

UN chief urges all sides in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to proceed with name change 'through country's institutions'

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has urged all political forces in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to implement plans to undergo a formal name change, following a consultative referendum on Sunday, through the country's institutions.

In a statement released by his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres took note of the referendum outcome, and the importance of the fact that an overwhelming majority of those voting, supported the Prespa Agreement.

Signed by FYROM Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on 12 June by Lake Prespa – which borders Greece, FYROM and Albania – the agreement is a mutual accord to resolve the long-running dispute between Greece and the FYROM, over the latter's name.

Although more than 90 per cent of the voters backed the name change, only a third of eligible electors took part, according to news reports. To move forward with the change, the FYROM parliament must now vote in favour, with a two-thirds majority, and the Greek parliament must also give its approval.

In his statement, the Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations to “provide all necessary support, if required”, both through his Personal Envoy and through the relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes.

Rights of older people celebrated, as historic UN Declaration turns 70

The [UN International Day of Older Persons](#), celebrated each 1 October, promotes the human rights of older people worldwide and, this year, celebrates the continued importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([UDHR](#)), as it turns 70.

The theme of this year's International Day is “[Celebrating Older Human Rights Champions](#).” As well as promoting the rights of the elderly overall, and

raising the visibility of their contribution to society, the 2018 theme aims to reflect on the progress and challenges in ensuring their rights and freedoms, and engage broad audiences across the world, to mobilize human rights for all.

Today, almost 700 million people are over the age of 60, a number predicted to rise to 2 billion – more than a fifth of the global population – by 2050. Asia will be the region with the largest number of older persons, and Africa is facing the largest proportionate growth.

This means that the needs and challenges of the ageing world population, and the essential contribution that older men and women can make to society, if adequate guarantees are in place, must be given greater attention.

Political attention on the subject has been growing since 2002, when the UN General Assembly endorsed the [Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing](#), described as a turning point in how the world addresses the key challenges of “building a society for all ages.”

More specifically, the Plan contained guidance on the right to work; and the right to health, participation and equality of opportunity throughout life; stressing the importance of the participation of older persons in decision-making processes at all levels.

The last decade has seen progress in several areas, with the social sector taking centre stage. This includes innovative policies in the health, social security or welfare systems, national plans of action on ageing and the creation of new institutions to seek ways of gradually responding to the challenges faced by older persons.

A special event to commemorate the 2018 International Day of Older Persons is taking place on Monday at the UN office in Geneva, followed by an Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) session at UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday, to be attended by [María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés](#), President of the General Assembly.

[**‘Selfless’ South Sudanese surgeon, who’s saved thousands of lives over 20 years, ‘humbled’ to receive top UN award**](#)

For 20 years, Doctor Evan Atar Adaha has been providing medical services to the conflict-affected people of Sudan and South Sudan and, on Monday, he received the 2018 Nansen Refugee Award, a prestigious prize given annually by

the UN refugee agency ([UNHCR](#)) to honour the women and men who work tirelessly to provide life-saving help to people caught in humanitarian crises.

“I’m really humbled to be the winner of this award,” he told Radio Miraya, which is part of [UNMISS](#); the UN’s Mission in South Sudan. “I think it will be good for us in the hospital... and we will be able to get at least some resources to continue to save lives in the area which is really isolated”.

South Sudan, the world’s youngest nation, gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after a peaceful referendum. However, a civil conflict now in its fifth year has forced almost 1.9 million to flee their homes within the country, and another 2.5 million to seek refuge across the border.

“The crisis in South Sudan has had a devastating impact on millions of people uprooted from their homes, or whose lives have been torn apart by conflict, violence and food insecurity,” said Filippo Grandi, UNHCR’s High Commissioner. “Yet, even in the midst of tragedy, acts of heroism and service to others have emerged”.

Dr. Atar is currently the head surgeon and medical director of the only functional hospital in Upper Nile State, in the north of South Sudan, serving an area larger than Ireland. Based in the remote town of Bunj, the hospital serves more than 200,000 people, including 144,000 refugees from Sudan. His team at Maban hospital carries out an average of 58 operations per week, in difficult conditions with limited supplies and equipment.

“Dr. Atar’s work through decades of civil war and conflict is a shining example of profound humanity and selflessness,” said the UNHCR chief. “Often risking his own safety, his dedication to serving victims of war and conflict has been extraordinary and deserves global attention and acknowledgement,” Mr. Grandi said.

Originally from Torit, a town in southern South Sudan, Dr. Atar studied medicine in Khartoum, Sudan, and practised in Egypt. In 1997, as war ravaged Sudan’s Blue Nile State, he volunteered to work there. In 2011, as the conflict intensified, he was forced to flee with his staff and as much equipment as he could transport. After a month, he arrived in Bunj, where he stacked up some tables to set up his first surgical theatre in an abandoned local health centre, and he is fighting daily to secure funding and train others to become nurses and midwives.

“There is nothing we can achieve in South Sudan unless we sacrifice a number of things,” he said. “We have to continue even if the situation is very difficult.”

The award includes a \$150,000 grant, which Dr. Atar said he will use to solve challenges in the hospital and invest the money in improving the structure of the building, procure much-needed equipment, and build the capacity of the staff.

The prize was presented by Mr. Grandi during an event in Geneva on Monday, featuring speeches and performances by world renown artists and advocates,

including Australian actor Cate Blanchett, British-Indian sitar player Anoushka Shankar, Syrian ballet dancer Ahmad Joudeh and Norwegian popstar, Sigrid.

UN system mobilizing to support Indonesia, following earthquake and tsunami disaster

Rescue workers are still trying to reach areas of Sulawesi in Indonesia affected by an earthquake and tsunami, UN humanitarian said on Monday, noting that more than 840 people have died and more than 600 have been severely injured in the disaster.

The update from the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) follows the 7.4 magnitude tremor which struck Central Sulawesi at 5.02pm local time last Friday.

The quake subsequently caused a tsunami that hit coastal areas in Palu City and Donggala which has left more than 48,000 people sheltering in some 200 displacement sites.

On Twitter, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), said on Monday that he had been “following the unfolding tragedy.”

The Pacific’s Ring of Fire is the most active seismic zone on the planet and requires special attention when it comes to disaster risk management – *Mami Mizutori, Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction*

“Our hearts go out to all affected by the earthquake and tsunami. My deepest condolences to all who have lost family and friends,” he said, adding that the UN system was “mobilizing to support government-led rescue and relief efforts as needed.”

Before the Sulawesi disaster, on 7 August the Indonesian island of Lombok was rocked by a magnitude 7 earthquake, which left hundreds dead.

That quake left about 80 per cent of buildings either damaged or totally destroyed in the north of the island, which is home to around 200,000 people.

In addition to national search and rescue teams now in Sulawesi, the relief effort includes the armed forces, police and government officials, the OCHA update said.

The UN agency added that the Government of Indonesia “welcomed specific offers” of international assistance that are in line with current needs, which according to the national disaster management agency (BNPB), include food, shelter materials, fuel and generators, clean water and medical assistance.



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People cross a damaged road in Balaroa, West Palu, Central Sulawesi, after the earthquake and tsunami that struck Sulawesi on 28 September 2018.

“The humanitarian community working in Indonesia is deeply saddened by the loss of life and the injuries following the earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi,” the OCHA statement said. “Humanitarian agencies are in close communication with the Government to more fully understand the situation in the affected areas and stand ready to support, however is required.”

Delivery of aid is ongoing but landslides and damage to essential infrastructure is hampering access.

This includes the damage to the runway at Palu airport, which is slowing the movement of equipment and personnel.

Messages of support from the UN Secretary-General were echoed by his Special Representative for [Disaster Risk Reduction](#), [Mami Mizutori](#): “The earthquake and tsunami are a reminder that the Pacific’s Ring of Fire is the most active seismic zone on the planet and requires special attention when it comes to disaster risk management,” she said. “About 90 per cent of the world’s earthquakes occur there and the risk of an associated tsunami is extremely high which is why early warnings are so important along with public awareness raising and evacuation drills.”

According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, [UNISDR](#), Indonesia has suffered more deaths from tsunamis than any other country.

This is the sixth fatal tsunami to strike the country since the huge 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami claimed approximately 226,000 lives across 12 countries, the vast majority in Indonesia.

Earthquakes and tsunamis are responsible for more deaths than extreme weather events, having claimed an estimated 747,234 lives over the last 20 years, according to a new UNISDR report.

It will be released next week to coincide with International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13 October.

'The world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us,' Holy See tells UN Assembly

The quality of a civilization, depends on how it treats the weak, the indigent, the elderly, the persons with disability, and by the place it gives them in community life, the representative of the Holy See told the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, urging everyone to value all human life and human dignity.

"It is worth recalling here Pope Francis' words: 'a society without proximity, where gratuity and affection without compensation – between strangers as well – is disappearing, is a perverse society'," said Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Secretary of relations with States of the Holy See, addressing the UN Assembly's annual debate.

"The same dehumanization occurs when people are reduced to the crimes they may have committed, the country to which they belong or to their productive capacity," he added.

Archbishop Gallagher noted the importance of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to be adopted later this year in Marrakech, and said that together with the Global Compact on Refugee, they provide vital protection for those forced to flee their homes for a number of reasons and whose fundamental human rights are at most risk.

"The Holy See hopes that the Global Compacts will serve as useful tools for good migration management at every level and a common resource for achieving our shared responsibility in front of the plight of refugees, as well as reference points for international cooperation in the management of migration and the care for refugees," he said.

The senior Holy See official also drew attention to the suffering of

civilians in amidst myriad conflicts around the globe and urged States to honour their 'responsibility to protect', and highlighted importance of reconciliation and peacebuilding to resolve conflicts.

"Forgiveness is not opposed to justice, but it is rather its fulfilment, since it leads to the healing of the wounds that fester in human hearts while acknowledging the evil that has been committed," he added, urging all religions to assist in the reconciliation efforts.

The Archbishop called for promoting equality in rights as well as the full and equal participation of women and men in society. He also outlined the challenges posed by poverty as well as from the impacts of climate change, urging "all efforts" towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#).

In that context, he expressed Holy See's hope that the upcoming [Conference of the Parties](#) to the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (COP-24), to be held in Katowice, Poland, will help reinvigorate action in support of the Paris Agreement.

Concluding his address, Archbishop Gallagher quoted Pope Francis: "intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us."

"While care for our common home benefits us, it is also a gift to future generations, sparing them from paying the price of environmental deterioration and ensuring that they are able to enjoy its beauty, wonder, and manifold endowment," he said.

[Full statement available here.](#)