

Security Council renews mandates of UN force monitoring separation area between Israel and Syria; AU-UN hybrid mission in Darfur

Adopting separate resolutions, the United Nations Security Council has extended the mandates of the Organization's Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Unanimously adopting [resolution 2426 \(2018\)](#), on Friday, the 15-member Security Council renewed, until 31 December, the mandate of UNDOF, adding that there should be "no military activity" of any kind in the area of separation between Israel and Syria, including Syrian military operations and those conducted by armed opposition groups.

By the text, the Council also called on all groups other than the Force to abandon UNDOF positions and the Quneitra crossing point between the Alpha and Bravo sides of the area of operation.

It also encouraged the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement to "engage constructively" with UNDOF to make the necessary arrangements for its return to vacated positions.

In a separate [resolution 2425 \(2018\)](#), also adopted unanimously on Friday, the Security Council extended, until 13 July 2018, the mandate of the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

By the text, the Council also decided – acting under [Chapter VII](#) of the [United Nations Charter](#), which deals with threats to peace and acts of aggression – to extend its authorization for UNAMID to act as needed to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian assistance.

In addition, the Security Council also urged the Hybrid Operation "to continue to deter any threats against itself and its mandate."



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

The Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2424 extending until 1 August 2019 the mandate of the Group of Experts in the DRC.

Security Council extends sanctions on Democratic Republic of Congo

Also on Friday, the Council extended its arms embargo, asset freeze and travel ban on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) until 1 July 2019 and the mandate of the [Expert Group](#) assisting the Sanctions Committee through 1 August 2019.

Unanimously adopting [resolution 2424 \(2018\)](#), the Council reaffirmed that the sanctions would apply to individuals and entities designated by the [Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 \(2004\)](#) that met criteria outlined in previous resolutions.

The Security Council also reiterated the need for the Government of the DRC to swiftly and fully investigate the killing of the two members of the Group of Experts and the four Congolese nationals accompanying them, and to bring those responsible to justice.

Experts Michael Sharp (United States) and Zaida Catalan (Sweden) were abducted in the DRC on 12 March 2017. Their remains were [recovered](#) by peacekeepers from the UN Mission in the country (known by its French acronym, MONUSCO) on 27 March outside the city of Kananga in the Kasai-Central province.

UN launches support plan to promote peace, inclusive growth in Africa's Sahel

The United Nations launched, on Saturday, a major plan to support countries in Africa's Sahel region promote sustainable peace and inclusive growth, as well as empower women and youth.

Speaking at the launch, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, highlighted the "immense" potential of the region – from natural resources and renewable energy to culture and tourism.

"Such significant opportunities offer a path to prosperity – provided we also address the root causes of today's crisis," he said, on behalf of Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed.

"We are committed to working closely with all ... countries of the Sahel and other partners whose initiatives fit under the Strategy."

Mr. Chambas also highlighted the importance of mobilizing private and public investments in the Sahel as well as to empower people, reduce inequalities and enable all people in the region to enjoy lives of dignity and peace.

The [launch](#) was held on the margins of the 31st Summit of the African Union, in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania and was chaired by Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mauritania.



Aude Rossignol/Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel

Mohamed Ibn Chambas (centre), the Special Representative of the Secretary-

General for West Africa, speaks at the launch of the support plan.

The UN support plan, entitled "[Sahel, Land of Opportunities](#)" targets 10 countries, namely Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon, with efforts to accelerate prosperity.

The plan focuses on six key areas, including cross-border cooperation; prevention and sustaining peace; inclusive growth; climate action; renewable energy; and women and youth empowerment. It will also support ongoing efforts and initiatives by Governments, international and regional organizations, and other partners.

In addition, given that nearly 65 per cent of the region's population is below 25 years of age, the plan urges specific investments in education and vocational training to achieve higher demographic dividends.

The support plan is based on the priorities and needs of the people and countries of the Sahel and was developed in consultation with governments and regional partners, including the African Union to ensure inclusiveness, as well as national ownership and leadership.

Despite the enormous potential of the Sahel, the region remains gripped by [humanitarian crisis](#) as a result of insecurity and natural disasters, leaving millions in need of international assistance and protection.

'We must fight terrorism together' without sacrificing legal and human rights, declares UN chief

With new solutions proposed, and new partnerships established, the United Nations [Secretary-General](#) told delegates from Member States attending the first ever High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism, that he was committed to meeting the challenge of "keeping your citizens safe".

["We must fight terrorism together](#), with methods that do not compromise the rule of law and human rights," said Antonio Guterres, speaking at the end of the two-day conference marking Counter-Terrorism Week, at UN Headquarters in New York.

The UN chief said that "we should engage with all who can help us achieve our goals", including empowering young people through education, jobs and training, and engaging women and all of civil society in the fight against terrorism.

He said consideration was being given to establishing a new unit in the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, to ensure that the views of civil society groups – who were among the more than 1,000 delegates attending the landmark two-day event – are “fully reflected” in policies and programmes.

A Global Network of Counter-Terrorism Coordinators, was another likely initiative he said, which would allow expertise and best-practices to be more effectively shared.

Prevention was also key said Mr. Guterres, adding that “terrorists remain determined to find a weakness in our defence...To stay ahead of the terrorists, I call on the international community, the private sector and academia, to share knowledge, expertise and resources to prevent new technologies becoming lethal terrorist weapons,” said the Secretary-General.

Other top UN officials echoed the call for greater youth-involvement as well as preventing the misuse of new technologies and the internet by terrorists.

Development can play a vital role

Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted the role development can play in the “prevention approach.”

“Very often the context within which extremism grows is to some extent linked to failures in development and weaknesses in the institutions that represent the Nation State. Desperation and frustration then may lead people, young people in particular, to lose confidence in state institutions because they have not delivered,” he said.

Our youth is not our greatest threat but our greatest hope – *UNDP*
head Achim Steiner

Mr. Steiner added that despite youth often becoming the “target” for radicalization by violent extremist groups, many young people display “extraordinary resilience” and are addressing violent extremism in a broad range of settings.

“We need to recognize their unique role and further engage them as meaningful partners and leaders. Our youth is not our greatest threat but our greatest hope,” he said, noting that the global community should do “everything possible” to ensure their potential is not undermined by misuse of new technologies of which they are the fastest adopters.

In his remarks, the head of UNDP also highlighted the “enormous potential” offered by new technologies, including to enhance public transparency, broaden meaningful inclusion and participation in decision-making.

We must not fail ‘our future’ – UN Special Adviser

Adama Dieng, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, cited conflicts around the world where States and non-State actors, including

terrorists and violent extremist groups, have committed horrific atrocity crimes and that some of those groups have misused religion and the false interpretation of religious texts to incite and justify violence.

Our young people are our future ... we must not fail them – *UN
Special Adviser Adama Dieng*

In particular, many have sought to entice young people, exploit their grievances and hopes, and drag them into the “trap of violence and terror” he warned.

“Our young people are our future. We must not fail them,” stressed the Special Adviser, calling for including youth in the design and development of workable solutions. “Including youth in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism must be a priority,” he said.

In his remarks, Mr. Dieng also called on religious leaders to engage more with young people and reach out to those who are marginalized and may be vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists. Collaborate with them to confront ideologies that promote violent extremism, and address topics that religious extremists monopolize, providing counter narratives, he urged.

Gender stereotypes drive choices that terrorists make

Also addressing the conference, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), spoke of the work done by the Organization to address complex gender dynamics around terrorism.

“Gender stereotypes contribute towards the choices that terrorists make: they target women in a specific way, taken them away from families and abduct them where they are not valued,” she said, noting that boys and men too are targeted using “toxic masculinity” to attract them to violence and extremism.

Gender stereotypes contribute towards the choices that terrorists make – *UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka*

The head of UN Women also cautioned that terrorist groups are increasingly using women and girls in conducting attacks given that are not perceived as a threat to the extent that young men and boys are.

Prejudices and stereotypes against women and girls are now being used by terrorists to use the same “negative stereotypes” that exist in society and perpetuate gender norms that regards girls and boys in different ways, she explained.

The world must recognize the role of women and girls of all ages as “partners in prevention” and response, urged Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

“They can facilitate interventions that are human rights-based and gender sensitive ... avoiding any unintended consequences,” she said.

[UN chief heads to Bangladesh to spotlight continuing perils facing Rohingya refugees](#)

According to UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, the visit will also highlight the “generosity” of Bangladesh in hosting the refugees as well as the need for the international community “to do more.”

During the mission, the Secretary-General will be joined by Jim Yong Kim, the President of the World Bank Group. The two top officials are expected to meet with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other senior officials in the capital, Dhaka.

On Monday, they are due to travel to Cox’s Bazar to visit Rohingya refugee communities and humanitarian workers, and advocate for increased donor support.



UNHCR/Shinji Kubo

Refugees in Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh rebuild their homes after Cyclone Mora tore through the area.

'One storm can wash us all away,' refugees fear

The greatest threat that hundreds-of-thousands face on the ground today, is the ongoing monsoon season, with torrential rain that can cause flash-flooding, and the heightened risk of cyclones which accompany it. For refugees in makeshift dwellings, perched on unstable, flood and landslide-prone terrain, the risks are even higher.

"With the monsoon in full swing, it would take just one storm to wash us all away," says 45-year-old Ayesha Begum, who lives with her two daughters and five sons whose shelter is in one of the precarious places most at risk of landslides.

"If there is a thunderstorm then the soil might get loose, anything could happen ... I want a safer place, but I want to go to a place where there is a school for my son."

Ms. Begum is on a list of 41,000 people deemed most vulnerable to floods and landslides within the Cox's Bazar settlements, which sprawl across steep hillsides. At least 16,700 have been relocated.

'Midwives save lives, it's that simple'

In this [complex humanitarian crisis](#), ensuring that pregnant women and their unborn children are protected from the myriad threats looming over them, is all the more pressing.

Midwives, trained by a UN Population Fund (UNFPA)-supported programme to care for pregnant and post-partum refugees, are saving lives.

"There's a clear nexus here between increasing capacity to ensure safer pregnancy and childbirth for the most vulnerable women in Bangladesh itself and the ability to respond better to humanitarian needs, as with the Rohingya situation," explains Rondi Anderson, a UNFPA midwifery specialist.

["Midwives save lives, it's that simple."](#)

The evidence of this can be seen as women in labour, arrive at maternity centres in the camp, where they are provided with quality delivery services. A few hours later, the vast majority are cradling a healthy new-born girl or boy in their arms, in spite of the problems around them, says UNFPA.



UNFPA Bangladesh/Allison Joyce

Health workers rush to assist a pregnant woman at the Nayapara refugee camp maternity centre.

Top UN officials to accompany Secretary-General Guterres

On his mission, Mr. Guterres will also be accompanied by number of senior UN officials, including the High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and the Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Natalia Kanem.

“They will review the situation of the newly arrived Rohingyas in Bangladesh, and assess progress towards a safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees in line with international standards,” added the UN Spokesman on Thursday.

Since late August 2017, widespread and systematic violence against Myanmar’s mainly-Muslim minority Rohingya, has forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes in Rakhine state and seek refuge across the country’s border, in Bangladesh. Prior to that, well over 200,000 Rohingya refugees were sheltering in Bangladesh as a result of earlier displacements.

Even though the number of new arrivals has tapered off, and an agreement has been reached between the UN on the ground and the government, over establishing conditions in Myanmar to allow refugees’ voluntary and safe return, UN agencies there have reported that such conditions have not yet materialized.

As of 24 May, there are an estimated 905,000 [refugees](#) in Cox’s Bazar. To address the ongoing and increasing needs, the UN launched a [Joint Response Plan](#) in March, urging \$951 million to provide life-saving assistance the refugees and host communities. However, the appeal remains only 18 per cent [funded](#).

We are deeply moved by the suffering of the Rohingya people and stand ready to help them until they can return home in a safe, voluntary, and dignified manner – *World Bank Group President Kim*

World Bank announces nearly half-a-billion dollar support for Rohingya refugees

On Thursday, the World Bank [announced](#) close to half-a-billion dollars in grant-based support to help Bangladesh address the needs of Rohingya refugees in areas such as health, education, water and sanitation, disaster risk management, and social protection.

World Bank Group President Kim said that the grant will go a long way in helping the country support the refugees in their hour of need.

“We are deeply moved by the suffering of the Rohingya people and stand ready to help them until they can return home in a safe, voluntary, and dignified manner. At the same time, we are also continuing to support the Bangladeshi people and the host communities, who have shown great generosity by welcoming these refugees.”

[Mine action is at ‘the nexus’ of peace, security and development: UN official](#)

Despite international efforts, the number of people killed or injured by landmines and other explosive hazards has risen following years of decline, the Security Council heard on Friday.

Alexandre Zouev, UN Assistant Secretary-General for [Rule of Law and Security Institutions](#), said the number of casualties has surpassed 8,500; citing information from the latest annual report by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

He said this “unfortunate trend” was the result of ongoing conflicts, as well as difficulty in accessing contaminated areas during active combat.

“That figure represents over twice as many victims as four years ago. Over 2,000 of those victims were killed; nearly a quarter of them were children,” he said.

“Considering the difficulty of gathering data during active conflicts, it is likely that the actual number of casualties is much higher.”

The Council met to take stock of developments since the adoption last year of its first stand-alone resolution on mine action.

Considering the difficulty of gathering data during active conflicts, it is likely that the actual number of casualties is much higher – *Alexandre Zouev, UN Assistant Secretary-General*

[Resolution 2365](#), tabled by Bolivia, highlights the importance of including mine action in the early stage planning for peacekeeping operations and humanitarian response.

Sacha Sergio Llorenty Soliz, the country's UN ambassador, listed how it can improve the lives of people in communities emerging from conflict.

"For example: the use of land for farming, the return of girls and boys to school, re-establishing water and electric supply, is only possible after an exhaustive clean-up," he said.

As Mr. Zouev explained, mine action is vital not only for saving lives but as a precursor for peacebuilding, stabilization and sustainable development.

And with nearly 60 peacekeepers killed last year in incidents involving explosive devices, it is also critical to the safety of UN personnel on the ground.

"Moreover, mine action helps prevent explosive material from being harvested for use by armed groups," he said.

"This makes mine action a vital element of the nexus between peace and security and development, and a cornerstone in preventing any relapse into future conflicts."