

'Discrimination against one is discrimination against all,' says UNESCO on Day for Tolerance

16 November 2017 – Marking the [International Day for Tolerance](#), the head of the United Nations cultural agency underscored how tolerance must be nurtured to celebrate the diversity that makes us strong and the values that bring us together.

["Tolerance is respect](#), acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human," said Audrey Azoulay, the newly-appointed Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), in her message on the International Day.

"Discrimination against one is discrimination against all," she continued.

Ms. Azoulay pointed out that as globalization is accelerating across the world, societies are undergoing deep transformations, which open vast opportunities for dialogue and exchange as well as raise new challenges – sharpened by inequality and poverty, enduring conflicts and movements of people.

"We see today the rise of exclusive politics and discourses of division. We see diversity being rejected as a source of weakness," she said.

Ms. Azoulay maintained that fuelled by ignorance and sometimes hatred, myths of "pure" lore cultures are being gloried while scapegoating and repressing people.

Also citing "barbaric terrorist attacks designed to weaken the fabric of 'living together,'" she spotlighted the need that tolerance be more than the indifferent, passive acceptance of others.

"Tolerance must be seen as an act of liberation, whereby the differences of others are accepted as the same as our own," stressed Ms. Azoulay.

The UN official said that that meant respecting the diversity of humanity on the basis of human rights; reaching out to others with dialogue; and standing up to all forms of racism, hatred and discrimination.

Noting that all cultures are different, she emphasized that "humanity is a single community, sharing values, a past and future."

"There are seven billion ways of 'being human,' but we stand together as members of the same family, all different, all equally seeking respect for rights and dignity," she underscored.

Ms. Azoulay termed tolerance "a struggle for peace" that calls for new

policies that respect diversity and pluralism on the basis of human rights.

“Most of all,” she added, “this calls on each of us, women and men across the world, to act for tolerance in our own lives, in seeking to understand others, in rejecting all racism and hatred, including anti-Semitism.”

The UNESCO chief said its role is “to deepen the binds of a single humanity, through understanding, dialogue and knowledge,” which is why the UN agency defend humanity’s cultural diversity and heritage from pillaging and attacks.

“This is why we seek to prevent violent extremism through education, freedom of expression and media literacy, to empower young women and men. This is why we work to strengthen dialogue between cultures and religions, spearheading the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures,” she said, adding that it was also why “UNESCO’s International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities works to fight racism, discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion.”

[UN plan for post-conflict transition in Libya makes headway, Security Council told](#)

16 November 2017 – The political process for a successful post-conflict transition in Libya has made significant headway over the past two months, the United Nations envoy for the North African country said Thursday.

“The re-launch of the political process has created a [new momentum](#),” Ghassan Salamé, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)), told the Security Council.

“I am pleased to see many constructive and peaceful debates on the future of the country,” he added.

The Action Plan for Libya was launched two months ago. The Plan is made of various ingredients, including amending the [Libyan Political Agreement](#), organizing a National Conference, preparing for elections and providing humanitarian assistance, he explained.

Libya is a nation without stark ethnic or sectarian divides, but with good education and a wealth of natural resources. Many challenges faced elsewhere are not there.

“But what might be mistaken for a homogenous nation, is actually a country divided at an atomic level,” Mr. Salamé said, noting that in the wake of the 2011 conflict, the national polity has been replaced by competing individual

agendas.

“Reconstituting the Libyan national polity is a must,” he said.

Based on the Action Plan, the UN convened two sessions of the Joint Drafting Committee, composed of members from both the House of Representatives and of the High Council of State, to agree on a set of amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement.

He welcomed the mutual recognition of the two assemblies, and their acknowledgment of the Libyan political agreement as the sole available framework to end the crisis in Libya.

Any mechanism to select a new Presidency Council and Government must be transparent and fair.

UNSMIL is currently exploring the possibility of hosting the National Conference inside Libya. The National Conference, slated for February 2018, will give Libyans from all across the country the opportunity to come together in one place, renew their common national narrative, and agree on the tangible steps required to end the transition.

As for elections, the High National Election Commission is working to initiate a voter registration update before the end of the year, which will be the first such exercise since 2014. The international community stands fully ready to support the process.

The Constitutional Drafting Assembly was elected and mandated to produce a new constitution and they have completed their draft. The constitutional process must now move forward, he said.

Serious challenges ahead

Beyond the Action Plan, there are three very serious challenges on UNSMIL’s agenda; impunity for grave crimes, the economy of predation and the erosion of frozen assets, he said.

First, impunity and lawlessness continue to prevail across the country in face of increasingly heinous crimes committed every day.

Second, politics in Libya is strongly shaped by economic predation. In an environment of protracted insecurity and lack of accountability, the shadow economy has been flourishing. Billions of dollars are lost every year in illicit money transfers.

Thirdly, beyond predation, hundreds of millions more are being silently lost due to poor management of Libya’s frozen assets. Freezing the assets is one thing, however, their mismanagement is another. There is a need to revisit how Libya’s external wealth and investments are taken care of, so that they are not silently and gradually lost for future generations.

Drawing attention to the dire humanitarian situation in Libya, he said: “In the past, the country has been a donor to much of Africa, now 25 per cent of

the population have humanitarian needs.”

[Conflicts, climatic change drive food insecurity and undernourishment in sub-Saharan Africa – UN](#)

16 November 2017 – Adverse climatic conditions, a sluggish global economy and conflicts are key factors driving food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa, the United Nations agriculture agency said on Thursday.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) 2017 [Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition report](#), chronic undernourishment appears to have risen from 20.8 to 22.7 per cent between 2015 and 2016 – pointing to the need to build affected communities’ resilience and find peaceful solutions that strengthen food security.

“The number of [undernourished people rose](#) from 200 to 224 million, accounting for 25 per cent of the 815 million people undernourished in the world in 2016,” said Bukar Tijani, FAO Assistant Director-General of and Regional Representative for Africa.

Under the theme ‘The Food Security and Nutrition – Conflict Nexus: Building Resilience for Food Security, Nutrition and Peace,’ this year’s report was launched at the joint FAO/WHO [World Health Organization] [Africa Regional Symposium](#) on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition, which is underway in Abidjan from 16 to 17 November 2017.

“Major factors have caused this surge in hunger: the proportion of the population that has experienced severe food insecurity because of their inability to access food has risen in the region; as well, adverse climatic conditions and conflict, often occurring concurrently, are key factors driving the recent increase in food insecurity in the region,” Mr. Tijani explained.

The report indicates that during the first decade of the millennium, sub-Saharan Africa made progress in fighting hunger with undernourishment falling from 29.1 to 20.6 per cent.

However, the following period showed no progress – with conditions worsening in many countries from 2015 to 2016. This was mainly due to the impact of conflict and adverse climatic conditions, such as repeated droughts, often linked to the [El Niño phenomenon](#), which resulted in poor harvests and the loss of livestock.

In sub-Saharan Africa, undernourishment is about double that of conflict-

affected countries, with generally worse nutrition outcomes as well. In 2016, the majority, or 489 million of the 815 million undernourished people in the world, lived in [countries struggling with conflict, violence and fragility](#).

Resisting hunger

The FAO report identifies a range of pathways supporting food security and livelihoods; helping to build resilience against conflict; and contributing to sustainable peace that require a multi-sectoral set of interventions before, during and after conflicts.

It also points out how many countries have developed or are developing policy frameworks and investment plans aligned with the second Sustainable Development Goal ([SDGs](#)) and the 2014 Malabo Declaration, through which African leaders recommitted their countries to end hunger and halve poverty by 2025, boost intra-African trade and enhance climate change resilience.

'Unity, solidarity and collaboration' can turn tide on terrorism, bolster human rights, says UN chief

16 November 2017 – Noting that at least 11,000 terrorist attacks occurred in more than 100 countries last year, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres stressed on Thursday that terrorism is fundamentally the denial and destruction of human rights.

Terrorism has been unfortunately with us in various forms across ages and continents, Mr. Guterres said in a lecture on counter-terrorism and human rights at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London.

But modern terrorism is being waged on an entirely different scale, and notably its geographic span. [No country can claim to be immune](#), he added.

Last year, more than 25,000 people died and 33,000 injured in at least 11,000 terrorist attacks in more than 100 countries.

In 2016, nearly three-quarters of all deaths caused by terrorism were in just five states: Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Nigeria and Somalia. The global economic impact of terrorism is estimated to have reached \$90 billion in 2015. That year, terrorism costs amounted to 17.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in Iraq and 16.8 per cent in Afghanistan.

Recalling how the *Magna Carta* 800 years ago established the principle of the

rule of law, the Secretary-General said that at its core, human rights are a true recognition of common humanity.

“When we protect human rights, we are tackling the root causes of terrorism. For the power of human rights to bond is stronger than the power of terrorism to devastate,” he said.

Priority actions in counter-terrorism

He went on to underscore five key counter-terrorism priorities.

First, he stressed the need for much stronger international cooperation, announcing that he intends to convene the first-ever UN summit of heads of counter-terrorism agencies next year to forge new partnerships and build relationships of trust.

Second is a sustained focus on prevention, which includes addressing the factors that radicalize young people and make terrorism a fateful option for them.

Terrorists are losing physical ground in Syria and Iraq, but gaining virtual ground in cyberspace. Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube have launched an anti-terror partnership, the ‘Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism,’ aimed at thwarting the spread of extremist content online.

When terrorists portray violence as the best way of addressing inequality or grievances, we must answer with non-violence and inclusive decision-making UN chief Guterres

“This is a start. We need to keep the momentum,” he said.

Third is to uphold human rights and the rule of law.

Facing threats of an unprecedented nature, States are scrambling to enhance efficiency of their counter-terrorist legislation. Without a firm basis in human rights, counter-terrorism policies can be misused and abused, for instance, to suppress peaceful protests and legitimate opposition movements.

Fourth, the battle of ideas must be won. “We should never shrink from pointing out the cynicism and errors of terrorism. At the heart of darkness, we should build a new age of enlightenment,” Mr. Guterres said.

“When terrorists portray violence as the best way of addressing inequality or grievances, we must answer with non-violence and inclusive decision-making,” he added.

The Secretary-General’s fifth priority is to lift up the voices of the victims of terrorism. Some of the best guides are the victims and survivors of terrorist attacks, who consistently call for accountability and results not blanket measures or collective punishments.

He urged young people to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens.

Learn more about the UN's range of counter-terrorism efforts, including victims' support, [here](#)

Bonn: Climate engineering is risky, but should be explored, experts say at UN conference

16 November 2017 – Climate engineering, or climate intervention, is risky but needs to be explored as a supplement – not as a ‘Plan B’ – to greenhouse gas emissions reduction, said experts at the United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP23](#)), in Bonn, Germany.

Climate engineering, also referred to as geoengineering, is the deliberate and large-scale intervention in the climate system with measures including carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere or solar radiation management.

“We can do a lot, we have to do a lot, we have to try much harder at cutting our emissions, but there will remain certain emissions, especially in the land use sector, which are not going away. So we actually need to start talking about this removal of greenhouse gases inevitably,” said Matthias Honegger, research scientist with the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, at a press conference.

Different approaches are being discussed. Some already exist, like planting trees. Other ideas include dispersing certain minerals in the oceans to enhance the growth of algae, which then as they sink to the ocean floor, would create a net flux of carbon from the atmosphere into the oceans.

“Business as usual is a little worrying,” said Dr. Hugh Hunt, from the Department of Engineering at Cambridge University. “The concept of not doing anything is full of danger. Now the concept of cooling the planet is full of danger as well.”

“We need to have full-on public engagement, full-on societal involvement. The reason is that the risks of climate change are huge, the risks of doing nothing are huge; but the risks of geoengineering are huge as well. We’ve got to explore those risks, because who knows, we may end up entering a very risky world without understanding it,” he added. “Geoengineering risks are not well understood and need to be explored.”

Stratospheric aerosol injection

Due to the great uncertainties over effectiveness and side effects of climate engineering – including the risk of disrupting natural systems – experts think that there is a need to discuss climate engineering governance, especially as it relates to stratospheric aerosol injection.

Stratospheric aerosol injection consists of injecting sulfate aerosols into the stratosphere with aircraft or balloons to create a global dimming effect.

“This technology is absolutely terrifying. We may actually need it, but then, who do we want to decide. That’s where this society-wide discussion has to take place,” said Janos Pasztor, Executive Director of the Carnegie Climate Geoengineering Governance Initiative (C2G2), and former UN senior climate advisor. “It would require a level of international cooperation that we have not yet seen.”

“Who will decide whether we should make use of stratospheric aerosol injection and when that decision should take place? [...] Who will make that decision on behalf of the world? And then how far do we turn the thermostat of the global air conditioning system [...] to cool the planet?” he said.

“There are issues: the more temperature you want to reduce the higher the chance there will be negative impact and the higher the chance that some of these impacts will not be the same across different geographical zones. You might end up in a situation where some people benefit from the reduced temperature but some people would have negative impacts. What do you do with those people? How do you compensate them? How do you take care of them?” he added.

Mr. Pasztor concluded that the highest priority should remain the gas emission reduction. “But we have to consider these other options, as supplements, not as a ‘Plan B,’” he warned.