

In Doha, General Assembly President spotlights UN 'sustaining peace' agenda

18 January 2018 – Conflict is not always linear, with a clear beginning, middle and end, the President of the United Nations General Assembly said Thursday, urging a new approach to peace that requires action at all stages of the conflict cycle.

“We are no longer dealing only with tanks, planes, and uniformed troops,” Miroslav Lajčák told a two-day regional forum on ‘Sustaining Peace’ held in Doha, Qatar, explaining that other factors, such as terrorism, growing internal violence, new technology and climate change, have transformed the faces of conflict and peace.

He stressed that action is needed when there are warning signs of conflict, when political tensions are on the rise, when human rights are being violated, when there is some hope of peace, amid conflict, when warring parties show any kind of willingness to talk, when a peace deal has been signed, when infrastructure needs to be rebuilt, and when a society is trying to patch itself back together.

“Sometimes we separate these into stages of prevention, mediation and peacebuilding. Other times we refer to them all as the peace continuum. But the magic of ‘Sustaining Peace’ is that all of them are brought together, under one umbrella, and one new approach,” he said.

This new approach, ‘Sustaining Peace,’ was adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council in April 2016, breaking new ground. One milestone along the way will be the expected publication next month of the UN Secretary-General’s report on the subject.

The Assembly President will also convene a High-Level Meeting on Sustaining Peace on 24 and 25 April, in New York.

A recent UN-World Bank report noted that conflict can kill a chance of progress from many areas – from development and poverty reduction, to health and education. The report also pointed out that, even with cautious estimates, more investment in conflict prevention could save the international community \$1.2 billion per year. And the benefits would be even more significant at the national level. Because, prevention could save countries over \$34 billion in losses.

At the moment, UN resources for peace are concentrated on military peacekeeping missions, and there is a chronic shortfall of funding to build or preserve peace, he said, noting that this affects activities for conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding.

He hopes that at the high-level meeting in April can provide a platform for this, leaders from all over the world will voice their commitment to making financing for Sustaining Peace stronger, and more predictable.

Mr. Lajčák also stressed the importance of partnerships. Within the UN system, silos between humanitarian and development work must be torn down, he said, highlighting the need for partnerships between the UN and other actors, including civil society, academia, regional and sub-regional organizations, regional development banks, and international financial institutions.

Finally, Mr. Lajčák underscored the need to do more to showcase best practices. “Sustaining Peace *is* happening. But it is the exception – not the norm,” he said.

[Dialogue and confidence vital to prevent, resolve conflicts, says UN chief](#)

18 January 2018 – Dialogue and confidence vital to prevent, resolve conflicts, says UN chief Worldwide concerns over nuclear weapons are the highest they have been since the Cold War, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Thursday, calling for comprehensive political solutions that include dialogue and negotiation to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts.

In cases involving weapons of mass destruction, “verifiable disarmament and non-proliferation” efforts are critical, [stressed](#) the UN chief, speaking alongside Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, at a Security Council meeting on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

However, warning that confidence can be undermined by “bellicose rhetoric, confrontational approaches, the absence of communication channels, and inflexible positions,” Mr. Guterres underscored the importance effective verification mechanisms.

“From the ground-breaking verification protocols of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, to the invaluable work undertaken by the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), verification builds confidence,” he said.

In his remarks, the Secretary-General also expressed his belief that UN can play a central role in assisting its Member States to develop, augment and support confidence-building measures and that its position as an “honest broker” allows it to serve as a venue in which all parties can engage in dialogue.

The UN's position as an "honest broker" allows us to act as a venue in which all parties can engage in dialogue Secretary-General Guterres

"Going forward, the Security Council, in particular, can provide leadership by demonstrating unity and continuing to highlight the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as an essential means for building confidence," he said, adding that a measure all Member States can undertake is the universal and complete implementation of all disarmament and non-proliferation obligations.

Mr. Guterres went on to welcome the reopening of inter-Korean communication channels, especially the military-to-military one, and said that it is critical to lower the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding and to reduce tensions.

"I am also encouraged by the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to participate in the upcoming Winter Olympics in the Republic of Korea," he said, calling for expansion of diplomatic efforts to achieve the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

At the same time, he added, that the firm decisions the Security Council taken in response to nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by the DPRK in defiance of Council resolutions must be fully implemented.

Unity within the Security Council vital

The UN chief also highlighted the importance of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme and said that multilateral agreement, which is in the interest of the Iranian people and the international community at large, should be preserved.

Turning to the Syrian conflict where the use of chemical weapons has challenged the "global taboo" against these weapons of mass destruction, Mr. Guterres said that if the use of chemical weapons in the country is once again determined, the international community "needs to find an appropriate way to identify those responsible and hold them to account."

"Without such an avenue, we are allowing the use of chemical weapons to take place with impunity," he stressed urging for unity within the Security Council on the issue.

The Security Council meeting today on the theme of *non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures* was convened by Kazakhstan in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of January.

Central African Republic: UN mission issues 48-hour ultimatum to armed groups

17 January 2018 – The United Nations Mission in the troubled Central African Republic, known by its French acronym, MINUSCA, has given armed groups in the north of the country 48 hours to clear out.

The Mission wants to clear a 50 kilometre perimeter around the town allowing displaced persons to return.

Over the last three weeks, some 60,000 people – mostly women – left everything behind to escape clashes between the armed groups Justice Riot (RJ) and the National Movement for the Liberation of the Central African Republic (MNLIC).

They ended up in Paoua, where some 40,000 residents took them in.

Now the food and water is running out.

We get the latest from CAR Humanitarian Coordinator Najat Rochdi:

AUDIO: Najat Rochdi, Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, provides an update on the fighting in the north of the country.

UN chief welcomes second anniversary of 'Implementation Day' for Iran nuclear deal

17 January 2018 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday welcomed the second anniversary of the day when Iran was confirmed to have taken a series of nuclear-related actions under the nuclear agreement reached with key countries in 2015.

“This marks another [significant milestone](#)” in the historic agreement, said UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric in a statement, noting that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – reached by Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union – constitutes a major achievement of nuclear non-proliferation and diplomacy, and has contributed to regional and international peace and security.

The day, known as “Implementation Day,” occurred on 16 January 2016 when the Security Council received the report from the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) confirming that Iran has taken a series of nuclear-related actions specified in the JCPOA’s annex.

“The Secretary-General remains convinced that the JCPOA is the best way to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme and to realize the promised tangible economic benefits for the Iranian people,” Mr. Dujarric said.

“The Secretary-General calls for concerns regarding its implementation to be addressed through the mechanisms established by the agreement,” and “believes that issues not directly related to the JCPOA should be addressed without prejudice to preserving the agreement and its accomplishments,” Mr. Dujarric added.

[US funding cuts for UN Palestine refugee agency put vital education, health programmes at risk](#)

17 January 2018 – The decision by the United States to withhold more than half its annual funding commitment to the United Nations relief agency providing aid for Palestine refugees threatens “one of the most successful and innovative human development endeavours in the Middle-East,” the head of the body said Wednesday, warning that the rights and dignity of an entire community are at stake.

In a [statement](#) Wednesday, Pierre Krähenbühl, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, said that US government announced a contribution of \$60 million for the UN agency, down from \$350 million total contribution by the country in 2017.

The reduction has endangered the agency’s programmes across the region, he added.

“At stake is the access of 525,000 boys and girls in 700 UNRWA schools, and their future. At stake is the dignity and human security of millions of Palestine refugees [and] access of refugees to primary health care, including pre-natal care and other life-saving services,” added Mr. Krähenbühl in the statement.

He further noted that the reduced contribution “also impacts regional security at a time when the Middle East faces multiple risks and threats, notably that of further radicalization.”

In the statement, the Commissioner-General called on the agency's partners, including host countries and donors to continue to support UNRWA and in creating new funding alliances and initiatives to ensure the continued effectiveness of its programmes.

He also noted that a global fundraising campaign will be launched in the days to come to seek commitment for UNRWA initiatives, including its schools and clinics throughout 2018 and beyond.

Also in the statement, Mr. Krähenbühl assured Palestine refugees in all of the agency's fields of operations that UNRWA would continue to work with "absolute determination" to ensure that its services continue.

"UNRWA stands for hope, for respect of rights and for dignity. When things are difficult, our determination grows. When the way seems lost, we invest all our energy in search of new paths, keeping our eyes on the horizon and looking for different solutions," he stressed.

UNRWA programmes important as a factor of stability – UN chief

[Speaking to the press](#) Tuesday at UN Headquarters in New York, prior to the announcement by the US of reduction in its funding to UNRWA, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres underlined the importance of the UN agency's support programmes, not only for the well-being of the refugees but also its importance as a factor of stability, something which he noted is the "opinion shared by most international observers, including some Israeli ones."

"So, if UNRWA will not be in a position to provide the vital services and the emergency forms of support that it has been providing, this will create a very, very serious problem. And we'll do everything we can to avoid the situation to occur," said Mr. Guterres.