

In Tanzania, UN peacekeeping chief pays tribute to 'blue helmets' killed in DR Congo

14 December 2017 – The head of United Nations peacekeeping operations on Thursday attended a ceremony in the port city of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in honour of the country's peacekeepers recently killed during their mission in a neighbouring country.

"We are here today to honor 14 fallen peacekeepers from Tanzania who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace," said Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean Pierre Lacroix.

"The Greek Philosopher Thucydides once said, 'The bravest are surely those that have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet not notwithstanding go out to meet it,'" he added.

These peacekeepers were killed in the attack by suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements that took place at the base of the peacekeepers in Semiliki in North Kivu of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on 7 December.

These peacekeepers are the bravest, he said, offering condolences to the Government and the people of Tanzania.

Mr. Lacroix said to the members of their families that "no word can express your sorrow but we also know that you can be very, very proud of them."

"Perhaps better than any of us, they knew the dangers they would face in this troubled region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo – a country that is so important for the security of the region," he said.

"They knew that these armed groups that are preying on the population have no qualms about attacking UN peacekeepers and yet they placed their lives on the lines to serve the people of this region and of the DRC," he added.

He stressed that "to truly honor these brave men, we must ensure that the sacrifice was not made in vain."

"As we mourn this terrible loss, we must work together to ensure that our peacekeepers have the means to achieve our common goal of bringing peace back to the Democratic Republic of Congo," he added.

Mr. Lacroix will also attend a ceremony in Goma, DRC, on Friday to honour the peacekeepers.

UN forum sees ‘moderate’ recovery for Latin American and Caribbean economies in 2018

14 December 2017 – New economic projections for Latin America and the Caribbean show moderate recovery in 2018 and growth the following year – with favoured expansions in consumption and domestic investment, the United Nations reported Thursday.

The Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Bárcena, unveiled on Thursday the [Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2017](#), which analyses the economies’ performance and updates its latest growth projections.

“Although there is reduced fiscal space in the region, we need to [promote active public policies](#) to sustain the expansion cycle,” stated Ms. Bárcena, adding that they include strengthening regulation, productive development, tax collection and intraregional trade.

After notching 1.3 per cent growth on average in 2017, the report maintains that regional economies would recover moderately in 2018, and grow 2.2 per cent the following year – noting that the regional economic projections are evolving in a more favourable international context than over the last few years.

According to the report, the global economy will expand at a rate close to that of 2017, or around 3 per cent, next year with emerging economies showing greater dynamism than developed ones.

In the monetary sphere, the current situation of ample liquidity and low international interest rates is seen holding steady.

Domestic demand will cause growth acceleration in 2018. While driven by private consumption, ECLAC attributes recovery in gross fixed capital formation in indicating that investments next year would contribute greatly.

“Spending that has a greater impact on growth and inequality must be prioritized, along with avoiding sharp adjustments in public investment to protect growth in the medium term,” Ms. Bárcena stressed.

ECLAC also noted some challenges and latent risks that may affect the consolidation of growth in the medium term, including a possible United States tax reform that would cause financial volatility due to an increase in capital flows to that country.

In its subregional analysis, ECLAC foresees that economies in South America are expected to grow by two per cent; Central America by 3.6 per cent; and the Caribbean by 1.5 per cent.

In Japan, UN chief spotlights power of universal health coverage to unlock economic growth

14 December 2017 – Health is everyone’s right and a driver of economic development, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres stressed Thursday, expressing the UN’s readiness to help countries move towards health coverage for all.

“Our goal must be to protect and promote [physical and mental well-being](#) for all. Health is both an outcome and a driver of progress,” Mr. Guterres told the global Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017, currently taking place in Tokyo, Japan.

“It is at the centre of our vision of a more sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future [...] When we invest in health – particularly of women and adolescents – we build more inclusive and resilient societies,” he added.

Commending Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s announcement of \$2.9 billion to fund universal health coverage programmes in developing countries, the UN chief acknowledged Japan for being one of the first countries to demonstrate the power of universal health coverage, achieving it in 1961 and unlocking economic growth for the decades that followed.

Next September marks the 40th anniversary of the Alma Alta Declaration, which famously set out a goal of achieving health for all.

Mr. Guterres said that targeted investments in recent decades led to major progress on a variety of health challenges.

“More women have access to modern contraception. Vaccination levels are up. More people living with HIV have access to anti-retrovirals. More people at risk of malaria are sleeping under an insecticide-treated nets. And an end to diseases such as polio is within sight,” he said.

However, gross inequities continue to leave the most vulnerable behind. For too many, health is inaccessible, unaffordable or altogether unavailable. Out-of-pocket spending on health causes an estimated 100 million people to fall below the poverty line every year.

Health not just the lack of illness. Our goal must be overall well-being, physically and mentally for everyone in all countries.
UN Secretary-General Guterres

Furthermore, new threats, such as antimicrobial resistance, the impacts of climate change and the spread of non-communicable diseases, have emerged.

All of this will require more integrated health systems capable of responding effectively and equitably to the unique needs of their communities, he said.

Noting that every \$1 spent on health yields up to \$20 in full-income growth within a generation, Mr. Guterres stressed the critical importance of political commitment to unlocking these investments.

“There is of course no one-size-fits-all solution, and each country must walk its own path toward universal health coverage,” he said, pledging UN support in that regard.

“Just as peace is not simply the absence of conflict, so is health not just the lack of illness. Our goal is not only a band-aid or a single dose of medicine, important as those are. Our goal must be overall well-being, physically and mentally for everyone in all countries,” he concluded.

The Secretary-General will convene a General Assembly high-level meeting on universal health coverage in 2019.

[Electronic waste poses ‘growing risk’ to environment, human health, UN report warns](#)

13 December 2017 – The growing volume of electronic waste, including discarded products with a battery or plug, such as mobile phones, laptops, televisions, refrigerators and electrical toys, poses a major threat to the environment and human health, the United Nations warned on Wednesday.

“Environmental protection is one of the three pillars of sustainable development [...] E-waste management is an urgent issue in today’s [digitally dependent world](#), where use of electronic devices is ever increasing,” said Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)).

The [Global E-Waste Monitor 2017](#), released by ITU, the UN University (UNU) and the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), highlights increasing levels of e-waste and its improper and unsafe treatment and disposal through burning or at dumpsites.

In 2016, 44.7 million metric tonnes of e-waste were generated, an increase of 3.3 million metric tonnes, or 8 per cent, from 2014. Experts foresee e-waste increasing a further 17 per cent to 52.2 million metric tonnes by 2021.

E-waste contains \$55 billion worth of recoverable materials

In 2016, only about 20 per cent, or 8.9 million metric tonnes, of all e-waste was recycled.

“The Global E-waste Monitor serves as a valuable resource for governments developing their necessary management strategies, standards and policies to reduce the adverse health and environmental effects of e-waste,” said Mr. Zhao.

With 53.6 per cent of global households now having Internet access, national e-waste policies and legislation play an important role governing the actions of stakeholders who are associated with e-waste.

Currently 66 per cent of the world population, living in 67 countries, is covered by national e-waste management laws, a significant increase from 44 per cent in 2014.

Low recycling rates can have a negative economic impact. In 2016, it was estimated that e-waste contained rich deposits of gold, silver, copper, platinum, palladium and other high value recoverable materials, whose total value is estimated at \$55 billion, a figure exceeding the gross domestic product of most countries in the world.

[Thousands of children need assistance three months after Caribbean hurricanes – UNICEF](#)

13 December 2017 – Three months after two category-5 hurricanes tore through the Caribbean, thousands of children across the region still need support, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said on Wednesday.

“Even before the hurricanes hit, UNICEF was [on the ground](#), working with Governments and local partners to prepare communities and preposition humanitarian supplies for the areas at highest risk” said Maria Cristina Perceval, UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

“These included life-saving supplies that were most needed during the immediate response when access to clean water, shelter and basic social services were scarce,” she added.

Irma, the most powerful hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean, caused extensive damage to the islands of the Eastern Caribbean, Haiti and Cuba.

Hurricane Maria then wrought additional damage across the region, with UNICEF

estimating that together, they left 350,000 children in need of humanitarian assistance.

“Three months on, UNICEF is still on the ground in these countries and territories, working on programmes to support children and families in rebuilding their lives and returning to a sense of normalcy,” she added.

However, challenges remain, with many of the most vulnerable families still feeling the effects of the storms.

Over 35 per cent of Dominica’s children – particularly those in shelters – are still not enrolled in education activities, while in Antigua and Barbuda many families remain in shelters, unable to return home.

Working in collaboration with governments and non-governmental organizations, UNICEF has been providing immediate humanitarian relief and working to ensure longer term recovery and resilience.

“While life is returning to normal for many, children and families who have lived through these storms will need committed, sustained support to get their homes, communities and lives back on track,” maintained Ms. Perceval.

UNICEF and its partners are supporting communities through programmes focused on recovery and resilience in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica and Haiti.