

South Sudan's 'relentless conflict' leaves almost 60 per cent suffering desperate food crisis

"Relentless conflict" in South Sudan has now left more than six million people facing crisis levels of hunger, three UN agencies have said, amid ongoing efforts to deliver aid to the war-weary country.

The warning follows the release of a [report](#) on Friday, indicating that it is only large-scale humanitarian assistance being provided in many areas of the country, that has prevented even more devastating hunger during the July and August lean season.

"More than six million lives shattered by hunger are just too many," said Pierre Vauthier, the UN Food and Agriculture ([FAO](#)) Acting Representative in South Sudan.

Violence in the country dates back to 2013 when political rivalry saw fighting erupt between army forces, and troops loyal to the Vice-President. It has left South Sudan facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the UN.

More than six million lives shattered by hunger, are just too many
– Pierre Vauthier, FAO in South Sudan

This is despite the signing of a peace agreement between the President and his former deputy, earlier this month, and insecurity continues to be an obstacle to aid access.

According to the latest FAO IPC report (shorthand for Integrated Food Security Phase Classification) on a scale of one to five, 47,000 people face the highest level of hunger in South Sudan (IPC phase 5).

A further 1.7 million are at an "emergency" level (IPC4), and 6.1 million – nearly 60 per cent of the population – live in a "crisis" state of chronic food shortages (IPC3).

The situation is deemed especially worrying in the former states of Unity, Lakes, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Western Bahr el Ghazal. Conditions are desperate in the counties of Leer and Mayendit in former Unity state, where famine was declared in February last year.

Although famine was ultimately reversed in these famine-hit areas, lack of access has prevented humanitarians from assessing current needs.

In addition to conflict-related displacement, the UN agencies insist that

hunger is driven by disruption to livelihoods and markets, lack of access to social services and restricted trade, owing to inaccessible roads during the rainy season.

UN agencies appeal for sustainable peace

Together with the [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#) and the [UN Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), FAO is appealing for a sustainable peace across the country, together with unhindered, safe access to all areas where survivors of the fighting have been left with nothing and need life-saving help.

If this can be achieved, IPC forecasts show an improved, though still serious, outlook for the rest of the year and into 2019, the UN agencies said in a statement.

“Assessment after assessment, we find that conflict is the main driver of this desperate situation, making it impossible for farmers to get back on their feet,” Mr Vauthier said. “We are reaching as many people as we can, in almost every county, but it is critical to end conflict and sustain peace to prevent an already severe food insecurity situation from deteriorating even further.”

So far in 2018, WFP has reached more than three million people with 30,000 tons of food and \$2.9 million in cash-based transfers.

FAO has supported 1.4 million farmers with agricultural seeds and tools during the main planting season so that they can increase cereal production.

UNICEF and its partners, meanwhile, have admitted more than 147,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition into outpatient treatment programmes and stabilization centres.

[Address shared challenges by supporting 'collective efforts' and reform, Albania's President says at UN](#)

At the United Nations General Assembly's annual debate on Friday, Albanian President, Ilir Meta told world leaders that “we continue to see the UN as a multilateral instrument through which peaceful international order is safeguarded.”

“We strongly believe that ([Agenda 2030](#)) is universal,” he said, referring to the sustainable development framework adopted by UN Member States in 2015, adding that “it is relevant to and applicable in all countries of the world.

We have taken a clear stance through a unanimous resolution adopted by the Albanian Parliament expressing our firm commitment to implementing and achieving these (related) goals ([SDGs](#)).”

Acknowledging his country’s accession negotiations with the European Union and their status as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the President stressed how important, in conjunction with the UN, these world organizations are to “in implementing sustainable development policies and contributing to the universal respect of the human rights.”

“Albania fully supports a more effective UN agenda through a more integrated peace and security architecture, with peacekeeping operations being vital instruments and a flagship activity of the United Nations. We support the recent initiative of the Secretary General – Action for Peacekeeping ([A4P](#)) – and we have endorsed the Declaration on this initiative.”

He further goes on to reaffirm support for UN Security Council [resolution 2242](#) as “Albania believes that the protection of civilians, women and children are of a crucial importance in peacekeeping operations, because the life of every person is precious.”

Highlighting Albania’s engagement on the issues of drugs and climate change, Mr. Meta asserted that his country supports, respectively, the recent Declaration on Global Call for Drug Problem in the World and the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

[***Full statement available here.***](#)

[**Conflict can lead to positive change, ‘if we learn from it’, South Sudan tells UN Assembly**](#)

Drawing lessons from conflict – particularly the causes and ultimate resolution – can be a vehicle for positive change, South Sudan’s Vice-President told world leaders gathered at the United Nations General Assembly, highlighting his country’s efforts to ensure lasting peace.

“As brothers and sisters, we have hurt each other,” said Taban Deng Gai, the First Vice-President of South Sudan, telling delegates at the Assembly’s annual general debate that his country, gripped by conflict for nearly five years, is seeking “national healing” through an inclusive, nationwide dialogue process.

A multi-layered approach has been launched in South Sudan to repair its

“social fabric”, he added, and its “grassroots component” is working with local communities to identify causes of division while also searching for solutions on how to heal them.

“The process allowed for those who didn’t have an opportunity to have their voices heard to begin putting across their various viewpoints,” said Mr. Deng Gai, noting that such information will be vital as the country moves forward in its peace process.

The South Sudan leader also highlighted of the recent agreement between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President Riek Machar on ending violence that has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions across the world’s youngest nation.

He added that the Government of South Sudan welcomes the guarantors of the agreement to monitor its implementation and that it encourages the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, an eight country trade bloc in Africa) and the African Union (AU) to work with the UN Security Council on the support that can be provided by the UN-mandated Regional Protection Force in the country to ensure that peace holds in his country.

The Vice-President also informed the UN Assembly of his country’s commitment to security sector reform, combat impunity and uphold human rights.

In particular, he noted the recent verdict by a military court, finding South Sudan soldiers guilty of horrific crimes against civilians and journalists in the infamous Terrain Hotel attack in July 2016.

“The Terrain trials demonstrated the commitment of the SPLA [the Sudan People’s Liberation Army] to make its members account for their crimes, including abuse of civilians,” he asserted Mr. Deng Gai.

Also in his address, the Vice-President of South Sudan said that his Government awaits the settlement of the final status of Abyei, reiterating its support for the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General. The Government of South Sudan also urged speedy resolution of contentious issues in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Darfur.

“This emanates from our strong belief that stability in these areas is critical for total and lasting peace in the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan and the region as a whole.”

[Full statement available here.](#)



UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Taban Deng Gai, First Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan, addresses the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly.

[Pacific Islands on the front line of climate change: UN chief](#)

The concerns of the Pacific Islands, on the front line of climate change, are at the heart of the United Nations work, said Secretary-General António Guterres on Friday, at a meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum ([PIF](#)), an intergovernmental organization, which holds [UN Observer](#) status.

The meeting, at UN Headquarters in New York, comes shortly after the organization's annual summit, in Nauru on 3-6 September, which reaffirmed in an [official communiqué](#) known as the Boe Declaration, that "climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific."

Mr. Guterres said that, with [COP24](#) (the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) coming up in November, and the [UN Climate Summit](#) scheduled for September 2019, the world needs to urgently step up action, adding that: "Your voices and experiences are pivotal as we push for increased ambition around the globe."

The Secretary-General thanked the PIF for including climate change as a security issue at the Nauru summit: the Boe Declaration expands the PIF's concept of security to include "human security, humanitarian assistance,

prioritizing environmental security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change.”

He recognized the efforts of the PIF to prevent conflict, citing the leadership of Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Rick Hou, in taking forward peacebuilding priorities, and congratulating the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government on implementing the [Bougainville Peace Agreement](#).

The PIF has taken a robust, regional approach to the implementation of The [2030 Agenda](#) on Sustainable Development and the [SAMOA Pathway](#) (which outlines action to be taken by Small Island Developing States), an approach appreciated by the Secretary-General.

With several members of the Forum showing improved economic growth, and close to leaving the “Least Developed Countries” socio-economic bracket, the UN Chief stated the UN’s commitment to supporting graduating countries on their sustained path to development and prosperity.

He also commended action by Forum States to end gender-based violence in the Pacific – strengthening women’s political and economic participation and deepening women’s rights – and continuing efforts to expand opportunities for young people in the region.

The Secretary-General concluded by thanking Pacific Island leaders for their support in the ongoing UN reform effort, promising to continue seeking their inputs and perspectives, and making a personal commitment to work with them for a safer, more secure and prosperous future for the people of the Pacific region.

Forum leaders welcomed the Secretary-General’s leadership on climate change, calling for the appointment of a Special Adviser on Climate Change and Security, to strengthen the global focus on climate change as a security risk.

[Access to legal abortion services needed, to prevent 47,000 women dying each year – UN rights experts](#)

States across the world should act now to decriminalise abortion and make every effort to ensure women and girls have the right to make their own decisions about pregnancy, said a group of United Nations human rights experts on Friday, in a [statement](#) marking International Safe Abortion Day.

“Unsafe abortions cause the deaths of some 47,000 women each year and a further five million suffer some form of temporary or permanent disability,” said the UN [Human Rights Council Working group, on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice](#).

The group highlighted that the ability for a woman or girl to make her own decisions about pregnancy “is at the very core of [her] fundamental right to equality, privacy and physical and mental integrity and is a precondition for the enjoyment of other rights and freedoms”.

Currently, an estimated 225 million women worldwide are deprived of access to modern contraception, often leading to unplanned pregnancies. For girls, issues arising from pregnancy and childbirth are some of the most common causes of death in developing countries. Girls under the age of 15 are five times more at risk.

“Legal frameworks for abortion have typically been designed to control women’s decision-making through the use of criminal law,” the experts said.

[Data](#) from the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) demonstrates that criminalising the termination of pregnancy does not reduce the number of women who resort to abortion procedures. Rather, it is likely to increase the number who end up have unsafe “back street” procedures.

In addition, “too many women are physically and verbally mistreated or simply denied emergency medical care after abortions”, which the experts said, “amounts to another means of punishment which violates international law and, in many instances, national laws and policies”.

“Governments have a duty to ensure that women and girls who have abortions are treated humanely and without judgement or assumption of violating laws, in particular in cases of miscarriages,” they stressed.

The experts added that they hoped that “important steps” already taken in some countries to “reclaim women’s reproductive rights through referendums, legislative and judicial action” can be followed by others.

They called for “concerns about unsafe abortion” to be addressed through public health, relevant medical malpractice and civil law.

“It is therefore crucial that countries demonstrate their commitment to eliminating discrimination against women in their legislation and to advancing women’s and adolescents’ sexual and reproductive rights, in accordance with international human rights standards.”