

Protect children in conflicts and disasters from forced labour, underscores UN on World Day

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.

[In Kyrgyzstan, UN chief Guterres highlights importance of governance for sustainable development](#)

11 June 2017 – Underscoring the importance of accountable and inclusive governance and institutions for the successful implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today called for public services to be more responsive, efficient and collaborative.

[Public service is a critical component for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) [...] we need to pioneer new approaches, work differently, take risks and innovate," Secretary-General Guterres said at the Taza Koom Conference on Public Service in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

"We need governance that is capable of delivering results and earning public trust; governance that is coherent and accountable; governance that is inclusive and that listens to all the country's citizens; governance that upholds human rights and leaves no one behind."

The Taza Koom is a project that seeks to transform digital technologies and e-governance to improve not only the way the State and the administration function, but also the way the people can benefit from new technologies and the impact on their lives.

Further in his remarks, the UN chief also spoke of the need to fight corruption to ensure effective and accountable public services, and highlighted the need for mechanisms that not only support people but also includes the poorest and the most vulnerable, so that they are able to not only define their needs but also to be a part of the efforts in ways to address those challenges.

As the President said, it [is] clear that 'Taza Koom' can be a way to empower the poorest and the most vulnerable," said Mr. Guterres, noting that the UN would continue to assist the country in these efforts.



Secretary-General António Guterres shakes hands with Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev during their meeting at the Ala-Archa state residence in Bishkek. UN Photo/Vyacheslav Oseledko

Earlier today, Secretary-General Guterres held a meeting with Almazbek Atambaev, the President of Kyrgyzstan.

Speaking to the media at a press conference, alongside the President, Mr. Guterres [hailed the country's efforts for democracy, rule of law and protection of human rights](#), as well as a vibrant and active civil society.

"I am also sure that Kyrgyzstan will play a very important role in what I hope will be future developments in Central Asia for better cooperation, better integration among the different countries and peoples of [the region] to guarantee its prosperity and its development," he said.

Also today, Mr. Guterres took part in the commemoration of the June 2010 events in Osh, where he laid a wreath at the Mother's Tears monument and expressed his condolences to the families of the victims as well as solidarity with the people of Osh, of Jalal-abad and all other places where the violence broke out.

"The Mother's Tears [monument] should remind all of us that societies in the world are becoming [multiethnic, multireligious, multicultural and that must be seen as a positive thing](#). It is a richness, not a threat," he said, underscoring: "Diversity needs to be cherished, not condemned."

[Catastrophe of Aral Sea shows 'men can destroy the planet', warns UN chief Guterres](#)

10 June 2017 – Continuing his visit to Central Asia, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today visited the Aral Sea – once the world's fourth largest inland sea, that has now shrunk to about a quarter of its original size due to human mismanagement – where he urged the world to take lesson from the catastrophe and to ensure that such tragedies are not repeated.

The Aral Sea's progressive disappearance was not because of climate change, it was [mismanagement by humankind of water resources](#), said Secretary-General Guterres after visiting Muynak, the 'cemetery of ships' once a port city but now devoid of all water.

It also shows that if in relation to climate change, we are not able to act forcefully to tame this phenomenon, we might see this kind of tragedy multiply around the world, he warned.

The environmental disaster was precipitated by diversion of the tributary river which drained into the Aral Sea for irrigation projects nearly half a century ago. Lack of fresh water feeding the sea slowly dried it up, increasing the salinity of the area, with serious impact on human health and agriculture.

Terming the catastrophe probably the biggest ecological catastrophe of our time, one that demonstrated that men can destroy the planet, the Secretary-General called on everyone to make the Aral Sea a lesson and to mobilize the whole international community to implement the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change and to make sure that such tragedies will not be repeated.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Guterres held a meeting with the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, where they discussed collaboration between the UN and the country in the context of Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and regional matters.

The UN chief also met with representatives of the civil society and visited Samarkand, one of the oldest inhabited cities in Central Asia.

[UN chief Guterres highlights importance of sustainable energy in message to EXPO 2017](#)

10 June 2017 – Underlining the importance of energy, in particular for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called for urgent action to ensure that everyone has access to clean, affordable and efficient energy so that they can rise to their full potential.

Energy is vital to our lives [...] Access to energy helps children to study at night, farmers to grow more crops and hospitals to provide better care, said the Secretary-General in his message to EXPO 2017, which opened today in the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana.

In his remarks, the UN chief also noted that the theme of this year's Astana EXPO, 'Future Energy', is all the more important given that energy in today's world comes from many sources that contribute to climate change.

It reminds us that the world must take urgent action to ensure that everyone has access to clean, efficient and affordable sources of energy [...] I hope this EXPO will help us resolve to contribute to more sustainable world," added Mr. Guterres.

Being held from 10 June to 10 September, the World's Fair EXPO 2017 explores the possibility of scaling up the world's sustainable energy production, promoting energy security and efficiency, as well as encouraging the use of renewable energy around the globe.

VIDEO: UN Secretary-General's message to EXPO 2017

The UN exhibit, a particular highlight at the EXPO, showcases technology and ideas that help the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development through sustainable energy.

Given the urgency of the situation, the focus is going to be squarely on practical solutions," said Cihan Sultanoğlu, the UN [Commissioner-General for the Organization's participation in EXPO 2017](#), reminding participants of the simultaneous need to make sure every woman, every man, every girl, and every boy has access to affordable and clean energy by 2030, while keeping temperatures within 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Several UN entities, including the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) and UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) will host events, release findings and showcase their work on how to mobilize investments to achieve breakthroughs on universal access to energy, renewable energy, and energy efficiency.

[All hands on deck: UN Ocean Conference wraps up with actions to preserve clean oceans, marine life](#)

9 June 2017 – The first-ever United Nations summit on oceans today wraps up with a global agreement to reverse the decline of the ocean's health, and more than 1,300 pledged actions for protecting the blue.

The bar has been raised on global consciousness and awareness of the problem in the oceans, the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, told journalists in New York.

Mr. Thomson, whose native Fiji co-sponsored the event along with Sweden, said the organizers got what they wanted from the conference: I'm 100 per cent satisfied with the results of this conference. Our aim was high. Our aim was to start the reversal of the cycle.

[The Ocean Conference](#) ends today with the adoption by consensus of a 14-point [Call for Action](#) where the participating Heads of State and Government and senior representatives affirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Speaking alongside Mr. Thomson, the Secretary-General of The Ocean Conference, Wu Hongbo, said the negotiated document lists specific measures to galvanize global commitment and partnerships for the oceans.

The main points from the political document and this week's discussions will be part of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)), the UN's central body for follow-up and review of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) adopted in September 2015. The HLPF is scheduled to meet next month in New York.

In addition to the political Call for Action, participants who also included thousands of civil society representatives, academics, artists, financial institutions and other practitioners and activists pledged actions to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. This is the goal of [SDG14](#).

By Friday afternoon, more than 1,300 [voluntary commitments](#) had already been registered.

Calling the figure truly impressive, Mr. Wu, who is also UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, underscored that the commitments were just for this conference and now comprise an ocean solution registry.

'It's all of us or nothing'

The week-long conference, where some 6,000 people participated, was the first time that the UN brought everyone together to discuss the challenges facing the world's oceans.

When it comes to the ocean, it's the common heritage of humankind. There's no North-South, East-West when it comes to the ocean, Mr. Thomson said. If the ocean is dying, it's dying on all of us.

The senior official underscored that by getting the wheels turning on SDG 14, the conference helped push forward action on all 17 [SDGs](#).

Topics that were discussed ranged from plastic pollution in the oceans and seas to ocean acidification and illegal fishing – which tie in with topics of alleviating poverty, ending hunger, promoting health, ensuring access to water and sanitation, and so on.

Mr. Thomson attributed the success of the conference to the “wonderful way” in which all the different participants came together to discuss and work together.

He lauded the “openness to civil society, to the science sector, to private society” in breaking down the typical divisions between governments and other sectors. “There’s no them and us. It’s all of us or nothing.”

In addition to eight plenary meetings and seven partnership dialogues, The Ocean Conference included 150 side events, 41 exhibitions and interviews at [the SDG Media Zone](#).

These included events with New Oceans Advocate and globally-acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter [Cody Simpson](#), as well as Marine biologist [Douglas McCauley](#), Aboriginal artist [Sid Bruce Short Joe](#) and Spanish philanthropist [Álvaro de Marichalar](#), for example.

The mix of personalities and strong support for action brought “creativity and a sense of unity” to the action for oceans, said conference co-chairwoman, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden Isabelle Lovin.