

Major new UN report sets course towards 'pollution-free planet'

28 September 2017 – While pollution has considerably negative impacts on human health and ecosystems, it is controllable and avoidable through political leadership, high-level champions and commitments, as well with local level action, says to a new report launched today by the United Nations Environment programme ([UNEP](#)).

The report, *Towards a pollution-free planet*, was launched during the first Conference of Parties for the [Minamata Convention](#), which addresses mercury issues and ahead of the annual UN Environment Assembly, to be held in early December.

[“Pollution is a universal challenge](#) [but] the good news is that we already know what we need to do to prevent and reduce it,” UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim said, stressing that “now the responsibility is on governments, businesses, cities and local authorities, civil society and individuals around the world to commit to act to beat pollution in all its forms.”

Outlining the negative impacts pollution has especially on the poor and the vulnerable and its direct threat to human rights; limited responses by governments, business and citizens to existing pollution; and the challenges of the current actions, the report suggests five overarching actions.

- A global compact on pollution would make pollution prevention a priority for all;
- Environmental governance needs to be strengthened at all levels;
- Sustainable consumption and production, through improved resource efficiency and lifestyle changes, should be promoted; waste reduction and management must be prioritized;
- Investment in cleaner production and consumption will help to counter pollution; and
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations are vital for the innovation, knowledge-sharing and transdisciplinary research needed to develop technological and ecosystems- based solutions.

Also proposed in the report are 50 concrete actions to curb pollution in various forms, with a call for strong high-level political commitment and engagement of local government, civil society and other stakeholders.

The report stresses that although some forms of pollution have been reduced as technologies and management strategies have advanced, approximately 19 million premature deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of the way societies use natural resources and impact the environment to support production and consumption.

“If consumption and production patterns continue as they are, the linear economic model of ‘take-make-dispose’ will seriously burden an already-

polluted planet, affecting current and future generations,” the report’s foreword concludes.

DR Congo: UN mission deploys ‘blue helmets’ to protect civilians and refugees

28 September 2017 – Responding to the worsening security situation near a major town in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations mission in the country has deployed peacekeepers to deter any attacks on the city and to prevent escalation in clashes.

[According to](#) the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC, known by its French acronym MONUSCO, clashes had occurred in the area of Uvira, in South Kivu province, between presumed armed groups and the Congolese national army (FARDC).

Noting that the response is guided by the Mission’s mandate, Maman Sidikou, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, said: “[We are] strongly committed to the protection of civilians, including vulnerable groups such as refugees and displaced people.”

He called on the armed groups to immediately cease this hostility including all forms of violence against constituted authority and innocent civilians.

“All perpetrators, in particular those who sponsor armed groups as well as those who bear command responsibility, will be held accountable for human rights abuses,” he added.

Uvira is the second largest town in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

FEATURE: See what happened when the world came together at the UN

28 September 2017 – Every year in September, world leaders gather at the United Nations in New York for the General Assembly’s annual high-level session. The diplomatic confab draws veteran politicians as well as new faces from all corners of the globe in what is always an interesting and intense

week for all involved. Also in attendance are representatives from civil society, academia, the private sector, the media, and the arts and entertainment worlds.

At the centre of it all is the General Assembly, one of the six main organs of the UN and the only one in which all Member States have equal representation: one nation, one vote. All 193 Member States are represented in this unique forum to discuss and work together on a wide array of international issues covered by the UN Charter, such as development, peace and security, human rights and international law.

This year all 193 Member States addressed the 72nd annual general debate, on the theme “Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.”

As world leaders began to gather in New York, Secretary-General António Guterres kicked things off by participating in a Facebook Live session moderated by Juju Chang of ABC News. He shared his thoughts on issues such as preventing conflicts, gender equality, what it takes to be a successful diplomat and how individuals can influence the policies that shape the world.

The Assembly debates pressing issues that affect millions of people around the world, including peace and security, human rights and development. Each year, on the eve of the opening of the Assembly’s annual session, a prayer service is held with religious and ecumenical leaders at the Church of the Holy Family in New York City.



UN Photo/Ariana Lindquist

Preparations for the high-level week begin months in advance and involve staff from across the Secretariat, from security and interpretation services to catering and media liaison. Tekila Mitei, left, and Ian Seals, right, who are both with the Department of Safety and Security, help to set up the Delegates Lounge for the official State Luncheon by steaming the flags.

The view from the podium in the General Assembly Hall where world leaders deliver their statements. At this year’s general debate, the longest statement lasted 43 minutes and was delivered by the President of the Observer State of Palestine, and the shortest statement, which lasted 5 minutes, was delivered by the President of Lithuania.

The high-level week brought together world leaders from around the globe,

including over 100 heads of State and government. Seen here is French President Emmanuel Macron (front, centre left) with Argentinian Vice President Gabriela Michetti (front, centre right) outside the General Assembly Hall on the first day of the general debate.

Thousands of journalists descended on UN Headquarters to cover the myriad events that take place in addition to the speeches delivered by world leaders, including this group awaiting the arrival of delegations to address the general debate.

The SDG Media Zone at UN Headquarters served as a platform for editors, bloggers, content creators and influencers to discuss ways to engage on the Sustainable Development Goals, which commit governments to end poverty, reduce inequalities and protect the planet by 2030. Among the participants were Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (left) and Alison Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications.

Attendees at the high-level session included renowned personalities who serve as advocates for a range of issues at the heart of the UN agenda. Among them is Nobel Laureate and UN Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai (right), who focuses on girls' education. She is seen here giving an interview to UN News while her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, looks on.

The high-level week saw UN officials, governments, civil society and celebrities rally around a number of initiatives, including on financing education for all, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting maternal and child health. Seen here is actor and UN Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador Nikolaj Coster-Waldau shining a light along with other attendees at the launch of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative for the elimination of violence against women and girls.

[At Security Council, senior counter-terrorism officials stress 'All of UN' approach](#)

28 September 2017 – Addressing the Security Council, the head of the newly

created United Nations counter-terrorism office today outlined a framework to devise a cohesive, well-coordinated programme to support Member States as well as the priority areas of such work.

“We must recognize that there are four important spheres of UN activity that need to be aligned if we are to effectively develop a coherent and well-coordinated ‘All of UN’ framework for our future counter-terrorism efforts,” Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), said at a briefing to the 15-member body on the threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

These four spheres are the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies; the General Assembly; the UN Secretariat headed by the Secretary-General; and the 38 UN entities that directly or indirectly contribute to counter-terrorism efforts, Mr. Voronkov said.

Today’s meeting marked the 16th anniversary of Council resolution 1373, which was adopted today in 2001, following the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States.

He said that he had more than 50 high-level meetings with Member States and international and regional organizations last week in the margins of the General Assembly’s annual debate and that he listened carefully to the statements delivered in the Assembly, in which counter-terrorism was clearly a priority for many UN Member States.

An effective, future-oriented and balanced counter-terrorism programme to support Member States would be built on six key areas; strengthening international counter-terrorism cooperation; preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism; addressing the terrorist use of the Internet; enhancing the foreign terrorist fighters’ threat; and increasing the sharing of information and good practices, he said.

Also briefing the Council was David Scharia, Officer-in-Charge of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), who discussed how CTED’s work can contribute to the “All of UN” approach to combating terrorism.



David Scharia, Officer-in-Charge of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), addresses the Council’s meeting on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. UN Photo/Ariana Lindquist

He said that CTED provides the Counter-Terrorism Committee, a subsidiary body of the Security Council, with neutral and independent expert assessments of Member States’ implementation of Council resolutions on terrorism. To date, CTED has conducted 133 visits to 96 Member States, including 16 this year. This process, Mr. Scharia said, helped these countries to enact new laws, establish new institutions and strengthen capacities. “Yet, many States still do not have all counter-terrorism measures in place,” he added, expressing an

expectation that the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism will shorten the time period between CTED assessments and the delivery of assistance.

He noted that the entire UN system should benefit from CTED analysis, “which is probably the most updated and comprehensive research-based analysis in the UN system on counter-terrorism trends and developments.”

“Together, we have achieved a great deal since the adoption of resolution 1373 in 2001,” he said. “However, the terrorist threat continues to evolve at an alarming pace.”

CTED recently updated the [Technical Guide](#) to the implementation of Council resolutions on terrorism.

[Horrific accounts of sexual violence against Rohingya ‘just tip of the iceberg’ – UN agency](#)

28 September 2017 – Warning that the horrific accounts of rape and sexual assault against Rohingya women and girls fleeing unrest in Myanmar could be “just the tip of the iceberg,” the United Nations Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) underscored the need to ensure that such violence is prevented and called for additional resources so that it can reach all those in need of assistance.

“Gender-based violence, including rape and sexual assault, is a key concern that has emerged from the ongoing humanitarian crisis,” said UNFPA in a [news release](#) today.

The UN agency noted that it has already provided a range of services, including medical and psychosocial counselling assistance, to more than 7,000 Rohingya women refugees.

However, many victims have not reported their ordeal out of concerns over safety, confidentiality, shame and stigma, it added.

“This is what makes it challenging to come up with accurate numbers of gender-based violence survivors.”

According to UNFPA, the lead UN agency on addressing gender-based violence in humanitarian crisis and emergencies, more than 480,000 Rohingya refugees – over half of them women and girls – have poured into Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar since August 25, having fled their homes since violence erupted in Myanmar’s northern Rakhine province.

Some 120,000 among them are women of reproductive age and 24,000 are either pregnant or breastfeeding.

SEE ALSO: [UN rights experts urge Member States to 'go beyond statements,' take action to help Rohingya](#) UNFPA has set up five 'Women Friendly Spaces' – areas which women can access at anytime for safety or to access information, education, support or other services – and plans to scale it up to fifteen by the end of the year.

It has also helped set up community watch groups and medical camps with psychosocial counselling assistance amid what it noted are “incredibly challenging circumstances.”

However, given the scale of the crisis, UNFPA and other UN agencies as well as partners, are struggling in need of resources. UNFPA alone needs an additional \$13 million to meet the demand for services over the next six months.

Humanitarian crises across the world suffering the blight

The scourge of sexual and gender violence, unfortunately, is not only limited to the Rohingyas who fled Myanmar. Humanitarian crises globally are affected, with women and girls disproportionately affected, their specific needs not addressed adequately.

And it is therefore of paramount importance, underscored UNFPA, that each and every survivor of gender-based violence who needs such services must receive them in an environment that respects their right to self-determination, privacy and confidentiality, ensuring safety and, in so doing, helping them regain or strengthen their sense of dignity.

“All women and girls, regardless of their ethnicity or religious affiliations, [must have access to health care and other essential services without discrimination](#), and they must be protected from all forms of violence, including sexual assault,” emphasized Natalia Kanem, the Acting Executive Director of UNFPA.

“The health and safety of women and girls must be protected.”