

Despite decline in attacks on persons with albinism, root causes rife in rural Tanzania, UN expert finds

28 July 2017 – Welcoming a drop in the number of reported attacks against people with albinism, a United Nations human rights expert has concluded that this group of people in rural Tanzania continue to live in fear amid widespread attitudes that lead to violence against them.

“People with albinism continue to live in a very fragile situation, as the root causes of the attacks against them remain rampant, and the effects of over a decade of violations have taken their toll,” [said](#) Ikponwosa Ero, the UN independent expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, at the end of her 11-day visit to Tanzania.

Ms. Ero, however, praised the Government for its work to tackle the issue which is rooted in the mistaken belief that the body parts of people with albinism have value in witchcraft practices.

“I welcome the measures already taken by the Government and civil society, and the decrease in the number of reported attacks,” she said. “There have been positive measures to address witchcraft practices, including the registration of traditional healers.”

“However, full oversight over their work has still not been achieved, and confusion still exists in the minds of the general public between witchcraft practice and the work of traditional healers,” the expert noted.

She said more work was needed to address witchcraft and educate the public.

Ms. Ero also highlighted concerns over the use of schools as protection centres for children with albinism, which in some cases have evolved from temporary shelters into long-term accommodation. Although there has been a significant reduction in the overall number of children in these shelters, more work remained to be done, she added.

During her mission to Tanzania, Ms. Ero met with various high-level officials, civil society representatives, people with albinism, and their family members.

Independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

She will present a full report and recommendations to the Human Rights Council in March 2018.

Wrapping up African trip, UN deputy chief vows to ensure displaced women return home in dignity

27 July 2017 – The United Nations deputy chief wrapped up her visit to two African countries – Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – where today she stressed the importance of women’s participation in peace, security and development processes.

The final day’s itinerary for Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed included a visit to the Mugunga camp for internally displaced persons, on the outskirts of Goma, which is the capital of North Kivu Province in restive eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Ms. Mohammed [said](#) that she is firmly resolved to ensure that women in the camp return home in dignity and humanity, which is not a favour but a right, promising to embark on an advocacy initiative to finance the better settlement of the women as they return to their places of origin.

She also commended the women at the camp for their involvement in small trade through micro-financing, which enabled them to meet the needs of their families.

Regarding the victims of sexual violence, she said: “These are our African women [and] we will take their voice out to the international community and see what can be done to put an end to the scourge.

In the DRC, the Deputy Secretary-General also visited the women’s economic and empowerment centre and stressed that the mission was intended to revitalize women’s participation and leadership in peace, security and development.”

VIDEO: Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed calls for more resources to alleviate the suffering of people, displaced by conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The mission was also intended to seek the support of the governor in the work of women in the provinces and to advocate for the implementation of legal texts in favour of gender equality, she said.

Ms. Mohammed began the trip on 18 July, which first took her to Nigeria. She was joined by the UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, as well as the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security,

Bineta Diop.

This first-ever high-level [joint AU-UN high-level trip](#) is the first part of a two-part mission focused on women's meaningful participation in peace, security and development. A similar mission will cover two further countries later in the year.

[Ahead of World Day, UN agency says fight against hepatitis 'gaining momentum'](#)

27 July 2017 – On the eve of World Hepatitis Day, the United Nations health agency released a study that reveals efforts to eliminate disease are gaining momentum globally.

“It is encouraging to see [countries turning commitment into action](#) to tackle hepatitis,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

“Identifying interventions that have a high impact is a key step towards eliminating this devastating disease,” he added, noting that many countries have succeeded in scaling-up the hepatitis B vaccination and now the task is to increase access to diagnosis and treatment.

New WHO data from 28 countries representing some 70 per cent of the global [hepatitis](#) burden reveals that nearly all have established high-level national hepatitis elimination committees and more than half have allocated dedicated funding for hepatitis responses.

Findings also show that more than 86 per cent of the countries reviewed have set national hepatitis elimination targets and more than 70 per cent have begun to develop national hepatitis plans to enable access to effective prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services. Furthermore, nearly half of the countries surveyed are aiming for elimination through providing universal access to hepatitis treatment.

But WHO is still concerned that progress needs to speed up. “The national response towards hepatitis elimination is gaining momentum. However, at best one in 10 people who are living with hepatitis know they are infected and can access treatment. This is unacceptable,” said Gottfried Hirnschall, WHO's Director of the HIV Department and Global Hepatitis Programme.

This week, WHO also added a new generic treatment to its list of WHO-prequalified hepatitis C medicines to increase access to therapy, and is

promoting prevention through injection safety: a key factor in reducing hepatitis B and C transmission.

This year's [World Hepatitis Day](#) is being marked under the theme 'Eliminate Hepatitis' to mobilize intensified action towards the health targets in the [2030 Agenda](#) and UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

“For hepatitis elimination to become a reality, countries need to accelerate their efforts and increase investments in life-saving care. There is simply no reason why many millions of people still have not been tested for hepatitis and cannot access the treatment for which they are in dire need,” said Mr. Hirsenschall.

Viral hepatitis affected 325 million people worldwide in 2015, with 257 million people living with hepatitis B and 71 million people living with hepatitis C – the two main killers of the five types of hepatitis. Viral hepatitis caused 1.34 million deaths in 2015, a figure close to the number of tuberculosis deaths and exceeding deaths linked to HIV.

In early November, WHO and its partners will convene World Hepatitis Summit 2017 in São Paulo, Brazil, which promises to be the largest global event to advance the viral hepatitis agenda, bringing together key players.

['None of us should stand silent' while civilians suffer in Syria, Security Council told](#)

27 July 2017 – Despite the remarkable hope and strength shown by most Syrians, daily life remains dangerous for millions of people across the country, a senior United Nations aid official warned today, calling for the parties to the six year conflict to stop targeting of civilians, to allow humanitarian access, and to end the “horrific” practice of besiegement.

[Briefing](#) the UN Security Council via videoconference from Amman, Jordan, Deputy UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller said that earlier in the day, she had visited the Azraq refugee camp, where around 35,000 refugees lived, many of whom had been there for several years. Most were women and children, she added.

“I was inspired by the incredible hope and strength of those who I met despite the terrible circumstances that have been forced upon them,” she said, delivering remarks on behalf of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien.

“Their message to me was clear and I pass it on to you today,” she continued. “What they want more than anything is for the [guns to fall silent](#); the conflict to end; and for them to be able to go home when it is safe to do so.”

She went on to note that the “hope and strength found in Azraq is replicated across Syria. This is remarkable given that daily life remains dangerous and desperate for millions of people inside the country.”

Pointing to a reduction of violence in some areas since a 4 May memorandum on de-escalation, she said the humanitarian and protection situation remains extremely difficult for civilians in many parts of the country.

Indeed, Ms. Mueller spotlighted continued fighting and the situations in besieged areas of Damascus and the Syrian-Jordanian border as well as anti-ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Da’esh) operations in Raqqa governorate. Infighting among non-State armed groups and designated terrorist groups, mentioning the north-western part of the country, was also a concern.



Deputy UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller (on screen) briefs the UN Security Council via videoconference. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

‘Not much positive news to report’ on humanitarian access

Turning to humanitarian access for besieged and hard-to-reach areas, she lamented that “there is not much positive news to report,” listing obstacles to convoys that included lack of approvals; lack of facilitation letters by the Syrian Government; other administrative delays; as well as insecurity and fighting.

“At the same time, arbitrary restrictions by some non-State armed groups, listed terrorist groups, and self-designated local authorities also continue to obstruct access in various ways, especially in Idleb and the eastern governorates of Syria. This means that, despite reductions in violence, we have not been able to noticeably increase our reach,” she explained.

Despite security and access challenges to besieged and hard-to-reach areas, Ms. Mueller underscored that in Syria, the UN continues to implement one of the largest humanitarian operations in the world, saying “humanitarians continue to reach millions on a monthly basis.”

As of May, humanitarians have collectively reached 8.5 million people in a single month, including 4.4 million women and girls, and 4.1 million men and boys with multi-sector assistance.

“The conflict in Syria may be complex, but ensuring people are protected and supported is our imperative as humanitarians, and as human beings. None of us should stand silent while civilians suffer and while fear tactics and the denial of food, water, medical supplies, and other forms of aid are used

as methods of war,” stressed Ms. Mueller.

‘Sustainable, inclusive societies,’ priority for new President of UN economic and social body

27 July 2017 – A week after the High-Level Political Forum ([HPLF](#)) assessed the progress on implementing the [2030 Agenda](#), the newly elected President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has stressed her priority to push forward the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

“I wish to announce that the key priority of my Presidency will be to develop initiatives towards fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all,” said Marie Chatardová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the UN, after her [election by acclamation](#) earlier today.

Delivering her first remarks as President, Ms. Chatardova welcomed the enormous interest among Member States to participate in the Voluntary National Reviews. “It proves that we take our shared vision of a better world seriously,” she said.

Noting several positive developments towards reaching the 2030 targets, such as unprecedented technological advancement and innovation, she said that nevertheless, the world continued to experience rising inequalities in most countries.

“If multilateralism is to stay relevant in this evolving context, we need to take these challenges seriously, and work on devising solutions to address them. I believe that the ECOSOC system has a key role to play,” she asserted.

To explore further collective action on the issue, the new President announced her intention to convene an ECOSOC Special Meeting at UN Headquarters in May 2018.

“We must work together and make all efforts to achieve what we have set out: ‘to leave no-one behind.’ Truly no one!” she underscored.



Ambassador Marie Chatardová, newly-elected President of the Economic and Social Council, addresses the Council. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

ECOSOC now seen as multi-stakeholder forum for tackling complex issues

Outgoing ECOSOC President Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava took stock of activities under his tenure.

On the priority of eradicating poverty, he said “we explored various means for promoting sustainable development; expanding opportunities; and addressing related challenges to leave no one behind,” he recalled.

“It was a tall order, but we made good progress,” he affirmed.

Inspired by what the delegation of Norway said during the HLPF: “No one can do everything, but we can all do something,” Mr. Shava urged the respective Ministries, organizations and communities to use this as their mantra in implementing the [SDGs](#).

Asserting that “the moment is ripe” to further strengthen ECOSOC to support the 2030 Agenda, the outgoing president emphasized the importance of aligning the agendas of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.

According to Mr. Shava, one of the biggest take-aways from the Council’s 2017 substantive session was “the importance of ECOSOC as a multi-stakeholder platform for forging solutions to complex and emerging issues,” observing that it is uniquely positioned at the global level to support efforts to leave no one behind

“The success of ECOSOC should be measured not by the number of resolutions that it adopts, but by the impact that it has on the lives of real people. ECOSOC is where Member States coordinate and guide the UN development system, and can therefore make a real impact on citizens around the world,” concluded the outgoing President.

Wu Hongbo, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said inequalities among and within countries are deep and addressing them is important for achieving sustainable development and peace. International support for sustainable and resilient societies is based on the recognition that “we cannot overcome global challenges in isolation.”

Solidarity, shared responsibility and open dialogue are more important than ever, he continued. The 2030 Agenda, the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#), and [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) together had formed an action plan for global prosperity and partnership.

The Council and its various forums had a key role in nurturing that vital opportunity by supporting implementation through the sharing of integrated and holistic approaches, he stated.