

Eleven global banks partner with UN to make financial markets more climate transparent

11 July 2017 – Representing over \$7 trillion, eleven major financial institutions around the globe have joined forces with the United Nations to promote climate transparency in financial markets, the Organization's environment wing said today.

According to a news release by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), ANZ, Barclays, Bradesco, Citi, Itaú, National Australia Bank, Royal Bank of Canada, Santander, Standard Chartered, TD Bank Group, and UBS have jointly committed to develop analytical tools and indicators to strengthen assessments and disclosures of climate-related risks and opportunities.

“The message from financial heavyweights is clear – [climate change poses a real and serious threat to our economy](#),” said Erik Solheim, the Executive Director of UNEP, in the release.

“At the same time, there are enormous business opportunities in taking climate action. Transparency on how financial institutions mitigate the risks and seize the opportunities of a two degrees pathway is crucial to move international markets towards actively supporting a low-carbon and climate-resilient future,” he added.

In the news release, UNEP noted that increasing the amount of reliable information on financial institutions' exposure to climate-related risks and opportunities would also strengthen the stability of the financial system and help boost climate-friendly investments.

The partnership between the institutions and the UNEP Finance Initiative follows the recommendations by the Financial Stability Board (FSB)'s Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

The Task Force was mandated by the Board to develop voluntary, consistent climate-related financial risk disclosures for use by companies, investors, lenders and insurers. Its final recommendations were published in June and submitted to the G20 last week.

It is anticipated that results from the undertaking will encourage banks worldwide to adopt such climate-focused efforts.

“After the G20, the issue now is about implementation: how can the finance industry put the framework into practice and deliver disclosure that is meaningful? Through this and other industry-led working groups UNEP FI is helping the finance sector to do just that: move from awareness to action.” said Christian Thimann, Group Head of Strategy, Sustainability and Public Affairs at the AXA Group, Co-Chair of UNEP Finance Initiative and TCFD Vice-

Chair.

[UN aid officials in Yemen forced to shift resources from fighting hunger to cholera](#)

11 July 2017 – Unless the international community contributes \$200 million to address the cholera outbreak in Yemen, the United Nations humanitarian arm will be forced to “reprogram” more resources tagged for malnutrition in the country already facing famine, a senior official today said.

“This unprecedented cholera epidemic would further weaken the resources, and the resilience that people had had over the last two and a half years of this war,” Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, told journalists in Geneva.

There were now 313,538 suspected cases of cholera and 1,732 deaths, according to figures from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

About 40 per cent of the suspected cases and a quarter of the deaths were among children younger than 15 years old, particularly the malnourished. Older adults, pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions were among the greatest risk for death.

“All of this is entirely man-made, as a result of the conflict,” Mr. McGoldrick said by phone from Amman, Jordan.

He noted that two million additional people were added to the humanitarian case load since the start of the year as a result of the cholera outbreak, the looming famine, and the economic collapse.

Humanitarians were not as far ahead as they should be in terms of the cholera response, he noted, mainly due to the fact that they did not have enough resources to expand their operations into areas where health workers were working without pay.

“The actual system is in complete collapse,” he said.

The UN has received only one-third of the \$2.1 billion it sought to provide food to the millions people facing famine in Yemen; separately, a \$250 million funding appeal on cholera received only \$47 million.

“Agencies have had to use resources which they had programmed otherwise, for example for food security or malnutrition,” said Mr. McGoldrick.

UN agency considers “shelving” cholera vaccine in Yemen

Meanwhile, the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) is considering not shipping vaccines tagged for Yemen.

“A vaccination way ahead of an outbreak would be useful, but that would imply a huge amount of vaccines, taking into account all the countries where cholera was endemic,” Christian Lindmeier, WHO spokesperson, told journalists.

[Asia-Pacific moving in ‘wrong direction’ on some development targets, notes UN regional report](#)

11 July 2017 – Despite an impressive track record, the Asia-Pacific region will need to scale up development efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) by 2030, the target envisioned, the United Nations development arm for the region has said.

“The region is making progress towards achieving the Goals on poverty, education, economic growth, industry and infrastructure, and life below water,” Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), launching a report assessing regional development since 2000.

“[But] [progress \[has been slow\] towards](#) achieving food security, agricultural sustainability, good health and well-being for all, and gender equality,” she added.

The [Asia-Pacific SDGs](#) Baseline report, the first regional measurement methodology of its kind, was launched at the side lines of the ongoing 2017 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, at the UN Headquarters, in New York.

The report has established a “baseline” for the SDGs through the assessment of regional progress since the turn of the millennium and has identified development gaps still need to be addressed to achieve the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

One of the key aspects highlighted by the report is that the region is moving in the “wrong direction” in terms of the targets related to on reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and ensuring responsible consumption and production.

“[This] trend must be reversed to achieve the Goals by 2030,” underscored

ESCAP.

Furthermore, the report also noted the areas where data is insufficient or not available to accurately measure progress, such as in areas such as those to analyze the level of inequality.

“Data scarcity is a major challenge,” noted Ms. Akhtar in her foreword to the report, highlighting the need for a more integrated and inclusive approach for generating statistics.

“Addressing systemic data and statistics gaps for monitoring the SDGs will only be possible if resources are mobilized in a targeted and sustainable way to support the implementation of national strategies for statistical development,” she added.

[UN agency assists nearly 100,000 migrants return home in 2016](#)

11 July 2017 – The United Nations migration agency reported today that it helped nearly 100,000 migrants return home voluntarily last year, a 41 per cent increase over 2015. This assistance was provided through the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration ([AVRR](#)) programmes and highlighted in its 2016 [Key Highlights](#) report. In a corresponding news release, IOM notes that the people assisted in 2016 from 110 countries were returned to 161 countries and territories of origin.

According to the report’s findings, nearly one third of migrants assisted by IOM AVRR programmes were female and nearly one quarter were children. Of the total assisted, 1,253 were unaccompanied migrant children, 995 were migrants with health-related needs, and 895 were identified as victims of trafficking.

“The current migration dynamics show that assisted voluntary return and reintegration has to be part of any comprehensive and effective migration governance,” said Anh Nguyen, Head of IOM’s Migrant Assistance Division.

As in 2015, the European Economic Area (and Switzerland) was the region from where most migrants returned (83 per cent), while south-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and the Central Asia remained the region to where most migrants returned (49 per cent).

Germany was the host country from where the largest number of migrants assisted by IOM returned (over 54,000 migrants), followed by Greece (6,153) and Austria (4,812). The number of returns from these countries increased in 2016, in comparison to 2015, and together accounted for nearly two thirds of the total.

With approximately 17,976 migrants assisted, Albania remained the country to where the largest share of migrants returned, followed by Iraq (12,776) and Afghanistan (7,102). West and Central Africa, East Africa as well as the Horn of Africa are regions which registered important intraregional flows.

The report provides an overview of global and regional trends for 2016, and a comparison between 2015 and 2016.

It also highlights concrete activities related to key themes, which were of particular significance in 2016: AVRR from transit countries, innovative initiatives to assist migrants in vulnerable situations, partnership and cooperation projects conducted to enhance the provision of assistance to migrants, and research and evidence-based programming applied to AVRR. Voices of returnees are also echoed through direct testimonies shared in the report.

“The impact that return has on host countries, transit countries, and countries of origin, and most importantly on migrants and their communities, cannot be neglected. AVRR remains one of IOM’s core assistance and represents a win-win situation for all concerned, as it provides a humane, dignified, and cost-effective way to return home and to reintegrate within communities,” concluded Mr. Nguyen.

[Security Council warned DR Congo’s violence on rise amid little political progress](#)

11 July 2017 – The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to be a major source of concern, with violence in the Kasai provinces, in the western part of the vast country, reaching “disturbing” levels, the United Nations Security Council was told today.

Presenting the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the DRC, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, who recently visited the country, urged the Council to support the Government and the people to preserve the gains of the past 17 years.

“The current political impasse, the rising insecurity, and the worsening human rights and humanitarian situation in the DRC require a concerted response from regional and international partners,” Mr. Lacroix said.

“This response must aim to help to create the conditions for a successful transition and the holding of free, fair and inclusive elections, in accordance with the Constitution,” he stressed, with a nod to a political agreement signed last year which specified that elections would be held by the end of this year.

The agreement – facilitated by Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) mediators, and reached in DRC's capital, Kinshasa, on 31 December 2016 – allowed President Joseph Kabila to stay in power beyond the end of his term.

In today's statement, Mr. Lacroix said implementation of the Agreement "remains largely inadequate."

"At a time when the DRC is at the mid-point of its transition, it is more necessary than ever for national political actors and international partners, including the members of the Council, to remobilize the political agreement of 31 December 2016," the senior UN official stressed.

Supporting the implementation of the Agreement – in addition to paving the way for elections and protecting civilians – remains a key priority of the UN peacekeeping mission in the country, known as MONUSCO, Mr. Lacroix said.

He underscored his commitment "to ensuring that MONUSCO delivers on its core mandated objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible" while responding to the changing situation on the ground.

MONUSCO is currently undergoing a strategic review, which will likely result shifts in its structure and mandate, based on options presented to the Security Council by 30 September.



Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, briefs the Security Council on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: UN Photo/ Manuel Elias

'Reports of daily human rights violations and abuse'

Amid the political impasse, the focus in the country faces rising insecurity, with particular concern over violence in the Kasai provinces, and a recent increase in inter-ethnic violence there.

"Disturbing reports of human rights violations and abuses continue to be received on a daily basis," Mr. Lacroix said.

Dozens of mass graves have been reported so far, and the national investigation efforts are "slow," he said, adding that "MONUSCO has also received disturbing reports of summary executions and rapes including of civilians by the security forces."

Between May and June, the number of displaced persons in the DRC increased by 26 per cent to 1.3 million, according to UN figures.

Noting that he visited the country last month, Mr. Lacroix said he had stressed the need to prioritize political means to address the situation in the Kasais and emphasized the urgency of ensuring accountability.

He also stressed UN's continued focus on ensuring that those responsible for the killing of UN human rights colleagues, Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, are brought to justice.

Despite the insecurity, MONUSCO has been able to support pockets of stability, such as in the town of Tshimbulu, where some schools and churches have reopened.

"Through a combination of human rights monitoring and political outreach, supported by a light but increasing military presence, the Mission is helping to bring back some measure of stability wherever it can," Mr. Lacroix said.