

Ukraine: UN calls for protection of civilians after attacks on water facility workers

Following recent shelling of water treatment workers in eastern Ukraine, a senior United Nations official has called on all parties to the conflict to protect those civilians who maintain critical infrastructure.

“I am [deeply concerned](#) that water treatment workers and critical infrastructure continue to be targeted in eastern Ukraine’s armed conflict,” said Neal Walker, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, in a statement issued on Wednesday.

“It is clear that any targeting of civilian infrastructure and intentional disruption of access to water supply or heating systems is a violation of international humanitarian law,” he added.

In the last eight days, workers seeking to maintain the Donetsk Filter Station have been shot at on four separate occasions.

The operation of the facility relies on the safe and unfettered access for the technicians, who risk their lives on a daily basis so water continues to flow to 345,000 people affected by the conflict.

On Tuesday, a truck was fired upon while making a routine delivery of water treatment chemicals vital for continued operations. A bus carrying 30 workers was also fired upon. It was only due to good luck that no one was hurt, Mr. Walker said.

Given Ukraine’s harsh winter, any interruption of water supply or inter-dependent heating systems could generate severe humanitarian consequences, he warned.

After four years of armed conflict, ordinary men, women and children continue to be the most affected in eastern Ukraine, with their most basic needs, including safety and protection continuing to be denied.

Millions of Ukrainians are either trapped in active hostilities or displaced and are losing hope, he said.

UN Security Council calls for all Yemen's ports to remain fully open to all aid imports

The Security Council has urged warring parties in Yemen to allow humanitarian convoys to safely reach all conflict-affected governorates without hindrance, while also asking that all Yemen's ports remain fully open to commercial and relief supply imports.

These calls were made in a [Presidential Statement](#) issued Thursday by the 15-member body.

Since the uprisings in Yemen broke out in early 2011, the United Nations has been engaged, through the [good offices](#) of the Secretary-General, in helping Yemenis to find a peaceful solution.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), 20.7 million people in Yemen need some kind of [humanitarian or protection support](#), with some 9.8 million in acute need of assistance.

In the Statement, the Council noted "with great concern" the impact that access restrictions on commercial and aid imports have on the humanitarian situation, and called on the parties to "immediately facilitate access for these essential imports into the country and their distribution throughout in order to reach the entire civilian population."

"In this regard, the Security Council calls for the full and sustained opening of all Yemen's ports, including Hodeida and Saleef ports, and stresses the importance of keeping these functioning and open to all commercial and humanitarian imports, including food, fuel and medical imports," the Statement added.

The Council also called for increased access to Sana's Airport for lifesaving humanitarian supplies and movement of urgent humanitarian cases.

Further, the Council reaffirmed that "denial of humanitarian access can constitute a violation of international humanitarian law," stressing that the operation of the UN humanitarian air and sea services and related services for staff of relief agencies should proceed unhindered.

Major reports on biodiversity and ecosystem services to be launched at UN-backed meeting in Medellin

With our planet's flora and fauna facing unprecedented threats, science and policy experts are set to gather next week in Medellin, Colombia, for a United Nations-backed meeting to consider five landmark reports aiming to inform better decisions by Governments, businesses and even individuals on biodiversity, and issues of land degradation and restoration.

"Literally, all Governments around the world should be looking at [the reports] to see what are we saying," Sir Robert Watson, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)) told *UN News* ahead of the body's sixth plenary session which will run in Colombia's second largest city from 18-24 March.

"That will be the basis for informed decisions," said the IPBES Chair.

Established in 2012, IPBES is the global science-policy platform tasked with providing the best-available evidence to inform better decisions affecting nature – by everyone from Governments and industry to non-governmental organization (NGOs) and the general public – towards strengthening services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.

The IPBES assessment reports are intended to provide decision makers with comprehensive, credible, evidence-based policy options to help reverse the unsustainable use of irreplaceable natural resources.

Prepared by more than 550 leading international experts and peer-reviewed by experts from both government and academia, the reports took three years to develop at a cost of more than \$6 million. IPBES will present the reports to representatives of its 128 member States for approval at the upcoming plenary.

The reports to be presented comprise four regional assessments of biodiversity in Africa; the Americas; Asia and the Pacific; and Europe and Central Asia; as well as an assessment of land degradation and restoration, both regionally and globally.

Each regional assessment will evaluate the status of biodiversity in its respective region and subregions, identifying progress, drivers of change and threats, as well as the policy-relevant issues affecting them.

In addition, the regional assessments will present lessons learned and progress (or lack thereof) on the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#) and its [Biodiversity Targets](#), agreed by States parties to the [UN Convention on Biodiversity](#) at their meeting in Aichi, Japan.

The assessments will also describe the implications regarding biodiversity in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and fulfilling the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

The assessment on land degradation and restoration will identify threats to land-based ecosystems, offering evidence from around the world and a range of best-available solutions to reduce the environmental, social and economic risks and impacts of land degradation.

The findings of the five IPBES reports will also be key inputs to a new comprehensive IPBES global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services, due for release in 2019. IPBES has previously issued a large-scale thematic assessment on global and regional pollination.

IPBES meets annually at a date and venue decided at the prior session. The Platform is placed under the auspices of four United Nations entities – the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) ([FAO](#)) and the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) – and administered by UNEP.

[The Netherlands and UN peacekeeping: Helping countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace](#)

From air transport in the Congo to truce observation in the Golan and assistance in the transition to independence in Namibia, the Netherlands has a long history with United Nations peacekeeping.

As of January 2018, there are 240 Dutch peacekeepers serving with five UN missions. The majority of them are in the West African nation of Mali, where they play a vital role in obtaining high quality intelligence that allows the UN peacekeeping mission there to operate more effectively.

In December 2017, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) conducted its first all-female foot patrol with ten female peacekeepers from six troop-contributing countries – Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Republic of Korea, Malaysia and the Netherlands. In the photo above, Lt. Colonel Ella Van Den Heuvel of the Netherlands interacting with a local resident while patrolling in Rmeish, South Lebanon.



UN Photo/JH

A Radio Communications Officer, W. Mayer of the Netherlands, at work at the airport in Elisabethville, in the Katanga province of what was then the Republic of the Congo (and is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Nearly 14,500 soldiers from 10 countries were part of the UN Operation in the Congo, known by its French acronym ONUC, helping to restore order and calm in the country. These countries assisted with technical and medical personnel, air transport, heavy materials, food and various supplies. (17 August 1960)



UN Photo/Yutaka Nagata

In the wake of the hostilities that erupted in May 1948 between the newly-proclaimed State of Israel and its Arab neighbours and the subsequent Armistice Agreements that followed, the Security Council established the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). Seen here is Major Arnold Wouters of the Netherlands observing at Observation Post ROME0, in the Golan Heights, Syria. (26 April 1973)



UN Photo/M. Grant

The Netherlands sent 60 police monitors to Namibia, such as the one seen here speaking to a resident in Windhoek, to serve with the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). The mission was set up in 1989 to help ensure the early independence of Namibia from South Africa through free and fair elections, among other tasks. A total of 980 UNTAG police monitors from 23 countries were charged with overseeing the Southwest African Police, who were responsible for maintaining law and order in the territory during the transition period. (1 April 1989)



UN Photo/Jorge Aramburu

An armoured personnel carrier from the Netherlands and Canadian Battalion (NECBAT), part of the UN Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) patrols the Temporary Security Zone, a buffer area along the countries' common border. The Zone was set up following the two-year border war that ended in 2000. A Boundary Commission, jointly set up by both countries, was tasked with demarcating the border and making final decisions on contested areas. (1 June 2001)



UN Photo/Marco Dormino

Peacekeepers from the Netherlands serving with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) keep watch from their guard station on the rooftop of an abandoned building, at the site of their military camp in Gao. At the time the Dutch contingent consisted of 380 troops (including Special Forces and a logistics team) and they also contributed several helicopters. (26 February 2014)

Guterres urges donors to generously support UN agency for Palestine refugees, 'as a matter of human solidarity'

Secretary-General António Guterres on Thursday called on the international community to generously support the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is facing “the worst financial crisis in its history.”

Addressing the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference Preserving Dignity and Sharing Responsibility: Mobilizing Collective Action for [UNRWA](#), Mr. Guterres noted that the Agency is facing a \$446 million shortfall in 2018, asking donors to respond to the Palestinian people’s plight and “[translate their dreams](#) into tangible improvements in their lives.”

“That is precisely what UNRWA does every day with such steadfastness, not only in Gaza but in the camps, communities and countries across the region that host Palestinian refugees,” he stressed, emphasizing the urgency to support and protect the vulnerable.

He warned that if the response is not met, “critical services could be reduced or eliminated entirely – from schools to sanitation, from medicine to microfinance to food security for some 1.7 million refugees in abject poverty or affected by conflict.”

The UN chief pointed out that until a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is achieved, the work of UNRWA remains “just as crucial as it was sixty-eight years ago.”

Mr. Guterres painted a detailed picture of UNRWA providing life-saving humanitarian relief and health care; building the future of Palestinian society through education; and ensuring human security, rights and dignity for over five million Palestine refugees.

“By keeping half a million children in school and millions of people healthy

and nourished,” he said, “UNRWA is contributing to stability in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as in Jordan and Lebanon – and has undertaken extraordinary efforts to support Palestinians who have suffered as a result of the tragedy in Syria.”

“UNRWA is an asset to the international community that we must protect and support,” he told the donors.



FA0/Pier Paolo Cito

Secretary-General António Guterres (centre) addresses the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference Preserving Dignity and Sharing Responsibility: Mobilizing Collective Action for UNRWA.

Without a collective solution Mr. Guterres affirmed that UNRWA would soon run out of money. He argued against this, drawing attention to then need for high-level action in the form of cash.

“It is far more grave, and threatens to cut programmes far more savagely,” he said, adding that this could push the suffering in disastrous and unpredictable directions.

Mr. Guterres appealed for increased support now and in the years ahead to ensure schooling, health care and food assistance.

“Such spending is an investment with wide-ranging dividends – in the human development of the Palestinian people, in stability today and in a peaceful future in and beyond Palestine,” he explained, adding that it could also address some of the despair and other factors that lead to radicalization.

Moreover, according to the UN chief, meeting the appeal would send a strong message to Palestine refugees that the international community is committed to their rights, their well-being, and meeting their daily needs.

“To those who may question the expense, let me echo UNRWA’s fundraising campaign: Dignity is priceless,” he pressed.

“As a matter of human solidarity, and as a matter of smart steps for peace, let us give UNRWA our full and generous support,” concluded the Secretary-General.