

UN health agency finds high levels of antibiotic resistance to world's most common infections

29 January 2018 – Antimicrobials have been a driver of unprecedented medical and societal advances, but their overuse has resulted in antibiotic resistant bacteria, with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reporting new surveillance data on Monday which reveals widespread resistance to some of the world's most common infections, including *E. coli* and pneumonia.

“The report confirms the [serious situation of antibiotic resistance](#) worldwide,” Dr. Marc Sprenger, director of WHO's Antimicrobial Resistance Secretariat, said at the launch of the agency's new Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System ([GLASS](#))

The most commonly reported resistant bacteria were *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, followed by *Salmonella spp.*

Although the system does not include data on the resistance of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which causes tuberculosis, WHO has been tracking and providing annual updates on it since 1994, in the Global tuberculosis report.

Among patients with suspected bloodstream infection, the proportion that had bacteria resistant to at least one of the most commonly used antibiotics ranged widely – from zero to 82 per cent – between different countries.

Resistance to penicillin, which has been used for decades to treat pneumonia, ranged from zero to 51 per cent among reporting countries. And between 8 to 65 per cent of *E. coli* associated with urinary tract infections presented resistance to the antibiotic commonly used to treat it, ciprofloxacin.

“Some of the world's most common – and potentially most dangerous – infections are proving drug-resistant,” Dr. Sprenger observed.

“And most worrying of all, pathogens don't respect national borders,” he added.

To date, 25 high-income, 20 middle-income and 7 low-income countries are enrolled in WHO's Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System. For the first report, 40 countries provided information on national surveillance systems with 22 also providing data on antibiotic resistance levels.

“WHO is encouraging all countries to set up good surveillance systems for detecting drug resistance that can provide data to this global system,” Dr. Sprenger asserted.

The quality and completeness of data in this first GLASS report vary widely. Some countries face major challenges in building their national surveillance

systems, including a lack of personnel, funds and infrastructure.

“The report is a vital first step towards improving our understanding of the extent of antimicrobial resistance. Surveillance is in its infancy, but it is vital to develop it if we are to anticipate and tackle one of the biggest threats to global public health,” explained Dr. Carmem Pessoa-Silva, WHO surveillance system coordinator.

WHO is supporting countries in setting up national antimicrobial resistance surveillance systems to produce reliable, meaningful data, with GLASS helping to standardize data collection for a more complete picture of patterns and trends.

Solid drug resistance surveillance programmes in tuberculosis, HIV and malaria have been functioning for years – estimating disease burden, planning diagnostic and treatment services, monitoring control interventions effectiveness and designing effective treatment regimens to address and prevent future resistance. GLASS is expected to perform a similar function for common bacterial pathogens.

[New UN funding to help sustain critical aid programmes for hundreds of thousands in Ethiopia](#)

29 January 2018 – The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) – a pool of funding which supports critical relief operations around the world – has allocated \$10 million to help meet the life-saving needs of the most vulnerable people displaced due to conflict in Ethiopia.

Since early September, escalation of conflict along the country’s Oromia and Somali regional borders has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes into about 370 sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs), where they are living with needs many times greater than the response.

“Today I visited two IDP re-settlement sites where I saw first-hand the critical importance of scaling up our support to meet their needs,” [said](#) Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the head of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), during a visit to the horn of Africa nation.

According to a [news release](#) issued by OCHA, the Ethiopian Government has also stepped up its response and is delivering vital food assistance to those in need. It is also working on efforts to facilitate voluntary returns and provide alternative re-settlement sites.

The CERF funds will complement the Government plan and will enable humanitarian partners to provide life-saving assistance, including shelter, clean water and sanitation services for those most in need among the displaced and host communities. The funds will also support solutions for displaced people to re-establish their lives," said Mr. Lowcock, who manages the CERF on behalf of the Secretary-General.

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In spite of having to brave acute crises, over the past decades Ethiopia has made remarkable strides in development and addressing hunger. However, its susceptibility to drought continues to plague its people with food insecurity, with rains having failed as recently as in 2016-2017.

And therefore, along with humanitarian response there is an urgent need to strengthen the country's long-term resilience to future shocks.

Highlighting this importance, Mr. Lowcock was joined during his visit by Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), to solidify humanitarian and development collaboration and to make joint recommendations for solutions to break the cycle of loss of development gains due to recurrent disasters.

The international community must seize opportunities to support Ethiopia in strengthening Government-led sustainable development structures at all levels that can mitigate human risks and the threat from increasingly frequent and severe droughts," added the news release, urging support to strengthen Government and civil society capacities for peace building and reconciliation.

Established by the UN General Assembly in 2006, CERF is a humanitarian funding mechanism that enables a faster and more effective response to vital needs of people affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, or under-funded crises.

Over the past two years, the Fund has provided \$49 million to aid programmes in Ethiopia, sustaining important relief efforts for those in dire need.

[Bridging gap between relief and development work can meet immediate](#)

needs, lessen vulnerability – UN chief

28 January 2018 – A surge in conflict-induced needs in Africa and the Middle East, coupled with an increase in climate shocks that pummel the most vulnerable everywhere, have given fresh urgency to calls for the international community to work in a new way – that not only ends humanitarian needs but reduces them over time, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Sunday.

Addressing leaders gathered for a high-level event as part of the African Union Summit, which has been running since last week in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, Mr. Guterres underscored that this [new way of working](#) is not about shifting funding from development to humanitarian programmes or vice-versa.

“It is about recognizing common goals and optimizing existing resources and capabilities to help all people in situations of risk, vulnerability and crisis. It is about working better together to reduce humanitarian needs over the medium to long-term,” said the UN chief, spotlighting the aim of one of the key outcomes of the 2016 [World Humanitarian Summit](#).

Two years after the international community outlined the changes that are needed to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability, Mr. Guterres [said](#) it was clear the call to bridge the humanitarian-development divide will take time and a diverse range of actors, including those outside the UN system.

“We must recommit to a focus on results and holding ourselves accountable by fully articulating collective outcomes,” he said.

Amid a surge in conflict-induced needs in Syria, Yemen the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan and elsewhere, the UN chief said he had launched a push in diplomacy for peace, including mediation, to end and prevent conflict.

We must break down the silos that have existed for too long between humanitarian and development actors UN chief Guterres

As for the increasingly frequent and more intense climate shocks that are also creating record humanitarian needs, and heavily impacting the most vulnerable, the international community must redouble its efforts to address climate change, as well as to increase the resilience of those impacted by drought, floods and other disasters.

“We have a moral obligation to do better and we have the tools and knowledge to deliver on that obligation,” said the Secretary-General, underscoring: “We must break down the silos that have existed for too long between humanitarian and development actors.”

He said experience from countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, Yemen and Somalia, where the new approach is working, offers four valuable lessons:

1. The UN and development partners must strengthen the capacities of national and local actors to effectively respond to needs, risk and vulnerability;
2. Collectively start from a common understanding of the challenges we face. It is imperative we have shared data, information and analysis;
3. Carry out risk-informed joint planning, with governments and all partners, to reach those furthest behind; and
4. Redesign the financing architecture to promote predictability, flexibility and multi-year financing, as well as engage international financing institutions and the private sector actors, including insurance actors, to develop innovative solutions.

Noting that the world spends much more energy and resources managing crises than preventing them, the Secretary-General said the UN must uphold a strategic commitment to a 'culture of prevention,' and he pledged to work with Africa towards ending suffering and restore the human dignity of every person.

[At African Union Summit, Guterres lauds strong AU-UN partnership, outlines areas for more cooperation](#)

28 January 2018 – Hailing the partnership between Africa and the United Nations as "solid, and grounded on sound principles of human rights and good governance," Secretary General, Antonio Guterres told leaders gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the African Union Summit, that with Africa in the lead, "we can and will do more" to bolster successful cooperation throughout the continent.

"I stand here on behalf of the United Nations system and reaffirm our strong commitment to the member states and the people of Africa," Mr. Guterres [told](#) the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) on Sunday, adding: "I strongly believe Africa is one of the greatest forces for good in our world."

The UN chief said that in just his first year in office, the Organization has entered a "new era" of partnership with the AU, recalling the holding of the first UN-AU Annual Conference at the summit level, as well as the signing of two landmark framework agreements, respectively on enhanced partnership in peace and security, and, just yesterday, on implementing the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Spotlighting these and other initiatives as key examples of the successful work the two organizations are carrying out across the continent, Mr. Guterres said this partnership could be further strengthened in five key areas: addressing corruption; cooperation in peace and security; inclusive and sustainable development; climate change; and international migration.

Combatting the far-reaching and devastating impact of corruption, tax evasion and illicit financial flows, a main theme of this year's AU Summit, requires an unimpeachable commitment to transparency and accountability, he said, commending the decision to highlight this scourge, and offering the strong support of the UN. He also welcomed the designation of 2018 as African Anti-Corruption Year.

Specifically on international migration, the UN chief expressed that the global phenomenon not only powers economic growth, reduces inequalities and connects diverse societies but also help ride the demographic waves of population growth and decline

We must maximize the benefits of orderly migration, while stamping out abuses and prejudice, he said, highlighting the benefits of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration for all countries.

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I urge you to bring your moral leadership and unique experience to this important collective priority for 2018, added Mr. Guterres.

On the peace and security sector, the UN chief expressed his appreciation to African governments for contributing troops and police to UN peacekeeping operations to help save lives and keep the peace around the world.

He, however, noted that UN peacekeeping is not the solution to all crisis situations, and said that partnership with the African Union and sub-regional organizations can be the means to address the varied contexts which necessitate peacekeeping, including peace enforcement and counter-terrorist operations.

On inclusive and sustainable development, Secretary-General Guterres expressed that the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and African Union's Agenda 2063 are mutually reinforcing, and underscored the need to ensure sufficient means of implementation to ensure sustainable development.

But he acknowledged that while poverty elimination is a shared priority across the two agendas, significant gaps persist, particularly with regard to industrialization, water, energy, infrastructure and the environment. We must place quality education within the reach of all, he underscored.

In that context, he urged all UN Member States to uphold their commitments to official development assistance (ODA), outlined in the [Addis Ababa Action](#)

[Agenda](#) on financing for development

Women's full participation makes economies stronger and peace processes more successful UN chief Guterres

Mr. Guterres also said the international community has a role to play in combating tax evasion, money laundering and the elimination of illicit financial flows that deprive Africa of its essential resources.

The UN chief also stressed that women and young people must lead the development agenda, stressing that: "Women's full participation makes economies stronger and peace processes more successful."

He said that around the world, there is skepticism about multilateralism. But he strongly believed that moving forward together, "the United Nations and the African Union can show that multilateralism is our best and only hope."

[UN condemns massive vehicle bomb attack in Kabul that leaves scores dead and wounded](#)

27 January 2018 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the United Nations in Afghanistan have strongly condemned Saturday's massive vehicle bomb attack on a busy street near Government buildings in the Afghan capital, Kabul, which reportedly left scores dead and wounded.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the deadly incident, in which the attackers reportedly used a [vehicle painted to look like an ambulance](#), including bearing the distinctive medical emblem, what the UN Assistance Mission in the country, known as UNAMA, flagged as a "clear violation of international humanitarian law."

In a [statement](#) from his Spokesman, Mr. Guterres said that indiscriminate attacks against civilians are grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and can never be justified.

"Those responsible for today's attack must be brought to justice," he added.

The Secretary-General extended his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured. He also expressed solidarity with the Government and people of Afghanistan.

Separately, Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, noted that the explosion occurred near a High Peace Council facility in a civilian-populated area of Kabul.

While the Taliban claim suggested the purpose of the attack was to target police, a massive vehicle bomb in a densely populated area could not reasonably be expected to leave civilians unharmed, he emphasized.

Calling the attacks nothing short of an atrocity, the UNAMA chief said those who organized and enabled it must be brought to justice and held to account.

He reiterated that under no circumstances are such attacks justifiable, and he called on the Taliban to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, at all times.