

UN chief appoints head of panel laying groundwork for possible war crimes probe in Syria

3 July 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today announced the appointment of Catherine Marchi-Uhel of France as the head of the independent panel to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for most serious violations of international law in Syria.

The panel, formally known as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, was [established by the UN General Assembly in December last year](#).

Ms. Marchi-Uhel is the first Head of the Mechanism.

Since 2015, she had been serving as the Ombudsperson for the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

According to a [statement](#) issued today, she also has extensive experience in the judiciary and in public service, including in the fields of criminal law, transitional justice and human rights.

She was previously a judge in France and an international judge at the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.

SEE ALSO: [Syria: UN chief Guterres clarifies tasks of panel laying groundwork for possible war crimes probe](#)

Ms. Marchi-Uhel also served as the Senior Legal Officer and Head of Chambers at the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and worked in legal positions at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with UN peacekeeping missions.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka appointed head of UN Women for the second term

Also today, Mr. Guterres following consultations with UN Member States and the Executive Board of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women ([UN Women](#)), [announced the appointment](#) of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka of South Africa as Executive Director of UN Women for a further term of four years.

She was initially appointed to the position in July 2013 and assumed office a month later.

Before joining UN Women, she worked with women and girls in different capacities in civil society and as a public representative, focusing on political and economic rights as well as girls' education.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka was the also first woman to hold the position of Deputy President of South Africa (2005-2008). She also held a number of senior positions at the South African Government as well as in the country's parliament.

[Turning national pledges into action crucial in fight against hunger, stresses head of UN agency](#)

3 July 2017 – Highlighting that the number of people going hungry across the world has increased since 2015, threatening to undo years of progress, the head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) today called for translating commitments into action at the national level.

[“Hunger will only be defeated if countries translate their pledges into action](#), especially at national and local levels,” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said at the opening of the agency's biennial conference in Rome.

Concerted effort is required in countries affected by conflict and climate change – which collectively house nearly 60 per cent of the world's population suffering from hunger – he underscored.

“Peace is of course the key to ending these crises, but we cannot wait for peace to take action [...] it is extremely important to ensure that these people have the conditions to continue producing their own food.”

FAO has currently identified 19 countries in a “protracted crisis” situation, often facing extreme climatic events, such as droughts and floods. It has also signalled the high risk of famine in north-east Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen with 20 million people severely affected.

These extreme conditions not only disrupt the lives of those affected, they also force many to migrate in search of better lives, compounding the distress. The most vulnerable – especially women – are often the worst impacted.

To save lives, we have to save their livelihoods José Graziano da Silva,
FAO chief

In order to alleviate the suffering of millions, the UN agency will, over the next two years, be focusing its efforts on the promotion of sustainable agriculture, climate change mitigation and adaptation, poverty reduction, water scarcity, migration as well as supporting conflict-affected rural livelihoods.

“To save lives, we have to save their livelihoods,” stressed Mr. Graziano da Silva.

Transforming agriculture sector critical for [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development – UNDP chief

Also today, delivering the McDougall Memorial Lecture, Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), highlighted that [transforming agriculture was crucial to transform the world](#), as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This, he said, is in many ways a “profound political reforms agenda.”

“Doing so cannot be seen as a technical challenge to be addressed within the agricultural sector, but rather as a complex undertaking that calls for integrated approaches considering economic, environmental, and social aspects,” said Mr. Steiner.

“[This] needs to recognize farmers as agents of change, operating within a larger ‘agriculture economy,’ that with the right incentives and enablers, can leverage agriculture to enhance livelihoods and sustainability.”

The lecture honours Frank Lidgett McDougall, an Australian economist, who played a key role in the creation of FAO.

The FAO Conference, being held from 3 to 8 July, is the UN agency’s highest governing body. It reviews and decides on FAO’s programme of work and budget, and discusses priority areas related to food and agriculture across the globe.

[UN health agency declares end to latest Ebola outbreak in DR Congo](#)

3 July 2017 – A recent outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is over, the United Nations health agency today said, while adding that enhanced surveillance for the virus continues.

The announcement comes 42 days since the last confirmed Ebola patient in the affected Bas-Uélé province tested negative for the disease for the second time.

With the end of this epidemic, DRC has once again proved to the world that [we can control](#) the very deadly Ebola virus if we respond early in a coordinated and efficient way," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the new Director-General of the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

At least four people died, and more than 580 were registered and closely monitored after having come into contact with the virus, the UN agency reported.

The virus emerged in Likati, which according to WHO is "a remote, hard-to-reach area" bordering the Central African Republic and other provinces of the DRC.

UN officials said the response was "effective" and praised "the timely alert by local authorities of suspect cases, immediate testing of blood samples due to strengthened national laboratory capacity, the early announcement of the outbreak by the government, rapid response activities by local and national health authorities with the robust support of international partners, and speedy access to flexible funding."

National officials continue to screen for the virus and provide medical care to people who may have come into contact for Ebola.

This was the eighth outbreak of Ebola in the DRC, where the virus was discovered in 1976.

Likati is one of the areas where the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) had been providing technical support to local officials in May, to help them deliver lifesaving information about Ebola to local populations.

In coordination with WHO, UNICEF also trained people on how to use chlorine and disinfect homes to avoid spreading the virus, as well as how to wash hands properly and reduce contamination by adapting local burial practices.

[Deputy UN chief highlights stronger AU-UN partnership to benefit Africa's youth](#)

3 July 2017 – Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed today called for strengthening the relationship between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations to deliver on promised development for Africa's youth.

Addressing her first African Union Summit since taking office, Ms. Mohammed said that the AU's thematic focus this year on youth is a "powerful reminder" of the core principle at the heart of the [2030 Agenda](#) for

Sustainable Development, the AU's strategic framework known as Agenda 2063 and other global agreements, namely, creating a better world for the next generation.

“For the 226 million young people aged 15 to 24 living in Africa today, these agendas address challenges and opportunities that are integral to their futures,” she [said](#).

“Today you are here taking decisions that will ensure that Africa benefits from the full potential of all its people, including young women and men,” she added, in a nod to this year's theme of [Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in Youth](#).

“Investing in our youth today reaps the dividend of a peaceful and prosperous Africa tomorrow.”

Addressing leaders from across the continent who have gathered at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Ms. Mohammed called for “building new bridges between us, and fortifying the ones that already exist” to deliver on the promises of the development agenda for Africa and its people.

In April, the UN-AU annual conference in New York resulted in a joint framework for enhanced partnership on peace and security. The two organizations are now preparing a joint framework on sustainable development, focusing on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of Agenda 2063, according to Ms. Mohammed.

She also noted that the UN will be collaborating with the AU on a new UN-European Union initiative to be launched at the UN General Assembly this September to end gender-based violence around the world.

The deputy UN chief also highlighted some of the other areas where the UN and the AU are working more closely, including on efforts to enhance the UN's partnership with Africa's regional economic communities in areas of peacekeeping, elections and democratic transitions.

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres recently reiterated the need for “predictable, reliable and sustainable” financing for AU peace operations, and is said to be working on a set of concrete proposals for the UN Security Council.

“Our efforts should continue to be based on urgency, flexibility and innovation to improve complementarity, cost-effectiveness and impact,” Ms. Mohammed said.

She also echoed Mr. Guterres' call at the G7 summit in Italy, where he urged world leaders to invest in young people, with stronger investment in technology, relevant education and capacity-building in Africa.

“The challenge of strengthening Africa's human capital, starting with its young people, has galvanized commitments to promote their rights and invest in quality and relevant education at all levels, health, science and technology and innovation,” said Ms. Mohammed.

[Refugee and migrant flows from Libya to Europe on the rise – UNHCR study](#)

3 July 2017 – Movements by sea from Libya to Europe, despite being the most dangerous route for reaching the continent, have increased and there are indications that it will likely continue to do so, a new study by the United Nations refugee agency has revealed.

According to [Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges](#), a study commissioned by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), around half of those travelling to the country did so believing they could find jobs there, but ended up fleeing onwards to Europe to escape life-threatening insecurity, instability, difficult economic conditions and widespread exploitation and abuse.

Foreign nationals going to Libya are part of mixed migration flows, meaning that people with different backgrounds and motivations travel together along the same routes, often with the help of ruthless people smugglers and criminal gangs, said the UN agency in a news release today, [announcing the findings](#).

They include refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, environmental migrants, victims of trafficking and stranded migrants, among others.

The study also found that almost 80 per cent of the [refugees and migrants](#) in Libya were young men (80 per cent), aged 22 on average and travelling alone (72 per cent).

Of particular concern was the rise in number of unaccompanied and separated children travelling alone, now representing some 14 per cent of all arrivals in Europe via the Central Mediterranean route, as well as women, particularly those from West and Central Africa, who could be victims of trafficking.

Refugees and migrants in Libya also tended to have a low level of education, with 49 per cent having little or no formal education and only 16 per cent having received vocational training or higher education, noted the study.

It also revealed that while economic reasons was the major factor motivating people to travel, many were also trying to flee violence, conflict or political persecution in their countries of origin.

In addition from people from within the African continent, the refugees and migrants in Libya also included individuals from as far as Syria, Iraq and Bangladesh.

However, many arriving in the country risk being kidnapped, held captive and

abused by human smugglers or criminal gangs.

RELATED: ['No limit' to cruelty of traffickers, says UN agency, as video surfaces of abused migrants in Libya](#)

In the news release, UNHCR noted that conflict, instability and the collapse of the justice system and reigning impunity in Libya have contributed to an environment where human smuggling and criminal networks flourish.

In order to provide humanitarian assistance to those arriving as well as to the Libyans affected by the ongoing conflict, UNHCR is scaling up its response and recently issued an appeal for \$75.5 million to strengthen protection monitoring and interventions, as well as advocacy on issues related to respect for human rights, access to basic services, asylum procedures and freedom of movement.

The UN agency is also stepping up efforts in Libya and the neighbouring countries to provide credible alternatives, find durable solutions and establish legal pathways for refugees and asylum seekers, as an alternative to dangerous trips to the country or over the Central Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

The study was commissioned by UNHCR and done by Altai Consulting, a specialised consulting firm that focuses on research, monitoring and evaluation in fragile states, and IMPACT Initiatives, a Geneva-based think-tank that assesses, monitors and evaluates aid programmes.

Its findings are primarily based on qualitative data including interviews with refugees and migrants collected in Libya, Algeria, Chad, Italy, Niger and Tunisia, between October and December 2016.