

Nations begin drafting climate action 'operating manual' at UN conference in Bonn

The latest round of United Nations climate change negotiations began on Monday in Bonn, Germany to further develop the "operating manual" for implementing the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement, which aims to keep temperature rises this century, well below 2 degrees Celsius.

"We are witnessing the severe impacts of climate change throughout the world", said the Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, Patricia Espinosa, at a press conference.

"Every credible scientific source is telling us that these impacts will only get worse if we do not address climate change and it also tells us that our window of time for addressing it is closing very soon," she added.

"We need to dramatically increase our ambitions," stressed the UNFCCC chief, outlining three priorities.

First, all stakeholders – including governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses, investors and citizens – must accelerate climate action by 2020.

Second, she said, the international community must complete the Paris Agreement guidelines, or operating manual, to unleash the potential of the accord.

Third, conditions must be improved to enable countries to be more ambitious in determining their own national policies to slow down global warming.

At the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23) held last November under the leadership of Fiji, nations agreed to accelerate and complete their work to put in place the guidelines – officially known as the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP) – at COP24 in Katowice, Poland next December.

At this Bonn meeting, which will run through 10 May, Governments will start drafting texts to be finalized at COP24.

Finishing off the operating manual is also necessary to assess whether the world is on track to achieve the goals of the historic Paris Agreement limiting greenhouse gas emissions, while pursuing efforts to keep the temperature rise to less than 1.5°C.

Throughout this year, countries will also focus on how they can scale up their climate ambition and implementation in the pre-2020 period. All countries share the view that climate action prior to 2020 is essential.

Nearly two-thirds of global workforce in the 'informal' economy – UN study

More than 61 per cent of the world's employed population – two billion people – earn their livelihoods in the informal sector, the United Nations labour agency said on Monday, stressing that a transition to the formal economy is critical to ensure rights' protection and decent working conditions.

[“The high incidence of informality in all its forms has multiple adverse consequences for workers](#), enterprises and societies and is a major challenge for the realization of decent work for all,” said Rafael Diez de Medina, the Director of Department of Statistics at the UN International Labour Organization (ILO).

The findings are revealed in ILO's latest report, [Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture](#). The study also provides comparable estimates on the size of the informal economy and a statistical profile of the sector, using criteria from more than 100 countries.

“Having managed to measure this important dimension, now included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework, this can be seen as an excellent step towards acting on it, particularly thanks to more available comparable data from countries,” added Mr. Diez de Medina.

The geographic distribution of employment in the informal sector presents a striking picture.

For hundreds of millions of workers, informality means a lack of social protection, rights at work and decent working conditions –
report author Florence Bonnet

In Africa, 85.8 per cent of employment is informal. The proportion is 68.2 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, 68.6 per cent in the Arab States, 40 per cent in the Americas, and just over 25 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.

In all, 93 per cent of the world's informal employment is in emerging and developing countries.

The report also found that informal employment is a greater source of employment for men (63 per cent) than for women (58.1 per cent).

“Out of the two billion workers in informal employment worldwide, just over 740 million are women,” said ILO, noting that they are mostly in informal employment in most low- and lower-middle income countries and are more often found to be the most vulnerable.

Factors affecting level of informality

Education is a major factor affecting the level of informality, the study has shown, noting that as the level of education increases, the level of informality decreases.

“People who have completed secondary and tertiary education are less likely to be in informal employment compared to workers who have either no education or completed primary education,” said ILO.

In addition, people living in rural areas are almost twice as likely to be in informal employment as those in urban areas, it added.

According to Florence Bonnet, one of the authors of the report, data on these issues are crucial to design effective policies.

“For hundreds of millions of workers, informality means a lack of social protection, rights at work and decent working conditions, and for enterprises it means low productivity and lack of access to finance,” she said.

UN mission strongly condemns twin suicide attacks in Kabul

Strongly condemning two terrorist attacks in the Afghan capital, Kabul, the United Nations mission in the country has underscored the need bring those behind the attacks to justice.

According to reports, at least 14 civilians were killed and over 30 injured in the two attacks that took place this morning (local time) in a heavily populated neighbourhood in central Kabul. The second attack was timed 30 minutes later to target journalists arriving on the scene and emergency services personnel seeking to provide aid to victims of the first attack.

There is no justification whatsoever for such attacks [...] those who have organized and enabled these attacks must be brought to justice
– UNAMA head Tadamichi Yamamoto

“[I am outraged by the attack](#) which appears to have deliberately targeted journalists; this attack, coming just ahead of World Press Freedom Day, is a direct assault on freedom of expression,” Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and the head of the [UN Assistance Mission in the country](#) (UNAMA), said in a news release.

“There is no justification whatsoever for such attacks [...] those who have

organized and enabled these attacks must be brought to justice and held to account.”

In the release, Mr. Yamamoto also reiterated the protections accorded to civilians under international humanitarian law and called on all parties to uphold their obligations, at all times.

“These attacks caused untold human suffering to Afghan families,” he said, extending condolences to the families of the victims and a speedy recovery to the injured.

[UN Mission condemns suicide bombing in central Somalia as attempt to derail reconciliation process](#)

The United Nations Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has condemned the suicide bombing on Saturday that reportedly killed government security officers and civilians in the city of Gaalkacyo.

“This attack occurred because extremists feel threatened by the progress that is being made with reconciliation efforts in Gaalkacyo,” said the head of UNSOM, Michael Keating in a [press statement](#).

“The country has suffered enough violence and bloodshed; it is time for reconciliation,” added Mr. Keating, who is also the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia.

According to initial reports, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives in an area of the city known as Jiir Abdullahi Yusuf, where security forces were stationed, killing at least two senior security force commanders as well as civilians. Al-Shabaab has reportedly claimed responsibility.

“The people and authorities in Gaalkacyo are courageously finding a way forward; they should not be derailed by this assault on their chances of a peaceful future,” Mr. Keating said.

UNSOM expressed its condolences to the families and colleagues of the victims and wished the injured a full and speedy recovery.

The Puntland and Galmudug state administrations control the northern and southern sections of Gaalkacyo, in north-central Somalia, respectively. This division has been a cause for recurring cycles of violence.

In January 2017, however, an agreement was reached by the Puntland and Galmudug state presidents. The accord stipulated a withdrawal of forces from

the disputed city, the removal of all roadblocks to allow free movement of people and goods, and the introduction of joint police training and patrols.

[Aid agencies face 'life threatening' funding crisis as monsoon rains barrel towards Cox's Bazar camps – UN](#)

The lives of tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees hang in the balance as monsoon and cyclone seasons threaten camps in southern Bangladesh, the United Nations migration agency warned Friday, appealing for urgent financial support to prepare the area against floods and landslides.

Without new funding, tens of thousands of people who poured into the camps, fleeing violence triggered in Myanmar last August will be at risk, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) cautioned.

“We cannot wait for funding to come in after the emergency is over and possibly [preventable tragedies have occurred](#),” said John McCue, IOM’s Senior Operations Coordinator in Cox’s Bazar.

“We need to be able to act now if lives are to be saved,” he added.

Almost a million Rohingya refugees live in the Cox’s Bazar district under tarpaulins, on steep, sandy slopes – 25,000 of whom have been identified as at the highest risk of landslides.

Without aid, numerous will have to remain in these hazardous locations and hundreds of thousands of others will also be at risk if roads become impassible, blocking access to aid supplies and medical services.

“Tarp stocks are also rapidly running out and IOM, which oversees shelter distribution, reports that by mid-May supplies will fall below critical levels,” maintained Mr. McCue, noting that without more funding, neither new shelters nor replacements would be available to those who lost homes during storms.

He also pointed out that other risks included safe water supply systems, which if collapsed could put hundreds of thousands of refugees in jeopardy of waterborne diseases.

Only nine per cent of a \$951million joint agency response plan has been secured. Of that, \$182 million allocated to provide Cox’s Bazar with assistance through December 2018 is facing a shortfall of almost \$151 million.

Aid staff on the ground are working to improve shelters, secure key access roads and have emergency response services ready should the worst happens, “but the harsh truth is that we cannot keep doing that if we do not have the funds,” said Mr. McCue stated.

IOM, the [World Food Programme](#) and the [UN refugee agency](#) are working alongside the government of Bangladesh and others to manage the scale of the response in Cox’s Bazar – the world’s biggest refugee settlement.

“If significant funding is not secured in the next few weeks to keep operations running, there is a high likelihood that many children, women and men may die, when they could have otherwise been saved,” concluded Mr. McCue.