

[Suicide attack on clerics in Afghanistan condemned by UN](#)

United Nations chief António Guterres has condemned Monday's suicide attack in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, that reportedly killed at least seven religious scholars who had gathered from across the country to promote peace.

"The Secretary-General reiterates that [no cause can justify such violence](#). Targeting civilians in this way is a clear violation of international law, including international human rights law," said a statement issued by his Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric.

According to media reports, about 2,000 members of the religious body, known as the Afghan Ulema Council, had gathered at a tented facility, and the explosion near the venue's entrance caused many casualties, claiming the lives of only clerics, but also security officers and civilians.

"The Secretary-General extends his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured. The United Nations stands with the people and Government of Afghanistan as they endeavor to build a peaceful future for their country," the statement said.

[UN 'Tech Bank' opens in Turkey, to help poor nations 'leapfrog development challenges'](#)

The United Nations on Monday welcomed a new member of the family, which will help address the development challenges of the world's poorest countries through science, technology and innovation, while also marking a significant milestone for the whole 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

"Technology has to diffuse to all communities to enable them to [leapfrog](#) traditional development challenges," said UN [Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed](#) at the launch of the new UN Technology Bank in the Turkish city of Gebze; about 30 miles southeast of Istanbul, the country's commercial hub.

The idea of establishing a capacity-building institution dedicated to the

least developed countries (LDCs) came out of the LDC Istanbul Conference in 2011 and was included in the world's action plan to eliminate poverty when the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) was adopted by UN Member States in 2015.

The following year, the UN General Assembly approved the creation of the Technology Bank, which is listed among targets under Sustainable Development Goal 17 on partnership.

Monday's launch of the Technology Bank marks the first SDG target to have been officially reached, among the 169 targets that have been set as part of the 2030 Agenda.

"The creation of the Technology Bank responds to the proposition that science, technology and innovation are essential elements to transform the economies of the LDCs, promote economic growth and enable countries to address their technology gaps and support their economic diversification and productive capacity building strategies," said [Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu](#), Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

According to Acting Managing Director, Heidi Schroderus-Fox, the Bank is already starting its work in 16 LDCs, with STI reviews and technology needs assessments under way in Guinea, Haiti, Sudan, Timor Leste and Uganda.

Projects aimed at improving digital access to research are also underway in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, and Tanzania, she said.

[Guatemala: UN chief pledges support for rescue effort after deadly volcano eruption](#)

United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) has expressed his solidarity with the people of Guatemala, and said the Organization stands ready to support rescue and relief efforts in the aftermath of a devastating volcanic eruption on Sunday, in the Central American nation.

According to UN-partner, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC), news reports, at least 25 people have died and news reports suggest that more than 40 are missing.

In a [statement](#) issued by his spokesperson on Monday, the Secretary-General said he was “deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and significant damage caused” by the Fuego volcano, located in the south of the country, around 40 kilometres from the capital, Guatemala City.

Mr. Guterres also offered his condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Guatemala and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

The volcano also [resulted](#) in what are known as pyroclastic flows: deadly fast-moving currents of hot gas and volcanic matter. Ash spewed across a 15-kilometre radius, and as many as 1.7 million people are likely to be affected.

[‘Social drivers’ must be confronted in fight against tuberculosis says UN chief](#)

Winning the fight against Tuberculosis requires that “social drivers” of the disease – especially poverty and inequality – are tackled head on, the United Nations Secretary-General said today, urging greater efforts to provide universal health coverage and combat the growing threat of anti-microbial resistance.

“Universal health care provides an ideal umbrella to [build cohesion across the global health landscape](#), on financing, programming and accountability,” said [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), on Monday, at an interactive dialogue with civil society groups.

“Let us use these meetings as an opportunity to inform a new way of thinking and working; lifting TB beyond its traditional silo,” he added.

Despite being curable and treatable, TB kills more than 1.6 million people every year and only about half the cases are diagnosed properly. The disease also takes an enormous financial toll on economies: it is estimated that TB will cost about \$1 trillion by 2030.

In addition, rising anti-microbial resistance is leading to growing cases of ‘[multi-drug-resistant Tuberculosis](#) (MDR-TB)’ where the two most powerful drugs used to fight TB, isoniazid and rifampicin, are rendered ineffective.



UN Photo/Cia Pak

Secretary-General António Guterres (centre) speaks at the meeting with civil society. To his left is the President of the General Assembly, Miroslav Lajčák.

‘We cannot stop at just knowing’ – President of the UN General Assembly

Also speaking today, Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly, who convened the [meeting](#), stressed that knowledge of the disease and factors that complicate treatment have grown, but the world “[cannot stop at just knowing.](#)”

“We know we need more research and development for new drugs and treatments; we need more funding; we need universal access to diagnosis and coverage; and we need partnerships and accountability of all stakeholders,” he said.

The civil society dialogue is part of the preparatory process for a [high-level meeting](#), to be held in September, on tuberculosis. It comes a day before UN Member States start negotiations on the outcome document for the high-level meeting.

“Today’s hearing is the first opportunity for the General Assembly to hear the views of all stakeholders. We are here to listen to you; to hear of best practices; to exchange experiences and lessons-learned; to contribute to a joint vision of how to End Tuberculosis by 2030,” added the Assembly President.

South Sudan suffering on 'almost unimaginable scale', warns UN relief chief

People are suffering "on an almost unimaginable scale" in South Sudan, the United Nations emergency relief chief said on Monday, adding that he welcomed the announcement by the United States that it is to review the amount of assistance it provides to the war-torn country.

Speaking in Geneva, Mark Lowcock, who is also UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), said that five years of civil war had left 7.1 million people, or more than half the country's population, in need of humanitarian aid.

Repeated negotiations have broken down to resolve fighting between troops loyal to President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar, including recent peace talks in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, held under the auspices of the African regional forum, [IGAD](#).

"Things are still getting worse", Mr. Lowcock told reporters in Geneva, highlighting "scorched earth tactics" by belligerents.

This had rendered formerly fertile areas of the country barren, amid murder, rape and other grave human rights violations, the UN official said.

He noted "another round of failed talks" in Ethiopia and declarations of ceasefires which were "a fiction because the fighting continues".

On the issue of international funding, Mr. Lowcock said that he believed that there was no question of cutting aid, although donors wanted to be sure that the funds were not "instrumentalized" as he put it, by the warring parties.

"I really welcome the announcement made by the White House a couple of weeks ago that the US is going to conduct a review of its assistance to South Sudan" – *Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock*

Foreign Governments, including the combined countries of the European Union, are also seeking to improve safety for humanitarian workers and get the "men with guns to behave differently", the UN official said, adding that despite the insecurity, aid workers still managed to reach "about 2 million people" in the last month.

Without this assistance, the situation "would be much worse", Mr. Lowcock said, adding that South Sudan remains "the most dangerous place to be an aid worker", having claimed the lives of 100 humanitarians since fighting began

in 2013.

While visiting South Sudan in recent weeks, the Emergency Relief Coordinator said that many high-level country representatives had told him that “things can’t go on like this”.

Above all, Mr. Lowcock noted, there needed to be a change “in the way that belligerents are behaving”, before adding “I really welcome the announcement made by the White House a couple of weeks ago that the US is going to conduct a review of its assistance to South Sudan”.

Asked which measures might encourage the warring parties to negotiate or at least curtail the destructive activities of armed groups, Mr. Lowcock noted that an arms embargo would be a matter for the UN Security Council, where he had been told “informally” that some members were considering it.

Some Governments also had mechanisms to investigate the private wealth of political appointees, the UN official continued, adding that visa bans and financial sanctions have been used to apply pressure on those suspected of using natural resources for personal gain.

Famine was declared briefly last year in Unity State where tens of thousands of civilians were under siege, Mr. Lowcock said, adding that humanitarians had managed to get aid to those who needed it.

The situation isn’t as dire as that yet, he added, but a lot of places are “on the cusp” of passing into severe vulnerability.

Outside South Sudan, refugees have fled settled in South Kordofan in neighbouring Sudan and to Kukuma camp in north-west Kenya, and Mr. Lowcock appealed to the international community to help support these host countries “as they have their own problems to deal with”.

To date, the UN’s \$1.7 billion humanitarian response plan for South Sudan is less than a quarter funded.