

UN chief outlines reforms that 'put Member States in driver's seat' on road to sustainable development

22 January 2018 – Sustainable development is a fundamental human right and humanity's best chance for a future of peace and prosperity, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres said Monday, laying out the case for Agenda 2030 to be at the centre of UN activities.

Mr. Guterres underscored that to implement the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development – an action plan including 17 goals to ensure that all people live in peace, security and dignity on a healthy planet – adopted by UN Member States in 2015, strategic choices needed to be taken between an evolutionary approach and a more ambitious pathway.

“We chose the [path of ambition](#),” he told a meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), adding: “In a rapidly changing world, we cannot afford to have a slowly reforming UN development system [...] we must act.”

The UN chief stressed that reforms are necessary because “business as usual” approaches simply will not provide countries with the support they need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) or meet the [Paris Agreement](#) commitments on climate change.

He laid out seven keystone reform proposals for better coordination, transparency and accountability, beginning with a new generation of demand-driven UN country teams, equipped with skillsets tailored to country-specific development priorities and needs.

The second proposal was a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, “with stronger capacity, leadership, accountability and impartiality.”

Thirdly he proposed “a coordinated, reprofiled and restructured regional approach to better support work on the ground.” The fourth reform would be for renewed spaces for Member States to guide system-wide actions, bringing greater transparency and accountability at the country level.

“I would also like to see a strengthened ECOSOC, empowered to hold the system accountable and challenge us to do more, together,” he added.

A stronger UN institutional response and approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda was the fifth proposal, and the sixth was concrete steps to accelerate the UN system's alignment to that blueprint.

“A Funding Compact to bring better quality, quantity and predictability of resources, increased accountability and transparency and enhanced capacities of the system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda,” was his final proposal.

The Secretary-General said the request included increasing the share of core

resources for individual agencies system-wide, from 21.7 per cent to 30 per cent, and doubling the share of contributions to pooled funds from eight per cent to 16 per cent of non-core.

Member States in the driver's seat

A common theme running through the proposals is a “rock-solid commitment” to reinforce national leadership and ownership for sustainable development.

“Member States will be in the driver's seat and the 2030 Agenda will be the driving force,” he stated.

He emphasized that the Organization's development coordination function is “vastly underfunded,” saying that resident coordinators often lack basic staffing capacities to credibly lead UN development activities – preventing Member States' resolutions to eradicate poverty from becoming a reality.

According to the Secretary-General, funding the core capacities of the Resident Coordinator system through assessed contributions “would be a logical step as the Organization repositions sustainable development at the heart of its work.”

He held sway that about one per cent of annual contributions allocated to operational development activities would bring value for money by yielding a more robust coordination function, significantly improving effectiveness and strengthening leadership and system accountability.

Calling effectiveness, efficiency, results for people and value for money “our shared goals,” Mr. Guterres said delivering was “our shared responsibility.”

“At the same time,” he stressed “we will continue to take all possible measures, within existing mandates, to lay the groundwork for precisely what you seek: a repositioned system, reinvigorated by a more impartial and accountable coordination system for sustainable development.”

Liberia: UN welcomes new President's inauguration as key milestone on country's road to success

22 January 2018 – George Weah was inaugurated on Monday as the new President of Liberia, where the United Nations is set to close its peacekeeping mission in a few weeks after a successful 15-year presence in the West African country.

The new Liberian President took office at a ceremony in the packed SKD stadium in the capital, Monrovia.

“I have spent my life in stadiums, but I have never felt like this,” said the former football champion who is succeeding outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in the first peaceful democratic transition the country has known over the past 70 years. Ms. Johnson Sirleaf led the country from 2006 to 2018.

“With the help of our regional partners and of the United Nations, we chose democracy as our best choice,” underlined the new Liberian President in its inaugural speech.

Leading the UN delegation at the event, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, congratulated the Liberian people for the “credible and peaceful election which, for the first time in Liberia, is ushering one elected civilian Government to take over from another civilian Government.”

“This is a remarkable achievement for Liberia,” said Mr. Chambas who, between 1991 and 1996, participated in the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)) mediation efforts in Liberia during the country’s first civil war. “We are all rejoicing with the people of Liberia. We wish President George Weah all the success that he deserves,” added the UN envoy.

In his inaugural speech, President Weah thanked the UN Mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)) for its efforts in reestablishing peace and security in a country that experienced two civil wars spanning over 14 years between 1989 and 2003.

According to the UN, civil war in Liberia, the African continent’s first independent State, claimed the lives of almost 250,000 people – mostly civilians – and led to a complete breakdown of law and order.

Along with ECOWAS, the Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the UN Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) made several interventions during the conflict to bring peace.

After the signature of a peace agreement in August 2003, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia. The first peacekeepers arrived in the country in October of the same year.

RELATED: [UNMIL Facts & Figures](#)

“The United Nations peacekeeping mission has ensured unbroken peace within our borders for more than a decade,” said President Weah.

After almost 15 years of operations, UNMIL has successfully completed its mandate, which encompassed civilian protection, supporting reform of rule of law and justice institutions, the protection and promotion of human rights, and the promotion of sustainable peace through a public information radio broadcast run by the peacekeeping mission.

“This is a very happy day for the UN, to witness this success story of

Liberia with the efforts of the international community over the past 14 years,” said Farid Zarif, the UN Special Representative for Liberia and Head of UNMIL.

“This is the culmination of all the efforts and works in building the capacity of the Liberians and also strengthening their democratic experiment, for them to reach a point where they can all come together and celebrate the success as one nation.”

Starting 31 March, UNMIL will be replaced by a UN country team in Liberia. “I can assure you that the United Nations will remain committed and engaged and on the side of the Liberian people going forward,” underscored Mr. Chambas.

AUDIO: George Weah was inaugurated on Monday as the new President of Liberia, where the United Nations is set to close its peacekeeping mission (UNMIL) in a few weeks after a successful 15-year presence in the West African country.

[UN flag no longer offers ‘natural’ protection to peacekeepers, says report on mission casualties](#)

22 January 2018 – The United Nations should change the way it does business in high-security risk peacekeeping operations, as the UN flag no longer offers ‘natural’ protection to mission personnel, according to a new report, which calls for better training for ‘blue helmets,’ more technology and greater freedom to respond to the threat posed by armed groups.

“Unfortunately, hostile forces do not understand a language other than force,” warns the report, titled Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers, arguing that projecting strength is more secure for uniformed and civilian personnel than risk-averse approaches.

Since 1948, more than 3,500 personnel have lost their lives serving in UN peace operations with 943 due to acts of violence. Since 2013, casualties have spiked, with 195 deaths in violent attacks, more than during any other 5-year period in history.

It was in this context that, in November 2017, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres [appointed](#) Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil to lead a high-level review to identify why the UN has had so many casualties caused by acts of violence in recent years, and what should be done to reduce these casualties.

Mr. dos Santos Cruz previously served as Force Commander, of the UN

Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([MONUSCO](#)) from 2013 to 2015 and of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti ([MINUSTAH](#)) from 2007 to 2009.

Two other authors are William R. Phillips, a retired United States Army Colonel, and former Mission Chief of Staff of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)), and Salvator Cusimano, the Special Assistant to the Director, Africa II Division of the Office of Operations in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

The review team visited UN peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali and South Sudan, accessed relevant internal UN data and conducted 160 interviews to inform their work.

The report does not address the issue of mandates, but instead confines its conclusions to operational issues in missions in those countries.

The report, which was submitted to the Secretary-General, states that with the influx of armed groups, extremists, organized crime, and other criminal elements and threats, the blue helmet and UN flag no longer offer 'natural' protection to peacekeepers.

Please see full report [here](#)

The review team identified four broad areas where the UN and Member States must take actions to reduce fatalities.

These include (1) changing mindsets so that personnel are aware of the risks and empowered to take the initiative to deter, prevent, and respond to attacks; (2) improving capacities so that the mission and personnel are equipped and trained to operate in high-threat environments; (3) achieving a "threat sensitive mission footprint" that is aligned with mission mandates and limits the exposure of the mission to threat; and (4) enhancing accountability to ensure that those able to take actions to prevent fatalities and injuries live up to their responsibilities.

The UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and of Field Support have developed an action plan to implement the report's recommendations, according to a [note to correspondents](#) issued by the Office of the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General.

The plan focuses on three main areas – operational behaviour and mindset; capacity building and readiness; and support issues – and includes immediate Headquarters and field-level actions.

The Departments have also established an implementation support team led by two senior officials, which will coordinate and monitor implementation of these measures at Headquarters and provide support to field missions.

The report was released on Monday to UN Member States at a session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations by Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who will brief the press

about the report on Wednesday.

AUDIO: Retired Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil, the lead author of a new independent report aimed at improving the security of peacekeepers, talks to UN News about what's needed to make sure 'blue helmets' get better training, access to more technology and have greater freedom to respond to the threats.

[Unemployment to remain high, quality jobs harder to find in 2018 – UN labour agency](#)

22 January 2018 – While the global economy has kept up modest growth, the total number of unemployed people will likely remain high in 2018 – at above 192 million – and it will be harder to find a decent job, the United Nations labour agency reported on Monday.

“Even though global unemployment has stabilized, [decent work deficits remain widespread](#): the global economy is still not creating enough jobs. Additional efforts need to be put in place to improve the quality of work for jobholders and to ensure that the gains of growth are shared equitably,” ILO Director-General Guy Ryder said.

The [World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018](#), a flagship report by the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), examines employment and social trends for the world as a whole and for each region, and analyses structural transformation and implications for future job quality.

The report says the global economy grew 3.6 per cent in 2017, after hitting a six-year low of 3.2 per cent in 2016. The recovery was broad based, driven by expansions in developing, emerging and developed countries alike. Future growth is likely to stay below four per cent, as economic activity normalizes in most major economies without significant stimulus and fixed investment remains at a moderate level.

The projected fall in the 2018 global unemployment rate would also mark a turnaround after three years of rises, and would remain essentially unchanged in 2019, according to the report. However, with a growing number of people entering the labour market to seek employment, the total number of unemployed is expected to remain above 192 million in 2018, and that number would likely grow by 1.3 million in 2019.

VIDEO: What to Expect from the Global Jobs Market in 2018. Source: ILO

Vulnerable employment is on the rise

The report also notes that the number of workers in vulnerable forms of employment, such as own-account workers and contributing family workers, is likely to increase in the years to come. Globally, the significant achievements had been made in reducing vulnerable employment but progress has essentially stalled since 2012.

In 2017, about 42 per cent of workers, or 1.4 billion, worldwide were estimated to be in vulnerable forms of employment. This share was expected to remain particularly high in developing and emerging countries, at above 76 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively. Worryingly, the number of people in vulnerable employment is projected to increase by 17 million in each of 2018 and 2019.

Slow pace of reducing 'working poverty'

Similarly, the global labour market has seen only weak progress in addressing the problem of 'working poverty,' or living under poverty lines despite employment, the report says. In 2017, extreme working poverty remained widespread, with more than 300 million workers in emerging and developing countries having a per capita household income or consumption of less than \$1.90 per day.

"In developing countries though, progress in reducing working poverty is too slow to keep up with the expanding labour force. The number of workers living in extreme poverty is expected to remain stubbornly above 114 million for the coming years, affecting 40 per cent of all employed people in 2018," explains ILO economist Stefan Kühn, lead author of the report.

Emerging countries, on the other hand, achieved significant progress in reducing extreme working poverty, which is expected to affect less than 8 per cent, or around 190 million, of workers there in 2017.

The incidence of extreme poverty should continue to fall, translating into a reduction in the number of extreme working poor by 10 million per year in 2018 and 2019. Nevertheless, moderate working poverty, in which workers live on an income of between \$1.90 and \$3.10 per day, remains widespread, affecting 430 million workers in emerging and developing countries in 2017.

To dig deeper into the data [click here](#).

The report also looks at the influence of population ageing. It shows that the growth of the global workforce will not be sufficient to compensate for the rapidly expanding pool of retirees. The average age of working people is projected to rise from just under 40 in 2017 to over 41 in 2030.

"Besides the challenge of a growing number of retirees creates for pension systems, an increasingly ageing workforce is also likely to have a direct impact on labour markets. Ageing could lower productivity and slow down labour market adjustments following economic shocks," says the ILO's Director of Research Department a. i., Sangheon Lee.

UN agency for Palestine refugee launches global funding push after US aid cuts

22 January 2018 – The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)) launched on Monday a global fundraising campaign to sustain resources for its education, health and other assistance programmes.

The campaign follows the announcement by the United States to withhold more than half its funding commitment to the UN agency.

“I wish to confirm to all Palestine refugees that UNRWA schools [...] will remain open [and] health care, and other services will be provided. It is a huge challenge, but it is absolutely imperative,” Pierre Krähenbühl, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, said in Gaza, [launching](#) the campaign, ‘#DignityIsPriceless’.

The UN agency said the reduction in US funding could have a significant impact on the daily lives of millions of vulnerable Palestine refugees across Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank including East Jerusalem.

It added that basic education for 525,000 boys and girls at over 700 UNRWA schools; emergency food and cash assistance to 1.7 million Palestine refugees; access to primary health care for 3 million refugees, including pre-natal care; and dignity and human security for 5.3 million refugees, have been endangered as result of the limited funding.

The UNRWA chief underscored that the agency’s mandate is “firmly protected” in a UN General Assembly resolution and called on “all people of good will, all institutions, members of the Palestinian diaspora, private companies, and foundations” to extend their support to the campaign.