

[UN chief condemns suicide attack that leaves dozens dead in northern Nigeria town](#)

21 November 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has condemned the suicide attacks that took place earlier Tuesday in Adamawa state, Nigeria, which resulted in scores of casualties, and called for those responsible for the “heinous acts” to be swiftly brought to justice.

“The Secretary-General extends his condolences to the bereaved families and to the Government and people of Nigeria for the loss of life. He wishes a speedy recovery to the injured,” according to a [statement](#) issued by Deputy UN Spokesman Farhan Haq.

Through the statement, Mr. Guterres reiterated the solidarity of the UN with the Government of Nigeria in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

“He also renews the commitment of the United Nations to continue to support regional counter-terrorism initiatives,” the statement concluded.

According to media reports, at least 50 people were killed in an early morning bomb attack at a mosque in northern Nigeria town of Mubi, which is near the border with Cameroon.

[Nearly 21 million people now have access to HIV treatment – UN agency](#)

21 November 2017 – About 20.9 million people now have access to the antiretroviral therapy, according to a new report by the UN agency leading the global push to end AIDS, spotlighting that this remarkable progress has been made possible by people living with HIV demanding their rights, strong leadership and financial commitment.

“People, no matter what their health needs, require [comprehensive health solutions](#) that are accessible, available, acceptable and of good quality,” Michel Sidibé, the Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), said in the foreword of the agency’s new report, [Right to health](#), which was launched yesterday in South Africa.

Mr. Sidibé cited South Africa as an example of a dramatic scale-up of HIV treatment, saying that while in 2000, the country had on 90 people on

treatment, today, there are more than four million.

“Today, South Africa has the biggest life-saving treatment programme in the world [...] This is the kind of acceleration we need to encourage, sustain and replicate,” he said.

The rising treatment helps keep more people living with HIV alive and well. As treatment access has increased for pregnant women living with HIV, new infections among children have been rapidly reduced by almost half worldwide, according to UNAIDS.

The new report highlights the gaps in accessing to health, while also providing some innovative examples of AIDS response.

One challenge is to ensure 17.1 million people, including 1.2 million children, have access to HIV treatment, especially in the countries where new HIV infections are rising.

In that regard, the report points out that new HIV infections are rising at a rapid pace in countries that have not expanded health services to those most affected. Wherever the right to health is compromised, HIV spreads, says UNAIDS.

In eastern Europe and Central Asia, for example, new HIV infections have risen by 60 per cent since 2010, and AIDS-related deaths by 27 per cent.

While in sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of new HIV infections are among young women and girls aged between 15 and 24 years.

The report “has been giving a voice to people living with HIV and giving affected communities and civil society the means to demand their right to health,” stressed Mr. Sidibé.

He further called on Governments to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health of everyone and reiterated the world’s commitment to Sustainable Development [Goal 3](#), to ensure good health and well-being for all.

Situation on Australian ‘offshore processing’ facility deteriorates by the day – UN refugee official

21 November 2017 – Three weeks following the closure of the Manus Island regional processing centre, the situation on the ground is very serious and deteriorates by the day, a senior United Nations official on protection of refugees has said.

“Without distribution of food and clean water over the last three weeks [and] significant accumulation of waste and rubbish in the hot and humid weather, the health and sanitation is becoming a very significant issue,” Nai Jit Lam, Deputy Regional Representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), currently on Manus Island, [told journalists in Geneva over the phone](#).

“The people that we have spoken to are extremely angry and they see this as an opportunity to tell the world and to show the world, years of anger about how they have been treated over the four years, after being forcibly transferred to Papua New Guinea,” he added.

According to the UN refugee agency, the conditions and the lack of medicines, increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers at the former facility are falling physically and mentally unwell. Alternative accommodation and services outside the facility are still under construction and it could be another two weeks before they are ready.

“We have observed [concerns] regarding security and the lack of interpreters on the Island, that brings about the issue of how they would communicate with local people or even the police as well,” added the UNHCR official, noting that local contractual disputes hinder staffing of caseworkers to look after the wellbeing of those there, and tensions with local community also remains.

Calling on Australian authorities for an active role resolve the situation, which Mr. Lam said that is a result of the forcible transfer of people, refugees and asylum seekers by Australia to Papua New Guinea and Nauru under its offshore policy.

“Australia must take responsibility for the protection, assistance and solutions for the refugees here on Manus Island,” he stressed.

According to the UN refugee agency, Manus Island (located some 320 kilometres or 200 miles off the northern coast of Papua New Guinea) has been the focus of Australia’s off-shore processing policy. Of the approximately 3,000 refugees and asylum-seekers forcibly transferred by Australia to facilities in Nauru and Manus, some 1,200 remain in Nauru and 900 in Papua New Guinea.

[‘New and better deal’ needed for climate resilience in Caribbean, UN chief tells donor conference](#)

21 November 2017 – Caribbean countries need “a new and better deal” – one that includes access to concessional finance and adequate insurance – if they are to build climate resilience, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António

Guterres said Tuesday at an international conference to mobilize support for the reconstruction of communities devastated by a series of powerful hurricanes.

“During my visits to Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, I saw [a level of devastation](#) that I have never witnessed before in my life,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that in these islands alone, damage is estimated at \$1.1 billion, and total economic losses at \$400 million.

This year’s Atlantic hurricane season was particularly active, with storms having been more frequent, and stronger. Of the 13 named storms, eight were hurricanes and of those, four were major hurricanes, including Irma and Maria. Across the entire Caribbean region, there was tragic loss of life and widespread devastation.

The pledging conference today at UN Headquarters in New York, was co-organized by the UN and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which is a regional grouping of 20 countries.

“Let’s not forget that these island States are not only interlinked by geography, but also interlinked by the economy, so when one country suffers, all countries suffer,” Mr. Guterres said.



Secretary-General António Guterres delivers remarks at High-Level Pledging Conference: Building a more Climate-resilient Community. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

He noted that extreme weather is becoming the new normal and sea levels have risen more than 10 inches since 1870. Over the past 30 years, the number of annual climate-related disasters has nearly tripled and economic losses have quintupled.

Countries in the Caribbean need a new generation of infrastructure that is risk-informed, to underpin resilient economies, communities and livelihoods, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), adopted in 2015 by 193 UN Member States.

But financing is a key challenge for many Caribbean countries, which have limited access to concessional finance because of their ‘middle income’ classification. They also have high levels of debt, much of it incurred through investment in recovery and resilience.

Caribbean countries are also paying hundreds of millions of dollars a year in remittance fees. Disaster insurance has also proved inadequate to this unprecedented hurricane season. Debt instruments should be sensitive to the ability to pay, and have catastrophe clauses built in.

“In short: we need a new and better deal for the Caribbean, if these countries are to build climate resilience and achieve the [SDGs](#),” Mr. Guterres said, urging international financial institutions and donors to coordinate

risk sharing and concessional lending terms.

“Today must be about more than speeches and pledges,” he said. “It is an opportunity to forge a partnership for a better future, and to deepen a vision for recovery that brings together all actors and puts people at its centre, as active development agents.”

Also addressing the conference was UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who highlighted [three key steps](#) the international community can take.

We should not let the people be punished once by nature and twice by outdated economic policies. General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák

First is commitment to support the rebuilding effort. Funding and technical assistance are urgently needed to help the affected countries to get back on their feet. Housing, telecommunications, water and sanitation, healthcare services and education facilities are needed.

Second is to rebuild with greater resilience, he said, commending CARICOM’s goal of becoming the first climate-resilient region in the world.

Third, he continued, there is a need to recognize that small island developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters and external shocks. To compound this, middle income small island developing States face inadequate access to grant and concessional funding because of how their development is measured.

“We should not let the people be punished once by nature and twice by outdated economic policies,” he said.

[Still far too much secrecy surrounding use of death penalty, says senior UN human rights official](#)

21 November 2017 – A senior United Nations human rights official has stressed the need for greater transparency by countries that still use the death penalty, noting that this is vital for families, who have a right to know the fate of their loved ones, as well as for lawyers so they can provide an effective defence.

“There is far too much secrecy, and it’s quite indicative the fact that although many countries are giving up the practice, those that retain it nevertheless feel that they have something to hide,” Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour said in an interview with *UN News*.

The UN has long advocated for the abolition of the death penalty. While some 170 States have either abolished the practice – which [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) has called “barbaric” – or refrained from it, prisoners in a number of countries continue to face execution.

Mr. Gilmour noted that the vast majority of executions today take place in five countries – China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Last December, the General Assembly in its regular resolution calling for a moratorium on executions added a new element to try to resolve the issue of transparency, which is a prerequisite to assess whether the death penalty is being carried out in compliance with international human rights standards.

It also honours the right of all people to know whether their family members are alive or dead, and the location of their remains.

Mr. Gilmour recalled one recent case of a family that heard on the radio that their son had been executed, even though just the previous week the mother had been to the prison to ask for news about her son and they had refused to give it to her.

VIDEO: Senior UN human rights official Andrew Gilmour emphasized the need for common decency, as he called for greater transparency in the use of the death penalty in some countries.

“Some of this seems to be unnecessarily cruel, additional punishment on the families,” he pointed out, highlighting the need for “common decency.”

“You may believe that someone deserves to be executed, or you may not, but even if you do, surely there’s no need to punish the family by keeping them in doubt.”

Also an issue is that some governments conceal executions and enforce an elaborate system of secrecy to hide who is on death row, and why. Others classify information on the death penalty as a state secret, making its release an act of treason, Mr. Gilmour noted, as in the case of Belarus and Viet Nam.

This lack of transparency shows “a lack of respect” for the human rights of those sentenced to death and to their families, according to Secretary-General António Guterres, who added that it also damages the administration of justice more generally.

“Full and accurate data is vital to policy-makers, civil society and the general public. It is fundamental to the debate around the death penalty and its impact,” he told an event at UN Headquarters last month to mark the World Day Against the Death Penalty.

“Secrecy around executions undermines that debate, and obstructs efforts to safeguard the right to life.”

As part of the effort to abolish secret executions, the UN human rights office ([OHCHR](#)) supports an initiative launched in September known as the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade, which aims to end the trade in goods used to carry out the death penalty and torture.

These include batons with metal spikes, electric shock belts, grabbers that seize people while electrocuting them, chemicals used to execute people and the forced injection systems that go with them.

“There’s something truly grotesque about medieval forms of torture, in a way, being advertised in mail-order catalogues and using the jargon of commercialization,” said Mr. Gilmour. “So I think it’d be a step forward in civilization to block this trade, and luckily there are some major drug companies who are refusing to allow their drugs to be used in instances of execution.”

Earlier this year, four men were executed within the span of eight days in the US state of Arkansas because the state’s supply of one of the drugs used in lethal injections – midazolam – was due to expire at the end of the month and it was unclear whether further supplies could be obtained.

“I’ve heard various arguments, absurd arguments for executing and some rather obscene arguments for executing,” Mr. Gilmour stated, “but I don’t really think I’ve heard many more obscene ones or absurd ones than the fact that the drugs for executing had reached their sell-by date.”