

UN tribunal for former Yugoslavia leaves behind culture of accountability, says Guterres

21 December 2017 – The United Nations tribunal dealing with atrocities committed during the Balkans wars of 1990s has been a pioneer in creating the contemporary architecture of international criminal justice, and “gave a voice to victims,” [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Thursday.

“The creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 was a [ground-breaking moment](#),” said Mr. Guterres in his keynote address at the closing ceremony of the court in The Hague, Netherlands.

Recalling that it had been close to half a century since the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes trials and the 1948 Genocide Convention entered into force in 1951, Mr. Guterres said no international criminal tribunal that would recognize individual criminal responsibility for such a crime had yet been established.

“The creation of this Tribunal demonstrated a newfound and serious commitment by the international community that those responsible for perpetrating the most serious crimes of international concern should be held accountable for their actions,” he said.

Beyond these numbers, the Tribunal gave a voice to victims

The Tribunal sat for more than 10,000 days of trial, and heard testimony from nearly 5,000 people. Ninety individuals were sentenced for their crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic conducted his own defence in a five-year-long trial before the Tribunal, which ended without a verdict when he died in 2006.

“Beyond these numbers, the Tribunal gave a voice to victims,” the Secretary-General said, noting that people who had experienced atrocious violence and tragic losses were given the opportunity to tell their stories in court, to place their experiences on the record, and to see the perpetrators of crimes against them held accountable.

The Tribunal leaves behind one of its most important legacies: the immense archives documenting what happened in Sarajevo, Foca, Vukovar, Suva Reka, Srebrenica and elsewhere.

“These records ensure that the world will not forget, that history cannot be re-written, and that the victims’ voices will continue to resound down the decades,” he said.

FEATURE: [Curtain falls on UN tribunal's 24-year history of fighting impunity in former Yugoslavia](#)

The Tribunal has been a pioneer in creating the contemporary architecture of international criminal justice, and pushed international expectations of accountability beyond what was anticipated in 1993.

Accountability has taken root in our collective consciousness

“Accountability has taken root in our collective consciousness,” he said, explaining that it is common practice for the UN Security Council to call for the perpetrators of atrocities to be held accountable, and similarly this is reflected on the statements of heads of state; in the work of journalists; in the efforts of national courts; and in public opinion.

The Tribunal also inspired the establishment of entities for ensuring accountability both at the international and national levels.

Indeed, without the UN tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, there might never have been a permanent International Criminal Court, the central institution of the international criminal justice system today, Mr. Guterres said.

But the future is not only the fight against impunity, it is also the pursuit of truth and reconciliation.

The genocide in Srebrenica will continue to haunt the global conscience. Just as the whole international community, including the UN, has had to acknowledge their share of responsibility for the massacre, so must the various communities of the former Yugoslavia build on the legacy of the Tribunal and deepen their efforts towards trust and full reconciliation.

“Accepting the undeniable truth and facts of past tragedies is crucial for building a better and common future,” he said.

[General Assembly demands all States comply with UN resolutions regarding status of Jerusalem](#)

21 December 2017 – By an overwhelming majority, Member States in the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday “demanded” that all countries comply with Security Council resolutions regarding the status of Jerusalem.

Through a resolution adopted by a recorded vote of 128 in favour to nine against, with 35 abstentions, the 193-member Assembly expressed “deep regret”

over recent decisions concerning the status of Jerusalem and stressed that the Holy City “is a final status issue to be resolved through negotiations in line with relevant UN resolutions.”

Action in the Assembly today follows a [failed attempt by the Security Council on Monday adopt a similar text](#) reflecting regret among the body’s members about “recent decisions regarding the status of Jerusalem,” with a veto from the United States, a permanent member of the Council.

Ahead of that failed resolution, Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council that the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory had become more tense in the wake of US President Donald Trump’s decision on 6 December to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Subsequently, Yemen and Turkey, in their respective capacities as Chair of the Arab Group and the Chair of the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, [requested](#) the President of the General Assembly to “urgently resume’ the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in accordance with the so-named ‘Uniting for peace’ procedure.

This procedure, under Assembly resolution 377 (1950), is a [pathway around](#) a Security Council veto. By it, the Assembly can call an emergency special session to consider a matter “with a view to making appropriate recommendations to members for collective measures,” if the Security Council fails to act or if there is lack of unanimity among the Council’s permanent members, China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Since the tenth such meeting, the Assembly has temporarily adjourned the emergency special session and authorized “the President of the General Assembly [...] to resume its meeting upon request from Member States,” allowing for speedy consideration by the body of urgent issues.

The [most recent](#) resumed emergency session was in 2009 when the Assembly called a meeting on East Jerusalem and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Resolutions in the Assembly are non-binding and do not carry the force of international law as do measures agreed in the Security Council.

Find out more about the Assembly’s emergency special sessions and resolution 377 (1950) [here](#)

Today’s resolution demanded that “all States comply with Security Council resolutions regarding the Holy City of Jerusalem, and not recognize any actions or measures contrary to those resolutions.”

The General Assembly further affirmed that “any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council.”

In that regard the Assembly also called upon all States to refrain from the

establishment of diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem, pursuant to Security Council resolution 478 adopted in 1980.

Reiterating its call for the reversal of the negative trends that endanger the two-State solution, the Assembly urged greater international and regional efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

UNICEF airlifts six million doses of vaccines to children in Yemen

21 December 2017 – A plane chartered by the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) landed in Sana’a, Yemen, on Thursday, delivering nearly 6 million doses of essential vaccines to protect millions of children at risk of preventable diseases, including the current diphtheria outbreak that has reportedly infected over 300 people and killed 35.

“Vaccinating children in Yemen now is critical to protect them from preventable diseases and death. It is vital that vaccines and other lifesaving supplies for children continue to flow into Yemen and across the country unimpeded. They are a [lifeline](#) for millions of children,” said Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative in Yemen.

Most diphtheria cases and deaths are among children.

Since 2015, the southern Arabian nation has been in a conflict between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement.

The country is in the grips of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, with restrictions on fuel and food imports further complicating emergency response.

The restrictions add to the misery of children in Yemen who already face the triple threat of diseases, malnutrition and violence.

UNICEF reiterates its call on all parties to allow unhindered humanitarian access to all of Yemen’s land, sea and air ports and to facilitate the distribution of lifesaving assistance for children inside the country.

Deadly war weapons endanger lives of over 220,000 children in eastern Ukraine – UNICEF

21 December 2017 – Landmines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war threaten the lives of over 220,000 children in eastern Ukraine, the United Nations Children's Fund has warned, calling on all parties to the conflict to immediately end the use of the lethal weapons and allow mine clearance activities to begin.

“It is unacceptable that places where children could safely play less than four years ago [are now riddled with deadly explosives](#),” said Giovanna Barberis, the head of UNICEF operations in the country, in a news release Thursday.

“All parties to the conflict must immediately end the use of these gruesome weapons that have contaminated communities and put children in constant danger of injury and death,” she added.

According to UNICEF, a child has become a conflict-related casualty every week, on average, between January and November this year along eastern Ukraine's contact line – a 500-kilometre strip of land dividing Government and non-government controlled areas, where fighting is most severe.

Landmines, explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance were the leading cause of these tragedies, accounting for approximately two-thirds of all recorded injuries and deaths during the period. In most cases the casualties occurred when children picked up explosives such as hand grenades and fuses.

I picked it up and I think I pressed something, and it just exploded. There was a lot of blood...Aleksey, a 14-year-old boy

Many more children have been left with lifelong disabilities.

Aleksey, a 14-year-old boy, badly injured in one such incident recently told UNICEF: “I picked it up and I think I pressed something, and it just exploded. There was a lot of blood and the fingers were hanging. I was so scared that I started shaking. I almost collapsed.”

In an effort to make children aware of the dangers, UNICEF and partners have been conducting mine risk education programmes since 2015, reaching over 500,000 children across the region. The UN agency has also provided psychosocial support to 270,000 children affected by the ongoing conflict.

However, persisting funding gaps have severely hampered the response.

With just mere days left in the year, UNICEF's emergency appeal to support children and their families in eastern Ukraine is only 46 per cent funded, while its child protection programmes including mine risk education and providing psychosocial support for children has an even larger funding gap of 73 per cent.

[UN envoy urges support for efforts to resume political process in Yemen](#)

20 December 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Yemen on Wednesday called for halting violence and supporting efforts to bring warring parties together for the resumption of the political process.

Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, "is deeply concerned about the [escalation of violence](#) in Yemen and the continuous violations putting the life of civilians at risk," said a statement issued by his office.

Since 2015, the southern Arabian nation has been in a conflict between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement.

The envoy reiterated that there is no military solution to the crisis, and the only solution is a Yemeni-owned political process "without any foreign intervention," the statement said.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed condemned targeting the Saudi capital of Riyadh on 19 December with a ballistic missile, saying that "this is an escalation that hinders peace efforts in Yemen."

The envoy called for restraint and urged parties to refrain from any acts of violence that would aggravate the already difficult humanitarian and security situation in the country.

The envoy welcomed the decision of the Arab Alliance to open the port of Hodeidah for humanitarian and relief access and allow commercial ships to enter for 30 days, also calling for the continuation of these measures thereafter.

The envoy reiterated his earnest intention to redouble his efforts urgently to get in contact with all parties to prepare the resumption of a comprehensive and credible political process.