

[Syria: Reported airstrikes should not derail chance for 'good news' at Astana talks, says UN envoy](#)

3 May 2017 – A senior United Nations mediator today urged the continuation of talks on a Syrian ceasefire being held in the Kazak capital of Astana.

The current round of what has become known as the 'Astana talks' –between the Syrian conflict parties and led by Russia, Turkey and Iran, kicked off today, but, according to media reports, the Syrian opposition side walked out of the meeting, citing a new barrage of airstrikes in the area they hold.

"The United Nations is very concerned at the reports of escalation in Syria, including, allegedly, reports of air strikes, particularly in this delicate moment in the Astana discussions where actually proposals to de-escalate the conflict are under very serious discussion," the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, [told](#) reporters, following the suspension of the meeting.

"We are calling, therefore, for the immediate investigation and for immediate institution of measures to ensure that now no strikes are taking place and are halted," Mr. de Mistura said, urging all participants in Astana to "press ahead tomorrow with de-escalation discussions and confidence-building measures."

Asked if he is confident that the opposition will come back tomorrow, he said that there have been "some incidents produced by one side or the other," but the important thing is "to make sure that those incidents stop but also do not kill the opportunity for good news related to that."

Positive outcomes from the Astana talks – which aim to bolster the ceasefire regime brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran in late December 2016 – would help Mr. de Mistura with his role of facilitating the [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, the latest round of which wrapped up in late March. The discussions are guided by UN Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#), focusing on matters of governance, a schedule and process to draft a new constitution and the holding of elections as the basis for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned process to end the conflict.

[In Lebanon and Syria, UN emergency food chief appeals for humanitarian](#)

access

3 May 2017 – The head of the United Nations emergency food relief agency today appealed for “regular, unimpeded and sustained” humanitarian access during meetings with senior government officials and partners in Lebanon and Syria – his first official visit since assuming office.

David Beasley, the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) today wrapped up a three-day trip to the two countries to assess the growing needs. According to a press release, he spoke first-hand with Syrian refugee families in the Bekaa Valley and Beirut, and met with displaced women and children at a WFP distribution centre in Damascus.

“I am touched by the stories of the [struggle and resilience](#) of the many Syrians I met who are living away from home and loved ones,” Mr. Beasley said.

The UN agency provides monthly life-saving food assistance to more than four million vulnerable people each month inside Syria through regular deliveries as well as cross-border, cross-line and air deliveries to areas not reachable through regular means.

“In his meetings, Beasley appealed for regular, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to deliver urgently needed food assistance to people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas across war-torn Syria,” WFP reported.

He also commended Lebanon for its generosity in hosting over one million Syrian refugees.

During the trip, Mr. Beasley also visited warehouses, food distribution centres and WFP-contracted supermarkets where some of the most vulnerable refugees redeem monthly electronic vouchers.

In Lebanon, almost 700,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees receive food assistance through an electronic voucher (e-card) system. The e-cards are replenished each month with \$27 per person, which can be used to buy food at one of 480 WFP-contracted shops across Lebanon.

[In ‘post truth’ era, leaders must defend objective, independent media, UN says on Press Freedom Day](#)

3 May 2017 – In a ‘post-truth’ world with ‘fake news’ on

the rise, and media accountability and credibility falling under question, free, independent and professional journalism has never been more important, the United Nations today said.

“We need leaders to defend a free media. This is crucial to counter prevailing misinformation. And we need everyone to [stand for our right to truth](#),” [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today said, marking World Press Freedom Day.

This year’s theme highlights media’s role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies and builds on the [theme](#) ‘Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies.’

The theme comes at a time when [free, independent and pluralistic media](#) has never been so important to empower individual women and men, strengthen good governance and the rule of law, and take forward the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural ([UNESCO](#)) said in a statement.

The agency is also tasked with defending press freedom and the safety of journalists, and is spearheading the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists](#) and the Issue of Impunity.

“Far too often, murder remains the most tragic form of censorship,” UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said in her message on the Day, noting that 102 journalists were killed in 2016.

She noted that “facing a crisis of audience identity, journalism stands before a horizon where old challenges are merging with new threats,” which include the Internet’s blurring of the lines between advertising and editorial material, businesses pushing for profits and private censorship.

RELATED: [UNESCO award for Dawit Isaak ‘sign of hope’ to free imprisoned Eritrean journalist](#)

In her message, Ms. Bokova cited Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist assassinated in 1986, whose name was lent to the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

He wrote: “Only the independence, the character, the objectivity and the good judgment of the journalist and the media can overcome the terrible storms of the new world that threaten freedom of information everywhere.”

Ms. Bokova noted those words, written two years prior to his death, “continue to resonate today, 33 years later.”

She called for “original, critical and well-researched journalism, guided by high professional, ethical standards and a quality media education” and for audiences who “have the right media and information literacy skills.”

Press Freedom is marked annually on 3 May. UNESCO’s main celebration of this

year's edition of the Day will take place in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 1 to 4 May.

The programme of the four-day conference has been designed to raise awareness of the importance of free and fact-based journalism in promoting peace and justice, and supporting the efficiency, accountability and inclusiveness of institutions, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal ([SDGs](#)). The [event](#) is organized with the Government of Indonesia and the Indonesian Press Council.

During the event, Ms. Bokova will award the 2017 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to Dawit Isaak, the imprisoned Eritrean-born journalist who will be represented by his daughter, Bethelem Isaak, during a ceremony hosted by Joko Widodo, the President of Indonesia.

A special event will be held at UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday.

[Philippines: UN reports significant progress in child protection, despite ongoing violations](#)

2 May 2017 – The Government of the Philippines and a rebel group with which it signed a peace accord have made progress in ending and preventing the recruitment of children on the southern island of Mindanao, according to a new United Nations report.

The Secretary-General's fourth report on the impact on children of armed conflict in the Philippines "describes [significant progress](#) in the protection of boys and girls, despite ongoing violations against children," according to the UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba.

In 2009, the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict on Mindanao.

Since then, more than 1,850 children have been identified and formally disengaged, the UN reported.

Special Representative Gamba encouraged the MILF to "draw on the current momentum to fully implement the Action Plan and to reinforce the necessary safeguards to prevent future recruitment and association of children."

RELATED: [UN official welcomes impact of Government-rebel peace accord on children in armed conflict](#)

She also commended the Government, which strengthened the national framework to address violations against children by forming an inter-agency committee to monitor, report and respond to such grave violations.

In the report, the Secretary-General calls on the Government to actively use these tools to ensure independent, prompt and thorough investigations into alleged violations committed against children and guarantee appropriate services for child victims.

Despite noted progress, the report highlighted that killing and maiming of children in the Philippines remains a concern with 116 documented cases.

“Most incidents were the result of crossfire, unexploded ordnance or shelling, but others involved the targeting of children,” according to the Ms. Gamba’s Office.

The Abu Sayyaf Group and the Armed Forces of the Philippines took responsibility for nearly half of the 116 children killed or injured.

Among other issues, the report noted a “high number” of attacks on schools and teachers, and an increase in attacks on indigenous communities.

The Special Representative responded by urging all parties to the conflict to end attacks or threats of attacks on schools, teachers and students.

“Using schools for military purposes is unacceptable. Children should be guaranteed safe access to education,” she said.

[On World Tuna Day, UN cites importance of sustainably managed fish stocks in achieving 2030 Agenda](#)

2 May 2017 – As migratory tuna species account for 20 per cent of the value of all marine capture fisheries and over eight per cent of all globally traded seafood, the inaugural celebration by the United Nations of World Tuna Day is an important step in recognizing the critical role of tuna to sustainable development, food security, economic opportunity, and livelihoods of people around the world.

Marking the first [World Tuna Day](#) with a call protect precious tuna resources and their surrounding ecosystems, the UN Legal Counsel today strongly urges long-term conservation and sustainable use of those resources, important for global achievement of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

According to the UN, more than 80 States currently have tuna fisheries while

thousands of tuna fishing vessels operate in all the oceans. In the Indian and Pacific Oceans, tuna fishery capacity is still growing.

Designation of the World Day underlines the importance of conservation management to ensure that systems are in place to prevent tuna stocks from crashing, the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) [says](#).

Many countries depend heavily on tuna resources for food security and nutrition, economic development, employment, government revenue, livelihoods, culture and recreation. Two main products drive tuna production; traditional canned tuna and sashimi/sushi.



FAO estimates that about one third of the world's seven major tuna species are currently overexploited. Photo: FAO/A. Urcelayeta

In a [statement](#), General Assembly President Peter Thomson notes that nearly two-thirds of the tuna found in restaurants and supermarkets around the world comes from the Pacific Ocean, hence the Pacific small island development States, as well as the least developed countries (LDCs) playing an active role on the designation of the World Day.

Today's celebration comes one month ahead of [The Ocean Conference](#), to be held from 5 to 9 June 2017 at UN Headquarters, "and is a good opportunity to highlight the importance of reversing the decline in the health of the Ocean to ensure sustainable management of marine life, such as tuna, that we are so dependent on."

In the latest publication of the [The State World Fisheries and Aquaculture](#), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) notes there is a need for effective management to restore the overfished stocks including tuna. In the 2016 report, FAO registered new record catches for tuna. Total catches of tuna and tuna like species were almost 7.7 million metric tonnes. FAO notices that market demand for tuna is still high, and that the significant overcapacity of tuna fishing fleets remains.

Addressing the decline in tuna stocks resulting from overfishing in the world's oceans, the UN Legal Counsel emphasizes the critical importance of effectively implementing the international legal framework, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, widely known as [UNCLOS](#), which has been strengthened by the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, recommendations of its Review Conference, annual General Assembly resolutions on sustainable fisheries, as well as other efforts by the international community at the global, regional and national levels.

Economic and social benefits of sustainably managed tuna stocks

About 25 per cent of the world's supply of tuna is controlled by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), UNEP reports. The parties, eight States in Oceania, agreed to scheme to sell a limited number of fishing days. According to UNEP this has advanced the sustainable management of tuna and has also

doubled their revenue.

Additionally, UNEP reports, 14 Pacific island countries have improved monitoring, reporting and enforcement by putting in place a regional fishing register, and a vessel monitoring system that tracks fishing vessels around the clock.

Fisheries sustainability and seafood guidelines

FAO Fisheries defines two approaches to define the sustainability of fisheries production. The first one measures the state of the system:

- Are fish abundant?
- Is nutrition good? and
- Are incomes from fishing allowing families to prosper?

The second one looks at the management of the system:

- Does the management system change management actions as the state of the system changes?
- If stocks decline, can the management system reduce fishing pressure and allow recovery? and
- If incomes are poor, can management actions increase incomes?