

[Syria: WHO appeals for funding to sustain critical health care for millions trapped by conflict](#)

With conflict raging in northwest Syria, the United Nations health agency has appealed for \$11 million to provide life-saving care to parts of Aleppo, Hama, Idleb and Lattakia governorates.

“The health situation in north-west Syria is already [dire](#) and looks set to deteriorate,” said Michel Thieren, Regional Emergencies Director for the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

“If WHO does not receive additional funding, more than two million people caught in the cross-fire may have no access to essential health care services, including life-saving trauma care.”

Fleeing mounting insecurity and violence, hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have already been displaced, may be forced to move again. Idleb is in particularly dire straits, as more than half a million people have been displaced to and within the governorate since January 2017.

Geert Cappelaere, [UNICEF](#) Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, had said that there was “at least one million [children at risk](#) in Idlib alone.”

Meanwhile, growing crime and inter-factional fighting are adding to the insecurity as targeted assassinations and kidnappings also rise.

The health situation in north-west Syria is already dire and looks set to deteriorate – *World Health Organization*

Many internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living in makeshift, overcrowded shelters with little access to health care, safe water and sanitation, according to WHO.

After more than seven years of conflict, which has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and forced millions to flee, those remaining are faced with degenerating health services, leaving them vulnerable to communicable disease as acute malnutrition is predicted to increase.

Moreover, a decline in vaccination coverage rates threaten renewed outbreaks of preventable diseases, such as polio, and jeopardize WHO’s efforts to globally eradicate the disease.

“As matters stand, over half of the country’s public health care facilities have been destroyed or forced to close after years of conflict,” said Dr.

Thieren.

Facing widespread need across many parts of the country, the humanitarian community is finding itself increasingly compromised as a gap in funding for health has placed millions of vulnerable Syrians at increased risk.

WHO said it would use any additionally received donor funds to support primary health care, childhood vaccination and trauma services in north-west Syria; and to strengthen referral systems to transfer critically ill and wounded patients to hospitals for specialized care.

The UN health agency flagged that it would also facilitate medical evacuations and deliver essential life-saving medicines and equipment to hospitals, clinics and mobile teams to treat people in need.

[Somalia has 'once in a generation' gender equality opportunity – UN Women chief](#)

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations entity dealing with issues related to gender, [UN Women](#), has encouraged Somalia to continue making progress in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka's comments were made on Sunday in Baidoa, the interim capital of Somalia's South West State (SWS), at the start of a three-day visit to the country, said [UNSOM](#), the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia.

Visiting as part of a delegation led by the Somali Minister of Women and Human Rights Development, Deqa Yasin, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka met with the acting president of South West State, Hassan Hussein Mohamed, cabinet ministers, female members of the SWS regional assembly and civil society representatives.

There are 31 female legislators in South West State's parliament, more than in any of Somalia's other states. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka congratulated Mr. Mohamed for the high participation of women in the parliament, whilst urging him to go further, saying "We expect you to do even better in the future."

Somalia is currently reviewing its constitution, ahead of federal elections planned for 2020. The previous federal elections, in 2016, were held under an indirect suffrage system, which a report from UNSOM, released earlier this month, credited with the formation of a more diverse Parliament: almost a quarter of those elected were women, up from 14 per cent in 2012.

The report called for the 2020 elections to establish a system of representation that is inclusive of all citizens, based on the one person, one vote principle.

Speaking during Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka's visit, Minister Yasin said: "We can have an impact on the constitutional review process to make sure (a future constitution) contains language that gives women opportunities in a very specific way, so that girls and women will benefit in the future."

With the UN Official's visit to Baidoa coinciding with [World Humanitarian Day](#), Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka took the opportunity to thank humanitarian workers in the country for their sacrifices and their dedication to communities who are targets of violent people and extremism.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been an estimated 74 incidents of violence affecting humanitarian personnel in Somalia, resulting in the deaths of seven workers. A further 18 were abducted, and six are still being held captive.

"We are there with them [every step of the way](#)," added Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka. "(We) call on all of those who work in the humanitarian space to have targeted interventions to ensure that the security of women and girls is addressed and their participation as leaders and not just as victims is also enhanced."

On arrival in the country on Saturday, the senior UN official met with Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire and Foreign Minister Ahmed Isse Awad in the capital, Mogadishu, as well as with women representatives from the business community, politics and civil society.

['Think beyond farm jobs' to reach sustainable development, UN agriculture chief advises African youth](#)

For the African continent to achieve sustainable development, more jobs must be created for its young people, including in the digitalized agriculture sectors, the United Nations agriculture chief told an international conference on Monday.

"We need to take action to [make agriculture more attractive to young people](#)," underscored José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), at the [Youth Employment in Agriculture](#)

[Conference](#) in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.

“They must perceive agriculture as a remunerative and profitable sector and the dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in rural areas play an important role in this regard,” he added.

Over 60 percent of Africa’s estimated 1.2 billion people are under the age of 25 –mostly living in rural areas.

Yet, there is a growing uncertainty over the continent’s preparedness to tap this precious resource, which requires that tens of millions of rural area jobs be created annually for the continent to harness the dividends of its youth.

Mr. Graziano da Silva’s remarks came at the opening of the two-day event, which is co-organized by FAO, the Rwandan Government and the African Union (AU) to share knowledge and best practices on agriculture, youth employment, entrepreneurship and ICT innovations to prioritize interventions going forward.

Other keynote speakers included Li Yong, Director-General of the UN Industrial Development Organization ([UNIDO](#)); Geraldine Mukeshimana, Rwanda’s Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources; and Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture.

We need to take action to make agriculture more attractive to young people – *UN agriculture chief*

Growing population means growing food demands

Mr. Graziano da Silva noted that due to continued population growth, rapid urbanization and dietary changes accompanying rising household incomes, Africa’s food demand is projected to grow in the coming years by more than 50 per cent, providing “an invaluable and untapped potential” to address youth unemployment challenges, albeit amid numerous constraints.

He pointed out that young people are usually employed on a casual or seasonal basis, with limited access to relevant education and technical training; limited access to finance, information and markets; and low involvement in decision-making processes.

“These constraints become a bottleneck that also impede young people to start an agricultural business of their own. As a result, young rural people are migrating,” explained the FAO chief.

Meanwhile, the [World Bank](#) expects that by 2030, African agribusinesses will create a \$1 trillion market.

“In the coming years, more and more of the agricultural activities and employment will require digital skills,” he stressed, calling cooperatives “the best way to provide family farmers and young professionals with

technical assistance, capacity building, and access to modern technologies.”

Mr. Graziano da Silva also encouraged youth to “think beyond farm jobs” and explore employment opportunities across the agri-food chain, such as in food processing, distribution, marketing and retail.

This “new kind of rural transformation” means equipping rural areas with basic services such as education, health, electricity, internet access and so on. “These services are themselves another important source for employment, especially for women and young people,” he said.

[UN mission welcomes Afghan government’s announcement of Eid holiday ceasefire](#)

After a surge in hostilities in Afghanistan over the past weeks, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) welcomed on Monday the Government’s announcement of a conditional ceasefire for the Eid al-Adha holiday and called on warring parties to use this “momentum” to put an end to the conflict.

“A mutual ceasefire would further the prospects for talks to take place between the parties to the conflict to find a political settlement,” [said](#) UNAMA chief [Tadamichi Yamamoto](#) in response to the Government’s announcement of the pause, which reportedly would begin today.

If it holds, this would be the second ceasefire between the Government and the Taliban to be respected since conflict started in Afghanistan almost 20 years ago, following a brief pause in mid-June during the three-day Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

“It is important to seize all opportunities for a negotiated end to the conflict so that all Afghans can enjoy the life of peace they so desperately want and need,” said Mr. Yamamoto, the top UN official in Afghanistan.

In July, UNAMA released figures highlighting the tragic toll the conflict has had on civilians, revealing that the first half of 2018 was the deadliest for Afghans since UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties in 2009.

In the past week alone, a deadly battle for the city of Ghazni, south-west of Kabul, led to the death of over 150 civilians. UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) released a statement on Thursday stressing the “urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and the opening of talks between the parties to the conflict to negotiate a sustainable peace.”

UNAMA, whose mandate it is to support the peace and reconciliation process, reiterated that it stands “ready to play any role requested by the parties to the conflict to achieve a negotiated peace”.

“This momentum must be upheld and the strong popular desire for peace must not be betrayed,” said the UN mission’s statement.

[A ‘charismatic leader’ dedicated to peace: UN officials bid farewell to former Secretary-General Kofi Annan](#)

The flag at United Nations Headquarters in New York is flying at half-mast this Saturday as the Organization marks the death of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Officials from across the UN system have been paying tribute to the man who led the global body for a decade, starting in January 1997. He was Secretary-General during what has been described as one of the darkest days in the organization’s history: the [19 August 2003](#) bombing of the UN premises in Baghdad, Iraq.

For Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Annan is simply [“irreplaceable”](#).

“Kofi was humanity’s best example, the epitome, of human decency and grace. In a world now filled with leaders who are anything but that, our loss, the world’s loss becomes even more painful,” said in a statement.

Mr. Annan was the seventh of nine men appointed Secretary-General since the UN was established in 1945. He was the first to emerge from the ranks of UN staff and the second to come from the African continent.

Before taking the reins of the organization, he held [various senior level positions](#) at Headquarters and in the field. At one point he was Zeid’s immediate boss.

The UN rights chief recalled a man who was ever courageous and though direct in speech, never discourteous.

“Later, when I was an ambassador at the UN he inspired us, by being a dynamic and charismatic leader in his capacity as Secretary-General,” Zeid continued.

“And most of all, he was a friend and counsel – to me and to so many others. Whenever – as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, I felt isolated and alone politically (which, in the last four years, was often) I would go

for long walks with him around Geneva – and listen.”

Mr. Annan and the UN were jointly awarded the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

Miroslav Lajčák, President of the [UN General Assembly](#), remembered the Nobel laureate as “a strong believer in dialogue” and staunch defender of peace, development and human rights.

“He dedicated his life to making the world a better, more peaceful, and just place for all people. And in many ways, he is a symbol for the shared values of the United Nations” he said.

The UN’s Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) brings the global community together to promote action to achieve a more sustainable planet. Inga Rhonda King, the newly appointed Council President, offered her condolences to his family, and to all those who had worked with or known the former leader.

“His contribution to the world was immense. His leadership was compassionate and his legacy consequential,” she stated.

Kofi Annan was committed to, in his words, “bringing the United Nations closer to the people”; forging partnerships with civil society, the business sector and others.

UN agencies and their chiefs are using technology to further this goal, taking to social media to express their sadness over his death.

In a post on Twitter, William Lacy Swing, Director General of the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) lamented the loss of “one of the greatest leaders of our times.”

He described Mr. Annan as a dear friend and “champion of justice and peace who, even at the moment of death, was engaged in the search for solutions to conflicts in many parts of the world.”

Also on Twitter, David Beasley, head of the UN [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#) said Mr. Annan had [strongly supported](#) the agency’s mission and was an ally in the fight against hunger. “We all must keep his legacy alive, working to break the cycle of hunger and conflict so people can live in peace,” he said.