

UN chief spotlights potential offered by cooperation among countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan

19 January 2018 – The threats of violent extremism and transnational organized crime in Afghanistan reverberate across Central Asia and the world and countering them cannot be the responsibility of one country alone, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Friday, urging regional and multilateral cooperation, based firmly on human rights.

“Regional cooperation offers opportunities to address common concerns, including counter-terrorist financing, improving border security, fostering dialogue with religious institutions and leaders, and countering human trafficking and drug smuggling,” said the Secretary-General, [briefing](#) a Security Council meeting on building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Convened by Kazakhstan in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of January, the ministerial-level debate was chaired by the country’s Foreign Minister, Kairat Abdrakhmanov.

The debate was addressed by other senior ministers from the region, including: Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan; Erlan Abdyldaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan; Sirodjidin Aslov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan; and Hekanat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. The day-long session will focus on the link between security and development and the need to integrate the economies of Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours.

Kazakhstan’s ‘concept note’ outlining key factors for success in Afghanistan and wider regional integration can be found [here](#)

“With greater regional cooperation and investment, Central Asia and Afghanistan have the potential to become symbols of dialogue, peace, and the promotion of contacts between cultures, religions and civilizations,” Mr. Guterres continued.

The Secretary-General also highlighted significant opportunities for intra-regional trade and said that even “modest” improvements can result in substantial gains for all the people of the region.

In that context, he noted ongoing recent intensification of cooperation between Central Asian governments on water resources through bilateral water commissions and agreements.

“These developments hold important lessons for Afghanistan, where water-dependent farming and agriculture make up nearly half the economy,” he said, noting also developments in energy cooperation and projects on strengthening

trade and transport connectivity.

Mr. Guterres went on to underscore the importance of sustainable development to enable communities and societies flourish and fulfil their potential and in that context, urged Governments to make education, vocational training and jobs “an absolute priority” in national and regional development cooperation.

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Secretary-General Guterres

Inclusive and sustainable development, he underlined, is vital to preventing and ending conflict, and in sustaining peace.

“Only by addressing the root causes of crisis, including inequality, exclusion and discrimination, will we build peaceful societies resilient to terrorism and violent extremism,” added the Secretary-General.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Guterres also spoke of the work of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia ([UNRCCA](#)) and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) in supporting the region and countries.

“The entire UN family stands ready to assist in promoting greater cooperation and integration among the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan, toward achieving the goals of peace, sustainable development, stability and security,” he said.

[Millions of children’s lives hang in the balance as South Sudan conflict grinds on – UNICEF chief](#)

19 January 2018 – Following a two-day visit to conflict-ravaged South Sudan, where a quarter of a million children are severely malnourished and at imminent risk of death, the head of the United Nations children’s agency has said only an end to hostilities can bring back hope and safety to the children and young people there.

I have just spent two days in South Sudan where I saw first-hand how four years of a man-made conflict have left children sick, hungry and on the brink of death,” Henrietta H. Fore, the Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), said Thursday in the capital, Juba, as she [wrapped up](#) her visit.

She said the impact of the relentless violence has been devastating. She recalled meeting a mother who had to walk for days to get treatment for her malnourished baby. Recounting another grim incident, Ms. Fore said she had spoken with a young boy who was forced to join an armed group at the age of 10.

At the same time, she said, she saw "signs of hope" emanating from the families experiencing the horror.

"UNICEF and other aid agencies are working on the ground in some of the most dangerous conditions to provide children and young people with their basic needs. This is no small feat," she said, describing South Sudan "the most dangerous place in the world for humanitarians" as 28 aid workers were killed last year alone.

Forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President Riek Machar, have been battling for the past five years, turning what began in 2013 as a political rivalry into all out conflict that, [according to](#) the UN relief wing, has left some seven million people in need of assistance and protection, and forced more than two million to flee to neighbouring countries.

Ms. Fore noted that the fighting shows no sign of abating and the humanitarian needs are massive: 2.4 million children have been forced to flee their homes. More than a quarter of a million children are severely malnourished and at imminent risk of death. Over 19,000 children have been recruited into the conflict. At least one in three schools has been damaged, destroyed, occupied or closed. More than 1,200 cases of sexual violence against children have been documented.

"The numbers go on and on. Together they equal an entire generation of young people denied the opportunities they so desperately need to contribute to building their society," she said.

As the dry season approaches, the needs and threats will only continue to grow.

"Only an end to hostilities can bring back hope and safety to the children and young people of South Sudan. Until then, we need unconditional, sustainable access from parties to the conflict and more resources from donors," she said. "Without these, the lives and futures of millions of children in South Sudan will continue to hang in the balance."

[Amid 'dramatic deterioration' in DR](#)

Congo, UN and partners launch \$1.68 billion aid appeal

18 January 2018 – Warning of a “dramatic deterioration” in the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) over the last 12 months, United Nations agencies and relief partners on Thursday launched the largest-ever funding appeal for the vast central African country.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the 2018 appeal – totalling \$1.68 billion – aims to reach 10.5 million vulnerable people across the nation, where over 13 million are in need of assistance.

“The past year has been one of the most difficult for millions of civilians, with unrelenting cycle of violence, diseases, malnutrition and loss of livelihoods taking a toll on families,” said Kim Bolduc, the Humanitarian Coordinator in the DRC, in capital Kinshasa, launching the appeal on Thursday.

“This appeal reflects the magnitude, severity and unpredictability of a crisis that has gone on for far too long. We are grappling with one of the world’s largest, most acute, and complex humanitarian crisis.”

According to OCHA, there are now some 4.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) across DRC – the highest number in Africa – and the country also grapples with the worst cholera outbreak in the past 15 years.

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Humanitarian Coordinator Kim Bolduc

On the food and nutrition front, over 7.7 million suffer are food insecure, a 30 per cent increase over the previous year.

Worse still is the fact that aid operations in the country suffer with severe underfunding and only half of the \$812.5 million humanitarian response for 2017 was funded.

“Without the essential support of the humanitarian community, the survival of thousands of people is at risk, and hopes of early recovery will be dashed,” Ms. Bolduc stressed.

“We must ensure sufficient funding so to match the magnitude of the crisis.”

The UN relief wing has more on the DR Congo crisis [here](#)

Improved economic conditions boost air-traveller numbers worldwide – UN agency

18 January 2018 – Improved economic conditions boost air-traveller numbers worldwide – UN agency A record 4.1 billion passengers took to the skies in 2017 onboard some 37 million scheduled flights globally, the United Nations civil aviation agency reported Thursday, highlighting that the fastest growth was seen among low-cost carriers.

According to preliminary figures released by the UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), air travel demand growth too gained “solid momentum” on the back of improved global economic conditions throughout the year.

“[The upward trend](#) was driven by the strengthening investment in advanced economies as well as the recovery in emerging market and developing economies owing to the increased export demand,” said the UN agency.

It added that lower air fares owing to the low fuel price also continued to stimulate traffic growth, albeit at a more moderate level compared to 2016.

In terms of geographic distribution, Europe remained as the largest international market (37 per cent of the global total), recording a strong 8.1 per cent growth over the previous year. Asia-Pacific came in second with 29 per cent and growth of 9.6 per cent over 2016.

North America accounted for a 13 per cent global share, and demonstrated but notched up the slowest growth as a region (4.9 per cent over 2016).

The Latin America and the Caribbean region bagged 4 per cent of the international traffic and saw the largest improvement among all regions at 10 per cent. Africa had the smallest traffic share three per cent, grew slightly faster than last year at 7.6.

Low-cost carriers and air cargo post strong numbers

The ICAO news release also reveals that low-cost carriers consistently grew at a faster pace compared to the world average growth, carrying an estimated 1.2 billion passengers and accounting for approximately 30 per cent of the world total scheduled passengers.

At the same time, bolstered by improving global economic conditions and world trade, air cargo demonstrated a strong rebound in 2017, recording a “robust” 9.5 per cent growth, a “significant improvement” from the 3.8 registered in 2016.

ICAO also reported that in 2017, average jet fuel prices increased by about 25 per cent compared to 2016 but remained significantly lower than the prices

observed for the ten years prior to 2016.

According to the UN agency, finalized figures will be released in July.

[Near-record warm temperatures fuel deadly, costly weather events in 2017 – UN](#)

18 January 2018 – The upward trend in global temperatures marked by record-shattering warmth in 2015 and 2016 kept pace last year, with the United Nations weather agency warning Thursday that the continued pressure on the Arctic in 2017 will have “profound and long-lasting repercussions on sea levels, and on weather patterns in other parts of the world.”

“The long-term temperature trend is [far more important](#) than the ranking of individual years, and that trend is an upward one,” Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said.

A WMO analysis showed that while measuring 1.2°C above the preindustrial era that 2016 holds the warmest year record, 2017, which measured approximately 1.1° C above the pre-industrial era, was the warmest year without an El Niño, which can boost global annual temperatures.

Describing the accelerating pace of climate change as “an existential threat to the planet,” the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Robert Glasser, said, “A three-year streak of record hot years, each above 1° Celsius, combined with record-breaking economic losses from disasters in 2017 should tell us all that we are facing an existential threat to the planet which requires a drastic response.

“We are getting dangerously close to the limit of the 2°C temperature rise set out in the [Paris Agreement](#) and the desired goal of 1.5° will be even more difficult to maintain under present levels of greenhouse gas emissions,” he underscored.

Recording the same global average temperatures, 2017 and 2015 were virtually indistinguishable because the difference is less than one hundredth of a degree, which is less than the statistical margin of error.

“Seventeen of the 18 warmest years on record have all been during this century, and the degree of warming during the past three years has been exceptional,” Mr. Taalas pointed out, stressing: “Arctic warmth has been especially pronounced and this will have profound and long-lasting repercussions on sea levels, and on weather patterns in other parts of the world.”

The globally averaged temperature in 2017 was about 0.46°C above the 1981-2010 long-term average of 14.3°C – a 30-year baseline used by national meteorological and hydrological services to assess averages and variability of key climate parameters, which are important for climate-sensitive sectors, such as water management, energy, agriculture and health.

Climate also has a naturally occurring variability due to phenomena such as El Niño, which has a warming influence, and La Niña, which has a cooling influence.

“Temperatures tell only a small part of the story. The warmth in 2017 was accompanied by extreme weather in many countries around the world,” Mr. Taalas continued, saying that the United States had its most expensive year ever in terms of weather and climate disasters, “whilst other countries saw their development slowed or reversed by tropical cyclones, floods and drought.

In March, WMO will issue its 2017 full Statement on the State of the Climate, which will provide a comprehensive overview of temperature variability and trends, high-impact events, and long-term indicators of climate change such as increasing carbon dioxide concentrations, Arctic and Antarctic sea ice, sea level rise and ocean acidification.

The final statement will include information submitted by a wide range of UN agencies on human, socio-economic and environmental impacts as part of a drive to provide a more comprehensive, UN-wide policy brief for decision makers and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

Mr. Glasser expressed concern that climate change, combined with poverty, eco-systems destruction and inappropriate land use are pushing more people to leave home.

“We need increased levels of ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions combined with concrete actions to reduce disaster risk especially in least developed countries which contribute little to climate change,” he underscored.