

# 'Positive' community building helps combat hate online: UN counter-terrorism chair

In an increasingly interconnected world, the glorification of terrorism online impacts everyone, the chair of a United Nations counter-terrorism body said on Tuesday, calling for a renewed effort to combat hateful propaganda and promote community solidarity.

Gustavo Adolfo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez, the Peruvian Ambassador to the UN, and chair of the Security Council [Counter-Terrorism Committee](#), said that although it was important to deny voices that incite and glorify violence access to the internet, the huge public benefits of being online, had to be acknowledged.

"Every measure taken to fight against terrorist narratives, like all counter-terrorism measures, must be in line with international human rights law, including the rights to privacy and freedom of expression," he said.

In that context, Mr. Meza-Cuadra highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships to keep the Internet space "as hostile as possible to terrorist groups," while at the same time "as open as possible for society at large", pointing to the Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives.

Effective counter-narratives should include positive messaging that promotes community solidarity – *Counter-Terrorism Committee chairperson*

Adopted in 2017, the Framework consists of three elements: legal and law enforcement measures, based on relevant United Nations resolutions; the development of public-private partnerships; and the development of counter-narratives, that push back against terrorist propaganda.

In his remarks, Mr. Meza-Cuadra said that in addition to counter-narratives, positive messages must be amplified, so that vulnerable audiences are given assurances that genuine concerns are being addressed, without resorting to violence.

"Effective counter-narratives should include positive messaging that promotes community solidarity and peaceful avenues for addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This is one way to achieve effective and long-term results," he said.

---

## UN chief arrives in Mali to honour fallen peacekeepers

The north-west African country is the most dangerous place in the world to be a UN 'blue helmet,' and last year, 21 troops serving with the UN Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) lost their lives, along with seven civilians.

The UN chief was greeted by President Ibrahim Keita and other officials upon his arrival in the capital, Bamako, and he then took part in a ceremony to pay tribute to fallen colleagues.

The Secretary-General said he was honoured to be spending Peacekeepers' Day with the "brave men and women" serving with MINUSMA, adding that "at their own personal risk, they save lives serving the cause of peace," according to a statement from UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric.

**UN News has a multimedia team travelling with Mr. Guterres and we will be bringing you a full report from them, later in the day.**

---

## UN releases \$2.7 million to help cyclone-hit 'Somaliland'; urges focus on longterm rebuilding

Following a visit to a cyclone-hit community in 'Somaliland', the United Nations has released close to \$3 million to help people affected by an unprecedented storm which delivered a full year's worth of rain in just a few days, compounding damage caused by recent severe flooding.

"We are on the ground, both the UN and NGOs, and we have already been providing assistance, particularly in the form of immediate food security assistance, and also non-food items, shelter items in particular, and health assistance – and this has kicked in, basically, from day one," said the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, on Monday, in the wake of a visit to Borama, located some 180 kilometres south-west of Hargeisa, the capital of 'Somaliland.'

We really need to not just work on the relief, but on the increased

resilience of the families that live in this area – *Peter de Clercq*  
(*UNSOM*)

“Just to reinforce the rebuilding of livelihoods I, moreover, pledged \$2.7 million,” Mr. de Clercq added, with the money coming from the international donor-backed Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF), designed to address the most urgent humanitarian needs in Somalia, which also covers ‘Somaliland.’

The recent landfall of Cyclone Sagar on the northern Horn of Africa has affected some 160,000 people, killing dozens and causing severe damage to infrastructure and economic hardship, especially for traditional pastoralists.

Mr. de Clercq had been in Borama to see its impact first-hand, as well as meet with local partners, including government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, community elders and people directly affected by the storm.

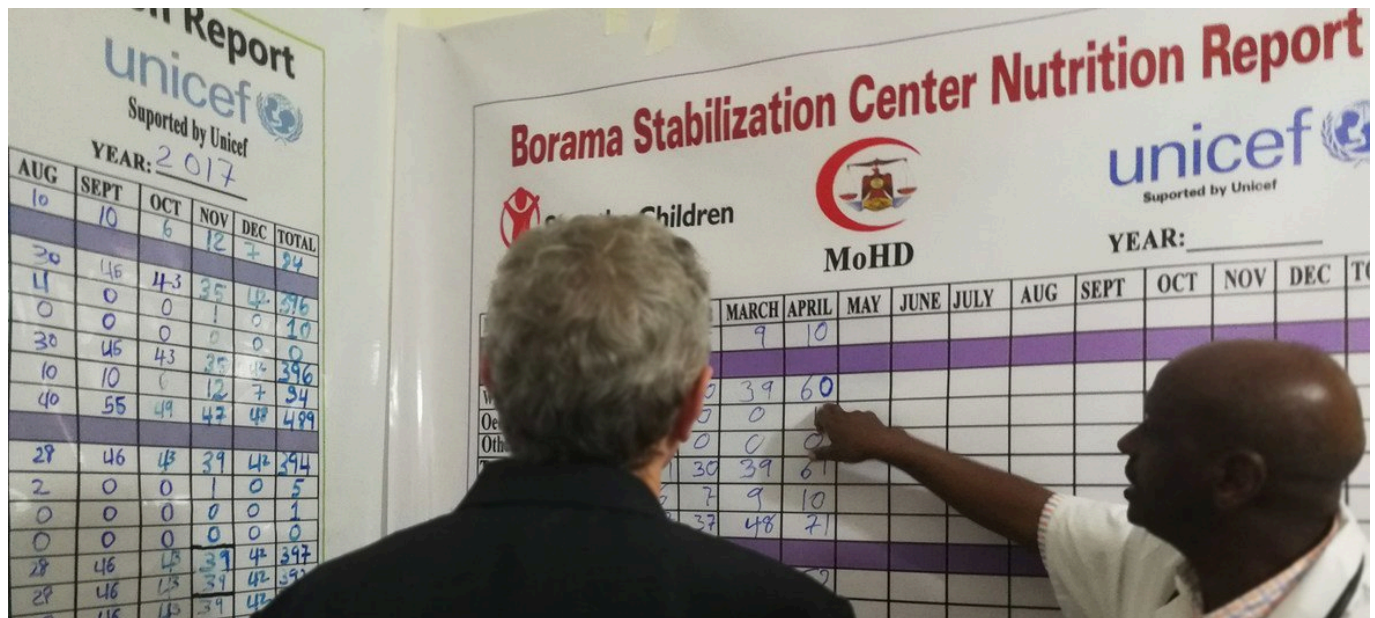
“It was an opportunity to interact with people who were immediately affected by it,” he said. “They’ve lived through this year of near-famine already, and they had to endure not only this very difficult period of drought, but then floods, immediately followed by the cyclone.”

### ***Need to focus on short- and long-term needs***

The UN official said the response to the combination of events – storm, floods and drought – highlighted the need for a response which addresses both the short- and longer-term humanitarian needs with the short-term; the longer-term being centred on building the resilience of communities like that of the Awhal region.

This will help to tackle the effects of climate change among the most vulnerable local populations, as resilience in these communities had already been extremely strained due to at least four failed rainy seasons.

“We still are dealing with the food insecurity, the lack of livelihoods as a result of the drought, and at the same time we’re dealing with people who’ve been displaced because their houses have been flooded, or because their livelihoods have been washed away,” said Mr. de Clercq, who also serves as the UN Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, and noted the need for increased funding of the SHF.



UNSOM/Carlos Gomez del Campo

On a visit to the Borama Regional Hospital, 180 kilometres southwest of Somaliland's capital, Hargeisa, medical staff brief the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, on the hospital's work, particularly in relation to the impact of Cyclone Sagar, but also on other humanitarian challenges, such as recent severe flooding and a years-long drought.

Currently, the Humanitarian Response Plan funding stands at \$390 million – less than 50 per cent of the amount that was pledged at this stage in 2017.

"We really need to not just work on the relief, but on the increased resilience of the families that live in this area, the families that have to go through this kind of terrible humanitarian challenges year after year after year," Mr. de Clercq said. "So, we should not be waiting until the next crisis hits us – we haven't seen the last drought yet, we very well may not have seen the last cyclone here."

## [UN aid chief highlights 2 million Syrians in greatest need](#)

Less than 20 per cent of the "desperate" civilians living in Syria's hard-to-reach areas have got the humanitarian aid they need so far this year, a senior United Nations official warned on Tuesday, calling for the Security Council to help ease their plight.

"Those two million people, in places like northern rural Homs, Douma and southern Damascus, are some of [the most desperate](#) in the country," Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said during his briefing to the 15-member body.

Only six inter-agency convoys have reached those areas since January, providing relief for 169,000 people, which is "less than 20 per cent of the people we would like to be reaching," he added.

Updating members on the situation in formerly rebel-held eastern Ghouta, Mr. Lowcock, who is also Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said he had released \$16 million from the Syria Humanitarian Fund to support people in that area – now under government control.

The Damascus suburb was recaptured after years of siege in April, following an intense battle, and the Syrian government asked the UN to provide assistance to local people there.

During a recent visit to Saqba and Kafr Batna in eastern Ghouta, UN staff observed the resumption of some services, with electricity, education and health facilities starting up once more, and a limited number of businesses and markets reopening.

"But it was clear that there are huge unmet needs, and extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure," Mr. Lowcock said.

There had been almost 200,000 people who reportedly stayed in the suburb throughout the fighting. The authorities report that more than 10,000 people have returned to eastern Ghouta from Rural Damascus over the past two weeks, makes access to the area even more critical.

The Government has already approved an inter-agency convoy to provide aid for 70,000 people living in the capital of the enclave, Duma, but it has not yet left, he said, reiterating a request to the government to move ahead with providing greater access to eastern Ghouta.

The situation in the northwestern province of Idlib is alarming, Mr. Lowcock said, noting that on-going airstrikes, clashes between armed groups, overcrowding and severely stretched basic services, are deepening the suffering of both displaced people who have fled there and host communities.

More than 80,000 newly-displaced people have arrived in the area since March, which is the last remaining Syrian province not under the control of government forces. "Keeping pace with the increase in needs in Idlib has involved redirecting resources from other activities," he said.

Many of the most recent new arrivals in Idlib have come from northern rural Homs. Some 35,000 people were evacuated from this area earlier this month, after a significant escalation in violence there.

---

## Spirit of compromise needed to combat workplace 'brutalism' – UN labour agency

The head of the United Nations labour agency has called for a new spirit of cooperation and consensus between workers, employers and Governments, to end what he called the “new brutality” of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

Addressing the International Labour Conference on Monday, Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) underscored that the “[the spirit of tripartism, compromise, and consensus](#)” is the “precondition of success for the Conference and of the ILO.”

Informally dubbed the “world parliament of labour”, the [Conference](#) is the primary policy making body of the ILO. It is convened annually in the Swiss city, Geneva, and brings together more than 5,000 Government officials, worker representatives and employer delegates from the ILO’s 187 member States.

In his remarks, Mr. Ryder also warned against growing challenges in labour markets across the world, and to multilateralism in general, underlining that the ILO “must be a bulwark against such contagion.”

He also highlighted the need to secure workplaces from any forms of violence or harassment.

### **Action against sexual harassment must make the difference – ILO head**

In particular, action that would really make a difference is needed, to end sexual harassment, said Mr. Ryder – brought into sharp focus by the “Me Too” campaign.

“Our answer to the ever more vocal call for action must be ‘Us Too’,” he stressed.

The ILO chief unveiled his new report entitled “The Women at Work Initiative: The push for Equality”, which calls for innovative action to close the persistent gender gap.

He also unveiled new data on workers in the occupied Arab territories, reporting that they faced a grim situation overall.

In particular, women continue to be severely disadvantaged in the Palestinian

labour market; finding it hard to access decent jobs, as well as facing gender-based discrimination. It also found that the population of the Gaza Strip continues to live through a “humanitarian and human-made” crisis with its economy depleted and the labour market crippled.

The opening day also saw Samir Murad, Minister of Labour of Jordan, elected President of the Conference over its duration from 28 May to 8 June. Jean-Jacques Elmiger (Governments) from Switzerland, Khalifa Khamis Mattar (Employers) from the United Arab Emirates and Akiko Gono (Workers) from Japan, were elected Vice-Presidents.