

In Kuwait, UN chief Guterres lauds country's humanitarian leadership, regional diplomacy

27 August 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, on an official visit to Kuwait, expressed gratitude to not only the Gulf country's leadership in humanitarian action, but the "dialogue [...] and promotion of understanding Kuwait has shown in relation to all conflicts in the region."

Speaking to reporters after meetings with the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Mr. Guterres [recalled](#) that during his tenure as UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Amir had presided over three conferences to mobilize the international community to support the Syrian people "suffering so much with the war that has been going on and on."

"But it's not only the humanitarian leadership of Kuwait, it's the wisdom, the dialogue, the promotion of understanding that Kuwait has shown in relation to all conflicts in the region," explained Mr. Guterres, adding: "Kuwait has no agenda. The agenda of Kuwait is peace; is understanding."

As for the current crisis in the Gulf, the Secretary-General said "the position of the UN is very simple: we are here to support the Kuwaiti mediation."

Indeed, this visit had been an occasion to express deep appreciation and raise ideas about ways to strengthen the cooperation and dialogue between Kuwait and the UN, "as we believe Kuwait is an extremely reliable partner in our common commitment to peace and security around the world."

Taking questions from reports, Mr. Guterres said that he and the Amir had discussed all the very difficult situations of the region, including Yemen, Syria, "the drama of the Palestinian people," Libya, and the need to make sure that Iraq is able to come together in unity after defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).

"All of these aspects were discussed in a very detailed way. I had the opportunity once again to express my deep appreciation for all the initiatives that Kuwait has had in the relation to the solution to these crises," stated the UN chief.

Asked about plans to begin negotiations in Kuwait on the crisis in Yemen, the Secretary-General said the UN is doing its best to create the conditions for the present stalemate to be overcome. "Kuwait has been very successful in the first conference that was organized. We will be working very closely

with the [parties] to see when and how a new strong initiative will be possible,” he stressed.

To a question on getting aid through Saan'a airport or Hodeida port, Mr. Guterres said that his Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, is pushing to create the conditions for both Hodeida and Saan'a to allow for an effective use, for humanitarian purposes, of these two very important infrastructures.

“I hope it will be possible for an agreement to be achieved between the parties to allow for Hodeida and Saan'a to be fully operational for the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people who are suffering in such a terrible way. They deserve our solidarity and our commitment.”

[Afghanistan: UN mission condemns deadly attack on Shi'a mosque in Kabul](#)

26 August 2017 – The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) has condemned the attack during Friday prayer at Imam Zaman mosque in Kabul that killed at least 20 civilians – including seven women and one child – and injured more than 30 others.

“These preliminary figures may rise,” the Mission said today, explaining that at least two attackers wearing police uniforms [stormed the Shi'a mosque](#) while several hundred worshippers, including many women and children, were at Friday prayer.

According to UNAMA, one assailant detonated his suicide vest outside the mosque, while another continued inside, indiscriminately killing and wounding people. The Mission expressed its condolences to the loved ones of those killed in the attack and wishes a full and speedy recovery to those injured.

Islamic State-Khorasan Province claimed responsibility, stating that two of its suicide attackers targeted a Shi'a mosque in Kabul, noted the Mission.

“This latest in a series of attacks targeting members of the Shi'a community at worship has no possible justification,” said Toby Lanzer, the UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and acting head of UNAMA.

Such attacks directed against congregations and places of worship are serious violations of international law that may amount to war crimes, he emphasized.

International humanitarian law prohibits deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian property, including places of worship, and also places a specific obligation on parties to enable religious personnel to carry out

their work.

Yesterday's attack was the sixth attack this year targeting Shi'a mosques in Afghanistan, killing a total of at least 64 civilians and injuring at least 118, according to UNAMA. Four of the attacks occurred in Herat and the other two in Kabul. Islamic State-Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for three of the six, including yesterday's attack.

[Syria: UNICEF cites conflict's 'staggering' impact on children; calls for urgent assistance and protection](#)

25 August 2017 – Six and a half years of war in Syria has inflicted untold suffering on the country's children, a senior United Nations official said today, urging parties to the conflict to stop the violence and live up to their legal obligations to children.

"The impact of war on children across Syria is staggering," said Fran Equiza, the UN Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Representative in Syria.

Ongoing and heavy fighting has displaced thousands of families from Raqqa city and Deir-ez-Zor.

"I have just completed a visit to the camps in Areesha, Ein Issa and Mabrouka where I met with displaced children and oversaw UNICEF's lifesaving efforts on the ground," continued Ms. Equiza.

"I am overwhelmed by the profoundly traumatising experiences these children have been through. They have endured brutal violence, lost friends and family members," she elaborated, adding "They are terrified, yet hopeful."

The UNICEF representative relayed that an 11-year old displaced girl who fled Raqqa told her, "Before we used to play, but then the darkness came."

According to reports UNICEF is receiving from inside Raqqa city, several thousand children continue to be trapped and caught in the direct line of fire.

With no access for humanitarian agencies, the city is completely cut off from lifesaving assistance.

As the conflict further intensifies, children and families have little or no safe water, while food supplies are running out fast. Moreover, trapped

children increasingly risk death and injury.

“Children and families who wish to leave Raqqa city must be allowed to do so in safety and in dignity,” he stressed, adding: “Parties to the conflict must protect them and facilitate safe passage for civilians to move to safety.”

Ms. Equiza underscored that “parties to the conflict must stop the violence all over Syria and live up to their legal obligations to children.”

“All children in Syria, regardless of their location or their families’ affiliation must be protected at all times,” she concluded.

[On first visit to Somalia since elections, UN political chief lauds progress](#)

25 August 2017 – The head of the United Nations political office visited Somalia this week, where he praised the “real forward momentum” in the country’s political development, and reiterated UN support as the Horn of Africa country tackles its challenges, such as the fight against the group Al Shabaab.

“I am here to reinforce and to demonstrate the support that the UN has for the people and the Government of Somalia as the country addresses a number of challenges ranging from the drought to security, to the political agenda going forward,” [said](#) UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman.

In a series of meetings on Thursday in the capital, Mogadishu, Mr. Feltman spoke with President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo, and Prime Minister Hassan Kheyre, among others, about the progress made in Somalia in recent months.

“I sense a real forward momentum in terms of political developments, in terms of reforms and transparency and of things moving forward to one-person one-vote electoral system for the 2021 parliamentary elections,” the senior UN official said.

Mr. Feltman praised the work of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC), which was created earlier this year and which is putting structures in place for the next parliamentary and presidential elections.

Following a meeting with NIEC Chairperson Halima Ibrahim, Mr. Feltman urged the Commission to move forward on the country’s constitutional review

process, which will lay the foundation for the national elections.

Among other topics discussed during the visit was the need for additional international support to combat the drought affecting more than 6.2 million people in Somalia.

The visit is Mr. Feltman's first since President Farmaajo was elected in February.

That poll was a "milestone" for the Horn of Africa nation as it moves forward after decades of war, said at the time Michael Keating, Special Representative and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia ([UNSOM](#)). Mr. Keating accompanied Mr. Feltman during Thursday's meetings.

AUDIO: Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman urges Somalia to continue efforts towards reconciliation and state-building. Credit: UN News

[Climate change threatens agricultural trade in Pacific Rim economies, UN agency warns](#)

25 August 2017 – With global warming expected to significantly impact future yields in countries located closer to the equator, the United Nations agriculture agency is calling on Asia-Pacific economies to take a leading role in adaptation and mitigation.

"Many APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] economies have already felt the full force of agricultural losses from natural disasters in recent years, with the vast majority of these being climate related," said Kundhavi Kadiresan, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

Geographically, the negative impact of climate change on agricultural output could result in lower yields of rice, wheat, corn and soybeans in countries with tropical climates, compared with the impacts experienced by those in higher latitudes. Fisheries could also be affected by changes to water temperature, warned the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) today.

"The annual tally runs into the billions and billions of dollars in losses. So, the time to act is now. Policy makers need to prepare for changes in supply, shifting trade patterns and a need for greater investment in agriculture, fisheries, land and water management, that will benefit smallholder farmers and others that produce our food," Mr. Kadiresan added.

It is imperative that we start thinking now about the hard decisions and actions that the [Asia Pacific] economies, and others, will need to take FAO Regional Representative Kundhavi Kadiresan

Many vital agricultural regions in Asia are at risk of crossing key climate thresholds that would cause plant and animal productivity to decline, according to a meeting in Viet Nam of Agriculture Ministers of APEC member economies.

Based on the findings of the global research community, the International Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) anticipates that these trends are expected to worsen in the future with the projected impacts of anthropogenic climate change.

Much can be done to increase the efficiency of agriculture and land-use activities in Asia, according to Mr. Kadiresan.

A changing environment

The agriculture sectors account for at least one-fifth of total emissions, mainly from forest to farmland conversions; livestock and paddy production; and application of synthetic fertilizers. Estimates show that 70 per cent of the technical potential to reduce agriculture emissions occurs in tropical developing countries, which characterize much of Asia.

It is imperative that we start thinking now about the hard decisions and actions that the APEC economies, and others, will need to take. Governments will need to consider greater social protection measures. Industry and trade will need to adapt to shifting supply and demand. There is no quick fix but there is every reason to act, Mr. Kadiresan stressed.

FAO has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Viet Nam to assess potential emission reductions the System of Rice Intensification and improved livestock management.

In Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and Mongolia, FAO, has partnered in developing programmes to measure, monitor and report emissions and adaptation actions in the agriculture and land-use sectors.

In the forestry sector, avoiding deforestation, increasing the area under forest, and adopting sustainable forest management will create invaluable carbon sinks. FAO has been supporting national programmes for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

The meeting made clear that more upfront support is essential to increase farmers' productivity, build capacity to adapt to climate change and reduce the emissions related to production.

A second area requiring financing is also needed to support capacity-building of appropriate institutions and policies. Climate funds could become an important catalyst for climate change adaptation and mitigation if they are used to build the enabling environment essential for climate-smart

agricultural development, while ensuring that public agricultural investment is also climate-smart, and to leverage private finance.