

'Silence the guns' urges UN disarmament chief as global week of action begins

The international community must present a united front against gun violence which kills nearly 250,000 each year and injures many more, said a senior United Nations official on Monday, marking the start of a Global Week of Action Against the scourge.

"Every day, hundreds of lives are lost due to [gun violence](#) worldwide," the UN Disarmament Affairs chief, Izumi Nakamitsu, said in her message at the start of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence. "Guns are responsible for about half of all violent deaths – nearly a quarter-million each year."

The High Representative said that for every death, there were "many more injured, maimed and forced to flee their home and community" and those who just live with the threat of being shot.

The pandemic of gun violence has many roots, such as a lack of adequate legislation and regulation on gun control; an insufficient ability to enforce existing laws; youth unemployment and a lack of job opportunities for former gang members and ex-combatants.

Ms. Nakamitsu also singled out a culture in some places that "glorifies violence and equates guns with masculinity".

Such complex problems require multi-faceted, sustainable solutions that address root causes, Ms. Nakamitsu said.

The Global Week "is a conduit" for fostering cooperation on this critical issue among all stakeholders, including government, international and regional organizations, businesses, and civil society, and for them to pool their experience, strength and expertise, she said.

Ms. Nakamitsu also highlighted the explicit link to sustainable development and security, stating that without tackling this scourge head-on, the ambitious goals set out in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) would not be achieved.

From 18-29 June, States will gather at the UN Headquarters in New York, for the [Third Review Conference](#) on the Programme of Action on small arms – the key global instrument that has guided international action against the illicit trade in small arms over the past two decades.

"The Conference will provide an important opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to silence the guns that affect so many innocent lives, and to continue its work towards achieving our common goal of peace, security and development for all," she said.

UN forum to coordinate global efforts to address worsening water woes

With extreme weather costing hundreds of billions a year and fears that by 2050, one in four people will be living in a country affected by severe water shortages, a global conference got underway on Monday convened by the United Nations meteorological agency to manage the precious resource more sustainably.

The problem has been further complicated due to the lack of comprehensive water supply data and monitoring systems which is making it hard to respond to the growing crisis.

[“We cannot manage what we do not measure,”](#) said Harry Lins, the President of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Commission for Hydrology.

“And yet the systems and data collection which underpin these vital services to society are under real pressure,” he added, underscoring that informed decision-making must be based on comprehensive facts and figures.

This sums up the key challenge underlying the agency’s [HydroConference](#), taking place in Geneva from 7-9 May, is seeking to address.

It brings together the full gamut of so-called “water stakeholders” – decision makers, meteorological and hydrological services; the private and academic sector; non-governmental organizations, and UN entities – around the same table to coordinate efforts as well as leverage individual knowledge and collective expertise to maximum effect.

WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said it was important for all actors to cope with the scale of the challenges that lie ahead, citing the two extremes of droughts and floods.

“Effective flood and drought policies can be implemented only with data and models for assessing the frequency and magnitude of extreme events,” he said, adding that the same also holds for other goals related to water and its efficient use; including those in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Sustainable Development Goal 6 ([SDG 6](#)) explicitly calls for sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Water is also a key component for other Goals including those on eliminating extreme poverty ([SDG 1](#)); as well as [Goal 2](#), to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, as well as [Goal 13](#) on

mitigating climate change.

[Largest-ever global response to cholera targets 2 million people in Africa](#)

The largest cholera vaccination drive in history targeting two million people across Africa is underway, the United Nations announced on Monday, in response to a series of recent deadly outbreaks of the water-borne disease.

“Oral cholera vaccines are [a key weapon](#) in our fight against cholera,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) in a statement, “but there are many other things we need to do to keep people safe.”

“WHO and our partners are saving lives every day by improving access to clean water and sanitation, establishing treatment centres, delivering supplies, distributing public health guidance, training health workers, and working with communities on prevention,” he added.

The drive targets Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, South Sudan and Nigeria, and will be completed by mid-June.

The vaccines are funded by the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private partnership known as Gavi, and were sourced from the global stockpile.

Oral cholera vaccines are a key weapon in our fight against cholera
– WHO chief

The burden of cholera remains high in many African countries. As of 7 May, there are at least 12 areas or countries, reporting active cholera transmission in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the beginning of this year, WHO has led the way providing technical expertise and guidance, working closely with Health Ministries and other partners in the five target countries to plan and implement the vaccination campaigns. The ambitious effort is part of a global push to reduce cholera deaths by 90 percent by 2030.

In the 15 years between 1997 and 2012, a modest 1.5 million doses of cholera vaccines were used worldwide. In just the first four months of this year, more than 15 million doses have been approved for use globally.

Oral cholera vaccine is normally administered in two doses. The first gives protection for six months, the second for between three and five years.

“Every rainy season, cholera springs up and brings devastation to communities across Africa,” said Matshidiso Moeti, WHO’s Regional Director for Africa. “With this historic cholera vaccination drive, countries in the region are demonstrating their commitment to stopping cholera from claiming more lives. We need to build on this momentum through a multisectoral approach and ensure that everyone has access to clean water and sanitation, no matter where they are located.”

A resolution on further action to combat cholera will be proposed by Zambia and Haiti at this month’s World Health Assembly in Geneva, calling for renewed political will and an integrated global approach to eliminate cholera, including more investment in clean water, sanitation and hygiene.

[UN experts urges Poland to ensure unrestricted ‘civic space’ during climate talks](#)

Poland’s new law designed to address safety concerns during the United Nations climate change conference to be held there later this year could infringe on the privacy of environmentalists and curtail their rights to protest peacefully, the world body’s human rights experts said Monday.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) will take place in a southern Polish city of Katowice from 26 November to 16 December.

“For the COP24 to be a true success, the Polish Government must do its utmost to prepare and hold the meeting in a manner that facilitates the climate change negotiations and also ensures [meaningful civic space](#) that is free from undue surveillance and restriction,” said a group of UN experts in a news release issued by the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR).

These experts – including Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and Joe Cannataci, Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy – raised the issue, as the Polish Government briefed officials about COP24 at a preparatory meeting being held in Bonn, Germany.

“All eyes are on the Polish Government to see how, as the host and the president of COP24, it will honour its human rights obligations and uphold

its responsibility to ensure free and unfettered access for broader participation,” the experts said.

Specifically, Article 17 of the new legislation appears to give sweeping surveillance powers to the police and secret services to collect and process personal data about all COP24 participants, and Article 22 appears to prevent spontaneous peaceful assemblies in Katowice.

The UN experts encouraged the Government to [clarify](#) these matters.

[UN chief condemns deadly attack on voter registration centre in eastern Afghanistan](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has strongly condemned an attack on a mosque being used as a voter registration centre in Afghanistan’s Khost province and underscored his support to the country as it prepares for elections later this year.

“The Secretary-General extends his solidarity to Afghan citizens seeking to exercise their constitutional rights and take part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections,” said a [statement](#) attributable to the UN chief’s spokesperson.

In the statement, Mr. Guterres also extended his condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

According to reports at least 17 people were killed and 37 were wounded in the attack, which took place Sunday afternoon (local time).

There have been a number of attacks on voter registration centres as Afghanistan prepares to hold parliamentary elections in October.

On 22 April, [a suicide attack struck](#) a voter registration centre in the capital, Kabul, killing at least 30 people.