

Amid a 'crisis of solidarity,' seek inspiration from the Buddha's message of empathy, urges UN chief

At an event commemorating the Day of Vesak, United Nations Secretary-General urged the global community to draw inspiration from the Buddha's teachings and message of tolerance, empathy and humanism.

"The world faces numerous challenges, from conflict to climate change, from prejudice to growing inequality. We see people turning inwards and we see a crisis of solidarity," said the Secretary-General in his address.

"[The Buddha's teachings can inspire us to become global citizens](#) [...] the Buddhist world view teaches us to see ourselves as a part of this world and not as its masters."

[Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon](#), generally in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions of Buddhists around the world.

It was on the Day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 B.C., that the Buddha was born. It was also on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on this Day that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away.

In his message, the Secretary-General highlighted Buddhism's emphasis on non-violence as a powerful call for peace and said that the teachings of the Buddha remain very relevant in the work of the UN.

"The focus in Buddhism on the inherent dignity of life finds resonance today in our [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)," he said, urging everyone commit to overcome differences, care for the most vulnerable and "truly leave no one behind as we navigate the path to a better future for all."

Speaking alongside Mr. Guterres, Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly also underscored the importance of the "[timeless principles](#)" of Buddhism to the work of the UN.

"They offer insights and ideals on improving the condition of the planet; they show us the way to a more sustainable future. They remind us to recognise the inherent dignity of all people. They shine a light on the path to peace – peace among nations, and peace within people," he said.

In 1999, the UN General Assembly [adopted a resolution](#) in which it recognized the International Day of Vesak to acknowledge the contribution that Buddhism, one of the oldest religions in the world, has made for over two and a half millennia and continues to make to the spirituality of humanity.

Can science and technology really help solve global problems? A UN forum debates vital question

Science and technology offer part of the solution to climate change, inequality and other global issues, a United Nations official said on Tuesday, spotlighting the enormous potential these fields hold for achieving humanity's common goal, of a poverty and hunger-free world by 2030.

"New advances in science and technology hold immense promises for achieving the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin, in his opening remarks to a session of the intergovernmental body overseeing the UN's development work.

The 2018 Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), being held from Tuesday to Thursday at UN Headquarters, brings together key stakeholders to review policies that support an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication – with a focus this year on increasing resilience.

"To truly leverage the benefits of science and technology for sustainable development, we need to prioritize solutions that are pro-poor and equitable," Mr. Liu said. "Only in this way can we ensure that no one is left behind."

He stated that a rapidly warming planet was one of the greatest threats today, but a wide array of technological measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation can help the transition from carbon-intensive growth, towards more sustainable and resilient development.

Technologies can also help provide jobs to disadvantaged groups in society, and can help make cities smarter and more sustainable, by facilitating new transport systems and improving the management of natural resources.

To truly leverage the benefits of science and technology for sustainable development, we need to prioritize solutions that are pro-poor and equitable – Liu Zhenmin, head of DESA

Threatened by unsustainable consumption and production patterns, the ocean is also suffering, he added. Numerous technologies have been shown to help mitigate and address these effects, such as innovations in sustainable fishing; enhanced surveillance of ocean acidification, and environmentally-sensitive forms of pollution prevention and clean-up, he added.

To make new technology and innovation work in support of communities, any efforts must be driven on a local level, and be inclusive.

Taking integrated approaches and working to break down barriers is of utmost urgency, too, as crises and shocks are increasingly complex and span the economic, social and environmental spheres.

“And, finally, we need to build capacities and institutions for anticipating risk, and for planning and strategic foresight to effectively leverage technologies,” Mr. Liu said.

Also addressing the opening segment was Marc Pecsteen, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, who said that technology and innovation have been identified as “two key enablers, whose appropriate, efficient, equitable and sustainable use can support our efforts to build and maintain resilient societies.”

Combating ‘scourge’ of sexual abuse allegations remains ‘key’ UN priority, as 54 new allegations emerge

More than 50 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving personnel serving with the United Nations and its partners in the field were received in the first three months of this year, the global organization said on Tuesday.

The allegations have not all been verified and many are in the preliminary assessment phase.

They involve 66 victims, including 13 girls under the age of 18, and 16 victims whose age remains unknown.

Farhan Haq, UN Deputy Spokesperson, provided journalists with an [update](#) on cases.

Overall, he said that 54 allegations had been reported between 1 January and 31 March 2018.

Fourteen cases related to on-going peacekeeping operations; 18 from UN agencies, funds and programmes; while 21 relate to implementing partners, and one to a member of a non-UN international force.

Two of the allegations have been substantiated by an investigation, while two were not substantiated.

Mr. Haq said that with over 95,000 civilians and 90,000 uniformed personnel working for the UN, sexual exploitation and abuse are not reflective of the conduct of the majority of those who serve the organization.

“But every allegation involving our personnel undermines our values and principles and the sacrifice of those who serve with pride and professionalism in some of the most dangerous places in the world,” he told journalists at UN Headquarters.

“For this reason, combating this scourge, and helping and empowering those who have been scarred by these egregious acts, continue to be key priorities for the Secretary-General in 2018.”

UN chief António Guterres has committed to a “[zero tolerance](#)” policy for sexual exploitation and abuse.

His initiatives to prevent and respond to the issue include appointing a [Victims’ Rights Advocate](#) and establishing a [Circle of Leadership](#) consisting of Heads of State or Government who have agreed to hold perpetrators to account.

[Security Council urges conditions that allow safe return of Rohingya refugees](#)

After seeing for themselves the conditions facing Rohingya refugees in the camps of southern Bangladesh as well as homes they fled in Myanmar, Security Council members called on Tuesday for them to be allowed a safe return.

Speaking to the press at the end of a four-day visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh, Council members highlighted the need to establish conditions within Myanmar that allow the “safe, voluntary and dignified return” of refugees as well as accountability for the human rights violations that prompted the exodus.

“I think it’s impossible not to be deeply moved by what we heard in Cox’s Bazar [southern Bangladesh] and particularly the scale of it,” Karen Pierce, the United Kingdom’s Ambassador to the UN, told reporters at a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar.

“One can tell stories and those stories are very moving but in order to have accountability you need a proper investigation with evidentiary standards.”

Ms. Pierce added that during the Council’s meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor urged all concerned to produce evidence that would help the country undertake a proper investigation.

Also speaking at the press conference, Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN, called for the full implementation of the agreement between the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh concerning the return of refugees.

“We saw that the Government of Myanmar took many steps to implement the agreement but I think much more needs to be done,” he said. “What we really want is to speed up the process of the return of refugees in a safe and voluntary and dignified manner,” he added.

Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, the Permanent Representative of Peru, reiterated the need to ensure refugees’ security and recalled previous statements made by the Council on the crisis.

“Basically the message that we conveyed was that it was very important to improve the security conditions of the return of the refugees,” he said, recalling the visit.

Joanna Wronecka, Poland’s ambassador to the UN – which holds the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of May – said that the visit was vital for the Council to gain a good understanding of the situation on the ground.

“I would like to pay tribute to my colleagues who prepared this visit, especially the previous Presidency, Peru, and Kuwait, which initiated our preparation as well as the UK for a very substantial contribution to this visit,” she said.

Security Council members also urged the international community to continue supporting the work being undertaken by the UN and humanitarian agencies in southern Bangladesh, on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable refugees living there.

Afghanistan: UN expert condemns killing of journalists as ‘attack on right to know’

A United Nations human rights expert on Tuesday strongly condemned the killing of nine journalists in Afghanistan who were among the victims of Monday’s terrorist attack in the country’s capital.

The condemnation came just in advance of [World Press Freedom Day](#), annually observed on 3 May.

According to figures released by the UN Security Council, at least 41 people

were killed and 45 injured; including women, children and emergency responders, as well as media workers.

“Yesterday’s attack, like all such attacks on journalists, is an attack on Afghanistan’s [free press](#) and the public’s right to know,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, [David Kaye](#), who called on the Government to bring the perpetrators to justice.

According to media reports, after an initial suicide attack, another suicide bomber targeted journalists who had arrived on the scene, to cover the event. The terrorist group ISIL – also known as Da’esh – reportedly claimed responsibility for the bombings.

“These attacks serve to remind those who glibly demonize the press that journalists serve a crucial function in societies: the illumination of all matters of public interest,” Mr. Kaye said. “The legacy of those killed is their reminder that serving the public’s right to know, can be dangerous and deserves all of our respect and support.”

On Monday, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) and his Special Representative for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, condemned the attacks.

In a Press Statement on Tuesday, the Security Council condemned the bombings as “heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks.”

“The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Afghanistan” and they wished a speedy and full recovery to the injured, added the statement.