

Genuine change in Gaza could help restore confidence in peace process, UN envoy tells Security Council

20 November 2017 – Noting that with the signing last month of the Cairo agreement, Palestinians have set out on a path towards reconciliation, a senior United Nations official underscored on Monday the urgency to resolve the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and to return the enclave to full civilian and security control of the Palestinian Authority.

"I believe and hope that a genuine change in Gaza [...] [would contribute to restoring confidence in the feasibility of a comprehensive peace agreement](#)," Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council Monday.

"This is a Palestinian-owned process. All Palestinian factions must seize this opportunity to open a new page for their people," he added.

In his briefing, the UN envoy also underscored that for success to be achieved, past failures must be avoided, security for both Palestinians and Israelis must be preserved, and all sides must be willing to compromise in the interests of peace.

In the context of improving security, he welcomed the restoration of full security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (announced 8 November) noting that it the coordination is critical to the security of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

He however, expressed concern over the recent discovery of tunnel extending from Gaza into Israel, and condemning the continued construction of tunnels and statements by terrorist groups purporting violence.

"At a time when Palestinians in Gaza [...] who have lived with closures for a decade, survived three conflicts, and have had to struggle to merely exist [...] are seeing hope for the future, such actions and statements risk a dangerous escalation that could destroy the prospects for intra-Palestinian reconciliation."

The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to worsen with power outages now reported as much as 20 hours a day, piped water supply of 3-5 hours every five days, dwindling stocks of essential drugs and medical supplies and lack of functioning sanitation systems.

Turning to settlements, Mr. Mladenov informed the 15-member Council of Israeli planning authorities' approval of building permits for at least 418 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlements of Gilo and Ramat Shlomo as well as conditional approval of 178 housing units in the settlement of Nof Zion located in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Jabel Mukaber.

The UN considers all settlement activities illegal under international law. They constitute a substantial obstacle to peace and should cease," added Mr. Mladenov.

Also in his briefing, the envoy expressed concern over the implications of the latest developments related to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) representative office in the United States.

Only through constructive dialogue can we hope to advance peace and I call on all parties to remain engaged," he said, urging everyone, especially Palestinian leaders, Israel and the international community of their important responsibility to advance the peace efforts in the region.

[UNICEF urges greater opportunities for 'forgotten minority' as study reveals bleak prospects for 180 million children](#)

20 November 2017 – Despite global progress, one in 12 children live in countries with prospects more limited than those of their parents, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) reported Monday.

In a new report released to coincide with [World Children's Day](#), UNICEF revealed that in 37 countries, some 180 million youth are more likely to exist in extreme poverty, be out of school or be killed by violence, than children in those same countries 20 years ago.

While the last generation has seen vast, unprecedented gains in living standards for most of the world's children, the fact that a forgotten minority of children have been excluded from this – through no fault of their own or those of their families – is a travesty," said Laurence Chandy, UNICEF Director of Data, Research and Policy.

In honour of World Children's Day, which marks the anniversary of the adoption of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), UNICEF has coordinated a range of activities in over 130 countries that aim to give youth their own platform, helping to save their lives, fight for their rights and fulfil their potential – including children's global 'take-overs' and high-profile events.

Among a [host of events and activities](#) worldwide, at UN Headquarters in New York, UNICEF will bring together high-profile supporters, influencers and special guests alongside children who represent some of the world's most vulnerable children to speak out to the international community on issues

that matter to them. Many are expected to join Secretary General António Guterres and 150 children in a 'take-over' of the UN complex.

It is the hope of every parent, everywhere, to provide greater opportunities for their children than they themselves enjoyed when they were young. This World Children's Day, we have to take stock of how many children are instead seeing opportunities narrow and their prospects diminish," Mr. Chandy said.

In assessing the prospect of children in escaping extreme poverty, getting a basic education and avoiding violent deaths, among other things, the UNICEF analysis shows that the share of people living on less than \$1.90 a day has increased in 14 countries mostly due to unrest, conflicts or poor governance.

It also revealed that due to financial crises, rapid population growth and the impact of conflicts, primary school enrolment has declined in 21 countries; violent deaths among children below the age of 19 have increased in seven conflict-ridden countries; and that four countries witnessed a decline across more than one of the three areas measured.

In a time of rapid technological change leading to huge gains in living standards, it is perverse that hundreds of millions are seeing living standards actually decline, creating a sense of injustice among them and failure among those entrusted with their care," said Chandy. "No wonder they feel their voices are unheard and their futures uncertain."

[Security Council fails at fresh attempt to renew panel investigating chemical weapons use in Syria](#)

17 November 2017 – For the third time in two days, the United Nations Security Council on Friday failed to adopt a resolution on the mandate of an international panel investigating use of chemical weapons in Syria due to a negative vote by permanent member, Russia.

The mandate of the joint Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN panel, the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) expires today.

Had the Japanese-penned resolution been adopted, the mandate of the JIM would have been renewed for a period of 30 days, with a possibility of further extension by the Security Council if it deems necessary.

In addition to Russia, Bolivia voted against the draft. Another permanent member China abstained.

A negative vote or veto from one of the Council's five permanent members (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States) means a resolution cannot be adopted.

[Yesterday](#), two draft resolutions on the joint [OPCW-UN](#) panel one sponsored by the United States and another by Bolivia were defeated in the 15-member Security Council.

The JIM was established by the Council, unanimously, in 2015 to identify to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups or Governments perpetrating, organizing, sponsoring or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria.

[Find out more about Syria and the OPCW here](#)

[At Security Council, UN chief urges cooperation to tackle security challenges in Mediterranean](#)

17 November 2017 – The Mediterranean a confluence of civilizations, cultures, religions, trade and migration is facing multiple security challenges, such as terrorism, illicit trade in narcotics, environmental degradation and forced displacement, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Friday.

The Mediterranean is a global junction of mutually enriching cultures, societies and economies. Yet violence and hatred are threatening that dynamism, to the detriment of the entire world, Mr. Guterres told a meeting of the UN Security Council chaired by Angelino Alfano, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, which holds the 15-member body's presidency this month.

Challenges facing the region include illicit trade in narcotics, weapons and petroleum products, large movements of [refugees and migrants](#), regrettably managed by human smugglers and traffickers, and maritime piracy.

The Mediterranean Sea provides immense economic resources such as hydrocarbons and fish stocks and invaluable trade routes. However, its benefits depend on stability and cooperation, the UN chief stressed.

Mr. Guterres went on to highlight difficulties in various parts of the region.

Libya's stability is vital for the region, but after years of prolonged

transition, the country's institutions are deeply divided.

Instability in the Sahel region has contributed to an increase in irregular migration towards Europe.

VIDEO: Addressing the UN Security Council, Secretary-General António Guterres highlights the need for global solidarity to tackle the security challenges in the Mediterranean.

Egypt continues to face several security challenges, including from irregular migration and from the cross-border transit of weapons and fighters along its desert borders with Libya and Sudan and in the Sinai Peninsula bordering the Gaza Strip.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) will continue to thrive unless the deep political roots of the Syrian conflict are resolved through a credible and comprehensive political process.

Turning to the movement of refugees and migrants, Mr. Guterres said that so far this year, at least 2,800 refugees and migrants have perished in the Mediterranean, while countless others died on their way across the Sahel desert.

There is a clear need to create more regular and safe ways to protect those fleeing persecution, and address the drivers of displacement. We must also address the worrisome increase in xenophobia and discrimination against refugees, migrants and minorities, the Secretary-General said, stressing the need to re-establish the integrity of the refugee protection regime on both sides of the Mediterranean.

We should do our utmost to resolve the worst of the region so that it can continue to contribute its best.

All too often, responses to security challenges in the Mediterranean are undertaken largely or solely through traditional security arrangements or ad hoc solutions, he noted.

Such approaches carry the risk of prolonging unacceptable status quos or worsening situations if not backed by efforts to address the underlying root causes, he said, noting that efforts to achieve the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development have there an important role to play.

The Mediterranean is a global junction of mutually enriching cultures, societies and economies. Yet violence and hatred are threatening that dynamism, to the detriment of the entire world, the UN chief explained.

We should do our utmost to resolve the worst of the region so that it can continue to contribute its best, he said, adding: I count on countries in the Mediterranean and beyond to reaffirm their proud tradition

of openness and solidarity.”

[Bonn: UN conference closes with renewed urgency for greater ambition to tackle climate change](#)

17 November 2017 – The United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP23](#)) wrapped up on Friday in Bonn, Germany, with delegations expressing a renewed sense of urgency and a need for greater ambition to tackle climate change.

Participants focused on how to maintain momentum two years after the adoption of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change in the context of the recent announcement by the United States of its decision to withdraw from the accord. At COP23, cities and local governments, including American cities and states, intensified their push to achieve the goals set out in Paris.

The Conference, which ran from 6 to 17 November, was chaired by Fiji, an island State particularly affected by the impacts of climate change. The Fiji Presidency announced an agreement on a Gender Action Plan, highlighting the role of women in climate action.

Apart from negotiations among Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)), several new climate action initiatives, commitments and partnerships were announced by States and non-State actors in the areas of energy, water, agriculture, oceans and coastal areas, human settlements, transportation, industry, and forests. Climate finance and climate resilience were also at the center of the discussions at the conference.

More than 20 countries, including the Canada, Finland, France, Mexico, and the United Kingdom, launched a new global coal alliance aimed at achieving the rapid phase-out of existing traditional coal power and at placing a moratorium on any new traditional coal power stations without operational carbon capture and storage.



COP23: Concrete Climate Action Commitments

As the UN Climate Change Conference comes down to the last day and governments work to complete the final negotiation decisions, it's good to be reminded of the new wave of climate action that has been announced during COP23 from countries, cities, states, regions, business and civil society

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Businesses and other non-government partners have in turn made commitments to focus on powering their operations without coal.

The 19 Member countries of the 'Biofuture Platform,' including Brazil, China, Egypt, France, India, Morocco, Mozambique, also announced on Thursday formal agreement on the development of targets for biofuels and to construct an action plan to achieve them.

"Sustainable biofuels can provide solutions to the energy transport nexus. This partnership offers us that chance," said Rachel Kyte, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and CEO, Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All).

Among other initiatives announced during the Conference, a global initiative was launched Tuesday with the aim of providing insurance to hundreds of millions of vulnerable people by 2020 and to increase the resilience of developing countries against the impacts of climate change. The 'InsuResilience' Global Partnership is a major scaling-up of an initiative started by the G7 in 2015 under the German Presidency.

The Conference took place one year after the entry into force of the Paris Agreement. The Agreement, which was adopted by the 196 Parties to the UNFCCC in December 2015, calls on countries to combat climate change by limiting the rise of global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius and strive not to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius. Today, 170 Parties have ratified the treaty.

The Conference, which was attended by some 27,000, took place in a sobering context of alarming scientific reports of climatic changes. A week before the opening of the Conference, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that the levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere surged at "record-breaking speed" to new highs in 2016.

COP23 will be followed by a series of summits and conferences on climate change which are scheduled ahead of the UN Climate Summit in September 2019, including the 'One Planet summit' to be convened by France next month and focusing on financing, a gathering in California, bringing together non-State actors, and the COP24 in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018. Brazil has offered to host COP25 in 2019.