

UN chief honours enduring legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King

Recalling the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated 50 years ago today, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres urged the world to build on the civil rights leader's work for equality and social justice.

"Dr. King was one of the [moral giants of the 20th century](#). He devoted his life to equality, justice, and non-violent social change," said the UN chief in a statement attributable to his spokesperson.

"Decades after his death, he continues to inspire all those around the world who are struggling for human rights and human dignity in the face of oppression, discrimination and injustice."

Dr. King's advocacy and pronouncements against discrimination, and in favour of social justice, of global understanding and the virtues of diversity are more relevant today than ever, added the Secretary-General.

Born in January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. King was shot and killed on the evening of 4 April 1968 while standing on the balcony the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking garbage workers of that city.

In 1978, ten years after his death, the civil rights leader was posthumously awarded the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights, honouring him for his outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of the human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Business leaders at UN forum challenged to invest in a more sustainable future for all

Three years into the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the United Nations continues brokering new partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), participants told a forum at UN Headquarters on Wednesday.

“Business as usual approaches [won't work](#),” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed at the 2018 ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] [Partnership Forum](#), an annual event promoting inclusive societies, including through innovative business models and mobilizing big data for public good.

“We need action – and bold action – to build an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future that leaves no one behind,” she continued.

Ms. Mohammed shared a snapshot of today's world, pointing out that more than eight per cent of the population lives in poverty; 192 million are unemployed; and young people are three times more likely to be jobless.

“Their voices in many places are stifled and leading to a greater sense of disenfranchisement and disillusionment,” she underscored.

Calling the private sector “an indispensable partner,” Ms. Mohammed stressed the need to work together “to reduce inequalities, end discrimination, empower people and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all.”

Partnering with the private sector is essential to pursue common goals and to align their business models with the 2030 Agenda.

“Sustainable business makes business sense,” she continued. “Better engagement with the private sector requires an enabling policy environment and dialogue mechanisms that encourage firms to do business in a way that works for global good, and for the bottom line.”

She said that both the Organization and the private sector need to step up efforts and scale up partnerships to generate results that would “reach the furthest communities and villages.”

“Our ambition is nothing less than ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment,” she underscored.

A win-win partnership

Opening the annual forum, Marie Chatardová, [ECOSOC](#) President, pointed out that inclusive development models and combatting inequality was critical to achieving the SDGs, which aim to wipe out poverty and boost equality by putting the world on a more sustainable economic, social and environmental path by 2030.

“It also requires building the resilience of societies, communities and people to cope with shocks – be it natural disasters, economic shocks, conflicts or others,” she said. “To do so, we must reach out to ‘those furthest behind first,’ including women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons living with disabilities.”

Citing research by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, she argued that sustainable business models could unlock economic opportunities “worth up to \$12 trillion and increase employment by up to 380 million jobs

by 2030.”

“The study also shows the majority of companies are already aware that investing in sustainable development goals is a ‘win-win partnership,’” she stressed.

Ms. Chatardová said the private sector can contribute to more inclusive value chains, diversity policies – including marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

“I would also like to take the opportunity to challenge the business leaders present here today to consider making bold commitments to act and invest towards co-designing a more inclusive future for all,” she concluded.

This forum will contribute important elements to a special ECOSOC meeting York in May, which will inform discussions at the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in July 2018.

[Security Council condemns terrorist attack against African Union mission in Somalia](#)

The United Nations Security Council on Wednesday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on 1 April perpetrated by the Al-Shabaab group against the Ugandan contingent of the African Union mission in Somalia.

“The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security,” said a statement issued to the press.

The Council underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.

The attack reportedly killed and injured a number of soldiers belonging to the mission, known as AMISOM.

The Council underscored its full support to AMISOM in delivering their mandate to reduce the threat posed by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab and armed opposition groups in Somalia, and paid tribute to all international actors working to bring peace and stability in Somalia.

Efforts to discover those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria at a standstill, Security Council told

A senior United Nations official on Wednesday stressed the need for an independent investigation to determine who used chemical weapons in Syria, and called on the Security Council to show unity to not let the perpetrators get away with it.

“The persistent allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria underscore the need to identify solutions and reach agreement on [an appropriate accountability mechanism](#),” Thomas Markram, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, told the 15-member body, which last year [failed](#) to renew an international panel investigating use of chemical weapons in that country.

The Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and UN was created in 2015 by the Council, but its mandate expired in November 2017.

“While allegations of the use of chemical weapons have not stopped, consideration of a mechanism for accountability has apparently slowed, if not come to a standstill,” said Mr. Markram, who addressed the Council on behalf of High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu.

Today, which marked one year since the tragic use of chemical weapons – the deadly nerve agent sarin – in Khan Shaykhun, is a fitting date to remember the victims of this attack, he added.

On the issue of chemical weapons production sites declared by Syria, Mr. Markram said that destruction of the two remaining facilities will be verified by the OPCW and is expected to be completed within two to three months from the start of destruction.

As for the allegations of the use of chemical weapons that were brought to the attention by the Syrian Government, the OPCW fact-finding mission is currently in Damascus to determine if such weapons were used. The mission, however, is not mandated to determine who used them.

United States Ambassador Nikki Haley said that “the Assad regime continued using chemical weapons against the Syrian people. One member of this Council shielded the Assad regime from any consequences, then blocked us from renewing the Joint Investigative Mechanism.”

Her Russian counterpart Vassily Nebenzia said that while some Western countries are chasing “the phantom chemical weapons” of Damascus, the dangerous potential of chemical terrorism continues to accumulate in the region. He added that Western countries insist on recreating a JIM which

would rubber-stamp the decisions that they need and that his delegation has proposed an alternative to the former JIM and circulated a draft resolution.

Results of tests of samples from Salisbury expected next week – chemical weapons watchdog

Results of tests of samples collected from individuals exposed to a nerve agent in Salisbury, the United Kingdom, are expected to be received by early next week, the head of the United Nations-backed body working to rid the world of chemical weapons said on Wednesday.

“Once the results of the analyses of the samples are received, the Secretariat will produce a report on the basis of these results and will transmit a copy of this report to the United Kingdom,” Ahmet Üzümcü, the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons ([OPCW](#)), told the body’s Executive Council.

“The UK has expressed its wish to be as transparent as possible and has already indicated its preference for disclosure of the report to other States Parties,” he added.

The samples were collected from Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, who have been hospitalized since when they were found on a public bench in the English city of Salisbury in early March, after reported exposure to a toxic chemical.

In the immediate aftermath of the incident, the UK said that it was “highly likely” that Russia was behind the incident using a deadly nerve-agent. The accusations were met by a firm denial by Russia, which as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention ([CWC](#)), requested today’s Executive Council [meeting](#).

According to OPCW, samples were also collected from a third individual – a police official – reportedly exposed to the chemical.

The samples were sealed and brought to the OPCW laboratory on 23 March.

An OPCW expert team was deployed to the UK at the country’s request seeking technical assistance in identifying the nature of the toxic chemical reportedly used.

In his update, Mr. Üzümcü also said that OPCW team worked independently and in not involved in the national investigation by the UK authorities and that

no State Party is involved in the technical work that is being carried out by the Secretariat.

The OPCW is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force in 1997 and outlaws the production, stockpiling, and use of [chemical weapons](#) and their [precursors](#).