to defend the place of human rights in the drive to implement sustainable development and sustaining peace in today's challenging times.

Western Sahara: UN chief Guterres urges Morocco and Polisario Front to de-escalate tensions in buffer strip

25 February 2017 – Deeply concerned about increased tensions in the vicinity of Guerguerat in the buffer strip in southern Western Sahara between the Moroccan berm and the Mauritanian border, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today called on Morocco and Frente Polisario to “take all necessary steps” to avoid escalation.

According to a statement issued by UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, armed elements of both Morocco and Frente Polisario (Polisario Front) remain in close proximity to each other, a position they have been in since August 2016, monitored during daylight hours by the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

“The Secretary-General calls on both of the parties to exercise maximum restraint and take all necessary steps to avoid escalating tensions, be that through the actions of military or civilian actors,” the statement said, adding that Mr. Guterres also underlined that regular commercial traffic should not be obstructed and that no action should be taken, which may constitute a change to the status quo of the buffer strip.

Strongly urging the parties to unconditionally withdraw all armed elements from the buffer strip as soon as possible, to create an environment conducive to a resumption of the dialogue in the context of the political process led by the UN, the Spokesman said Mr. Guterres further called on the parties to adhere to their obligations under the ceasefire agreement and to respect both the letter and the spirit of it.

Western Sahara is located on the north-west coast of Africa bordered by Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. The colonial administration of Western Sahara by Spain ended in 1976. Fighting later broke out between Morocco and the Polisario Front. A ceasefire was signed in September 1991. MINURSO was deployed that year to monitor the ceasefire between the Government of Morocco and the Polisario Front and organizing, if the parties agree, a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara.

A revised settlement plan was proposed by the United Nations after seven years of diplomatic consultations was rejected by one of the parties in 2004. In approving the current phase of direct negotiations in 2007, the UN Security Council called for “a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political settlement which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.”

[UN Security Council calls for immediate investigation into recent violence in DR Congo's Kasai region](#)

25 February 2017 – The United Nations Security Council has strongly condemned the recent spate of violence in the south-central Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), calling on the Government to immediately dispatch a credible and impartial investigation.

In a press statement issued in New York yesterday evening, the Council expressed grave concern at the recent reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by local militia in that region, including unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, and of killings of civilians by members of Congolese security forces, known as FARDC, all of which might constitute war crimes under international law.

Recalling that the DRC Government bears the primary responsibility to protect civilians within its territory, the Security Council urged the authorities to constantly exercise maximum restraint and proportionate lawful use of force in its efforts to restore order.

The Council also called on the Government to immediately dispatch an investigation and to bring to justice and hold accountable all those responsible. Welcoming the Government's announcement in this regard, the Council encouraged the UN Stabilization Mission in the country, known by its French acronym MONUSCO, to provide support to the Congolese authorities, if requested, in the conduct of this investigation, developments in which they will follow very closely.

MONUSCO was further urged to monitor and report on violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law and to update its contingency plans in this regard. In the longer-term, the Security Council encouraged the DRC Government to continue its efforts for the extension of State authority throughout the vast central African nation, ensuring credible governance with capable institutions, especially in the security sector, to prevent and deter violence.

RELATED: [UN mission in DR Congo strongly condemns persistent violence in Kasai Provinces](#)

As for the political situation in the country, the Security Council reaffirmed its strong support for the 31 December 2016 political agreement, and its pursuit of peaceful, credible, free, fair and inclusive elections by December 2017, leading to a democratic transfer of power.

In this context, the 15-nation body said it is increasingly

concerned at the continuing lack of progress in the dialogue among the political stakeholders in DRC related to implementation modalities of the agreement. The Council expressed concern that, two months after the signing of the agreement, the appointment of a Prime Minister presented by the *Rassemblement* coalition, as well as the installation of a new transitional government and of the *Comité National de Suivi de l'Accord* (CNSA) have yet to take place.

As such, the Council stressed the need to maintain the political goodwill that led to the signing of the agreement in order to avoid further insecurity in the DRC. Further, the Council called on all stakeholders in the DRC, including President Joseph Kabila, the presidential majority and the opposition, to redouble, in good faith, their efforts towards a speedy conclusion of the ongoing talks on the *arrangements particuliers* of the agreement, in order to urgently nominate a Prime Minister presented by the *Rassemblement*.

The Security Council reaffirmed the need for all parties to support and participate constructively in the mediation led by the *Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo* (CENCO), and recalled that full and timely implementation of the 31 December agreement, in accordance with the Congolese Constitution and in line with Council resolution 2277 (2016), is critical in upholding the legitimacy of the transitional institutions until elections.

[UNESCO meeting lays groundwork for reviving, protecting Iraq's cultural heritage](#)

24 February 2017 – As details on the destruction of and damage to Iraq's rich and diverse cultural heritage emerge, the United Nations cultural agency has appealed to the international community to help protect and revive the country's archaeological, religious and cultural sites for future generations.

"This is a turning point for the Iraqi people and for the world's understanding of the role of heritage for societies in conflict situations," said the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova.

Speaking at the end of a two-day meeting of the International Coordination Conference on the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in Liberated Areas of Iraq, Ms. Bokova added: "UNESCO is already mobilizing on the ground to support Iraq in protecting heritage and objects most at risk, and to fence off and guard sites."

The meeting also prepared the groundwork for emergency, medium and long term action plans to preserve the country's millennial archaeological sites, museums, religious heritage, and historic cities.

It also agreed to appoint a joint UNESCO-Iraqi Steering Committee to coordinate and advocate the many national and international initiatives to rehabilitate the cultural heritage of Iraq.

However, according to UNESCO the damage already done has been much fear than what was anticipated and the rehabilitation process is likely to require decades of work.

Noting the importance of action to safeguard Iraq's heritage, the country's Minister of Culture Fryad Rawandouzi highlighted: "As we reclaim our country [...] We need help from UNESCO, the UN and others to rehabilitate museums, cities and sites [...] We need a plan with a timeline, as well as technical and financial support."

At the same time, there are fears that antiquities taken away from heritage sites may have been sold on the Internet and the black market and the money used finance activities of the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).

"We must stop the trade in Iraqi antiquities, adhere to Security Council Resolution 2199, and dry up [ISIL]'s money flow," underscored Mohammad Iqbal Omar, the Iraqi Minister of Education.

Adopted in 2015, UN Security Council resolution 2199, among other provisions, banned all trade in looted antiquities from Iraq and Syria. It also encouraged steps to ensure such items are returned to their homelands, and called on UNESCO, Interpol, and other international organizations to assist in such efforts.

"Da'esh tried, but will never erase our culture, identity, diversity, history and the pillars of civilization. I call on the world to help us," said added the Minister of Education.