

India-UN fund gets 22 development projects off the ground in first year

An India-United Nations fund aimed at supporting sustainable development for low-income nations marked its first anniversary on Friday, with 22 projects having already been approved in 25 partner countries.

“The Fund’s [focus on supporting people](#) in least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing States reflects our ambition to reach those that are left furthest behind and to reach them first,” said UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), in his remarks to an event marking the first anniversary of the India-UN Development Partnership Fund.

Managed by the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, the Fund seeks to assist projects for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in partner countries.

South-South cooperation in the UN context refers to the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries. India has committed \$100 million to the Fund.

Mr. Guterres said that even before the SDGs were crystallized, “India’s own development efforts and vision reflected many of the same priorities and aspirations.”

“India is, for all of us, a very important inspiration,” he said.

The projects approved by the Fund so far include a climate early-warning system being implemented in seven Pacific island countries, and governance projects in eSwatini, formerly known as Swaziland, and Uruguay.

But the UN chief stressed, however, that South-South cooperation should not be seen as an instrument to replace North-South cooperation, between developed and developing nations.

“South-South cooperation must be a stimulus for an intensified North-South cooperation,” he said.

WHO reports “very strong progress” in

[battling DRC Ebola outbreak](#)

One month after the start of an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), United Nations health experts on Friday reported “very strong progress” in the response to the disease.

Dr. Peter Salama of the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) told journalists in Geneva that the first phase—protecting urban centres and towns—“has gone well, and we can be cautiously optimistic.”

There have been 62 Ebola cases in the DRC during this latest outbreak, with 38 confirmations and 27 deaths.

The latest case, confirmed on Thursday, is in the remote Iboko health zone in the northwest: an indication that the outbreak is ongoing.

Dr. Salama, the UN health agency’s Deputy Director-General for Emergency Preparedness and Response, was fresh from a two-day visit to the DRC.

“There’s been very strong progress in the outbreak response, particularly in relation to two of the initial three sites: Mbandaka and Bikoro,” he said.

Mbandaka, in northwest DRC, has a population of around one million.

It is the capital of Equateur province, where the small town of Bikoro also is located.

“We’re cautiously optimistic but there’s a lot of very tough work to do in phase two before we say that we’re on the top of this outbreak,” said Dr. Salama. “And we’ve learned the hard way in the past never to underestimate Ebola.”

The focus now is on rural isolated communities in the Iboko health zone which will present logistical and other challenges.

Dr. Salama described it as among the most remote territory on Earth, mainly inhabited by indigenous populations. WHO currently has 80 staff in the area.

“We’re talking about an enormous logistical effort required to reach every alert of a case. And then if there is a confirmation of a case, every contact of those cases,” he explained.

[ICC Appeals Chamber acquits former](#)

Congolese Vice President Bemba from war crimes charges

The Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC), on Friday, decided to acquit Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, former Vice President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and head of a rebel group in the country, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to a [news release](#) issued by the ICC, the Appeals Chamber found, by majority, that the Court's Trial Chamber III – which delivered the original sentence – had “erred on two important issues”, including the wrongful conviction of Mr. Bemba “for specific criminal acts that were outside the scope of the charges as confirmed.”

It added that the Trial Chamber made serious errors in its assessment of whether Mr. Bemba took all necessary and reasonable measures to prevent, repress or punish the commission by his subordinates of the other crimes within the scope of the case.

“More specifically, the Trial Chamber erred in its evaluation of Mr. Bemba's motivation and the measures that he could have taken in light of the limitations he faced in investigating and prosecuting crimes as a remote commander sending troops to a foreign country; in whether he made efforts to refer the allegations of crimes to the Central African Republic (CAR) authorities; and in whether he intentionally limited the mandate of commissions and inquiries that he established,” added the news release.

Furthermore, in the view of the Appeals Chamber majority, there was an apparent discrepancy between the limited number of crimes within the case's scope for which Mr. Bemba was held responsible and the Trial Chamber's assessment of which measures he should have taken.

Mr. Bemba will, however, remain in detention on account of a different case in which he has been convicted of offences against the administration of justice, pending a decision of Trial Chamber VII, within the ICC.

In 2016, Mr. Bemba was [originally sentenced](#) to 18 years in prison, after the Chamber found him “guilty beyond reasonable doubt” as a military commander responsible for two counts of crimes against humanity (murder and rape) and three counts of war crimes (murder, rape, and pillaging) committed in the Central African Republic between October 2002 and March 2003.

As Security Council imposes sanctions on 6 human traffickers in Libya, UN chief calls for more accountability

The [United Nations Secretary-General](#), António Guterres, has called for more accountability for human traffickers in Libya, after the UN Security Council on Thursday added six individuals accused of leading smuggling and trafficking networks in the country, to its [Sanctions List](#).

Those now subject to asset freezes, and a travel ban, under Council [sanctions resolutions and measures relating to Libya](#), include the head of a regional coast guard unit in Libya, according to reports, as well as two Eritrean nationals.

The unprecedented sanctions against the leaders of trafficking networks, follow widespread international outrage at the end of last year, when the CNN television network broadcast pictures of migrants being auctioned off in a modern-day slave market, in the suburbs of the Libyan capital.

In a tweet on Friday, Mr. Guterres said that “we were all horrified by pictures of human beings for sale in Libya last year. I welcome the Security Council’s decision to sanction six traffickers and smugglers.”

“There must be accountability for exploitation and human rights abuses,” he added.

Libya has become a major conduit for human trafficking, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, since the overthrow of former leader, Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011, which saw the country descend into factional conflict, widespread instability and a humanitarian and economic crisis.

Figures from the African Union suggest that between 400,000 and 700,000 migrants were being held in often inhumane conditions, and subject to human rights abuses, in more than 40 detention camps across the country, as of last December.

Six smugglers and human traffickers

The six men now subject to Security Council sanctions, are:

Mus’ab Abu-Quarin, [described by the sanctions committee](#) on Libya as “a central actor in human trafficking and migrant smuggling activities”, whose network covers “Libya, European destinations, (and) sub-Saharan countries for the recruitment of migrants and Arab countries for the financial sector.”

Mohammed Kachlaf, described as being head of a militia in the north-western coastal city of Zawiyah, that controls an oil refinery there which is a “central hub of migrant smuggling operations.”

Abd Al Rahman Al-Milad, described as head of the regional coastguard unit in Zawiya “that is consistently linked with violence against migrants and other human smugglers.”

Ermias Ghermay, described as “one of the most important sub-Saharan actors in trafficking”, who is “leader of a transnational network responsible for trafficking and smuggling tens of thousands of migrants.”

Fitiwi Abdelrazak, who also leads a network responsible for trafficking and smuggling tens of thousands, according to the committee, identified sources in criminal investigations as “one of the top-level actors responsible for the exploitation and abuse of a large number of migrants in Libya.” He is also said to have accumulated “immense wealth” through people trafficking.

Ahmad Oumar Al-Dabbashi, described as commander of the Anas al-Dabbashi militia, currently active around Zawiya, who is a “significant leader in illicit activities related to the trafficking of migrants. The al-Dabbashi clan and militia also cultivate relationships with terrorist and violent extremist groups.”



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Wide view of the Security Council meeting on the situation in Libya. 06 June 2018.

How do Security Council sanctions work?

[Sanctions](#) are meant to be a last resort when it comes to addressing massive human rights violations, curbing illegal smuggling or curbing extremism groups. Increasingly, sanctions are also being used to support peace efforts, to ensure that elections are held, or to demobilize armed groups.

This ability stems from the [UN Charter](#). Under Article 41 of [Chapter VII](#), the Council can use enforcement measures not including weapons, such as “complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal,

telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.”

Sanctions Committees are [subsidiary organs](#) of the Security Council and are composed of all 15 of the Council’s members. Their role is to implement, monitor and provide recommendations to the Council on particular sanctions regimes. They meet regularly to consider reports from expert panels and to hold meetings with Member States, UN actors and international organizations.

[From drought to floods in Somalia; displacement and hunger worsen, says UN](#)

After four consecutive poor rainy seasons that brought Somalia to the brink of famine, the country is now seeing near-record rainfall, and with it, flooding that has already displaced hundreds of thousands of people, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said on Friday.

According to the agency, about 230,000 people, over half of whom are estimated to be children, have been displaced since April due to flooding. They join around 2.6 million people across the country who have already been affected by drought and conflict.

“The rains signal the end of the drought for some areas of the country but they also sharpen the risks faced by acutely malnourished children, and particularly those who have been displaced,” Christophe Boulierac, UNICEF spokesperson, told reporters in Geneva.

The rains spread diseases that are particularly deadly for malnourished children whose immune systems are fragile and exhausted.

While there has not yet been a notable spike, the risk of further outbreaks is high and compounded by flooding, Mr. Boulierac said.

The flooding has also damaged water sources, sanitation facilities and other critical infrastructure, and 22 nutrition centres treating over 6,000 acutely malnourished children in areas hosting the displaced, have had to shut down.

Many of the flood-impacted areas are in the path of an ongoing measles outbreak, and a spike in acute watery diarrhoea, or cholera, is a major threat, he said.

Children displaced from their homes are most likely to be malnourished.

About half of children under 5 – more than 1.25 million – are expected to be

acutely malnourished this year, including up to 232,000 children who could suffer the harshest form of malnutrition that requires specialized lifesaving care.

UNICEF is still \$110.3 million short of the \$154.9 million in funding needed to support relief programmes in Somalia.