

New EU focus on Kosovo provides Pristina and Belgrade with historic opportunity – UN official

Efforts to calm tensions between Belgrade and Pristina that came to a head with the arrest, “theatrical” parade and expulsion of a lead negotiator from Kosovo, must be redoubled if “real progress” is to be made on the ground, a senior United Nations official said on Monday.

“There is no other viable option. However, for that to happen there is a clear need for exercising leadership, to stand up to challenges” even if there are “short-term political costs,” said Zahir Tanin, the head of the [UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo](#) (UNMIK), addressing the Security Council on Monday.

“A new focus by Brussels [the European Union] at all levels provides a mutually beneficial opportunity for Pristina and Belgrade to leave the current difficult moment behind and to take the dialogue to the next stage of real progress,” he added.

In his quarterly briefing to the 15-member Council on the situation in Kosovo and the work of the UN Mission, Mr. Tanin said that UNMIK continues to focus on creating an atmosphere which allows for compromise in good-faith.

“Our efforts are aimed at sustaining peace, ensuring we remain at the forefront of monitoring and analysing the situation and reinforcing strategic coordination with members of all UN entities, as well as international partners” alongside the authorities in Kosovo, he said.

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He described the recent Kosovo Trust-Building Forum, which brought together UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and more than 100 community leaders, to discuss ways of building a positive path for the future.

“Multiple focus groups worked to strengthen understanding across community divides. The resulting outcomes identified by participants provided a roadmap for objectives to be implemented in Kosovo,” recalled Mr. Tanin of the Forum, urging all leaders in Kosovo to move forward with more trust, compassion, understanding, and clarity.

Turning to Kosovo’s relations with the rest of Europe, Mr. Tanin, who is also the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Kosovo, said a

number of steps must be taken, including a security agreement with Montenegro and strengthening the rule of law and human rights portfolios.

In that vein, he noted the approval of a new draft of the Kosovo criminal code, introducing stricter penalties for offences related to corruption and misuse of official duty.

Concerning the protection of cultural heritage, he described progress in the so-called “special protected zones” and said the world was watching how the Government was handling construction near the Visoki Dečani Monastery, a UNESCO [World Heritage Site](#), in western Kosovo.

[Avoid further bloodshed, UN chief urges, as Gaza violence leaves dozens dead](#)

Following reports that dozens of Palestinians have been killed, demonstrating along the border of the Gaza Strip on Monday, United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) urged both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to show restraint.

“The Secretary-General is [profoundly alarmed](#) by the sharp escalation of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the high number of Palestinians killed and injured in the Gaza protests,” said UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq in a statement.

“Israel security forces must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire. Hamas and the leaders of the demonstrations have a responsibility to prevent all violent actions and provocations,” the statement added.

According to media reports, more than 50 Palestinians were killed and more than 2,000 wounded in Gaza – the Palestinian enclave occupied by Israel, as the Israeli army fired live ammunition and tear gas at protesters assembled along the fence with Israel.

It was the highest Palestinian death toll in a single day since Hamas-led demonstrations began along the border fence on March 30; and the highest number of casualties inflicted since the 2014 conflict with Israel inside Gaza.

During the six-weeks of demonstrations which organizers have called “the Great March of Return,” thousands of Palestinians have converged at the border to protest the long-standing blockade of the enclave. Israel has accused Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other militants of using the protests –

involving women, children, and elderly civilians – as a pretext to infiltrate Israel and carry out terrorist attacks.

In the Monday's march, many Palestinians were protesting the official move of the United States embassy, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People does not recognize Israel's claim that the entire city of Jerusalem is its capital.

The Committee considers that [the status of Jerusalem](#) must be settled through negotiations that take account of the political and religious concerns of all sides.

“With tensions high and more demonstrations expected in the coming days, it is imperative that everyone show the utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life, including ensuring that all civilians and particularly children are not put in harm's way,” said the Deputy UN Spokesperson.

“The ongoing violence underscores the urgent need for a political solution. The Secretary-General reiterates that there is no viable alternative to the two-state solution, with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace, each with its capital in Jerusalem,” he added.

Meanwhile, the UN body monitoring implementation of the convention on eliminating racial discrimination has urged Israel, which is a State party, to [immediately end the disproportionate use of force](#) against Palestinian demonstrators in the Gaza Strip, refrain from any act that could lead to further casualties and ensure prompt and unimpeded access to medical treatment for those injured.

The body – known as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – also urged Israel to initiate an impartial and independent investigation into the use of force against Palestinian demonstrators and ensure that all Palestinians under its effective control, enjoy full rights under the Convention, without discrimination.

[**‘Problems can be solved’ through international cooperation, says UN chief, welcoming North Korean pledge to close nuclear test site**](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed the commitment

by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to dismantle its nuclear test site at Punggye-ri as an important "confidence-building measure" that that will support efforts towards sustainable peace and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Speaking to the press in the Austrian capital, Vienna, Mr. Guterres also [expressed hope](#) that the "positive momentum" will be consolidated during the summit between the United States and North Korea, scheduled for next month.

"This proves that even when things seem without solution, even when there is apparently no hope for the problems of the world to be faced with success, when there is concerted international action – when the Security Council is able to act together, when international cooperation works – problems can be solved," he said.

Mr. Guterres also expressed hope that progress over shutting down North Korea's nuclear programme would provide an impetus to address other challenges elsewhere in the world.

Recent traction towards lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula would formally end one of the world's longest unresolved conflicts, which began in June 1950. An armistice brought about a ceasefire in 1953, but the war never officially ended because the parties failed to reach agreement over a peace treaty.

[Jobs in the green economy will 'more than offset' losses in traditional industry by 2030: Labour agency](#)

Action to combat climate change could create millions of new job opportunities and "more than" offset losses in traditional industries, the UN labour agency said on Monday.

The International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) made the announcement at the launch of its [annual flagship report](#) on the state of the global job market.

Its forecast that 24 million new posts "will be created globally by 2030", contains the caveat that "the right policies to promote a greener economy" must also be in place for this to happen, along with better social safety nets for workers.

The ILO report predicts that the transition to a green economy will also lead to the loss of six million jobs in industries that are heavily reliant on

carbon or resources.

ILO Deputy Director-General, Deborah Greenfield, insisted in a statement that the green economy “can enable millions more people to overcome poverty and deliver improved livelihoods for this and future generations”.

But she warned that jobs also “rely heavily on a healthy environment”, something that is at risk from rising global temperatures which ILO believes will lead to a two per cent global loss in hours worked by 2030.

“Most sectors” of the economy will benefit – out of 163 analysed in total, according to ILO – but 14 will face losses of more than 10,000 jobs worldwide.

Two sectors, namely petroleum extraction and refining, are set to see job losses of one million or more.

In line with the historic Paris Climate Change accord of December 2015, UN Member States pledged to respond to destructive climate change, by keeping temperature rises to below two degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels.

This should lead to more new jobs in the sustainable energy sector through public policy shifts – as well as private sector development – ranging from the promotion of electric cars to energy-efficient buildings, according to the ILO report.

It indicates that the regional winners from investment in energy use and production will be Asia and the Pacific, with 14 million jobs created, the Americas (three million) and Europe (two million).

In contrast, negative job growth is forecast in the Middle East (minus 0.48 per cent) and Africa (minus 0.04 per cent) if the reliance of these regions continues, respectively, on fossil fuels and mining.

Catherine Saget, lead author of the report, underlined the need to help low and middle-income countries offset the potential “short-term” employment losses in countries attempting to make the transition to environmentally sustainable economies.

Social dialogue between employers, workers and Member States is also crucial, according to Ms Saget, adding that it has played a “key role in reconciling social and economic objectives with environmental concerns” in some situations.

Measures that could help workers include cash transfers, better social insurance and even limits on fossil fuel use, according to the ILO report, which states that this policy mix “would lead to faster economic growth, stronger employment creation, fairer income distribution and lower greenhouse gas emissions”.

The report’s other findings include a call for governments to take urgent action to train their workforces so that they have the right skills to make the transition to a greener economy possible.

[‘Never forget children,’ UNICEF warns of escalating violence in Central African Republic](#)

At least 350,000 children in the Central African Republic (CAR) are out of school and lack access to health and other basic services, including nearly 29,000 who have fled escalating violence this year, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has warned, urging warring parties to stop the fighting.

“Children are [paying the highest price](#) for this new surge of violence,” UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Marie-Pierre Poirier, said over the weekend, adding: “All actors should stop violence against children now. The world must not forget the children of the Central African Republic. Protection of children should come first.”

The already precarious humanitarian and security situation in the country has deteriorated over the past year, worsening even further since the start of 2018. An estimated 687,400 people are displaced within the country, up from 440,000 in 2017, including more than 357,400 children.

This year alone, at least 55,000 people – including 28,600 children – have fled their homes because of escalating brutality and violence.

UNICEF said that a third of children are currently out of school. Close to half of all children are not fully immunized and 41 per cent of children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition.

The agency is providing children with life-saving assistance. “UNICEF and our partners are achieving encouraging results focusing on four key priorities: scaling up immunization, ending malnutrition, providing education, and protection; including in emergency situations,” said Ms. Poirier.

In 2017, UNICEF and partners vaccinated more than 800,000 children under-five against polio, representing 98 per cent coverage, and treated more than 26,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Also last year, UNICEF supported the release of 2,969 children from armed groups, and helped set up 315 child-friendly and temporary learning spaces in displacement camps, helping around 56,600 children.

However, up to the end of April, only 15 per cent of UNICEF’s 2018 humanitarian appeal for the country has been funded. The agency needs an additional \$48 million.

“With significant investment in targeted interventions, we can make a real difference for children both in internally displaced sites and host communities,” said Ms. Poirier.