

[South Sudan: amid security challenges, aid workers delivering 'against the odds'](#)

Mayen is South Sudanese. He was forced to flee his home when the conflict started in 2013. Five years later, his voice is resonating in one of the conference rooms of United Nations Headquarters in New York, on the margins of the 73rd General Assembly.

In the [video](#) shown at the high-level event on South Sudan, Mayen is holding a book that he says was given to him by the UN. "It contains the rights of internally displaced persons, all those who had to flee from one city to another city. When I read this book, I realized that not even 10 per cent of my rights are met. So tell me, am I not a human being? Am I not a displaced person?"

"[The people of South Sudan] are the same as us in every respect – they want health care, they want schools, they want to have hope in their futures, and the single thing they want most is peace," said UN relief chief Mark Lowcock.

Five years of conflict have left South Sudan in the grips of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Currently, according to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), more than 7 million people need life-saving assistance to survive; one in two people don't know where their next meal is coming from; 40 per cent of the entire population is displaced in and outside of the country; two in three pregnant or breastfeeding women suffer from acute nutritional deficiencies; more than 2 million children are out of school; and only one in ten people has access to basic sanitation.

The event gathered donors, Member States, and senior humanitarian officials, including the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, [Alain Noudéhou](#); the Assistant Executive Director of the [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#), Valerie Guarnieri; and the President of International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer.

"We deliver against all odds in South Sudan," said Ms. Guarnieri, referencing the major challenges faced by relief workers in terms of accessing conflict-affected communities. The lack of infrastructure, she explained, with only 300 km of built roads across the country, renders delivering aid during the rainy season, when 60 per cent of the road network is flooded, an almost-impossible mission.

Thanks to mass prepositioning of goods ahead of the rainy season, and the use of a complex combination of air, road and river delivery systems, which

required careful negotiations with the various warring parties, humanitarian workers are able to reach affected populations, even in very remote areas. In 2017, aid groups supported nearly 5.5 million people out of the 6 million targeted with food, shelter, nutrition, medical, protection and other forms of assistance.

Despite the signing of a peace agreement between the various parties to the conflict this September, insecurity remains a massive challenge for the humanitarian response. South Sudan is one of the most dangerous places to be an aid worker. More than 100 aid workers have been killed since the conflict broke out in December 2013, including 13 in 2018 alone.

“I call on everybody who works in South Sudan to respect humanitarian workers and international humanitarian law,” said Humanitarian Coordinator Noudéhou, who explained that between February and May of this year, there were several incidences of aid workers detained by armed groups for days or weeks. “We are not a target,” he added.

Much of the event focused on the need to “localize” the response, which entails empowering the South Sudanese non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

“People who are on the frontline of the response are the national NGOs and they have done a tremendous amount of work and they are courageous,” said Mr. Noudéhou.

Angelina Nyajima is the Director of Hope Restoration, a South Sudanese NGO that works to empower women. At the event, she pleaded for more mentoring and more direct funding for national NGOs, as laid out in the localization agenda that came out the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

“We are on the front lines, we are with the communities... In case of crisis we don’t get evacuated,” she said, adding that one day, the presence of international organisations will be reduced. “If we are not mentored right now, if we are not funded right now, we are not going to be able to stand on our own.”

[Afghanistan: Sunday airstrike killed 12 women and children from one family, UN mission reports](#)

Preliminary findings from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) released on Tuesday, indicate that 12 women and children from a single family were killed in an airstrike that took place on Sunday, conducted by pro-Government forces.

They were sheltering in a house belonging to the family in the village of Mullah Hafez, Jaghato district, Maidan Wardak, when it was destroyed by an aerial missile. “Ten of those killed were children whose ages ranged from six, to 15. Eight were girls”, said [a statement](#) from the Mission.

“UNAMA is currently reviewing reports of civilian casualties from a number of alleged airstrikes in other parts of the country,” the statement continued. “UNAMA continues to work to verify whether Afghan or international military forces were responsible for the civilian casualties from recent strikes.”

UNAMA notes its strong concern with the rising numbers of civilian deaths and injuries caused by aerial operations

UNAMA is mandated by the UN Security Council to establish the facts surrounding civilian casualties independently, in an effort to try and prevent civilian deaths in the future.

The mission registered its “strong concern with the rising numbers of civilian deaths and injuries caused by aerial operations and urges all parties to take additional measures to prevent harm to the civilian population.”

In figures also released on Tuesday, UNAMA said it had documented 353 civilian casualties from air attacks during the first six months of the year, with 149 registered deaths and 204 injured – a 52 per cent increase on the same period last year.

Approximately seven per cent of all civilian casualties in the Afghan conflict in the first half of 2018 were attributed to air operations.

The Mission attributed just over half of all civilian casualties from aerial attacks to the Afghan Air Force, 45 per cent to international military forces, and the remaining three per cent to unidentified pro-Government Forces.

[Peacekeeping expectations ‘far outstrip resources’: UN chief](#)

“Expectations for peacekeeping have so far outstripped its resources,” [UN Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told Heads of State and Government on Tuesday, as he opened a High-Level meeting marking the 70th anniversary of [UN Peacekeeping](#) operations, at UN Headquarters in New York.

Mr. Guterres outlined the impetus for his launch of the [Action for](#)

[Peacekeeping](#) (A4P) initiative in March this year, citing the tragically high numbers of peacekeeping fatalities he faced during his first months in office, and the recommendations of the subsequent [report](#), “Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers.”

Peacekeepers must navigate complex conflicts on the ground, stalled peace processes and a rise in transnational terrorism but, said Mr. Guterres, one overarching challenge they face is the gap between aspiration and reality.



UN Peacekeeping

A4P aims to bridge that gap by refocusing peacekeeping bearing in mind more realistic expectations; making missions stronger and safer; mobilizing more political support; and providing better equipment and training for ‘blue helmets’.

The two core aspirations for UN peace operations are a greater push for political solutions, which enables the successful completion of missions, and the protection of civilians. On this point, Mr. Guterres said that “we can never forget the tragic consequences of our failures.”

The initiative, said Mr. Guterres, is already becoming a reality, with independently-led reviews determining how the UN can better deliver on its mandates, including through more proactive, accountable missions; innovative approaches to training and equipment; and active steps to strengthen the role of women in peacekeeping.

Referring to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, Mr. Guterres said that these are being responded to more quickly, with more support for victims; and that the UN is now more effective in seeking justice.

Peacekeeping's achievements, said Mr. Guterres, go far beyond keeping the peace: "Blue helmets are protecting millions of displaced people and supporting the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid. Their presence sends a powerful message of international solidarity with the most vulnerable."

But, said the UN chief, partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations are instrumental if the UN is to achieve its objectives. When it comes to counter-terrorism or peace enforcement, African peace operations – including those mandated by the African Union – are playing a critical role.

The Secretary-General urged more countries to endorse the [Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations](#). As of Tuesday, it has been endorsed by more than 146 governments, and he urged more support for UN peacekeeping operations, including through predictable, adequate and sustainable financing, in order to make peacekeeping fit for the future.

Thanking the Heads of State and Government for their contributions, in terms of troops, police and funding; managers of peacekeeping mandates; and governments hosting peace missions, Mr. Guterres said that, with the Declaration providing a clear agenda for the peacekeeping community, it is now time to translate commitments into action.

'Old forms of intolerance are being rekindled,' unilateralism re-emerging, Brazil warns at UN Assembly

The first Head of State to address the seventy-third general debate of the United Nations General Assembly, Michel Temer, President of Brazil, denounced the rising tide of isolationism, intolerance and unilateralism that was challenging international order.

"We live in times clouded by isolationist forces. Old intolerances are re-emerging. Unilateral relapses are less and less the exception. But these challenges should not – cannot – intimidate us," the President said.

Saying that collective order "has served the greater causes of humanity," Mr. Temer noted that "imperfect as it may be," we must defend its integrity.

He emphasized that isolationism be responded to with "more openness, more integration," saying that common development depends on international flows of trade and investment; and new ideas and technologies.

By opening to others "we will build an effectively shared prosperity," he

stated.

The said that deepened integration mechanisms between Brazil and Mercosur have yielded “concrete results...with a direct impact on the day to day.”

Saying that Brazil is pursuing a universalist foreign policy, he underscored, “It is with openness and integration that we achieve harmony, growth, progress.”

He said that his country responds to intolerance “with dialogue and solidarity.”

Acknowledging that violations of international norms persist in the most diverse quarters, he asserted that Brazil has been working to preserve democracy and human rights in Latin America.

He highlighted that Brazil has received tens of thousands of Venezuelans who have left their country “in search of dignified living conditions,” and, with the collaboration of the Office of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), has built shelters to support them.

“We issue documents that enable them to work in the country. We offer school for children, vaccination and health services for all. But we know that the solution to the crisis will only come when Venezuela rediscovers the path of development,” the President detailed.

When confronted by unilateralism, Mr. Temer said that Brazil responds, “with more diplomacy, more multilateralism” because “collective problems demand collectively articulated responses.”

Calling the UN “the home of understanding,” he urged everyone to strengthen the Organization and to make it more “legitimate and effective,” including by reforming the Security Council to reflect the current world.

“We need to reinvigorate the values of diplomacy and multilateralism,” Mr. Temer said, noting that he was the first head of State to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

He also enumerated Brazil’s actions in support of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement – “real milestones” that “put us on the path of economic growth with social justice and respect for the environment.”

He reassured the Assembly that Brazil will remain “a firm ally of cooperation among nations.”

US President Trump rejects globalism in speech to UN General Assembly's annual debate

Taking the podium of the United Nations General Assembly, the world Organization that embodies greater global cooperation, United States President Donald Trump told scores of Heads of State and Government on Tuesday that his country rejects the ideology of globalism.

"America is governed by Americans," he said on the opening day of the Assembly's annual General Debate. "We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism. Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance, but also from other, new forms of coercion and domination."

At the same time, he reiterated the US commitment to making the UN more effective and accountable. "I have said many times that the United Nations has unlimited potential," he declared.

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