

Security Council approves probe into ISIL's alleged war crimes in Iraq

21 September 2017 – The United Nations Security Council today authorised the establishment of an investigation team to support Iraq's domestic efforts to hold the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) accountable for acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in the country.

According to the unanimously adopted resolution, the team will be headed by a Special Adviser to be appointed by the Secretary-General, and will consist of both international and domestic experts who will work "on equal footing," with an initial mandate of two years.

The Council underscored that the team should operate with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its jurisdiction over crimes committed in its territory. In addition, evidence of crimes collected and stored by the team in Iraq should be for eventual use in fair and independent criminal proceedings conducted by competent national-level courts, with the relevant Iraqi authorities as the primary intended recipient.

Another Member State may request the team to collect evidence of acts committed by ISIL on its territory, but only with the approval of the Security Council, which may request the Secretary-General to submit separate terms of reference.

The Council requested the Secretary-General to establish, as a supplement to financing by the UN, a trust fund to receive voluntary contributions to implement the resolution.

UNICEF urges countries to prioritize early childhood development

21 September 2017 – There is no period more critical in a child's development than the first 1,000 days of life, and yet 32 countries – including Bangladesh and the United States – lack three basic national policies to support parents of babies and young children, says a new United Nations report issued today.

According to [*Early Moments Matter for Every Child*](#), published by the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), only 15 countries – including Cuba, France, Portugal, Russia and Sweden – have the three policies critical to support young children's healthy brain development: two years of free pre-primary

education; paid breastfeeding breaks for new mothers for the first six months; and adequate paid parental leave.

These policies, UNICEF noted in a [news release](#), help parents better protect their children and provide them with better nutrition, play and early learning experiences in the crucial first years of life when the brain grows at a rate never to be repeated.

The report states that around 85 million children under five are growing up in 32 countries without any of the three critical policies in place; 40 per cent of these children live in just two countries – Bangladesh and the US.

“What’s the most important thing children have? It’s their brains. But we are not caring for children’s brains the way we care for their bodies – especially in early childhood, when the science shows that children’s brains and children’s futures are rapidly being shaped,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

“We need to do more to give parents and caregivers of young children the support they need during this most critical period of brain development.”

The report also points out that millions of children under five live in areas affected by conflict, are starved of nutritious food, and are deprived of stimulating activities fundamental for healthy brain growth.

Urging governments to invest in children and their families, UNICEF called for actions to support early childhood development. Among these is to make family-friendly policies, including two years of free pre-primary education, paid parental leave and paid breastfeeding breaks, a national priority.

“Policies that support early childhood development are a critical investment in the brains of our children, and thus in the citizens and workforce of tomorrow – and literally the future of the world,” said Mr. Lake.

At the beginning of 2017, UNICEF launched the #EarlyMomentsMatter campaign, aimed at raising awareness about the critical impact that early experiences have on children’s brain development during their first 1,000 days of life.

More than half of children and youth worldwide ‘not learning’ – UNESCO

21 September 2017 – About 617 million children and adolescents worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, signalling a learning crisis that could threaten progress on global development goals, a report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) shows.

The figures are staggering both in terms of the waste of human potential and for the prospects of achieving sustainable development," said Silvia Montoya, Director of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, in a press release.

The [report](#) suggests some 387 million children of primary school age (or 56 per cent) and 230 million adolescents of lower secondary school age (or 61 per cent) will not achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, 202 million children and adolescents are not learning these fundamental subjects. Nearly 90 per cent of children between the ages of about 6 and 14 will not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.

Central and Southern Asia has the second highest rate, with 81 per cent, or 241 million, not learning.

Surprisingly, two-thirds of the children who are not learning are in school. Of the 387 million primary-age children unable to read proficiently, 262 million are in classrooms. There are also about 137 million adolescents of lower secondary age who are in classrooms, but unable to meet minimum proficiency levels in reading.

The report indicates that along with a lack of access to school and a failure to retain children in school, the poor quality of education in the classroom is among the three common problems.

Ms. Montoya said the new data was a "wake-up call" for far greater investment in the quality of education.

The global goals for education are clear: Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) signals a commitment from governments to ensure an "inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all."

No one country can tackle the problems associated with migration, Libya tells global leaders

20 September 2017 – Recalling the situation in Libya since the 2011 revolution, Faiez Mustafa Serraj, the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord said that international support is essential to ensure progress in the country.

The Political Agreement which had been reached between the different parties

after two years of negotiations remains the cornerstone for building new political institutions and transition in the country, he said, noting that the aim is to ensure broad and inclusive participation; the transition is vital to achieve stability.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Serra announced that all parties in the country are ready to meet the challenges confronting Libya.

He further informed that those displaced within Libya are now returning to their homes and that the Government is working to establish stability.

On the economic side, he announced that oil production reached about one million barrels per day and urged for the resumption of international financial assistance as well as the repayment of Libyan financial assets abroad which have resulted in enormous losses to the country.

Speaking on migration and human trafficking, he expressed that no one country can tackle the issue by itself and urged for international support for his country to address the challenges it confronts.

Also in his address, Mr. Serraj reiterated the need for strategic partnerships with friendly countries, and drew attention to the ongoing work to unify the country's security forces and to make them capable of confronting the threats posed by terrorists.

He also informed the General Assembly of adoption of new laws, with the technical support of the UN, to ensure protection of human rights in the country.

[Full statement available \(in Arabic\) here](#)

Devastating 'season of natural disasters' demands action to address extreme weather events – Dominican Republic

20 September 2017 – Amid a “devastating season of natural disasters” in the region – widespread catastrophe that extends to Mexico, hit by two destructive earthquakes, and to the southern United States, viciously punished by Hurricane Harvey – the Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic today called on the United Nations to consider “new actions we must take, urgently, to counteract extreme climatic phenomena.”

Addressing the General Assembly's annual general debate in the wake of the massive destruction caused in the region by Hurricane Irma and as Puerto Rico was being battered by Hurricane Maria, Miguel Vargas Maldonado expressed solidarity with all countries that had suffered these back-to-back extreme weather events and said that the deaths and material losses have been immense.

He said one thing was clear, that the damage caused during this hurricane season alone far exceeded the Dominican Republic's gross domestic product(GDP). Moreover, the "lethal power" of these recent storms – which had been intensified by climate change – had eroded more than roads and beaches, it had shattered lives and destroyed dreams.

"Our economies, our way of life, and our development potential are at in danger. The Caribbean vulnerability and that of our Dominican Republic pose a risk that we cannot face alone," stated Mr. Vargas Maldonado, and although his country had been fortunate not to suffer human losses during the catastrophic passage of Irma, "we are aware that, like every other Caribbean island, we will always be vulnerable to this type of phenomenon."

Indeed, this reality has led him to raise once again to the General Assembly, the imperative need to join forces to confront these threats. "It compels us to act in a responsible, cohesive way for the sake of our people's lives," he said, stressing that it is not enough to send messages of solidarity or humanitarian aid after natural catastrophes have caused death and devastation.

"And it is absolutely not enough to sign agreements on climate change; It is critical for these agreements to be coherent, move forward a joint agenda, and develop concrete action plans," said the Foreign Minister proposing the creation of a special fund to deal with natural catastrophes, to foster awareness, prevention, and resilience strategies, which will allow us to preserve life.

"We must act on this or otherwise the future will judge us for our total lack of responsibility," he warned.

[Full statement available here](#)