

Joint African action crucial to protect persons with albinism from violence, highlights UN expert

13 June 2017 – Highlighting the importance of cooperation among countries to overcome the violence and discrimination faced by persons with albinism, a United Nations rights expert has urged African nations to fully implement a regional action plan on ending attacks on persons with albinism.

The plan sets out clearly what States can do – for example educating the public, collecting data and researching the root causes of the violence, – said the UN Independent Expert on human rights of persons with albinism, Ikponwosa Ero, in her message for [International Albinism Awareness Day](#).

The regional action plan to end attacks on persons with albinism in Africa – the first-ever such joint initiative – was recently endorsed by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. It includes 15 practical steps which are expected to go a long way in addressing the persisting and deadly challenge.

International cooperation will be a turning point in the [long battle to end discrimination for people with albinism](#), some of whom continue to be murdered for their body parts, – added Ms. Ero.

According to a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the action plan focuses on ensuring accountability as well as support for victims and uses legal and policy frameworks to deter practices of witchcraft and trafficking in body parts.

Further, Ms. Ero underscored that persons with albinism also face significant barriers restricting their equal participation in society, impacting their rights to enjoy physical and mental health and their ability to access adequate health care, education, social services, legal protection, and redress for abuses.

In particular, women and children face violence, suffer from discrimination, stigma and social exclusion, forced into becoming marginalized within their communities and face social exclusion caused by misunderstanding, deeply entrenched prejudices and stereotyping.

‘We cannot underestimate the importance of joint action’ – UN Independent Expert

‘We cannot rest until we have seen change in people’s lives and tackled the root causes of the current situation,’ she said, calling everyone concerned to be bold and to persevere to ensure that all people with albinism enjoy their full human rights.

“We cannot underestimate the importance of joint action [...] we advance together, with renewed hope inspired by the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ which is at the core of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.”

Ms. Ero’s statement has been endorsed by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights; the UN Special Rapporteur on physical and mental health, Dainius Pûras; the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Mutuma Ruteere; the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar; and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN [Human Rights Council](#) to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

In December 2014, the UN General Assembly [designated](#) 13 June as the International Albinism Awareness Day to draw attention to the stigma and violence that persons with albinism everywhere in the world.

[On World Day Against Child Labour, UN urges protection for children in conflicts and disasters](#)

12 June 2017 – Children in areas affected by conflict and disasters are among the most vulnerable, the United Nations International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) in warning on the World Day Against Child Labour, making a strong call for an end to the scourge, especially as children trapped in crisis risk falling prey to trafficking or being forced into hazardous work.

“All children have the [right to be protected](#) from child labour,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder in a statement on the [World Day](#).

“Yet, around the world, there are still 168 million children in child labour. Eighty-five million of them are engaged in hazardous work.”

A significant portion these children find themselves undertaking dangerous work, living in areas affected by conflict and disaster and they are the focus of the 2017 commemoration of the World Day, marked annually on 12 June.

As the world strives to achieve the elimination of child labour by 2025, the UN underlined that conflicts and disasters have a devastating impact on people’s lives. They kill, maim, injure and force people to flee their homes; destroy livelihoods, push people into poverty and starvation, and trap many

in situations without basic safeguard for their rights.

The first to suffer from human rights violations and abuses are often boys and girls. Their schools are destroyed and basic services are disrupted. Many children are internally displaced or become refugees in other countries, and are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and child labour.

“Today, we are facing the greatest refugee crisis for decades,” said Mr. Ryder, referring to one of the main drivers of child labour. Globally over 1.5 billion people live in countries that are affected by conflict, violence and fragility. At the same time, around 200 million people are affected by disasters every year.

While a huge part of the world’s responsibility to provide sanctuary and support to children and their families is shouldered by neighbouring host countries, ILO’s Director-General says much more needs to be done to share fairly the responsibility to protect refugees.

In his statement, he particularly urges support to those States on the front line in the affected regions, so that they can provide access to the labour market for adult refugees and access to education for their children.

Amid growing concern for the safety of migrants and children in particular the ILO also noted that the [Minimum Age Convention](#), 1973 (No. 138) and the Convention [Worst Forms of Child Labour](#), 1999 (No. 182) have now been ratified by 169 and 180 States respectively.

“Tomorrow I will have the honour of receiving India’s ratification of both Conventions,” noted Mr Ryder, explaining that with this “great step forward towards universal ratification,” almost all the world’s children will be covered by Convention 182; and that coverage of Convention 138 will leap from 60 per cent to 80 per cent.

“Together with the near universal ratification of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), that sends a resounding message about our common cause and our common standards that protect children’s human rights,” he stated.

[Central African Republic: UN mission determined to fulfil mandate despite attacks on peacekeepers](#)

12 June 2017 – The United Nations envoy for the Central African Republic today warned against increasing attacks on civilians and peacekeeping personnel while stressing the need to reenergize the political process to

achieve sustainable peace in the conflict-torn country.

The intensity of the attacks, their premeditated nature and the targeting of ethnic minorities, are a reminder of the darkest moments of the Central African political and security crisis," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, in his briefing to the Security Council.

The new and disturbing fact is the systematic and fierce aggression against the peacekeepers," he added.

The envoy provided an update on the situation in Bangassou, where political spoilers demonstrated their intention of carrying out a de facto ethnic cleansing of the town. He said that the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) has gradually regained control of the town, but anti-Balaka elements continue to pose a serious threat to civilians and peacekeepers.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. According to the UN, more than half the population is in dire need of assistance. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

The situation in the southern-central prefectures of Ouaka and Mbomou remains complex as fighting continues between ex-Séléka factions the Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance (FPRC) and Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC).

He also expressed deep concern about the evolving situation in Bria, where some 80 per cent of the civilian population has been displaced.

Meanwhile, an outbreak of violence in the northwest prefectures of Ouham and Ouham Pende, was abated through a tripartite local mediation initiative at the end of May, with local and traditional authorities firmly in the lead and MINUSCA in a facilitation role.

The security situation in Bangui remains relatively calm thanks to continuous and integrated political and military efforts.

Despite harsh public criticism, Mission's resolve 'remains strong'

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga said that lately MINUSCA has been under harsh public criticism within CAR with each side expecting MINUSCA to fight its perceived enemy.

Even in the face of those cynics, MINUSCA's resolve remains stronger than ever, he said.

Each time MINUSCA exhibits strength against armed groups, it is a victory for stability [...] Each time tensions are defused through dialogue, it is another gain for peace, and we close the distance to achieving the end-

state of the mission a little bit more,” he said.

In this context, he said, “all constructive peace efforts need to be energized,” noting that the National Consultative and Follow-up Committee can provide an essential forum where the Government and the armed groups would not only discuss the modalities of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme but also broader issues related to peace and stability in the country.

He said that he believes the African Peace and Reconciliation initiative remains an essential element to facilitate an inclusive national dialogue with the support of the sub-region and finds recent contacts between the Government and the African Union and other parties encouraging.

Also briefing the Security Council was the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, who provided an update on the human rights mapping report that covered major violations committed in the country from 2003 to 2015.

The report detailed 620 incidents, including horrific accounts of entire villages being burnt to the ground and multiple incidents of gang rapes of women and girls, and extra-judicial killings. The vast majority of incidents were attributed to the Séléka /ex- Séléka and the anti-Balaka, and the Central African defence and security forces.

“This long list and patterns of past violations and abuses is unfortunately resuming today,” he said, adding that “this is therefore a timely moment to send an unequivocal message to the perpetrators of violations that their actions are being watched and documented, and that they will be held accountable.”

[UN agency chief urges world to 'step up' as refugee numbers outpace resettlement spots](#)

12 June 2017 – Against the backdrop of increasing refugee numbers around the globe, fuelled by crisis and insecurity, and an ever widening gap in places to resettle them, the top United Nations official dealing with refugee issues has called on governments to “step up” and deliver places for refugees in line with the commitments they have made.

“The fact is global resettlement needs today far outweigh the places made available by governments by a factor of 13 to one, despite more countries taking part in the programme and an increase in private sector and community involvement,” said Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner

for Refugees Filippo Grandi, at the opening of the UN agency's annual resettlement consultations in Geneva, Switzerland.

Recalling the New York Declaration, adopted by the 193 UN Member States, in September last year save lives to protect rights and share responsibility on the global issue, Mr. Grandi added:

"The Declaration was a milestone in global solidarity with refugees and the mainly developing countries which host almost 9 in 10 of them. But true sharing of responsibility requires places for refugees in third countries on a scale in line with the needs."

"[We need urgent action to get there](#)," he underscored.

In the Declaration, and the annexed Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), governments committed "amongst other objectives" to work on increasing resettlement places and other legal pathways for admission of refugees on a scale that would match the annual resettlement needs identified by UNHCR.

According to estimates, close to 1.2 million refugees need resettling globally, but only 93,200 places in resettlement countries are expected to be available this year "43 per cent fewer than in 2016."

Refugees in need of resettlement are those people identified by UNHCR as having particular problems in the countries where they have sought refuge because their life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk.

Last year, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) submitted more than 162,500 refugees for resettlement "the highest number in 20 years" and more than 125,800 started new lives in third countries.

Also last year, the number of third countries offering resettlement grew to 37, with some European governments setting up programmes for the first time and Argentina and Brazil, amongst others, making new commitments to resettle Syrian refugees.

Similarly, to assist the new resettlement states, UNHCR and [IOM](#) launched a support mechanism with support from donors. Community and private sponsorship programmes also increased.

"Despite the rhetoric against refugees in some quarters we have also seen an outpouring of good will, with ordinary citizens sponsoring refugees to live in their countries, inviting them into their homes and helping them to find jobs," Mr. Grandi added, urging all partners to support ways to provide additional places for refugees.

"Resettlement places not only help those refugees who face extreme difficulty in their first country of asylum, but are an important gesture of solidarity with countries hosting large numbers of refugees," he said.

Angola: Funds urgently needed as Congolese refugee influx overwhelms services, warns UN agency

12 June 2017 – As refugees fleeing violence and communal tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to arrive in neighbouring Angola, the United Nations refugee agency has appealed for more resources to cope with the influx and to provide those coming with the support they urgently need.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), some 30,000 people have arrived in Angola's Lunda Norte province since April and there are fears that the number could reach 50,000, with about 300-500 people arriving daily.

“Angola is providing a warm welcome, but reception centres accommodating refugees, are full beyond their capacity and basic services cannot be maintained without immediate donor support,” said Valentin Tapsoba, the UNHCR's Africa Bureau Director, in a news release today.

He added that the refugees are traumatized and humanitarian agencies require urgent support to ensure that life-saving assistance and protection can be provided to those in need.

The arrivals have mostly been from the Kasai provinces in the DRC, where they were at risk of serious human rights violations and abuses, including physical mutilation, killing, sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention in inhumane conditions.

The Kasais were the location of the discovery of some 42 mass graves, in April by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)). The discoveries further underscored the gravity of the situation.

About 1.3 million people remain displaced internally in the DRC.

Those reaching Angola also expressed fear returning back unless the situation allows for safe and dignified return, noted UNHCR in the release.

Sustaining life-saving assistance not possible without more funding – UNHCR

In the news release, the UN refugee agency also said that Angola, a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, has historically hosted refugees from its neighbours – including DRC.

Prior to the recent influx, the country housed some 15,600 refugees – including more than 13,400 from the DRC.

However, with arrivals increasing and apprehensions that the situation could get much worse additional funding is urgently needed.

Sustaining life-saving assistance won't be possible without more funding, said UNHCR, noting that together with its partners, some \$65 million are required of which the UN agency needs \$35 million (until the end of the year) to reach refugees in remote parts of Angola, who are the most vulnerable.

Current humanitarian efforts are supported with \$10 million by the UN Central Emergency Fund, a limited pool of financial resources that provides funding to critical, life-saving humanitarian rapid response and underfunded operations around the globe.