

UN Human Rights Council wraps current session, adopts texts on Myanmar, Yemen, Burundi

29 September 2017 – The United Nations Human Rights Council concluded its 36th session in Geneva today, having adopted 33 resolutions, 20 by consensus, addressing multiple themes as well as human rights situations in Yemen, Burundi, Myanmar, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Somalia and Cambodia.

Among the highlights of the final day the [Council](#)'s work for the session, the 47-member body adopted a resolution in which it extended the mandate of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar. It also adopted a text on cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

The Council also decided to extend for a year the mandate of the [Commission of Inquiry on Burundi](#) and recommended that the UN Recommends that the General Assembly submit the Commission's most recent report on the human rights situation in Burundi "to all relevant UN bodies for its consideration and appropriate action."

The Council requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch a team of three experts to engage with the Burundian authorities and all other stakeholders in order to collect information, establish the truth, and ensure that the perpetrators of deplorable crimes are all accountable to the judicial authorities of Burundi.

Also today, the Council took several actions regarding Yemen, adopting a resolution condemning ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in the country, including those involving the widespread recruitment and use of children by parties to the conflict.

It also requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish, no later by the end of 2017, a group of eminent international and regional experts for a period of at least one year to monitor and report on the situation on human rights in Yemen and to carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of human rights.

[Full coverage of the closing of the Council's 36th session here](#)

UN agency provides 'badly battered' Dominica with critical food supplies, telecom support

29 September 2017 – Emergency supplies from the United Nations food relief agency are being delivered to Dominica as people face “huge challenges in their lives” in the wake of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria, which ripped through the small Caribbean island last week.

“Dominica has been [badly battered and needs to be rebuilt](#),” said World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Barreto.

The mountainous island has suffered nearly 30 deaths, about 80 per cent of its buildings damaged and many roads blocked or impaired.

“We’re working with the Government to support the people who are facing huge challenges in their lives” added Mr. Barreto, who has visited in recent days.

Some 10 metric tons of WFP high-energy biscuits were transported by ship to the eastern Caribbean island this week and then delivered to communities in the remote interior by helicopter and to coastal communities by boat.

Overall, WFP plans to provide a range of food assistance to some 25,000 people for three months as it discusses with the Government a system to supply hurricane-affected people with food vouchers to be used in local markets once they reopen.

WFP is also providing critical logistics, air service and telecommunications support to Dominica and the humanitarian relief response. Its Emergency Telecommunications Team – with expert support from the Ericsson Response Team and the Government of Luxembourg – has set up connectivity in Dominica to some 400 registered users including the Government Emergency Operations Centre, the island’s airports and hospitals, and the Dominican, Venezuelan and French fire brigades.

Mr. Barreto and the UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados, Stephen O’Malley, visited some of the worst-hit areas and have held discussions with Dominica’s Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerrit.

“We’ve been talking to the Government about how to help them get their systems up and running again,” said Mr. O’Malley. “People want to go back to their normal lives and we can help them do that.”

The UN food agency’s emergency efforts are part of a larger UN operation to provide a range of assistance including disaster relief, humanitarian coordination, shelter and water.

On the logistics side, the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Panama

and the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) – both managed by WFP – are providing support to humanitarian partners in Dominica and the region.

UNHRD has been airlifting critical emergency supplies, including mobile storage units and pallets, tarpaulins, boats, and electric generators while UNHAS has been providing regular flight services to humanitarian workers, government officials and partners.

In the wake of a series of hurricanes that have ravaged the Caribbean, WFP – from its operational hubs in Barbados and Antigua – has been working closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, island governments and international partners.

[Half a million Rohingya arrive in Bangladesh; UN agencies rush to provide shelter, clean water](#)

29 September 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency announced today that it has started distributing plastic sheeting and essential relief items to Rohingyas arriving in from Myanmar into neighbouring Bangladesh, as part of a massive effort to cut the time refugees spend in the open.

“The latest estimate of the number of Rohingya who have arrived in Bangladesh since violence erupted in Myanmar has [crossed the half million mark](#), at 501,000 as of Thursday,” Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), told reporters at today’s regular press briefing in Geneva.

“Giving the newly arrived refugees the ability to construct their own shelter, begin cooking for themselves and taking care of their families is an important first step on the road to healing,” he added.

The 2,000-acre (809 hectare) extension site on the outskirts of Kutupalong Camp in southeast Bangladesh is becoming more organized, turning into a series of communities as UNHCR and its partners supporting the Bangladesh Government deliver more emergency relief items.

From its \$4.2 million budget, UNHCR is contributing \$2 million to support Bangladesh in constructing a road for easier aid delivery into Kutupalong extension site and shipping in 23 vehicles to assist aid efforts.

UNHCR nutrition experts estimate that approximately 18 per cent of new arrivals suffer from acute malnutrition.

“This is due to more than lack of food,” said Mr. Mahecic. “We witness dire

need for psycho-social support and counselling among refugees,” he said adding that many breastfeeding mothers are “severely traumatised, sick and malnourished.”

UNHCR is working with its partner Action Against Hunger to provide warm meals as private donors conduct ad hoc food distributions, which is also becoming more structured.

“As Bangladesh shoulders the full extent of this refugee crisis, UNHCR calls on all countries in the region to show solidarity and do their part in keeping their borders open and protecting refugees who are fleeing discrimination, persecution and violence in Myanmar,” concluded Mr. Mahecic.

UN Migration agency reports at least 23 dead in Bay of Bengal boat tragedy

More tragic details have emerged about [yesterdays' reports](#) that Rohingya refugees died when the boat they were using to reach safety in Bangladesh capsized in the Bay of Bengal's rough seas. An International Organization for Migration (IOM) [local field team](#) travelled to the scene to assist survivors and assess any further response needed. Today, they report that, having checked with police and the owner of a grocery shop located close to where the incident occurred, the total confirmed dead is now 23.

Clean water and sanitation needed

Meanwhile, IOM is partnering with UNHCR and other aid agencies to [provide clean water and sanitation](#) for an estimated half a million people who have fled to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

As tens of thousands of new arrivals live with little or no shelter, food or access to healthcare, daily rain flooding campsites has left pools of water – numerous contaminated with faecal matter – as the only accessible water source, posing a lethal threat of waterborne diseases like cholera.

The Inter Sector Coordination Group, which, hosted by IOM, is managing the response, says that approximately 59 million litres of safe water are now needed every day to meet the basic needs of the new arrivals.

Since the influx began on 25 August, IOM has installed 1,532 emergency latrines in three sites to serve some 19,350 people and 17 mobile toilets to serve an estimated 850 people.

The IOM Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team has also bored six deep tube wells, with installation completion due in two weeks to provide 3,000 people in the Kutupalong expansion site with clean water.

While agencies have been able to reach only 141,070 people in Cox's Bazar with WASH assistance, its engineers say some 18,000 emergency latrines are needed as basic emergency sanitation for all the new arrivals.

[New UN Day honours unsung heroes who ensure diplomats are 'on the same page'](#)

29 September 2017 – Recognizing the unsung heroes behind international diplomacy, the United Nations is celebrating – for the first time – International Translation Day, paying tribute to the work of the language professionals who play a vital role in facilitating dialogue and understanding among peoples and nations.

The simultaneous issuance of UN documents in the six official languages of Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish is made possible by UN translators who, transpose content from the original texts into their main language.

Katherine Durnin, head of the UN English translation service, explained to UN News how her work ensures that Member States are using the correct texts during their discussions, thereby contributing to the overarching goals of the Organization.

“We ensure that when they are debating any subject, they all understand the same message, enabling their discussion to move forward in the language they know,” Ms. Durnin said.

“In that way, they can reach the proper agreement because with the translations they are all on the same page,” she added.

In declaring the [International Day](#) earlier this year, the General Assembly affirmed that “professional translation, as a trade and an art, plays an important role in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and cooperation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security.”

Ms. Durnin noted that this recognition has lifted morale “amongst translators, interpreters, editors... anyone who works on documentation.”

“We play a behind-the-scenes role and we understand that,” she stated. “The idea of being a translator is that someone doesn’t actually know that the text they are looking at is a translation; we are supposed to be invisible.”

“But,” she added with a smile “it is great to have that recognition now and then. Once a year, now we can pat ourselves on the back before we recede back into the background.”



Katherine Durnin, head of the UN English translation service. Photo: Elizabeth Scaffidi

Ms. Durnin also admitted that it is nice to be acknowledged outside of the profession, saying “we ourselves understand the difficulty of the work that we do, but it is great to have that recognition across the UN in general.”

Professional translation also includes interpreters, verbatim reporters and terminologists.

Translators handle a range of documents that cover every topic on the UN’s global agenda – with new issues arising every day. They not only command multiple languages, but are also well versed in the proper way to go about translating them – indispensable in a political climate.

“We spend a lot of time doing research, becoming sort of experts in the areas that we are translating from,” said Ms. Durnin. “A lot of the behind-the-scenes work that we do involves clarifying, understanding the message and understanding the meaning that was intended,” she explained, adding that they often have to do research or go directly to the experts for explanations.

“It is very exacting, difficult work to do,” she stated, adding that interpreters have to understand and clearly express what the speaker intends to say during meetings – in real time.

Translation at the UN

The UN is one of the world’s largest employers of language professionals. Several hundred such staff work in UN offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, or at the UN regional commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva and Santiago.

Translators are only one type of “language professionals” employed at the UN. They also include: interpreters; editors; verbatim reporters; terminologists; reference assistants; and copy preparers/proofreaders/production editors.

Some of the first UN translators had no official training, but instead spoke multiple languages at home. Over the years that has changed, and to be hired now as a UN translator one must meet several criteria, including educational requirements and passing a language exam.

It is very exacting, difficult work to do Katherine Durnin

Fortunately, more universities are training translators with the UN in mind. A number of them have signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN to ensure that their curriculums cover the different areas needed by the Organization.

“That has really helped to create a pipeline of new young well-trained translators, who even as they are graduating, already have a good grounding in the type of work we need for the United Nations,” Ms. Durnin said.

Asked about modern-day apps and software programmes that offer instant translations, her response was enthusiastic: “I think they’re wonderful!”

She credited them with bringing people on holiday together, “to communicate with the locals,” making travellers “so much more aware of the beauty of communicating with other people.”

However, she pointed out, while they do well with small segments of texts, they will not replace a professional translator, who will provide “the full complete message in proper English.”

Ms. Durnin confirmed the use of computer-assisted translation at the UN, but only to help with efficiency.

“Human language is always going to be more complex than something that machines can deal with,” she noted. “If you want to have an agreement between countries on nuclear non-proliferation, I don’t think you want to leave it up to a machine.”

[UN health agency recommends large-scale deworming to improve children’s health](#)

29 September 2017 – The suffering of those infected with parasitic intestinal can be drastically reduced with periodic deworming programmes with a single-tablet treatment, according to new guidelines approved by the United Nations health agency.

“There is now [global evidence-based consensus](#) that periodic, large-scale deworming is the best way to reduce the suffering caused by intestinal worms,” said Dirk Engels, Director of the Neglected Tropical Diseases Department at the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), which also noted that such programmes can also protect the 1.5 billion people currently estimated to be at risk.

WHO aims to eliminate the harm caused by worm infections in children by 2020 by regularly treating at least 75 per cent of the estimated 873 million children in areas where prevalence is high. In 2016, WHO Member States treated 63 per cent of children requiring treatment.

“Now that the world has agreed standards for deworming at-risk populations, we are in a better position to reach this target,” Antonio Montresor, who heads WHO’s global deworming programme.

The [guidelines](#) have been approved by WHO’s Guidelines Review Committee.

Four main species of intestinal worms, also known as [soil-transmitted helminths](#), affect almost a quarter of the world’s poorest and mostly

marginalized people. The worms disrupt people's ability to absorb nutrients and impede the growth and physical development of millions of children.

Large-scale deworming programmes use medicines donated by pharmaceutical companies. These medicines are shipped to countries requesting them, and distributed during mass treatment campaigns.

"Providing medicines to populations at risk reduces the intensity of intestinal helminth infections," said Francesco Branca, Director of WHO's Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, adding however that improving basic hygiene, sanitation, health education and providing access to safe drinking-water are also keys to resolving the health and nutritional problems caused by intestinal worms.

Many countries combine deworming activities for pre-school children with other health campaigns, such as vaccination, child health and vitamin supplementation days.