

In Kabul, UN chief calls for peace and compassion

14 June 2017 – Expressing solidarity with Afghan people, in the wake of recent violence in the country, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today underscored the Organization's full commitment to work with the Government and people of the country to build a sustainable and prosperous future for them.

"Peace is the solution [...] the international community, the neighbouring countries [and] all those related to the Afghan crisis need to come together and understand that this is a war that has no military solution," said the Secretary-General, at a press conference in Kabul, where he arrived earlier today.

"We need to have peace," he added, underscoring that at the same time, the level of humanitarian assistance to the country had to be increased and conditions needed to be created for Afghans to be able to live in dignity.

Since his time as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2005-2015), Mr. Guterres has been paying a solidarity visit to Muslim communities during the holy month of Ramadan, and his visit to Afghanistan was a continuation of his expression of solidarity with them.

While in Kabul, the UN chief met with displaced men and women from the Kapisa province, now living in a settlement on the outskirts of Kabul.

In their interaction, the displaced persons underscored that security remained the prerequisite for their return to their homes and that education, including for women and girls was critical for supporting themselves and their families. They also stressed their need for medical care.

"I have an enormous admiration for the courage and the resilience of the Afghan people, and they were very eloquently demonstrated in my meeting this morning," noted the UN chief.

The Secretary-General also held bilateral meetings with Ashraf Ghani, the President of Afghanistan, as well as the country's Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Abdullah, where they discussed cooperation between the Organization and the Government of Afghanistan as well as the security situation in the country and the need to better mobilize the international community to counter terrorism.

UN and partners in Sri Lanka appeal for resources as receding floods reveal extent of damage

14 June 2017 – UN and partners in Sri Lanka appeal for resources as receding floods reveal extent of damage

Following last month's severe flooding and landslides in Sri Lanka that impacted some 630,000 people, the United Nations and humanitarian partners today launched an urgent appeal for more resources to reach those in the worst-hit parts of the country with urgent assistance.

On 25 and 26 May, heavy rains triggered floods and landslides in 15 out of the island nation's 25 districts, sweeping away homes, clinics, schools, roads and water systems. Some 212 people perished and another 79 are still missing.

Immediately after the disaster, UN agencies and relief partners responded with assistance in priority sectors identified by the Government. However, access to the most remote communities was cut off due to destroyed roads and bridges.

As flood waters recede and more areas become accessible, the extent of damage and the response needed is revealed: emergency shelter, sanitation and hygiene, and health services are high on the list. On top of this, damaged infrastructure, particularly related to water and hygiene, has increased the risk of waterborne diseases.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Emergency Response Plan amounting to \$22.7 million launched by the Humanitarian Country Team (UN as well as non-UN humanitarian actors in the country), focuses on providing immediate life-saving and protection assistance, emergency livelihood support, and access to basic services to people worst hit.

The Plan also aims to strengthen resilience of affected communities to cope with and recover from the disaster.

It targets about 374,000 people in seven districts, including the four most affected districts Galle, Rathnapura, Kalutara and Matara.

The Humanitarian Country Team, with the support of the international community, will continue responding to the needs of those affected by the floods through the implementation of the Emergency Response Plan, paying particular attention to supporting the most vulnerable people in the affected communities, highlighted Una McCauley, UN Resident Coordinator for Sri Lanka and the Chair of the Team.

OCHA also reported that an allocation of \$4 million was made by the UN

Central Emergency Response Fund to assist rapid delivery of life-saving shelter, health and food assistance, as well as provide essential non-food items.

Cash assistance will also be provided to affected people to meet their shelter and food needs, in addition to the provision temporary shelters, shelter repair kits, and emergency healthcare and reproductive healthcare support.

The recent disasters hit Sri Lanka when the country was reeling under bad drought which had affected about a million people, leaving them vulnerable to food insecurity.

The floods and landslides have washed away the crops that managed to survive the drought and further increased the urgency of more resources to ensure assistance for people who have already suffered much hardship.

[Vanuatu, UN partner to test drones for vaccines delivery to inaccessible communities](#)

14 June 2017 – The Government of Vanuatu and the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) are partnering to launch what may be the Pacific’s first-ever trial of drones to deliver life-saving vaccines to inaccessible remote communities in the island nation.

UNICEF is excited to work with the Government of Vanuatu to support this initiative, [said](#) the UN agency’s Pacific Representative, Sheldon Yett, in a news release. Ensuring vaccines are consistently available in isolated and remote communities is one of the keys to sustaining high rates of immunisation. We welcome innovative measures to ensure that every child is reached.

The Government is [inviting applications](#) from companies to test their Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS) technology for transportation of cargo in the Pacific. Successful applicants will be assessed for a long-term engagement with the Government.

Increasing availability, performance and declining cost of drones offer innovative opportunities in challenging environments such as Vanuatu.

An archipelago of 83 islands that run 1,600 kilometres north to south, 65 of which are inhabited and around 20 of which have airfields and established roads, Vanuatu faces considerable logistical challenges to reach, engage with and support remote communities.



Aerial shot of Emae Island in Vanuatu with Cooks Reef in the foreground.
Photo:Vanuatu Helicopters/2017/Andy Martin

This initiative explores options that allow the Government to enhance service delivery and significantly reduce costs as it does not require massive investment in infrastructure and transport.

"This is a milestone for Vanuatu," said Director General of the Ministry of Health, George Taleo. "If the trial shows that vaccine delivery using drones can work, and that it can be integrated into our existing national and provincial systems, then it will change the way we operate forever. If it works, we will allow us to better ensure availability of health supplies to our people even at community aid post levels."

[UN aid official warns of 'disastrous consequences' of power cut in Gaza](#)

14 June 2017 – A senior United Nations humanitarian official in the occupied Palestinian Territory warned today about the disastrous consequences of a further reduction in electricity supply to the Gaza Strip on the living conditions of two million Palestinians.

"A further increase in the length of blackouts is likely to lead to a total collapse of basic services, including critical functions in the health, water and sanitation sectors," said UN Humanitarian Coordinator Robert Piper in a statement.

"The people in Gaza should not be held hostage to this longstanding internal Palestinian dispute," he added, calling on the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and Israel to put the welfare of Gaza's residents first.

This year marks 50 years since the start of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory.

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Early this week, the Israeli cabinet agreed to a reduction in the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip, following a decision by the Palestinian Authority to reduce its monthly payments for that supply by 30 per cent.

The reduction will bring most households and service-providers down to 2 hours or so of power per day, he said.

Hospitals, water supply, waste water treatment and sanitation services have already been dramatically curtailed since mid-April and depend almost exclusively on a UN emergency fuel operation.

An additional reduction in electricity will require the delivery of one million litres of fuel monthly, under the UN operation, to keep minimum functions operating at 186 essential facilities across the Strip.

The UN has already appealed to the international community to support its limited humanitarian efforts to prevent the collapse of vital life-saving, health, water, sanitation and municipal services, Mr. Piper said.

[‘Security vacuum’ in Central Africa may be exploited by armed groups – UN envoy](#)

13 June 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Central Africa today expressed his concern that the withdrawal of troops from the regional force by some contributing countries would create a security vacuum that may be exploited by an armed group.

The continued threat by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) to regional stability should not be underestimated, in particular as the Ugandan and the South Sudanese forces have now disengaged from the African Union Regional Task Force (RTF), along with the United States special forces, François Loucény Fall, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa ([UNOCA](#)), told the Security Council.

He explained that the Central African Republic national security forces, which could in the long run fill the gap left by the exit of the Ugandan forces, still require training and structural reforms. And the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the country, known by its French acronym MINUSCA, is not mandated to conduct anti-LRA military operations.

Any training efforts would need to be in line with the overall security sector reform process and coordinated with other partners supporting the Central African armed forces, he added.

Collectively, there is a need to remain focused on efforts aimed at the total eradication of the LRA, he said, stressing that UNOCA will remain engaged, including by reviewing the UN regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the LRA, and ensuring coordination among the various stakeholders working on the issue.

His semi-annual briefing also touched on political tensions that have persisted in some Central African countries, mostly related to recent or future electoral processes, including Gabon and the Republic of the Congo.

As for Lake Chad Basin, he said that the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group have undermined development and exacerbated economic hardship in the region. Boko Haram remains a serious threat to regional stability despite the military progress achieved by the Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against the terrorist group.

In conclusion, he called for a strong commitment of the Security Council to the promotion of peace and security in Central Africa.