

UN voices support for Somali Government's efforts at first-ever security conference in Mogadishu

4 December 2017 – At Somalia's first-ever security conference, hosted by the country's Federal President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmaajo" in the capital, Mogadishu, participants agreed to speed up security sector reform and develop a plan to transfer primary responsibility for the country's security from the United Nations-backed African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to its own security forces.

"Security is our greatest requirement if this country is to realize its full potential," President Farmaajo said in his keynote address. "As a Government, we are absolutely determined to win the war against al-Shabaab and (Islamic State) with the full support of our international partners. Without security and counter-terrorism, there cannot be a peaceful, prosperous and progressive Somalia to which we all aspire."

The conference was jointly convened with the UN and the African Union (AU) and featured the participation of Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairi, the presidents of Somalia's five federal member states, cabinet ministers and a host of ambassadors and other senior representatives of the international community. The top UN official attending was the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating.

In his remarks, Mr. Keating voiced support for the Federal Government's commitment to pursue a comprehensive approach to security in the country.

"Defeating al-Shabaab cannot be done exclusively by military means," he said. "Rule of law and policing are essential, stabilization activities [in recaptured areas] are essential. Countering and preventing violent extremism are also essential as well as addressing and solving the many conflicts around the country on which al-Shabaab and other extremists thrive."

The conference was organized as a follow-up to last May's London Conference on Somalia, which endorsed a landmark political agreement on a new national security architecture reached by federal and state leaders earlier this year and formally adopted a security pact for the country.

A [communiqué](#) issued at the end of the meeting identified three priority areas that require immediate action by Somali authorities with the support of the international community. These include the implementation of the approved national security architecture, the urgent development of a realistic, conditions-based transition plan to enable Somali security forces to take over primary responsibility from AMISOM for protecting the people and Government of Somalia, and continued international support to build the capacity of the country's security forces and institutions.

Security has been a major issue for the east African country, which has suffered a range of violent attacks linked to extremists. In mid-October, hundreds of civilians were killed and injured in a massive car bomb blast outside the entrance to a hotel in Mogadishu's K5 junction, which is home to government offices, hotels and restaurants.

Senior Somali Government officials and leading representatives of the international community will reconvene on Tuesday for a so-called Somalia Partnership Forum that will address the pressing humanitarian and development issues facing the country.

[Urgent action needed to address rising global hunger, says UN agency head](#)

4 December 2017 – Immediate action is needed to address the rise in global hunger, the head of the United Nations food security agency has urged, highlighting the need to build resilience in poor and vulnerable communities.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), the number of hungry people around the world rose to 815 million – [the first increase after more than a decade of steady decline](#).

“The most important thing to do now is to build the resilience of poor people to face the impacts of conflicts and climate change,” José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of FAO told the UN agency’s Council meeting in Rome, Monday.

In addition to rising hunger, obesity and overweight are also growing in developed and developing countries, adding further challenges and raising the cost of current food systems.

It is, thus, critical to ensure that humanitarian assistance is combined with development actions to chart a course to eradicate hunger by 2030, added Mr. Graziano da Silva, calling for new and increased investments from both the public and private sectors.

At the FAO Council, which manages administrative and financial affairs between biennial meetings of the UN agency’s Conference, the Director-General outlined major events in 2018, including those on agroecology, globally important agricultural heritage systems, innovation for smallholder and family farmers, as well as plan to launch an international platform for biodiversity.

These initiatives are designed to support countries put in place sustainable agricultural practices that combine food production, ecosystem services and climate-change resilience at the same time, Mr. Graziano da Silva explained.

[Top UN humanitarian official in Yemen calls for 'humanitarian pause'](#)

4 December 2017 – Amid a sharp escalation of fighting in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, with reports that dozens have been killed and hundreds injured, the top United Nations relief official in the country has urged for an urgent humanitarian pause to allow civilians to seek assistance, aid workers to reach them, and for the wounded to be evacuated.

["The streets of Sana'a have become battlegrounds](#) and people are trapped in their homes, unable to move out in search of safety and medical care and to access basic supplies such as food, fuel and safe water," said Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, in a statement Monday.

He also noted that humanitarians have received "desperate calls" for help by families trapped in the midst of the fighting but added that ambulances and medical teams cannot reach the injured due to ongoing clashes.

There are also reports that some have come under attack and life-saving activities have been impacted as aid workers are unable to move.

"Thus, I call on all parties to the conflict to urgently enable a humanitarian pause on Tuesday, 5 December, between 10.00 AM and 16.00 PM to allow civilians to leave their homes and seek assistance and protection," he added.

Mr. McGoldrick also urged UN Member States with leverage on the parties to the conflict to step up their engagement "for the sake of the protection of the civilian population."

Further in the statement, the senior UN relief official also stressed that deliberate attacks against civilians, humanitarians and health-care personnel, as well as against civilian and medical infrastructure, are clear violations of international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes.

UN rights chief appoints experts to investigate violations and abuses in Yemen

In related news, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Monday appointed members to the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, [established](#) by the Human Rights Council in September this year, to monitor and report on the situation in the war-torn country.

In the [resolution](#), the Geneva-based Human Rights Council –the highest intergovernmental forum on human rights within the UN system – requested the experts to carry out a "comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and other appropriate and applicable fields of international law committed by all parties to the conflict [...] and

to establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged violations and abuses and, where possible, to identify those responsible.”

The members appointed Monday are Kamel Jendoubi (Tunisia), who will serve as chairperson, Charles Garraway (United Kingdom) and Melissa Parke (Australia).

“The group’s creation is an important step toward accountability and ending impunity for the serious violations of human rights committed by all sides in Yemen amid a worsening humanitarian crisis in the country, and ensuring justice and remedy for the victims,” said the UN rights chief, in a [news release](#) announcing the appointments.

According to the release, the experts will submit a comprehensive written report to the High Commissioner by September 2018.

A child’s bicycle lies amid rubble of a destroyed house in Yemen’s capital, Sana’a. (File) Photo: OCHA/Charlotte Cans 12-04-2017_OCHA-Yemen.jpg

[UN chief calls for end to all armed clashes, airstrikes in Yemen](#)

3 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called on the parties to the conflict in Yemen to cease all air and ground assaults, expressing deep concern about the “sharp escalation” of armed clashes and airstrikes in the capital, Sana’a, and other parts of the war-torn country over the past several days.

A [statement](#) issued by Mr. Guterres’ Spokesman Sunday evening said the fighting has already resulted in dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries, including civilians, and is also restricting the movement of people and life-saving services within Sana’a city.

“Ambulances and medical teams cannot access the injured and people cannot go outside to buy food and other necessities. Aid workers are unable to travel and implement critical life-saving programmes at a time when millions of Yemenis rely on assistance to survive,” said the statement.

This latest outbreak of violence could not come at a worse time for the Yemeni people, who are already caught up in the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. The [conflict and blockade](#) that was put in place on 6 November and is still not fully lifted have caused significant shortages of critical supplies, especially food and fuel, and resulted in price hikes, curtailing access to food, safe water and healthcare.

“The Secretary-General calls for the urgent resumption of all commercial imports, without which millions of children, women and men risk mass hunger,

disease and death,” the statement underscored.

The UN chief went on to call on all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, with the statement emphasizing: “It is paramount that civilians are protected, that the wounded are afforded safe access to medical care, and that all sides facilitate life-saving humanitarian access.”

More than two years of relentless conflict between the Government and Houthi and allied rebels in Yemen, already the Arab world's poorest country, has devastated the lives of millions of people. An alarming 20.7 million people in Yemen [need some kind of humanitarian or protection support](#), with some 9.8 million in acute need of assistance. This man-made disaster has been brutal on civilians.

“The Secretary-General reiterates that there is no military solution to the Yemen conflict. He urges all parties to the conflict to engage meaningfully with the United Nations to revitalize inclusive negotiations on a political settlement,” the statement concluded.

RELATED: [UN Special Envoy for Yemen calls on the parties to urgently come to the negotiation table and to engage in the peace process](#)

[Remove physical and cultural barriers; build inclusive societies 'for, by and with persons with disabilities' – UN](#)

3 December 2017 – Persons with disabilities, as both beneficiaries and agents of change, can fast track the process towards inclusive and sustainable development, and for the [2030 Agenda](#) to truly live up to its promise to 'leave no one behind,' all physical and cultural barriers must be removed to create societies that provide real opportunities for everyone everywhere, the United Nations has said.

The theme of the 2017 edition of the [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) is 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all,' and the UN is urging governments, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, academic institutions and the private sector to work as a 'team to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

In his [message](#) on the Day, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embodies a commitment to building the capacities of those who face marginalization and exclusion to reduce their

vulnerability to economic, social and environmental shocks.

In recent years, the international community has achieved notable progress in advancing the rights of the world's one billion persons with disabilities. Disability is recognized as a cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda, the [New Urban Agenda](#), which sets a new global standard for sustainable urban development, and the [Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction](#).

Yet, persons with disabilities remain too often excluded from the design, planning and implementation of policies and programmes that have an impact on their lives. Too often they face discrimination in labour markets and in access to education and other services," stated Mr. Guterres.

To overcome this challenge, the UN chief said, the path towards inclusive, accessible, usable facilities, technologies, infrastructure, services and products must be ensured by, for and with persons with disabilities.

"We must build on their agency, working together to design, develop and implement affordable and innovative solutions to realize equality for all," he underscored, adding: "On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let us remove physical and cultural barriers, build resilient societies and create opportunities that truly leave no one behind."

RELATED: [What Disability Means & Facts & Figures](#)

Echoing that call, Audrey Azoulay the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), said in her message that persons with disabilities are [on the frontlines of a world changing quickly](#) and societies transforming, and they are especially vulnerable to the impacts of humanitarian crises and environmental challenges.

"This cannot go on. We must integrate persons with disabilities into all decision-making and policies," she emphasized, explain that UNESCO will continue acting across the board, starting with, among others, inclusive education, leading the Education 2030 Framework, drawing on UNESCO's Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education to bolster educational systems that provide opportunity to all.

"UNESCO's message is clear today. Building sustainable and resilient societies requires the inclusion, participation and empowerment of every woman and man, including persons with disabilities," stressed Ms. Azoulay, adding: "This is about equal rights and dignity & this is about the better future we seek to build for all."