

All countries should benefit from fast-moving ICT revolution, urges UN agency

15 November 2017 – Revolutionary advances in technology have the potential to “fundamentally transform” billions of lives, but the threat that many people – especially in the world’s poorer countries – could be left out continues to loom large, a new United Nations report warns.

“Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the [potential to make the world a better place](#) and contribute immensely to sustainable development,” said Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union – the Organization’s specialized agency for matters related to ICT.

“However, despite the overall progress achieved, the digital divide remains a challenge which needs to be addressed,” he stressed.

According to the UN agency’s 2017 [Measuring the Information Society](#) report, harnessing the benefits of advances in the ‘Internet of Things’, big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, countries will need to create conditions and infrastructures that allow these next-generation networks and services.

At the same time, the substantial digital divides between countries and regions will also need to be addressed.

[The ICT] revolution will unfold over the coming decades with opportunities, challenges, and implications that are not yet fully knownITU report

For instance, least developed countries – which have, over the years, made progress in improving ICT infrastructure and connectivity – continue to lag behind on key indicators that can influence their position in the digital economy, such as having the lowest numbers among internet users (15.2 per cent on average).

Countries, irrespective of their development classification, will also have to adopt policies that that harbour innovation, as well as those that mitigate risks to information security, privacy and employment.

“This report will help to support countries to do just that,” expressed Mr. Zhao.

The report employs the ICT Development Index 2017, a unique benchmark of the level of ICT development in countries across the world.

This year, Iceland (score: 8.98) tops the rankings, followed by Republic of Korea (8.80) and Switzerland (8.66). United States, with a score of 8.18, ranks 16. However, the best performing African country, the island nation of Mauritius ranked 75, with a score of 5.88.

Measuring the Information Society, ITU's flagship publication is recognized as the most authoritative repository of data and analysis on the state of global ICT development. It is extensively relied upon by governments, international organizations, development banks and private sector analysts and investors worldwide.

[In Vancouver, UN peacekeeping chief outlines 'very serious challenge' facing Mali operation](#)

15 November 2017 – The “very serious challenge” facing peacekeepers with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) makes it vital that additional efforts are made for the four-year-old operation to fulfil its mandate, the UN peacekeeping chief has said.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations made this assessment Tuesday as he addressed a packed Working Meeting for Member States, on the sidelines of the [UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference](#), which is taking place from 14-15 November, in the Canadian coastal city of Vancouver.

Top military personnel and leading defence ministers – together with organizations and groups from more than 80 countries involved in peacekeeping – have joined UN officials to discuss the increasing challenges faced in the field, and how to address crucial funding gaps in equipment and expertise.

Of the 170 peacekeepers killed while serving in UN missions since the beginning of 2013 up to the end of September this year, 86 were with MINUSMA.

A June 2015 Peace Agreement was signed between the Government and various armed groups which it was hoped would bring a lasting ceasefire to the country, whose northern region was over-run by militant extremists in 2012.

Mr. Lacroix told the meeting of mostly uniformed men and women, looking out onto Vancouver's picturesque waterfront, that there were key gaps in equipment such as helicopters and robust armed personnel carriers.

He appealed for other troop contributing countries (TCCs) to come forward to help staff one the UN's most dangerous peacekeeping missions.

“We need to do more in terms of training, how the force is organized, and modalities of how we protect ourselves and better-protect the population as well, against the threats they are facing,” said the Under-Secretary-General.

UN Field Support chief Atul Khare told the meeting that while challenges remained, MINUSMA has made “significant achievements in terms of protection and training,” and was fulfilling its mandate.

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MINUSMA Force Commander, Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck of Belgium, gave the meeting a frank assessment of the operational difficulties and deficiencies that he faced with deploying blue helmets and equipment, but in an interview with *UN News* after the 90-minute session, he said he was “confident but realistic” and if given the tools he needs, the mission “will succeed.”

Overcoming the threats of continuing extremist violence against civilians was not only about MINUSMA he stressed, but about durable partnerships with the Malian army and international missions deployed in and around Mali, such as the regional counter-terrorism force known as the ‘G5 Sahel,’ which comprises Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania, along with Mali.

The full plenary meeting of the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial takes place Wednesday afternoon, with sessions on “smart pledges” and pledge announcements; innovation in training and capacity building; protection; early warning and rapid deployment; and the Women, Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network.

We will have more from our news team in Vancouver later today.

[Bonn: Secretary-General Guterres urges more ambition, leadership and partnerships on climate](#)

15 November 2017 – Addressing the United Nations Climate Conference (COP23) in Bonn, Germany, on Wednesday, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called for more ambition, more leadership and more partnerships to tackle climate change.

“Our duty to each other and to future generations is to raise ambition,” said Mr. Guterres at the opening of the high-level segment of COP23, which was also attended by Heads of State and Government, including President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Prime Minister of Fiji,

Frank Bainimarama, who is also the President of COP23.

“We need to do more on five ambition action areas: emissions, adaptation, finance, partnerships and leadership,” the Secretary-General added.

The Bonn Conference, which opened on 6 November 2017, is taking place one year after the entry into force of the Paris Climate Agreement.

The Agreement, which was adopted by the 196 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([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.

We will have more from our news team in Bonn throughout the day.

[UN rights chief urges DRC authorities to allow peaceful expression of dissent at protests](#)

15 November 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief on Wednesday called on the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to lawfully handle demonstrations organized by those protesting the updated electoral calendar for general elections.

“The [inflammatory comments by police authorities](#) ahead of today’s protests are deeply alarming,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in a news release.

“I call on the Government and security forces to work to defuse tensions instead of creating the conditions for suppression, confrontation and violence,” he added.

Upon publication of the electoral calendar on 5 November, which states that general elections will take place in December 2018 – two years later than originally scheduled – civil society organisations called for nationwide protests to be held today.

In response, a number of alarming comments were reportedly made by provincial police inspectors in Goma and Kinshasa. Yesterday, the Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC) provincial inspector in Kinshasa warned that any gathering of more than five people would be dispersed “mercilessly” upon the Governor’s orders.

Even before the announcement of the electoral calendar, between 22 and 23 October, at least 65 opposition political activists were arrested in Lubumbashi, in the country's southeast. All those arrested were later released, some on bail, but these arrests were part of a worrying pattern of actions to prevent political opponents from gathering.

Mr. Zeid called for top political leaders to ensure respect for the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and the freedom of expression. He also urged all sides to exercise restraint and to renounce the use of violence.

The UN's Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials contains very strict guidelines on the use of force, including that intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

In September last year, 54 people died after defence and security forces used excessive force against demonstrators who were calling for constitutional deadlines to be respected and for President Joseph Kabila to step down at the end of his second mandate.

[Security Council maintains partial lifting of arms embargo on Somalia for one year](#)

14 November 2017 – The Security Council on Tuesday renewed until 15 November 2018 the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia, authorization for maritime interdiction of illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and the humanitarian exemption.

In the resolution adopted by 11 affirmative votes and four abstentions, the 15-member body requested the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) to continue its investigations related to the export to Somalia of chemicals that may be used as oxidisers in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices, such as the precursors ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate, potassium nitrate and sodium chlorate.

Those abstained in the vote were Bolivia, China, Egypt and Russia.

Further, the Council extended until 15 December 2018 the mandate of the SEMG, and recognised that during the course of its current and three previous mandates, the SEMG has not found conclusive evidence that Eritrea supports Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

The Council expressed its intention to keep measures on Eritrea under regular

review, in light of the upcoming midterm update by the SEMG due by 30 April 2018.

Recalling the three meetings between an Eritrean government representative and the SEMG, the Council reiterated its expectation that Eritrea's Government will facilitate the entry of the SEMG into Eritrea to discharge fully its mandate.

The Council urged Eritrea and Djibouti to engage on the issue of the Djiboutian combatants missing in action and to seek all available solutions to settle their border dispute peacefully.