

UN chief welcomes deployment of regional force to combat terrorism in the Sahel

23 June 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has welcomed the deployment by the so-called Group of Five (G5) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – of a joint force to tackle the threat of terrorism and organized crime in the Sahel region.

In a statement issued late last night by his spokesman, the Secretary-General welcomed the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 2359 (2017), which created the joint task force.

Mr. Guterres reiterated the UN's commitment, working closely with the African Union (AU) and other partners, to do its utmost [to help mobilise adequate resources](#) for the attainment of the objectives of the Force as agreed by the leaders of the G5 and endorsed by the AU Peace and Security Council.

The unanimous adoption of the resolution on Wednesday coincided with the second anniversary of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The agreement, signed on 20 June following Algeria-led mediation, included political and institutional reforms, and those relating to defence and security. It also encompasses humanitarian, economic and legal aspects.

In his statement, Mr. Guterres welcomed the important progress made by the Government and the groups, and stressed the need for expeditious progress on the remaining aspects of the agreement for sustaining peace in Mali and the region.

UN opens international probe into alleged abuses in DR Congo's Kasai provinces

23 June 2017 – The United Nations today opened an international investigation into alleged killings, mutilations and destruction of entire villages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's restive Kasai provinces.

The UN Human Rights Council, comprised of 47 countries, adopted the resolution by consensus during a meeting earlier today in Geneva.

The victims – those who have been killed, maimed, subjected to terrible violence and forced from their homes – deserve justice, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who has been called on to appoint a team of international experts to carry out the investigation.

In a statement, Mr. Zeid, who has repeatedly called for a probe, said the creation of the investigation is a step forward in identifying [the perpetrators of gross violations and bringing them to justice](#).

His office said it expects and counts on the full cooperation of the authorities – including unfettered access to all sites, files, people and places.

He added that the team will conduct investigations in a fully independent manner, in accordance with international standards.

Addressing the Council on Tuesday, Mr. Zeid recounted chilling details of apparent ethnic violence that included mutilated babies and fetuses.

Violence flared up in the DRC's Kasai regions in August 2016, when a customary chief was killed by Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), as DRC's armed forces are known. The Kamuina Nsapu militia (named after the chief) then set about avenging the killing, committing widespread atrocities as well as recruiting children into its ranks.

The gravity of the situation was further underscored by the discovery in April of forty-two mass graves by Mr. Zeid's office ([OHCHR](#)) and the UN mission in the country, known by its French acronym, MONUSCO.

Since the start of the violence, more than 1.3 million people have since been displaced within the country as well as thousands forced to flee across its borders.

[In Uganda, UN chief meets with South Sudanese refugees, urges world to show solidarity](#)

22 June 2017 – With Uganda hosting almost one million South Sudanese refugees – as sisters and brothers and sharing with them their land and everything they have, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today urged the international community to show solidarity with those that had fled their homes, as well as with the Ugandan Government and people.

In a world where so many people are [selfishly closing their doors](#),

closing their borders, not allowing refugees to come, this example deserves praise [and] admiration from the whole international community,” Mr. Guterres told reporters at the Imvepi Refugee Reception Centre in the Arua district of northern Uganda.

Imvepi is the first stop for many South Sudanese refugees once they cross the border into Uganda. The camp, which opened in February this year, is already filling up; hosting some 120,000 refugees, mostly women and children, fleeing violence and instability in the neighbouring country.

In just the past year, the overall refugee population in Uganda has more than doubled – from 500,000 to more than 1.25 million – making the East African country host to the world's fastest growing refugee emergency.

The UN chief pointed out that tomorrow, the international community would have the opportunity to express its solidarity, “responding to our appeal for massive financial support, both for humanitarian aid for the refugees, but also for the investments necessary for the education system, the health system, the infrastructure, the [local] environment, to be able to cope with this enormous challenge.”

Mr. Guterres was referring to the 'Solidarity Summit,' which opened today in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, and is expected to wrap up tomorrow. Co-hosted by Uganda and the UN, the event aims to rally international support for refugees and host communities in the form of donations, investments and innovative programmes.



Secretary-General António Guterres speaks to media in the Imvepi refugee camp

in Uganda. UN Photo/Mark Garten



UN chief meets South Sudan refugees in the camp who are awaiting relocation. UN Photo/Mark Garten



Mr. Guterres and David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, serve food at the Imvepi Camp reception area for the newly arrived refugees. UN Photo/Mark Garten



Secretary-General António Guterres and Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of Uganda, speak with host community representatives on issues relating to the refugee situation. UN Photo/Mark Garten



The 'Solidarity Summit,' in the Ugandan capital of Kampala aims to rally international support for refugees and host communities in the form of donations, investments and innovative programmes. UN Photo/Mark Garten



“Peace in South Sudan is a must for these people to be able to have a future,” said the Secretary-General. UN Photo/Mark Garten

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“At the same time, I cannot forget that twelve years ago I was here, in June, in this same place. I was [marking] World Refugee Day with South Sudanese refugees that were singing with joy because they were going back home soon,” said Mr. Guterres, who is the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He said he had later accompanied many of them across the border with the hope that the their new country would live in peace.

Unfortunately, that had not been the case. South Sudan’s leaders “do not deserve the people of their country,” said the Secretary-General, stressing that the South Sudanese people have been suffering enormously [in an] endless war.

“It is time for the war to end. It is time for all the leaders of South Sudan to understand that they need to stop this war,” he said, expressing gratitude for the efforts made by the Heads of State of the region, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union and by the UN to help create the conditions for peace to be re-established.

“Peace in South Sudan is a must for these people to be able to have a future,” said the Secretary-General.

Millions could escape poverty by finishing secondary education, says UN cultural agency

22 June 2017 – While a new United Nations study shows that the global poverty rate could be more than halved if all adults completed secondary school, data show high out-of-school rates in many countries, making it likely that education completion levels will remain well below that target for generations.

“The new analysis on education’s far-reaching benefits released today should be good news for all those working on the Sustainable Development Goal to eradicate poverty by 2030,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

“It shows that we have a concrete plan to ensure people no longer have to live on barely a few dollars a day, and that plan has education at its heart,” she added.

Based on the effects that education had on growth and poverty reduction in developing countries from 1965 to 2010, the new analysis by UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team, shows that nearly 60 million people could escape poverty if all adults had just two more years of schooling.

“If all adults completed secondary education, 420 million could be lifted out of poverty, reducing the total number of poor people by more than half globally and by almost two-thirds in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia,” according to UNESCO.

The paper, from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education, is being released ahead of the UN High Level Political Forum ([HLPF](#)) which will be held in New York from 10 to 19 July and focuses on poverty eradication in pursuit of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development. It demonstrates the importance of recognizing education as a core lever for ending poverty in all its forms, everywhere.

Studies have shown that education has direct and indirect impacts on both economic growth and poverty. It provides skills that boost employment opportunities and incomes while helping to protect from socio-economic vulnerabilities. An equitable expansion of education is likely to reduce inequality, lifting the poorest from the bottom of the ladder.

However, if current trends continue, of the 61 million primary school age children currently out of school, 17 million will never set foot in a classroom – one in three of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, Western

Asia and Northern Africa, and more than one in four of those in Central Asia and Southern Asia.

Moreover, girls in poor countries continue to face particularly steep barriers to education.

While UNESCO underscores that education must reach the poorest in order to maximize its benefits and reduce income inequality, according to the GEM Report, children from the poorest 20 per cent of families are eight times as likely to be out of school as children from the richest 20 per cent in lower-middle-income countries.

The paper stresses the need to reduce the direct and indirect costs of education for families.

[Global narcotics market ‘thriving;’ range of available drugs diversifying at alarming pace – UN](#)

22 June 2017 – Of the quarter of a billion people who used drugs in 2015, about 29.5 million – or 0.6 per cent of the global adult population – were engaged in problematic use and suffered from drug use disorders, including dependence, according to report out today from the United Nations drugs and crime agency.

Opioids were the [most harmful drug type](#) and accounted for 70 per cent of the negative health impact associated with drug use disorders worldwide, said the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)).

“There is much work to be done to confront the many harms inflicted by drugs to health, development, peace and security, in all regions of the world,” said UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov in a statement on the launch of the 2017 [World Drug Report](#).

Marking 20 years of its publication, the report provides a global overview of the supply and demand for opiates, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances (NPS), as well as their impacts on health.

This year’s report states that opium production is up and the cocaine market is thriving. In 2016, global opium production increased by one third compared with the previous year and this was primarily due to higher opium poppy yields in Afghanistan.

The report also highlights the scientific evidence for hepatitis C causing

greatest harm among people who use drugs; and spotlights further diversification of the thriving drug market, as well as changing business models for drug trafficking and organized crime.

Disorders related to the use of amphetamines also account for a considerable share of the global burden of disease. And while the NPS market is still relatively small, users are unaware of the content and dosage of psychoactive substances in some NPS. This potentially exposes users to additional serious health risks.

The 2017 report finds that hepatitis C is causing the greatest harm among the estimated 12 million people who inject drugs worldwide. About 1.6 million people are living with HIV and 6.1 million are living with hepatitis C, while around 1.3 million are suffering from both hepatitis C and HIV.

Overall, three times more people who use drugs die from hepatitis C (222,000) than from HIV (60,000).

Changing business models for drug trafficking and organized crime

In 2014, transnational organized crime groups across the globe were estimated to have generated between one fifth and one third of their revenues from drug sales. Mobile communications offers new opportunities to traffickers, while the 'dark net' allows users to anonymously buy drugs with a crypto-currency, such as bitcoin.

While drug trafficking over the dark net remains small, there has been an increase in drug transactions of some 50 per cent annually between September 2013 and January 2016 according to one study. Typical buyers are recreational users of cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, hallucinogens and NPS.

Drugs and terrorism

Although not all terrorist groups depend on drug profits, some do, notes the report. Without the proceeds of drug production and trafficking, which make up almost half of the Taliban's annual income, the reach and impact of the group would probably not be what it is today.

Up to 85 per cent of opium cultivation in Afghanistan occurs in territory under some influence of the Taliban.