

Dangerous rhetoric, overconfidence, increasing risk of conflict on Korean Peninsula, UN chief warns

15 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Friday that he is deeply concerned over the risk of military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, “including as a result of miscalculation.”

“While all concerned seek to avoid an accidental escalation leading to conflict, the [risk is being multiplied by misplaced over-confidence](#), dangerous narratives and rhetoric, and the lack of communication channels,” the Secretary-General told the UN Security Council’s ministerial-level meeting, convened by Japan, on the challenges posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to international peace and security.

Describing the situation on the Korean Peninsula as “the most tense and dangerous peace and security issue in the world today,” he warned: “Any military action would have devastating and unpredictable consequences.”

In his briefing, Mr. Guterres said that unity of the Security Council is essential to achieve the goal of denuclearization in a peaceful manner and underscored that communication channels, including military-to-military ones have to be re-established and strengthened to reduce tensions in the region.

“The [UN] Secretariat and I are your partner in this effort. My good offices remain always available,” he added.

Mr. Guterres also noted the need to disassociate the peace and security situation in the DPRK from the humanitarian needs in the country.

Seventy per cent of the country’s population is affected by food insecurity and 40 per cent are malnourished and some \$114 million is needed to meet urgent requirements.

However, the 2017 DPRK Humanitarian Needs and Priorities appeal is only 30 per cent funded.

Urging UN Member States, in particular those represented the Security Council, to consider the humanitarian imperatives, Mr. Guterres said: “The people of the DPRK need our generosity and help.”

Diplomatic engagement is the only pathway to sustainable peace and denuclearization
UN chief Guterres

Concluding his remarks, the Secretary-General pointed to the upcoming Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang and expressed hope that the DRPK would take part.

“As the General Assembly has recognized, these Games can foster an atmosphere of peace, development, tolerance and understanding on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. We need to spread and deepen that spirit of hope and possibility,” he said, urging for diplomatic engagement to sustainable peace and denuclearization.

“We must do everything we can to reach that objective – and avoid a level of danger that would be unpredictable in its trajectory and catastrophic in its consequences,” said Mr. Guterres.

The ministerial-level meeting was convened by Japan, in its capacity as the President of the 15-member Council for the month of December.

In addition to Taro Kono of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, which holds the Council presidency for the month, ministers from other Security Council member States, including Sweden (Margot Wallström), Ukraine (Pavlo Klimkin), the United Kingdom (Mark Field), and the United States (Rex Tillerson) were at the meeting.

[Children are the face of conflict-fuelled humanitarian tragedy in South Sudan – UNICEF](#)

15 December 2017 – South Sudan’s children are facing a raft of daily horrors and deprivations and urgently require a peaceful, protective environment, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said Friday, warning that “anything less, places children and women at even greater risk of grave violations and abuse.”

As the conflict in the world’s youngest country enters its fifth year, UNICEF said in a new report entitled [Childhood under Attack](#), that more than half the children of South Sudan are “in the throes of tragedy” – victims of malnutrition, disease, forced recruitment, violence and the loss of schooling.

“No child should ever experience such horrors and deprivations,” said Leila Pakkala, UNICEF’s Regional Director in Eastern and Southern Africa, “and yet children in South Sudan are facing them on a daily basis.

Years of insecurity and upheaval have had a ‘staggering impact on children,’ threatening an entire generation, according to the report entitled.

The numbers tell a grim story, said UNICEF, noting that almost three million children are severely food insecure; more than one million acutely

malnourished; 2.4 million forced from their homes; two million out of school, and if the current situation persists, only one in 13 children are likely to finish primary school.

Moreover, an estimated 900,000 children suffer from psychological distress; more than 19,000 have been recruited into armed forces and armed groups; and more than 2,300 have been killed or injured since the conflict first erupted in December 2013 with hundreds of rape and sexual assault incidents against children having been reported.

Despite the huge challenges faced in a country that ranks among the world's most dangerous for aid workers, UNICEF has been delivering lifesaving assistance to children across the country since the crisis started in December 2013, warning that while it required \$183 million in 2018 to provide critical assistance to children and women, currently it is \$141 million short.

[UN chief stresses need to denuclearize Korean Peninsula, avoid 'sleepwalking into war'](#)

14 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres wrapped up a short visit to Tokyo on Thursday with an appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and other countries to implement relevant Security Council resolutions to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

"I think we all want to avoid that things get out of control and that misperceptions and mishandling of situations make us [sleepwalk into a war](#) that will have devastating consequences," Mr. Guterres told a press conference held at Japan National Press Club, stressing the need for the implementation of all Council resolutions, first by the DPRK and then all the other countries that have such obligations.

"The objective is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and it is extremely important to preserve the unity of the Security Council," he added.

Mr. Guterres is set to brief the Security Council on the DPRK, tomorrow, Friday, 15 November.

Asked about the outcome of a recent visit to Pyongyang by UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, Mr. Guterres said that "in diplomacy and especially in discreet diplomacy, it is difficult to measure an immediate result of any initiative" but "the message was conveyed."

He said that the message was that not only that Security Council resolutions

must be implemented, but there must be a sense of urgency in creating the conditions for a meaningful dialogue to achieve the denuclearization of the Peninsula.

On questions about a possible military strike against the DPRK by the United States, he refused to comment on “things that have not happened” but said he is “a believer that a military solution would have dramatic negative consequences and that we need to be able to achieve the goal to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and to achieve it through diplomatic engagement.”

Asked what the UN can do in a concrete manner about the situation, he said that the Security Council has taken the right decisions, and the Secretariat has to explore all ways to convey the messages that are necessary for those decisions to be implemented peacefully.

“We are not miracle makers. We are people committed to a cause, and that cause is the cause of peace and security in line with international law,” he said.

To a question about a possible visit to the DPRK by himself, the Secretary-General said he would go anywhere at any time when it is useful.

“But I am not aiming at a protagonism just to appear in the cameras of the televisions,” he said. “We are available, but we can only mediate when both parties accept our mediation.”

The main purpose of the Secretary-General trip to Japan was to address the global Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017 held in Tokyo.

[UN Security Council pledges support for regional push to revive South Sudan's peace pact](#)

14 December 2017 – As the brutal conflict in South Sudan enters its fifth year, the United Nations Security Council on Thursday said it remains deeply concerned over the situation there, and expressed strong support for a regional initiative aimed at salvaging a 2015 peace deal.

In a presidential statement, the 15-member Council said it “is deeply concerned about the actions of all parties to the conflict that are perpetuating this, with 7.6 million people now in need of aid, four million displaced, and six million lacking enough food to feed themselves.”

The world's youngest country, South Sudan has spent much of its short life mired in conflict, riven by a political face-off between President Salva Kiir

and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar that erupted into full-blown war late in 2013.

The Council also took note of the September 2017 mid-term report of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and its findings that the parties to the conflict have failed to implement substantive elements of the 2015 peace agreement, which sought to end the fighting that broke out in December 2013.

The Council expressed its strong support for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) High-Level Revitalization Forum, which was established to revitalize efforts to implement the 2015 peace agreement, adding that it "looks forward" to the convening of a fully inclusive Forum and substantive progress on the initiative by the end of December.

IGAD is a regional mechanism in Eastern Africa consisting of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

The Council strongly urged all parties to engage constructively in the process to revitalize the 2015 peace agreement, underlining that no party should set pre-conditions for participation.

The Council noted with deep concern the continuing obstacles that hinder the delivery of vital lifesaving assistance to the South Sudanese people, condemning attacks on national and international humanitarian personnel and compounds.

The Council reiterated that perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights must be held accountable, to break the prevailing cycle of impunity.

RELATED: [Security Council extends mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan \(UNMISS\)](#)

[Respiratory diseases linked to seasonal flu claim thousands of lives every year – UN health agency](#)

14 December 2017 – Respiratory diseases from seasonal influenza takes up to 650,000 lives annually, according to new estimates released Thursday by the United Nations health agency and global partners.

"These figures indicate the [high burden of influenza](#) and its substantial social and economic cost to the world," Dr. Peter Salama, Executive Director of the World Health Organization's ([WHO](#)) Health Emergencies Programme said on

Thursday.

“They highlight the importance of influenza prevention for seasonal epidemics, as well as preparedness for pandemics,” he added.

This marks an increase of the previous global estimate of 250,000 – 500,000 from over ten years ago, which covered all influenza-related deaths, including cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

The new figures of 290,000 – 650,000 deaths are based on recent data from more diverse countries and exclude deaths from non-respiratory diseases. They consider findings from recent influenza respiratory mortality studies, including by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

According to CDC, most deaths occur among people aged over 75 years, and in the world’s poorest regions. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for the world’s greatest flu mortality risk, followed closely by the Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Asia.

“All countries, rich and poor, large and small, must work together to control influenza outbreaks before the arrival of the next pandemic,” continued Dr. Salama. “This includes building capacity to detect and respond to outbreaks, and strengthening health systems to improve the health of the most vulnerable and those most at risk.”

Nearly all deaths among children under five with influenza-related lower respiratory tract infections occur in developing countries, but the effects of seasonal influenza epidemics on the world’s poorest are not fully known.

WHO is working with partners to measure the global influenza burden and its economic consequences, and to provide guidance and expertise to Member States.

Further surveillance and laboratory studies of other diseases, which can be influenza-related, are expected to yield substantially higher estimates over the next few years.

WHO encourages countries to prioritize influenza prevention and produce national estimates to inform prevention policies.