

[International Criminal Court may investigate migrant-related crimes in Libya, Security Council told](#)

8 May 2017 – The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)) today told the United Nations Security Council that her Office is considering launching an investigation into alleged migrant-related crimes in Libya, including human trafficking.

“My Office continues to collect and analyze information relating to serious and widespread crimes allegedly committed against migrants attempting to transit through Libya,” said Fatou Bensouda during a Security Council meeting on the North African country’s situation.

“I’m similarly dismayed by credible accounts that Libya has become a marketplace for the trafficking of human beings,” she added, noting that her Office “is carefully examining the feasibility” of opening an investigation into migrant-related crimes in Libya should the Court’s jurisdictional requirements be met.

“We must act to curb these worrying trends,” she said.

Ms. Bensouda said that reports indicate the country is at risk of returning to widespread conflict, and such an outcome would not bode well for the rule of law in Libya, and will surely aggravate a climate of impunity, which could in turn lead to widespread human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

RELATED: [African migrants reportedly being sold in ‘slave markets’ in Libya, UN migration agency warns](#)

Turning to specific cases before the Court, she said that her office has alleged Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled, the former head of the Libyan Internal Security Agency under the Muammar Gaddafi regime, is responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The pre-trial chamber of the Court found reasonable grounds to believe that the Internal Security Agency, led by Mr. Al-Tuhamy, along with other Libyan military, intelligence and security agencies, arrested and detained persons perceived to be opponents of Mr. Gaddafi and his rule.

The prosecutor said these persons were allegedly subjected to various forms of mistreatment, including severe beatings, electrocution, acts of sexual violence and rape, solitary confinement, deprivation of food and water, inhumane conditions of detention, mock executions, and threats of killing and rape, in various locations throughout Libya.

Ms. Bensouda urged Libya as well as State or non-State parties to take immediate action to verify the suspect’s whereabouts and facilitate his

arrest and surrender to the Court.

She said the Court “unsealed” its arrest warrant for Mr. Al-Tuhamy to enhance the chances of justice being done.

In Zimbabwe, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador calls for more protection of child victims of sexual violence

8 May 2017 – Drawing attention to the harrowing traumas of child victims of sexual violence, a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has called for greater recognition of the fact that it is “not OK” for children to be touched inappropriately as well as for raising awareness among youngsters that under-age sex can lead to pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

“No woman, and most definitely no child, should ever have to experience sexual violence – especially from someone they trust for protection, such as a family member,” [said](#) actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Priyanka Chopra, who is currently in Zimbabwe to advocate for increased support for child victims of sexual violence.

“When I met these survivors, young brave women and children, and listened to their experiences, it just broke my heart [...] I will never forget their stories,” she added, recalling her conversation with a 13-year-old girl who was repeatedly raped by her uncle.

According to UNICEF, sexual violence against children is widespread in Zimbabwe and latest available data has showed that close to one in 10 girls aged 15-17 years old has been a victim of forced sexual intercourse or a forced sexual act.

Approximately two-thirds of victims were first abused by an intimate partner and about a tenth of the victims by a stranger.

Most concerning is that in the case of children, most abuse occurred in situations when the child knew and trusted the adult who abused him or her.

Sexual violence against children is also “mostly invisible” and goes largely undocumented, noted UNICEF, stating that fear of “getting into trouble” as well as shame and stigma all contributed to children not reporting the abuse.

Additionally, many victims were too young or too vulnerable to know what happened to them.

In the case of the 13-year-old girl that Ms. Chopra spoke to, with the help of her mother and neighbours, the incident was reported to the police and the uncle who abused her has been arrested, tried, and jailed for 10 years.

The 13-year-old child received supported by the Family Support Trust, an organization supported by UNICEF, that runs a “one stop” child-friendly clinic providing medical and psychosocial support for sexually abused children.

She also attended a peer support group for teens, and received regular home visits from social workers to provide the help and support she needed.

Approaching trauma with compassion and seriousness

While in the country, Ms. Chopra also visited Childline Zimbabwe, a 24-hour service that provides free, confidential, multilingual counselling to children and those under 18 years of age who have been abused, violated or exploited.

“The counsellors, all volunteers, told me that many calls come from children in hysterics because they had been raped or abused,” noted the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador recollecting her visit.

“Without Childline, they would have nowhere to turn. This is a model that many countries with high rates of violence against children can adopt, because it is a safe place for children to turn to and know that their call will be answered by a compassionate person who will take their complaints seriously and respond.”

Consultations on migration compact begin; UN envoy urges policies that reject ‘us vs. them’ tactics

8 May 2017 – A lack of trust leads to increased intolerance and xenophobia, the United Nations envoy on international migration told UN Member States told, calling on Governments to review and put in place effective migration policies that reject an “us vs. them” mentality between national and migrants.

“Migrants are not a burden. Even less so are they a threat. Properly managed, migration stands to benefit all,” Louise Arbour, the Special Representative for International Migration said in Geneva, kicking off the process to the first-ever [global compact](#) for safe, orderly and regular migration, due to be adopted in 2018.

She urged Governments to ratify and implement all international and regional human right instruments and related conventions, so that their countries' migration policies would be grounded in human right norms and standards.

"Success will rest in large part on your sustained engagement, in word and deed, to changing the optic by which we view migration, from a phenomenon currently feared by too many, to one that better reflects its overwhelmingly positive impact on society," Ms. Arbour said.

The UN envoy was addressing the first informal session on the [human rights of migrants](#), looking at their social inclusion and cohesion in societies, and the necessity to counter discrimination including racism, xenophobia and intolerance against migrants.

The two-day session opened today under the co-facilitation of Switzerland and Mexico. It is the first of six thematic discussions to be held between now and November, as consultations for the [intergovernmental conference on international migration in 2018](#), of which Ms. Arbour is the Secretary-General.



UN Special Representative for International Migration Louise Arbour. UN Photo/Mark Garten

Leading up to the conference, the UN launched the [Together](#) initiative last year to change negative perception and attitudes towards [refugees and migrants](#), and to strengthen the social contract between host countries and communities, and refugees and migrants. The initiative bolsters the work of the 2016 UN Summit to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants and its outcome, the landmark A HREF="http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration">New York Declaration.

In today's session, Ms. Arbour noted that deep-seated attitudes of prejudice and xenophobia, which many of the world's 245 million migrants often confront, is particularly felt by so-called "irregular migrants" who enter, stay or work in a country without the necessary authorization.

While such migrants may have constituted administrative offences, "they are not crimes per se against persons, property or national security. And while states retain the sovereign prerogative to order their removal, the very presence of such migrants under their jurisdiction places certain obligations on national authorities."

These obligations include protections, which despite political commitments, are not implemented, and include access to services.

"Putting in place 'firewalls' between immigration enforcement and public services is an effective way to facilitate access to justice, housing, health care, education, social protection and social and labour services for migrants," Ms. Arbour said.

She continued that the erroneous perception of an increased influx of irregular migration, combined with a lack of trust in state capacities to deal with such influxes has led to increased intolerance and rejection of migrants – particularly in communities that face poverty or discrimination themselves.

“Distrust grows between host communities and irregular migrants when an effective migration policy is not in place, devolving into an ‘us vs. them’ mentality between nationals and migrants,” she said.

Irregular migration by some people feeds xenophobic and racist attitudes against all migrants, creating a “downward spiral of hatred that risks becoming insurmountable.”

In contrast, facilitating access to legal avenues for migration and access to work would reduce the need for many to migrate through irregular channels, the UN envoy noted.

“Policies related to migrants must include the participation of all actors with a stake in the outcome,” she said, “including local governments, trade unions, employers’ organizations, national human rights bodies, private sector, recruitment agencies, security and justice service providers, civil society and youth organizations and migrants.”

The second information thematic discussion will be held next month in New York. It will address drivers of migration, such as climate change and human-made crises.

[Task of eradicating poverty must be met ‘with a sense of urgency,’ says deputy UN chief](#)

8 May 2017 – Eradicating poverty remains the greatest global challenge, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said today, calling for a collective and comprehensive approach that recognizes the multidimensional nature the issue and its interaction with other aspects.

Addressing poverty, inequality, climate change, food insecurity and a sluggish and unpredictable global economy requires integrated responses and engagement by all actors, Ms. Mohammed [said](#) at the opening of the [2017 Integration Segment](#) of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

It is [also] an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, she stressed.

In her remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General highlighted the importance of broad partnerships and building synergies across all dimensions of poverty eradication and sustainable development, including with the different sectors of economy at national levels to address the complex interlinkages.

Further, recalling that the first Sustainable Development Goal ([SDG1](#)) is to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere, she added that such efforts also provided an opportunity to gauge how national approaches and the recently adopted [SDG Indicator Framework](#) can support each other in advancing integrated implementation and reviewing progress.

“We need options that will enable policy-makers at the global, regional and national level to foster coherent and integrated approaches to poverty eradication,” said Ms. Mohammed, noting: “Expectations are very high and now is the time. We have a collective responsibility to deliver results at the country level.”

Also speaking at the opening, Nabeel Munir, the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, underscored the importance of integrated policy frameworks given the interconnected nature of sustainable development (the economic, social and environmental dimensions).

“The interlinkages between the different Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) we have defined to achieve our common vision are explicit, unveiling potential synergies and trade-offs. This underlines the importance of integrated policy frameworks for the realization of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development,” he said, adding:

“It also underlines the significance of this Integration Segment and the discussions that will take place in the context of the 2017 session of the Economic and Social Council’s work.”

The 2017 Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council brings together key stakeholders to discuss and identify opportunities and challenges in developing integrated approaches to tackle poverty in a sustained, inclusive and sustainable manner.

Among other matters it will discuss, the Integration Segment will include a particular focus on Least Developed Countries.

This year’s meeting will also consider best practices, lessons learned and recommendations at the national, regional and international levels, with a view to extract policy recommendations to guide integrated policymaking for poverty eradication as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda.

Discussions and outcomes from the Integration Segment will feed into the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council as well as into the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

[PODCAST: Saving 'the blue heart of the planet' with Sylvia Earle](#)

8 May 2017 – As a little girl, Sylvia Earle, today perhaps the world's best known woman marine scientist, literally fell head over heels in love with the ocean.

"I got knocked over by a wave on the New Jersey Shore when I was three-years-old and the ocean got my attention," says the veteran oceanographer, who after decades at the forefront of ocean exploration, has also earned the sobriquet 'Her Deepness.'

She will be one of the special guests attending [The Ocean Conference](#) in early June, but ahead of that major event to help repair and sustain what she refers to as the Earth's "blue heart," she stopped by UN Headquarters in New York to talk with *UN News* for our podcast series, *The Lid Is On*.

She knows the ocean better than most, having, for starters, walked on the ocean floor; led more than 100 deep-sea expeditions, and logged more than 7,000 hours underwater.

The former chief scientist of the United States National Oceanic Service, NOAA, the founder of "Deep Ocean Exploration and Research," she also has her own alliance to protect the ocean, "Mission Blue."

She is passionate about reversing the damage done in recent decades.

"Here's how it's going to be if we keep doing what we're doing: 90 per cent of the big fish – gone. How long before they'll all be gone? How long before the last tuna will bring a high price?"

"How long before we see the disappearance of all the coral reefs, knowing that we've lost half, in less than half a century?"

Ms Earle describes the Ocean Conference, which will run from 5 to 9 June at UN Headquarters, as a "remarkable" and unprecedented event.

"The UN is getting behind the idea of celebrating the ocean, examining the issues. What are the problems that we now face and what can be done, as individual nations; as nations working together?"

That's a sentiment shared by the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, who is from Fiji; a Pacific island state that's facing an existential crisis over the warming and rising ocean.

"I see it as the opportunity for us to address these major problems, these major woes that humanity has put upon the ocean," said Mr Thomson, one of the driving forces behind the conference.

He added that 40 per cent of the cause of rising sea-levels which threaten to

engulf whole countries, is down to ocean warming.

Ms. Earle is looking forward to being at the Conference, to stand up for her beloved ocean and repeat the warning she made more than two years ago here at the UN – that the “living ocean” is not too big to fail.

Yet despite the dire statistics, she says “there’s plenty of reason to hope,” adding “we are seeing a trend – we are seeing a revision of fishing policies to favour the fish.”

“The fish, like trees, help capture, hold, sequester carbon [...] the ocean is the biggest reservoir of carbon, the deep sea, the greatest place where carbon is already being sequestered. What we want to do is maintain that, so that Earth continues.”