

UN chief urges States to disclose information concerning death of Dag Hammarskjöld

2 May 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has urged Member States to disclose, declassify or allow access to information that they may have regarding the tragic 1961 plane crash that killed his former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and the members of the party accompanying him, a UN spokesman said today.

Mr. Guterres also urged Member States to actively assist Mohamed Othman, former Chief Justice of Tanzania, in his work as the Eminent Person looking into the causes of those deaths, according to a [statement](#) issued by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

“The Secretary-General affirms his own commitment to this matter in the strongest terms as he strongly feels that he owes it to his illustrious and distinguished predecessor, Dag Hammarskjöld, and to the other members of the party accompanying him and to their families, to pursue the full truth of this matter,” the statement said.

Mr. Othman was Chair of the 2015 Independent Panel of Experts, which concluded, among other things, that there was significant new information with sufficient probative value to further pursue aerial attack or other interference as a hypothesis of the possible cause of the crash.

The current stage of the work will build on the findings of the 2015 Panel. The Eminent Person’s mandate is to review potential new information, assess its probative value, and determine the scope that any further investigation should take. The mandate also allows him to potentially draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted, including those of the 2015 Panel, and of the 2013 Hammarskjöld Commission.

At the daily briefing in the UN’s New York Headquarters, Mr. Dujarric [said](#) Mr. Othman has noted that more active cooperation is necessary from Member States to declassify or otherwise allow access to records that are now over 55 years old.

Mr. Dujarric also noted that Mr. Othman held meetings last week with Member States in New York, and will continue to liaise with relevant parties prior to reporting his findings to the Secretary-General before the end of the current UN General Assembly session.

'All indications suggest DPR Korea making progress' on nuclear programme, says UN atomic agency chief

2 May 2017 – The head of the United Nations atomic agency today expressed serious concern about the nuclear program of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), saying all indications suggest that the country is moving ahead with its nuclear efforts.

Speaking the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Yukiya Amano, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)), noted that DPRK continues to launch missiles and threaten other countries.

"This is [extremely worrying](#)," the Director General told the participants at the session, where he also provided a broader overview of important developments in key areas of the IAEA's work relevant to the implementation of the Treaty since 2015.

In 2009, DPRK asked IAEA inspectors to leave the country, but the UN agency has continued to collect and evaluate information from satellite imagery, open-source and trade-related information.

"Without direct access to relevant sites and locations, the Agency cannot confirm the operational status of North Korea's nuclear facilities. But all the indications suggest that North Korea is making progress with its nuclear programme," said Mr. Amano.

DPRK has also withdrawn from the Treaty, known as [NPT](#) for short. A landmark international treaty that went into force in 1970, the NPT aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

It represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.

In today's speech, Mr. Amano urged DPRK to cooperate with the IAEA in implementing NPT [safeguards](#), to fully comply with its obligations under relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and resolve any outstanding issues.

He also noted that IAEA inspectors are ready to return to the country "at short notice" if political conditions allow it.

The [Preparatory Committee](#), which started today, will last through next Friday. It is the first of three planned sessions to be held prior to the 2020 review conference.

Citing Uruguay's 'inspiring' record on environment, UN expert says country must do more

2 May 2017 – Uruguay has much to be proud of in its record on human rights and the environment, but the South American country still has some challenges ahead, including the setting up of an environment ombudsperson, a United Nations-appointed expert said today.

“Uruguay has supported its obligations to human rights and the environment by adopting a number of laws and policies on rights to information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and providing remedies following environmental harm,” UN Special Rapporteur John Knox said at the end of his five-day mission to the country, according to a [news release](#) from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

Mr. Knox is appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report on the issue of human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

“But the Government should adopt affirmative measures to structure environmental information in a way that is easily understandable by the general public, especially those, like people living in poverty, who are most vulnerable to environmental degradation,” he noted.

Like other countries, Uruguay seeks to pursue both economic growth and environmental protection. These goals can sometimes come into conflict with one another. For example, expanding agricultural production through the use of fertilizers, agro-chemicals, and irrigation can cause environmental harm, including to water quality.

“The best way to ensure that development is truly sustainable is to provide effective access to information, which in turn allows informed public participation in the decision-making processes,” said Mr. Knox. “Only in that way can the public be assured that economic growth is not coming at the expense of human rights.”

He pointed to complaints that the current system for reporting problems was “confusing and not always responsive” and called for a new mechanism, which would include an ombudsperson with the authority to receive all environmental complaints to ensure that each was addressed promptly by the appropriate office.

The expert’s final report will be presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2018.

The positions of Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are honorary and they are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

[Afghanistan: UN assesses border management to cope with spike in returns from Pakistan](#)

2 May 2017 – With an unprecedented 600,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan last year, the United Nations migration agency has completed an assessment of border management capacity at Afghanistan’s two main border crossings with Pakistan.

“With returns in 2017 on track to meet or even surpass the levels of last year, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the current procedures at the border, and to look at how they can be improved,” [said](#) Laurence Hart, Afghanistan Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), in a press release.

In 2016, 600,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan through the Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar province and the Spin Boldak border crossing in Kandahar province.

Over several visits to Torkham and Spin Boldak in April, the assessment team met with officials from the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, Border Police, customs officials, humanitarian actors and migrants.

Based on interviews and observations at the borders, IOM will produce an assessment report addressing key areas of administrative and operational capacity including infrastructure and available equipment; human resources and competencies; the regulatory framework guiding relevant government agencies; procedures and workflow; capacity gaps and issues.

“The report resulting from the assessment will include short-term recommendations for streamlining registration, document security and other border procedures, as well as technical assistance needs that could be addressed by IOM over the longer term,” said IOM border management expert Erik Slavenas.

As a first step toward improving efficiency at the border, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, with the support of IOM, rolled out the Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS) in late 2016.

ARIS, a digital registration process for both undocumented and refugee returnees, replaced a paper-based registration system. It allows for better data collection and data sharing.

[Somalia: 1.4M children to suffer acute malnutrition this year – UN agency](#)

2 May 2017 – Some 1.4 million children in Somalia are projected to be acutely malnourished this year, an increase of 50 per cent over last year, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today announced.

The figure includes more than 275,000 children who have or will suffer life-threatening severe acute malnutrition.

“The combination of [drought, disease and displacement](#) are deadly for children, and we need to do far more, and faster, to save lives,” Steven Lauwerier, UNICEF Somalia Representative.

Somalia is in the midst of a drought after rains failed in November 2016, for a third year in the row. About 615,000 people looking for food and water have been displaced since then.

The women and children who make the trek, generally on foot, to places where they hope to find assistance, are often robbed or worse, both on the way to, and in camps. While there have been some reports of sexual abuse, including rape, according to the UN agency. Some children have been conscripted into armed groups.

Since April, it has rained in parts of Somalia, but there are concerns that if they come in full, they could spread disease among children living in makeshift shelters made out of twigs and cloth, or tarps.

“If assistance doesn’t reach families, more people will be forced off their land into displacement camps. Outbreaks of malaria are already imminent, as is an upsurge of cholera,” UNICEF said.

Speaking in Geneva, UNICEF spokesperson Marixie Mercado said that a severely malnourished and dehydrated child could die in a matter of hours if they did not get treatment for diarrhoea and cholera

Ms. Mercado just returned from Baidoa, in the Bay region, which has more than half of the 28,400 cholera cases so far this year. She visited an inoculation campaign targeting every displaced child under five years of age with an emergency measles vaccination.

“Every mother I had spoken to had said that her children were sick, either with diarrhoea or vomiting, or feverish. Most had never been vaccinated before because of the insecurity across the country,” she said.

Humanitarians in Somalia are seeking an overall \$25 million to reach the

most vulnerable with life-saving assistance until June 2017.

Donors have been responding, hoping to avoid the 2011 famine in the country. But whereas the 2011 drought was concentrated in South Central Somalia, this year, it is affecting more parts of the country, including the north-eastern and the Somaliland regions, with a higher total number of people at risk.