

Change in behaviour for South Sudan actors 'long overdue,' Security Council told

20 July 2017 – Highlighting challenges facing South Sudan, a senior United Nations official today underlined that overcoming obstacles borne of a volatile combination of insecurity and political uncertainty is critical for the war-torn country to be put on the track to peace and stability.

The security environment remains extremely volatile and South Sudan is in need of an effective and credible ceasefire, El Ghassim Wane, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, told the Security Council today, noting reports of active military operations in parts of the country since the Government's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in June.

In his briefing, Mr. Wane also noted that while the Government has publicly expressed its commitment to create an environment conducive for the conduct of the National Dialogue, certain recent decisions seem to contradict those pledges, such as blocking of key media websites after their alleged criticism of the authorities.

Every effort should be made to ensure that [the Dialogue] is inclusive, transparent, takes place in a free and secure environment, has clear outcomes that complements the ARCISS [Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan] and is supported by a sufficiently broad political consensus from all political forces in the country, he added.

Further, noting the importance of an Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, an eight-country trade bloc in Africa)-led revitalization process, the UN official urged the Council to continue its support for the process and called on national stakeholders to embrace it as a genuine opportunity to restore peace in South Sudan.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Wane stressed the importance of the unity in the region and the need for the international community to call on the leadership of all sides in South Sudan that the current situation in the country is unacceptable and unsustainable.

A change in behaviour is long overdue, and the pursuit of political objectives through violence for which the people of South Sudan continue to bear a heavy toll should not be allowed to continue, he stated.

AIDS-related deaths decline; 19.5 million people on life-saving treatment – UN report

20 July 2017 – The scales have tipped for the first time in the fight against AIDS as more than half of all people living with the HIV virus now have access to treatment, while AIDS-related deaths have nearly halved since 2005, according to a new United Nations report.

“We met the 2015 target of [15 million people on treatment](#) and we are on track to double that number to 30 million and meet the 2020 target,” said Michel Sidibé, the Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), in a press statement.

“We will continue to scale up to reach everyone in need and honour our commitment of leaving no one behind,” he added.

The UNAIDS report, [Ending AIDS: Progress towards the 90-90-90 targets](#), gives a comprehensive analysis of the 2014 targets to accelerate progress so that by 2020, 90 per cent of all HIV-infected people know their status, 90 per cent of all HIV-diagnosed people are accessing antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 90 per cent of those taking ART are virally suppressed.

It states that last year, 19.5 million of the 36.7 million people living with HIV had access to treatment and AIDS-related deaths have fallen from 1.9 million in 2005 to one million in. With continued scale-up, this progress puts the world on track to reach the global target of 30 million people on treatment by 2020, according to the report.

“We will continue to scale up to reach everyone in need and honour our commitment of leaving no one behind,” Mr. Sidibé stressed.

Eastern and southern Africa, which account for more than half of all people living with the virus, are leading the way. Since 2010, AIDS-related deaths there have declined by 42 per cent and new HIV infections by 29 per cent, including a 56 per cent drop in new infections among children over that period – a remarkable achievement of HIV treatment and prevention efforts aimed at putting that region on track towards ending its AIDS epidemic.

On the 90-90-90 track

The *Ending AIDS* report reveals that in 2016, more than 70 per cent of HIV-infected people knew their status, 77 per cent of whom were accessing treatment. Of those, 82 per cent were virally suppressed and helping to prevent virus transmission.

Eastern and southern Africa, western and central Europe and North America and

Latin America are on track to reach the targets by 2020 with Botswana, Cambodia, Denmark, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden and the UK having already achieved it.

The Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific can also reach them if programmes are further accelerated, says the report.

The most significant impact of scale-up has been in reducing AIDS-related deaths, which have almost halved in the past 10 years. Accordingly, life expectancy has significantly increased in the most affected countries, particularly in eastern and southern Africa.

“Communities and families are thriving as AIDS is being pushed back,” said Mr Sidibé. “As we bring the epidemic under control, health outcomes are improving and nations are becoming stronger.”

Lagging behind

In contrast, progress against the targets has been poor in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where AIDS-related deaths have pointedly risen. Exceptions, however, include Algeria, Morocco and Belarus, which have increased HIV treatment access from 2010 to 2016.

The report also shows that globally, 30 per cent of people living with HIV still do not know their status, 17.1 million are unable to access ART and more than half are not virally suppressed.

[UN envoy calls for de-escalation of tensions and violence in Jerusalem](#)

20 July 2017 – Expressing deep concern over a surge in tensions and violence around the holy esplanade of Jerusalem’s Old City, the United Nations envoy on Middle East peace today called for de-escalation of the situation.

“I call on all concerned parties to [de-escalate the situation](#) and on moderate voices to speak up against those who try to fuel tensions,” said Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, in a statement.

He welcomed the commitment of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to uphold and respect the status quo at the City’s holy sites, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ firm condemnation of violence, specifically the [deadly attack](#) on two Israeli policemen on 14 July.

“I hope these affirmations will contribute to resolving the concerns of all parties and put an end to the provocative rhetoric that has added to the

escalation over the past week,” Mr. Mladenov said, noting the importance of the special role of Jordan and the historical role of King Abdullah II, as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

[Drought in DPR Korea threatens food supply during ongoing lean season](#)

20 July 2017 – Amid the worst drought in nearly two decades in the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK), the United Nations agricultural agency is calling for emergency food assistance, as well as irrigation and farming equipment, to help farmers get through the lean season.

“DPR Korea’s [crop production for 2017](#), including staple rice, maize, potatoes and soybean, has been severely damaged by prolonged dry weather conditions, threatening food security for a large part of its population,” according to a new report by the Food and Agricultural Organization ([FAO](#)).

Rainfall from April to June in key crop producing areas is “well below the long-term average,” severely disrupting planting activities and damaging the 2017 main season crops.

The rainfall is below the level in 2001, when cereal production dropped to an “unprecedented” two million tonnes. The lack of food caused a large part of the population to go hungry, the UN agency reported.

“[Immediate interventions](#) are needed to support affected farmers and prevent undesirable coping strategies for the most vulnerable, such as reducing daily food intakes,” said Vincent Martin, FAO Representative in China and DPRK.

He said it was “critical” that farmers receive appropriate and timely agricultural assistance, including irrigation equipment and machinery.

Increased food imports, commercial or through food aid, would be required during the next three months at the peak of the lean season, to make sure there is adequate food supply for the most vulnerable, including children and the elderly.

South Sudan: UN agency scales up cholera response with 500,000 doses of oral vaccine

20 July 2017 – The United Nations health agency is scaling up cholera response in South Sudan, where 17,785 cases, including 320 deaths, have been reported since the outbreak in June 2106.

Cholera is endemic in South Sudan and historically, outbreaks have occurred along major commercial routes and rivers in the dry season as well as during the rainy season, said Joseph Wamala, an epidemiologist at the World Health Organization (WHO), in a news release from the agency's Africa office.

Earlier this week, WHO received 500,000 doses of oral cholera vaccine and is working with South Sudan's Ministry of Health and partners to carry out a vaccination campaign from 28 July to 3 August in four selected counties – Tonj East, Kapoeta South, Kapoeta North and Kapoeta East.

South Sudan has suffered from several major cholera outbreaks in the last four years. Following other successful oral cholera vaccine campaigns, WHO and partners can make a real difference in controlling the outbreak in Tonj and Kapoeta states and in other parts of the country, Mr. Wamala said.

Along with the use of the vaccine, South Sudan is implementing the integrated approach to control cholera, such as improving access to patient care, surveillance, social mobilization, water, sanitation and hygiene.

As a result, cholera transmission in Bor, Mingkaman, Duk, Ayod, Bentiu, Leer, Aburoc, Malakal Town, and several other areas has been controlled.

Food insecurity is putting people at increased risk of starvation and malnutrition, which in turn will further the risk that cholera outbreak in South Sudan will spread.

Drought has also led to the drying of water points in some regions leading to the population using contaminated water from the remaining few unprotected points leading to repeated outbreaks of cholera and other water-borne diseases.