

Holocaust Remembrance: Never lose sight of what went wrong, UN memorial event told

31 January 2018 – Describing the Holocaust as the “culmination of hostility towards Jews across the millennia,” a “systematic campaign of extermination,” United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday warned against ignoring signs the hatred, xenophobia and other types of discrimination that exist in today’s world.

“Since hatred and contempt of human lives are rampant in our time, we must stand guard against xenophobia every day and everywhere. Across the world, the state of hate is high,” Mr. Guterres told a UN Holocaust Memorial Ceremony held at the world body’s Headquarters in New York.

Featured speakers included Thomas Buergenthal, a Holocaust survivor and a retired Judge of the International Court of Justice, Professor at George Washington University Law School and Eva Lavi, the youngest survivor on Schindler’s List.

Also delivering remarks were the representatives of Israel, Germany and the United States.

Four days ago, 27 January marked the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

“The gargantuan horror of those 12 years, from 1933 to 1945, reverberates to this day,” Mr. Guterres said. “This annual Day of commemoration is about the past, but also the future; it is about Jews but also all others who find themselves scapegoated and vilified solely because of who they are.”

The UN chief said that “genocide does not happen in a vacuum” and “the Holocaust was the culmination of hostility toward Jews across the millennia.”

“We must not lose sight of what went wrong,” he declared, warning against manifestation of resurgent hatred, such as the march of 60,000 people waving signs reading “White Europe” and “Clean Blood” in one capital two months ago.

The ceremony, hosted by Alison Smale, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, began with a minute of silence in honour of the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust.

For his part, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said: “We are not here today just to remember the Holocaust. We are also here to remind ourselves of our collective failure to prevent it.”

He said that the Holocaust did not happen overnight. “We saw it coming, and we did not stop it.”

And, when it was over, a promise was made not to repeat it, “never again.” But, unfortunately, this promise has not always been kept.

“No, we have not had another world war. Nor have we seen anything on the scale of the Holocaust. But we have felt tremors in the ground. We have seen red warning flashes lighting,” he said, citing acts of genocide, systematic discrimination, anti-Semitism, racism, intolerance, Islamophobia and hate speech.

“Too often we did not have the courage to call things exactly what they are – and to act accordingly,” he said.

“So, we need to reflect on our inaction – and, indeed, our failures. But we must also use this occasion to inspire change.”

More to follow...

[South-East Asia region aims to close immunity gap, wipe out measles by 2020 – UN health agency](#)

31 January 2018 – The so-called ‘big six’ countries in the World Health Organization’s (WHO) South-East Asia region are meeting today in New Delhi on an accelerated strategy to wipe out measles and rubella in the next three years by targeting as many as 500 million children with vaccines.

“Eliminating measles would [avert half a million deaths](#), while controlling rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) would promote health of pregnant woman and the infants they give life to,” said Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director for the World Health Organization (WHO) South-East Asia, referring to the ‘big six;’ Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand.

While Bhutan and Maldives eliminated measles in 2017, other regional countries are carrying out large-scale immunization drives to achieve the same. WHO noted that nearly 4.8 million children in the region miss their measles vaccines every year.

Through routine immunization and supplementary immunization campaigns, over the next two years, nearly 500 million children in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand are being targeting for measles and rubella vaccines.

According to Dr. Khetrpal Singh, sharing challenges and lessons learned from

recent achievements and initiatives will help member countries address their specific problems to close the immunity gap against measles, rubella and CRS.

In recent years, WHO South-East Asia Region has made unprecedented progress against vaccine-preventable diseases: Certified polio-free in 2014 and having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus as a public health problem in 2016.

Further accelerated and focussed efforts are needed.

Nearly 38 million children are born in the Region every year, of which approximately 87 per cent receive the first dose of measles-containing vaccine. Though this is a marked improvement from previous years, it still means around 4.8 million children are deprived of the most basic protection against measles each year.

Immunization programme managers of the 'big six' countries, along with WHO, UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Centre for Disease control are deliberating challenges, experiences and lessons learned in immunization in the Region that can be harnessed to eliminate measles and control rubella / congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

"This dynamism and positive exchange is at the very core of south-south and triangular cooperation," said Dr. Khetrapal Singh, who announced measles elimination and rubella / CRS control as one of her flagship programme at the start of her tenure in 2014.

Since then, all South-East Asia Region member countries have introduced two doses of measles-containing vaccines in their childhood immunization programme.

Measles elimination and rubella /CRS control strategies include ensuring over 95 per cent coverage with two doses of measles and rubella containing vaccine in each district through routine and/or supplementary immunization activities, and developing and sustaining sensitive measles surveillance supported by an accredited measles laboratory network.

Eliminating measles and controlling rubella would also mean extending the benefits of vaccine to all people everywhere, including communities in hard-to-reach or remote areas, the underserved or the neglected or marginalized; and advancing universal health coverage.

[With 'little hope' of a quick return to stability in Lake Chad Basin, UN](#)

and partners launch aid appeal

31 January 2018 – With more than a quarter of a million people affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin region, the United Nations refugee agency and its humanitarian partners launched on Wednesday an inter-agency funding appeal for \$157 million.

“The [Boko Haram crisis lingers on](#) and is far from over,” said Kelly T. Clements, Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at the appeal launch in Niger’s capital Niamey.

The 47 UN agencies, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), and humanitarian organizations participating in the [2018 Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) will provide support to some 208,000 Nigerian refugees and 75,000 of their hosts in Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

“The world should not forget the victims of this deadly conflict, especially as there appears to be little hope for a return to peace and stability in the near future,” Ms. Clements underscored.

Nigerian refugees continue to arrive in very remote, impoverished communities in neighbouring countries. Since it started in 2013, the Boko Haram conflict has internally displaced another 2.4 million people in north-east Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

UNHCR called the menacing threat of food insecurity and severe malnutrition “one of the most devastating side effects of the conflict.”

Please see the UN relief wing’s snapshot of the Lake Chad Basin Crisis [here](#)

Last September more than 7.2 million people in the Lake Chad Basin, which spans seven countries, including most of Chad and a large part of Niger, were food insecure. Across the vast region, food insecurity and malnutrition have reached critical levels, a situation only made worse over the eight years of the Boko Haram insurgency.

“The future of young generations in the region is at stake, as food insecurity not only affects the dignity of families, but has serious consequences on the physical and cognitive development of children,” stressed Ms. Clements.

In a region where education levels were already among the lowest in the world, the conflict has had a devastating impact – forcing hundreds of schools to close, making education inaccessible and causing school attendance rates to drop.

Refugee-hosting communities are also in dire need of assistance, as their capacity, including basic services infrastructure, is stretched to the limit. Humanitarian aid is needed to uplift services, including in the shelter, health, education, and water and sanitation sectors.

In 2017, a \$241 million appeal was only 56 per cent funded.

[Conflicts and disasters forcing 59 million young people into illiteracy – UNICEF study](#)

31 January 2018 – Nearly three in ten young people between the ages of 15 and 19 living in conflict- or disaster-affected countries are illiterate, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said Wednesday, calling for greater investments in the education, particularly for the most disadvantaged children and youth.

The situation is particularly dire for girls and young women in that age group, with 33 per cent of them in emergency countries failing to learn even the basics, compared to 24 per cent of boys.

“These numbers are a stark reminder of the [tragic impact that crises have on children’s education, their futures](#), and the stability and growth of their economies and societies,” said Henrietta H. Fore, the Executive Director of UNICEF, in a news release announcing the findings.

“An uneducated child who grows into an illiterate youth in a country ripped apart by conflict or destroyed by disasters may not have much of a chance.”

The findings, calculated using literacy data from the UN Educational, Science and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) in 27 emergency countries, also revealed that Niger, Chad, South Sudan and the Central African Republic all with a long history of instability and high levels of poverty recorded the highest illiteracy rates among those aged 15-24 with 76 per cent, 69 per cent, 68 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively, unable to read or write.

Globally, the number stands at 59 million.

Education can make or break a child’s futureUNICEF chief Fore

Ensuring adequately funding for education programmes, particularly during humanitarian crises, is critical to improve these statistics.

At present, only 3.6 per cent of humanitarian funding goes toward providing education for children living in emergencies, making it one of the least funded sectors in humanitarian appeals.

UNICEF estimates that over the next four years, it will spend approximately

\$1 billion a year on education programmes.

In its [2018 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, launched on Tuesday](#), the UN agency called for \$900 million for education in countries affected by conflicts and natural disasters. Some of its key interventions include accelerated education and non-formal learning opportunities, training teachers, rehabilitating schools and distributing school furniture and supplies.

RELATED: [Millions of children in crisis zones face 'bleak future,' UNICEF warns, launching emergency appeal](#)

At the same time, UNICEF also called on Governments and partners to provide young children with access to quality early education programmes to support their development and set them up to continue learning throughout their childhood; and offer illiterate young people the opportunity to learn to read and write and further their education through specially designed alternative and accelerated education programmes.

“Education can make or break a child’s future,” said Ms. Fore.

“For all children to fully reap the benefits of learning, it is key that they get the best quality education possible, as early as possible,” she stressed.

The UNICEF analysis has been released ahead of the Global Partnership for Education Replenishment Conference in Dakar, Senegal, (1-2 February) which aims to raise funding for education from partner countries, and current and new donors in order to ensure that all children and youth are in school and learning.

[Without young people, Global Goals will not be achieved, UN forum told](#)

30 January 2018 – Young people today are more connected, dynamic and engaged than ever and the Global Goals can’t happen without them, speakers told an annual United Nations forum, where young leaders called on the Organization keep its promise to “leave no one behind” on the road to creating a prosperous life for everyone on a clean planet.

The first day of the 2018 [Youth Forum](#), convened by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), got off to a rollicking start with young people from every corner of the world leading discussions with ministers and high-level government officials, UN agencies and other international organizations.

One of the highlights of today’s events was the dialogue between Deputy

Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

The conversation revolved around the Forum theme, 'the role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities' and how youth can engage in the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, adopted by UN Member States in 2015. Ms. Mohammed said that the Agenda 2030 was "shaped with youth" and young people were "the loudest voice" in the ground-breaking [My World survey](#), in which almost 10 million made their voices heard during the UN system-wide discussions on the landmark 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

She encouraged youth to "make noise" for their voices to be heard.

Stressing that the importance of youth engagement by Member States in their national plans to implement the [SDGs](#), Ms. Wickramanayake said: "We talk about leaving no one behind but if we don't keep up with that phase, young people will leave the UN behind."

In a keynote address, Salina Abraham, President of the International Forestry Students' Association, said: "Sustainable development is not having to leave your home, family and culture behind to provide your children with an adequate life. It's not having to conceal your language or culture in an attempt to conform, only to never truly be accepted.

Participants at opening of the 2018 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

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"Sustainable development is having the security, access, resources and tools to create new opportunities wherever you choose to call home," she said.

For her part, ECOSOC President Marie Chatardová said that young people imbue urban and rural communities with energy, creativity, and innovation.

"Your drive for innovation and consumption choices are crucial to our goals of increasing the eco-efficiency, minimizing waste and pollution, and of promoting access to and the sustainable use of all resources," she said.

"You are a key partner in efforts to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient, and to build a global coalition to reverse land degradation and protect biodiversity," she added.

"We are here to listen to your voices. Our landmark frameworks – including the 2030 Agenda, the [Paris Agreement](#) and the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) – already recognize you as the key partners in efforts to build a better future," she stressed.

Also addressing the Forum was General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who

stressed that “if we neglect young people, we will not achieve a single SDG.”

He highlighted the role of youth in innovations that help reverse the trends that are harming the planet as well as in preventing conflict and building peace.

“I want to conclude with a blunt truth: our international system simply was not set up for young people. If you look at photographs of the signing of the UN Charter, you will not see any young men or young women. That is why, for years, young people were not seen – and were not heard – in the conference rooms, like this one,” he said.

“Young people can no longer be dismissed as the rebel fighters; the terrorists; the disenfranchised. They are the innovators, the solution-finders; the social and environmental entrepreneurs,” he added.