

# At Vienna forum, young people raise their voices for world free of nuclear weapons

29 June 2017 – Around 100 young people from 54 countries are raising their voices and harnessing social media to help mobilize support for a world free of nuclear weapons, and advance the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Youth are among the 1,000 participants at this week's Science and Technology 2017 Conference, held in Vienna, Austria, which provides a forum for scientists around the world to exchange knowledge and share advances in monitoring and verification technologies of relevance to the CTBT, which prohibits nuclear explosions anywhere in the world.

The meeting, which concludes on Friday, is convened by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, known as the CTBTO, a UN partner organization.

"Although we are not government leaders or in a position to influence public policy, we have a voice and when we use our voice collectively, we can make a big impact," said Carlos Rodriguez, a student at the University of Dallas in the United States.

"We have to find ways to collaborate across borders to ensure that we live in a peaceful and safe world that future generations can enjoy," he added.

The youth listened to presentations from scientists around the world specializing in technologies for detecting nuclear events and committed to using social media and blogs to encourage others to push for the Treaty's entry into force.

For the CTBT, adopted by the General Assembly in September 1996, to enter into force, ratification is required from the so-called Annex II countries. Of these, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, and the US have yet to ratify.

"There is a big nuclear threat at the moment. It is important that we know that there is a solution. The CTBT is the first step towards a world free of nuclear weapons, which guarantees peace for all," said Juan Bustamante, a young Ecuadorian who is studying in Vancouver, Canada.

He encouraged other young people to talk with their friends about the Treaty and its importance to raise awareness of the issue and push for the instrument's entry into force.

"Nuclear weapons should be a thing of the past," said 21-year-old Kevin Bai, who was born in China, raised in the US and is currently studying and working in Dubai.

His message is addressed to young people in Asia: "The eyes of the world are set in Asia because it will be the centre of growth and progress. If you are an Asian resident, you should not be satisfied with being a leader in economic development or scientific research. You should demand that it also becomes a leader in peace and diplomacy because stability is the bedrock upon which human civilization is built," he emphasized.

"If you think nuclear warfare and nuclear tests do not belong in our societies and we should get rid of them, then you can contribute to this movement," he went on to say, encouraging young people to familiarize themselves with the Treaty and spread the word.

Magdelene Wangui, a young woman from Nairobi, Kenya, called on African youth to support those living in the Annex II countries to demand that their governments take an affirmative decision.

Meanwhile, 26-year-old Alan Juarez of Mexico summed it up like this: "We have the power to change the future... We can raise our voices around the world, educate ourselves and change the situation. All these tensions of nuclear weapons and the human rights crises, we have the power to end these problems."

Rizwan Asghar comes from Pakistan, one of the eight countries whose ratification is still pending. "I come from a country where we still have to feed millions of people. At the same time, my country invests billions of dollars in the development of nuclear weapons. I do not understand that rationale. There is no logic in increasing the nuclear arsenal," he said.

"It is time for Pakistan to ratify the Treaty," he stressed, as he invited the youth of his country to use social media networks to generate pressure on politicians with influence in these decisions.

Prior to the adopting of the CTBT in 1996, some 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out worldwide. The US carried out 1,000 of them, followed by the former Soviet Union, which was responsible for 700.

Three countries have broken the de facto moratorium since 1996: India and Pakistan in 1998; and DPRK in 2006, 2009 and 2013, and then again twice in 2016.

Natalia Zhurina of Russia, a country that has already ratified the instrument, underscored the importance of taking that step.

"It is vital because we owe a peaceful future to our children and to the generations to come."

---

## Ending occupation only way to lay foundations for lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace – UN officials

29 June 2017 – Top United Nations officials today declared that ending the occupation is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty.

“It is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people,” [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said in a message to a forum held at UN Headquarters to mark 50 years since the start of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan.

In the message, read out by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Guterres said that it is time to return to direct negotiations to resolve all final status issues on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, agreements and international law. It is also time to end the conflict by establishing an independent Palestinian State, side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel, he added.

The occupation, he noted, has imposed a heavy humanitarian and development burden on the Palestinian people. “Generations of Palestinians have grown up in crowded refugee camps, many in abject poverty, and with little or no prospect of a better life for their children.”

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remove a driver of violent extremism and terrorism in the Middle East, the Secretary-General added, and “open the doors to cooperation, security, prosperity and human rights for all.”

Ms. Mohammed, in her own remarks, said today is an occasion not only to reflect on the costs and consequences of 50 years of occupation, but also to look ahead at what must be done to end this situation.

“I understand the deep sense of despair of the Palestinian people. For far too long, the international community has failed to find a just and lasting solution to their displacement,” she told the forum, which is convened by the General Assembly’s Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

“The lives of generations of Palestinians and Israelis have been confined by a conflict that has shaped the physical and human landscape with concrete walls, checkpoints, and watch towers, all under a heavy atmosphere of fear, mutual distrust and despair,” she continued.

“Some think that the situation can be managed. They are all wrong. It must be

resolved.” Real peace, Ms. Mohammed stressed, cannot be achieved without a just and lasting resolution, adding that the two-State solution is the only path to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis can realize their national and historic aspirations and live in peace, security and dignity.

The two-day forum brings together international experts, including from the State of Palestine and Israel, representatives of the diplomatic community, civil society, as well as academics and students to discuss the ongoing occupation in a series of interactive panels.

---

## [Côte d’Ivoire: UN chief voices support for sustaining ‘hard-won peace’ after mission’s closure](#)

29 June 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has welcomed the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire ([UNOCI](#)), which will take place on Friday, and reiterated the UN family’s commitment to helping the people and Government of the West African nation to sustain their hard-won peace.

“The Secretary-General congratulates the people and Government of Côte d’Ivoire for their determination and efforts in turning the page of crisis and conflict,” said Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, in a [statement](#).

After 13 years, the UN is completing the peacekeeping phase of its engagement with Côte d’Ivoire, after successfully assisting the country in restoring peace and stability following the post-2010 election crisis.

When UNOCI closes its doors on 30 June, it will mark the most recent successful completion of a peacekeeping operation in West Africa since the UN mission in Sierra Leone in 2005.

This milestone was made possible thanks to a significantly improved security situation in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as the extension of State authority and the deployment of public services, the strengthening of democratic institutions, progress in security sector reform and steady economic development.

The Secretary-General reiterated the commitment of the rest of the UN family present in Côte d’Ivoire to support the Government with the implementation of outstanding reform activities with a view to ensuring that “the hard-won peace can be sustained and the country and its people will continue to progress and thrive,” the spokesperson added.

Mr. Guterres also commended the significant contributions of all partners

national, regional and international in the Ivorian peace process, and is appreciative of the excellent leadership of his Special Representative, Aïchatou Mindaoudou, and her predecessors.

Paying tribute to all uniformed and civilian personnel who served with UNOCI, the Secretary-General expressed his profound respect for the memory of the 150 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace with the Mission, and his gratitude to all troop- and police- contributing countries.

UN Special Representative Aïchatou Mindaoudou and local residents highlight the vital contributions UNOCI made in restoring peace and security in the nation.

---

## [Delays in access in Syria 'will mean further death,' warns top UN relief official](#)

29 June 2017 – Citing attacks against aid workers in Syria, the removal of life-saving supplies from convoys and bureaucratic impediments restricting access, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator has called for ensuring immediate and safe humanitarian access to save lives that are dependent on assistance.

Briefing the Security Council today, Stephen O'Brien, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, also underlined the need for a sustained reduction in fighting to ease the burden on civilians and create an environment conducive for assistance.

"Now is the time. Any delay will mean further death. The clock is ticking," he warned.

The Syrian conflict, now into its seventh year, has taken a terrible toll on the country's population: hundreds of thousands have been killed, more than 13.5 million left [in need of humanitarian assistance](#), about 6.3 million displaced within the country, and some 5.1 million forced to flee as refugees outside its borders.

The situation is particularly dire in Raqqa, where the Syrian Democratic Forces, supported by coalition forces, launched an offensive to take the city from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), and in the last days fully encircled it.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), at least 173 people have been reportedly killed in air and ground strikes.

Although about 25,000 have reportedly fled the city since the latest phase of operations, as many as 100,000 civilians could still be trapped there, said Mr. O'Brien.

*Multitude of challenges for aid workers*

On relief operations in Syria, Mr. O'Brien said that the work of humanitarians remains extremely difficult and bureaucratic restrictions on top of attacks and removal of relief supplies has made their operating space incredibly complex and complicated.

Bureaucratic restrictions, he said, delay convoys and often force them to abort their missions or turn around, leaving relief workers vulnerable to attacks.

In one such incident, a driver of a truck was hit by sniper fire from unknown gunmen after his convoy had to turn back to avoid travelling at night. The convoy had been stopped for several hours at a Government checkpoint. A bullet also grazed a second driver.

Those who deliberately direct attacks against humanitarian workers are committing war crimes  
Stephen O'Brien, Emergency Relief Coordinator

The injured driver survived and is in stable condition, said Mr. O'Brien.

"I condemn such acts in the strongest terms, and call for accountability for those responsible," he stressed. "Those who deliberately direct attacks against humanitarian workers are committing war crimes."