

In Addis Ababa, Guterres says partnership with African Union is fundamental to work of the UN

27 January 2018 – Strong cooperation with the African Union (AU) is essential for the United Nations to be able to fulfill its mandate, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said on Saturday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the two organizations signed a new agreement to bolster their collaboration on range of global issues.

“For the United Nations, the most important partnership is the partnership with the African Union,” Mr. Guterres said, alongside Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, at the start of a weekend of activities for the UN chief at the 30th AU Summit, which gathers leaders from across the region, this year under the theme ‘Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation.’

After signing the new Framework Agreement, the Secretary-General said that across the three main pillars of the United Nations – development, peace and security, and human rights – the African continent is key to solving global problems.

“The international community would not be able to have successes in development if Africa does not succeed its development taking advantage of its youth ‘dividend’ youth,” he said, adding that neither world the global community secure lasting peace and security if Africa is not able to manage not only its conflicts, but above all, to make strong effort at conflict prevention and resolution.

“We will be side by side with the African Union in respecting African leadership in solving African problems to help in this [regard],” said the Secretary-General, adding that Africa has also made admirable strides in human rights.

“Today, we talk a lot about immigration. I have always seen African countries open their doors to [refugees and migrants](#),” said the UN chief, adding that this is a lesson other parts of the world could learn from.

The understanding reached today follows the signing at UN Headquarters in April 2017 of a landmark framework to strengthen partnership between the UN and the AU on peace and security, and help the two organizations better respond to the evolving challenges of peace operations.

Ahead of Pyeongchang Games, UN Assembly President appeals for nations to honour 'Olympic Truce'

26 January 2018 – Ahead of next month's Olympics and Paralympics in the Republic of Korea (ROK), United Nations General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák on Friday appealed to all UN Member States to observe the historic 'Olympic Truce' during the Games.

"I [solemnly appeal](#) to all Member States to demonstrate their commitment to the Olympic Truce for the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympic and Paralympic Games and to undertake concrete actions at the local, national, regional and world levels to promote and strengthen a culture of peace and harmony based on the spirit of the Truce," said Mr. Lajčák.

He also called upon all warring parties of current armed conflicts around the world to "boldly agree to true mutual ceasefires for the duration of the Olympic Truce, thus providing an opportunity to settle disputes peacefully."

The ancient Greek tradition of the *ekecheira*, or 'Olympic Truce,' began in the eighth century B.C., and serves as a hallowed principle of the Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) renewed this tradition in 1992 by calling upon all nations to observe the Truce.

The Pyeongchang Olympics will be held 9-25 February and the Paralympics 9-18 March.

On 13 November last year, the General Assembly adopted a resolution that urges Member States to observe the truce individually and collectively throughout the period from the seventh day before the start of the Olympics until the seventh day following the end of the Paralympics.

The Assembly also expressed its expectation that "Pyeongchang 2018 will be a meaningful opportunity to [foster an atmosphere of peace](#), development, tolerance and understanding on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia."

In a statement on 9 January, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres welcomed the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to send a delegation to the Olympic Winter Games.

'We are all at risk,' when humanity's

values are abandoned; UN honours memory of Holocaust victims

26 January 2018 – Calling on the world to “stand together against the normalization of hate, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has stressed in his message for the International Day dedicated to honouring Holocaust victims that everyone has a responsibility to quickly and decisively resist racism and violence.

Mr. Guterres recalled that the [International Day](#), marked annually on 27 January, was created to honour the memory of six million Jewish men, women and children [perished in the Holocaust](#) and countless others lost their lives as cruelty convulsed the world.

Yet, decades since the Second World War, there is still the persistence of anti-Semitism and an increase in other forms of prejudice.

Citing Neo-Nazis and white supremacy groups as among the main purveyors of extreme hatred, the UN chief said that too often, vile views are moving from the margins to the mainstream of societies and politics.

“Whenever and wherever humanity’s values are abandoned, we are all at risk,” stressed the Secretary-General.

“All of us have a responsibility to quickly, clearly and decisively resist racism and violence,” he stated, adding: “Through education and understanding, we can build a future of dignity, human rights and peaceful coexistence for all.”

For his part, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein held the painful day of remembrance for Holocaust the victims as forcing us “to contemplate the horrors to which bigotry, racism and ultimately lead.”

“The sadistic brutality of the atrocities inflicted by the Nazi regime on Jews, Roma, Slavs, disabled people, political dissidents, homosexuals and others was nourished by layer upon layer of propaganda, falsifications and incitement to hatred,” he stated, adding how they were denigrated and smeared, “one after another, their rights were refused, and finally, even their humanity was denied.”

Mr. Zeid pointed to the statement of Primo Levi, who survived the Auschwitz Birkenau concentration camp: “It happened, therefore it can happen again.”

“As we honour the victims of the Holocaust,” Mr. Zeid continued, “we must also acknowledge the need to [prevent the recurrence of anti-Semitism](#) and all forms of racial and religious hatred and discrimination today.”

He specified the importance of upholding independent rule of law institutions and a free press; maintaining respect for human rights; and education, which must be at the core of all efforts to combat anti-Semitism, racism, and all

forms of discrimination.

“In honouring the victims of the Holocaust, we must recognise that only if we regard each other as fully equal in dignity and rights will we be able to come together to overcome the many challenges facing humanity,” he concluded.

At the same time, Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), cited the Day as a call to strengthen nations’ commitment to peace.

Recalling the possibility of the worst, also carries a memory that must be forward-looking, she said, adding that combating anti-Semitism, in whatever form, “is at the heart of this fight” in which everyone has a role to play.

“We can build up awareness against forgetting, denial, historical revisionism, relativization of crimes and the return of stereotypes that fuel hatred. We can [oppose the manipulation of facts](#) by speaking the truth,” she asserted.

Among a series of events taking place across the UN system, the annual United Nations Holocaust Memorial Ceremony hosted by Ms. Alison Smale, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, will take place on Wednesday 31 January. The Secretary-General, President of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, Representatives of Israel, Germany and the United States, will deliver remarks.

‘Enough is enough;’ world cannot become numb to killing of children, says top UNICEF official in Syria

26 January 2018 – With families in Syria’s besieged northern town of Afrin on the run or hiding in basements to escape intense shelling, the head of the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) operations in the country has strongly denounced the rising number of child casualties, questioning whether the world is “becoming numb to the killing of children.”

“The grim tally of children killed in Syria in the past two weeks has increased daily as violence escalates in several areas across the country,” Fran Equiza said on Friday in an impassioned statement.

“Nearly seven years into the conflict, children continue to be the hardest hit by unprecedented destruction, displacement and death. They have lost lives, homes and childhoods. Enough is enough.”

According to UNICEF, over the last few days, at least 23 children have

reportedly been losing killed as a result of fighting in Afrin, Idlib, Saraqab, Khan Shaykhoun and Damascus.

The attack in Damascus on 22 January, the heaviest in weeks, allegedly occurred as children were leaving school.

Furthermore, families that managed to flee violence in some places are living under extremely difficult conditions and exposed to the harsh winter conditions while others have reportedly been prevented from leaving areas of hostility.

SEE ALSO: [Syrian children succumb to freezing temperatures while crossing into Lebanon](#)

In Afrin, violence is reported to be so intense that families are confined to the basements of their building, after reportedly being prevented from leaving the area.

According to UNICEF, the majority of shops in the district are closed and UNICEF-supported child protection services, including a child-friendly space and psychosocial support activities, had to be suspended.

Wars have laws and these laws are being broken every single day in Syria
UNICEF official Fran Equiza

“Wars have laws and these laws are being broken every single day in Syria,” said Mr. Equiza underscoring the need on all parties to the conflict to honour obligations to protect children at all times and to allow safe passage to all people wishing to leave areas under attack.

Hostilities in Afrin force temporary halt on aid supplies

Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) also said Friday that the military campaign in Afrin (north-west Syria) has forced a temporary halt on humanitarian shipments across the border from Turkey into Syria.

[According](#) to Jens Laerke, a spokesperson for the UN relief wing, during the past week, 123 trucks have been put on hold.

[Venezuela: Economic woes worsening malnutrition among children, warns](#)

UNICEF

26 January 2018 – Amid growing food insecurity and rising malnutrition among children on the back of a protracted economic crisis in Venezuela, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) on Friday called on all actors for rapid and coordinated assistance efforts to reach those most in need.

“While precise figures are unavailable because of very limited official health or nutrition data, there are clear signs that the crisis is limiting children’s access to quality health services, medicines and food,” said the UN agency in a [news release](#), Friday, underlining the severity of the situation.

According to UNICEF, national reports in 2009 (the most recent official figures) showed that the prevalence of wasting (low weight to height ratio) in children under five was, at the time, 3.2 per cent.

However, more recent non-official studies indicate “significantly higher rates” of as much as 15.5 per cent, and an additional 20 per cent of children at risk of malnutrition.

Similarly, the [State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017](#) (a comprehensive report on the subject prepared by a number of UN agencies) suggested that undernourishment – a measure of hunger indicating the proportion of population with inadequate energy consumption – in Venezuela rose from 10.5 per cent in 2004-2006 to 13 per cent in 2014-2016.

In response, the Venezuelan Government has implemented measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the country’s children, including providing regular food packages at affordable prices to the most vulnerable families, cash transfers, and strengthening of nutritional and recuperation services.

“But more needs to be done to reverse the worrisome decline in children’s nutritional wellbeing,” said UNICEF, calling for the rapid implementation of a short-term response to counter malnutrition, based on disaggregated data and coordinated between the Government and partners.

On its part, the UN agency is working with the Ministry of Health, National Institute of Nutrition and the civil society to strengthen and expand nutritional surveillance at the community level and provide nutritional recuperation services through partners organizations.

The efforts are being implemented through activities such as nutrition screening days aiming to reach over 113,000 children, provision of supplementary and therapeutic foods when required, training programmes and communication campaigns, added UNICEF.

Venezuela has been mired in a socio-economic and political crisis since 2012 and has witnessed rising consumer prices even as the overall economy has contracted.