

'Time for important decisions,' head of UN in Afghanistan tells Security Council

With parliamentary elections one month away and a major ministerial conference planned for November in Geneva, the United Nation's Special Representative for Afghanistan [briefed](#) the Security Council on Monday, noting that "preparations are on track" but that many challenges lie ahead, including increased security concerns.

"It is a time for important decisions in Afghanistan", said [Tasamichi Yamamoto](#), who heads the UN mission in the country ([UNAMA](#)). "These decisions will affect the fundamental fabric of the society and future of Afghanistan", he added, referring to the parliamentary elections slated for 20 October – the first time since 2010 – and the 28 November ministerial conference in Geneva, co-chaired by the Afghan Government and the UN.

Among the positive developments cited by the Special Representative, candidate lists were finalised on time for the printing of ballots, more than nine million Afghans are registered to vote, and various safeguard measures for fraud prevention are now in place.

"I have met many Afghans across the country who have impressed upon me their desire to exercise their right to elect their representatives. Many will face considerable risks to do that," he explained, stressing that while "preparations are on track" for the elections, he remains "very concerned" over security and political challenges that "could jeopardize the tight timelines and derail the elections".

"Political concerns must be addressed through institutional mechanisms and not through blockades", the head of UNAMA noted, urging "all political actors and institutions to perform their duties, act responsibly, and to think of the Afghan people, bearing in mind the country's bitter past".

The four-decade conflict continues to wreak destruction and death across the country. In July, UNAMA released figures highlighting the tragic toll the conflict has had on civilians, revealing that the first half of 2018 was the deadliest for Afghans since the Mission began documenting casualties in 2009.

Insecurity is also taking its toll on journalists and aid workers. This year alone, 13 journalists have lost their lives and many more were injured; 23 aid workers were killed, 37 injured and 74 abducted, making Afghanistan the second most dangerous country to work in the aid sector.

"Each death is an individual tragedy. But it is also a tragedy for the country: reconciliation becomes harder with each life lost." The UN Special

Representative stressed that “all sides must realize that there is no military solution to the conflict” and that “equal participation and full involvement of women” in all efforts towards peace and security must be ensured.

In February, the country witnessed “unprecedented political space for peace” when the Government extended an offer to the Taliban to engage in talks without preconditions, leading to a temporary ceasefire in June and another one in August which was not reciprocated by the Taliban.

“Whatever setbacks may lie ahead, we are in a better position now than at any time in the past 17 years to commence the process which would lead to talks for a negotiated end to the conflict”, Mr. Yamamoto said, proposing measures “to build confidence” such as prisoner releases and improvements on agriculture, education and health in contested areas.

Mr. Yamamoto concluded: “In 2001, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan began his Nobel Peace Prize speech with a few simple words: ‘Today in Afghanistan a girl will be born’. That girl is now almost a woman, who soon, will be old enough to vote; old enough to attend university; old enough to pursue the vocation of her dreams. Will she be able to? I am sure that that girl will be watching closely the developments of the next few months.”

[In a complex world, ‘we need to take the right road’: outgoing General Assembly President](#)

The outgoing UN General Assembly President, Miroslav Lajčák, called on the global community on Monday to remain steadfast in support of multilateralism, reiterating that it is the only way to address the complex and growing challenges facing the world.

“The [stakes are high](#), we need to take the right road,” said Mr. Lajčák, in his final address to the 193-member General Assembly.

Mr. Lajčák spoke of “six major trends”, which he observed during his year as the General Assembly President, expressing hope that his observations will be useful as the new high-level debate gets underway.

On the first trend – peace – he noted the shift of the global discourse from a reactive approach to one of “sustaining peace.”

“But we have a lot of work ahead. Sustaining Peace cannot be, just, a concept – or an aspiration. Rather, it should be seen more like an Operations Manual.

Something that guides the real work we do on the ground, every day,” he said.

Mr. Lajčák also highlighted the challenges posed by climate change and called for more leadership and funding to ensure sufficient resources are on hand to honour the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

The President of the 72nd regular session of the [General Assembly](#) also underlined the need for the world body to adapt to major global shifts, highlighting the work still to be done on the [Global Compact for Migration](#), expected to be adopted in Morocco this December.

Dialogue leads to results. It is why, last February, we watched a joint Korean team playing in the Winter Olympics. It is why peace has returned to Colombia, after five decades of war – *Assembly President Lajčák*

With its universal membership and its flexible agenda, the General Assembly has “enormous legitimacy” and can play the role of a “global thought-leader,” he said, noting also the need for Organizational reforms and the steps initiated by [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) towards that end.

Next, Mr. Lajčák warned of shrinking space for global dialogue. “Dialogue is part of our humanity,” he said, noting recent world events that continue to illustrate the important results when leaders “talk through their differences.”

“Dialogue leads to results. It is why, last February, we watched a joint Korean team playing in the Winter Olympics. It is why peace has returned to Colombia, after five decades of war. And it is why, in January of last year, political turmoil in the Gambia did not turn violent.”

Alongside dialogue, Mr. Lajčák also highlighted the importance of multilateralism, noting that it too is under threat.

“It is clear that we live in a complex, uncertain world. That is why it is so tempting, to go it alone ... and let everyone else fend for themselves,” he said.

“But history tells us that it is not the way forward. It tells us that – actually – this could be the way back ... There is still time to counter this trend. I hope that we don’t have to wait for disaster to teach us that multilateralism is the only way.”

General Assembly an invaluable forum to address ‘the full spectrum’ – UN chief Guterres

UN Secretary-General Guterres also addressed the world body, [congratulating](#) President Lajčák for his leadership, as well as Member States on the completion of a very productive Assembly session.

“Last September’s general debate was the first in more than a decade at which all Member States spoke – a sign of welcome engagement by political leaders at the highest level, and of faith in the value of this unique and universal body,” he said.

In his remarks, he also noted the important issues addressed by the UN body during its session, demonstrating, yet again, its “invaluable role as a forum for addressing the full spectrum of the world’s concerns and aspirations.”

“He possesses deep knowledge across the international agenda,” said the UN chief of Mr. Lajčák, “and he has always been strongly committed to cooperation as a critical ingredient in success, and so took a wide range of steps to bring people together and new partners into the Assembly’s work,” he said.

The 73rd regular session of the General Assembly convenes on Tuesday, with María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador assuming the Presidency.

UN chief concerned over havoc of Typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines

Secretary-General António Guterres said on Monday that he was saddened by the “loss of life and extensive destruction” caused by Typhoon Mangkhut across the Philippines.

According to news reports, dozens have been killed; some of them buried by landslides, while sheltering from the storm.

The super typhoon that slammed into the northern Philippine province of Luzon on Saturday, reportedly continued a path of destruction across southern China on Sunday, into Monday.

The statement issued by the UN Spokesperson, extends the UN chief’s condolences to the families of the victims, while commending “the leadership of the national and provincial authorities, for their preparedness efforts and response to the needs of the affected communities.”

Media reports say at least 60 have died across the Philippines, and rescuers are digging through the mud following a landslide in Itogon, where at least 32 were killed, and many more are missing, presumed dead. There were several deaths reported in the Chinese province of Guangdong, due to falling trees.

“The United Nations system in-country is already working to support the government-led response efforts and stands ready to scale up assistance as requested,” concluded the statement issued on behalf of Mr. Guterres.

Signs that North Korea is ‘maintaining nuclear weapons programme’ – UN political affairs chief

There are signs that North Korea (formally known as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or DPRK), is “still maintaining and developing its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes”, Rosemary di Carlo, United Nations political affairs chief, told the Security Council on Monday.

Ms. Di Carlo [welcomed](#) the positive announcements made by North Korea, with regards to ending nuclear testing, in April and May, including DPRK’s leader Kim Jong Un’s stated commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

However, she added that Yukiya Amano, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) reported in May that the Agency had observed nuclear signatures consistent with the continued operation of a plutonium production reactor, radiochemical laboratory and alleged uranium enrichment facility in Yongbyon, North Korea.

In an IAEA [statement](#) released on Monday, Mr. Amano said that “the DPRK’s nuclear activities are clear violations of relevant UN Security Council resolutions and are deeply regrettable.

The Agency continues to enhance its readiness to play an essential role in verifying the DPRK’s nuclear programme if a political agreement is reached among countries concerned.”



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Nikki R. Haley, Permanent Representative of the United States to the UN and Security Council President for the month of September, chairs the Security Council meeting on Non-proliferation and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on 17 September 2018.

Whereas, one year ago, the Korean Peninsula lay at the centre of world concerns over peace and security, in the face of DPRK's nuclear testing and threats, the unity of the Security Council, she said, helped create the opportunity to engage diplomatically, reduce military tensions and re-open channels of communication.

Ms. di Carlo was speaking at a [briefing](#) on the implementation of sanctions on North Korea, requested and presided over, by the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley.

The 15 Council members sat to consider the latest midterm report of [the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee](#), which was established to oversee the relevant sanctions measures relating to North Korea.

Ms. Haley reiterated claims made in a press release published by the US Mission to the United Nations, on September 13, stating that Russia had pressured the panel to alter its independent report, which included sanctions violations implicating Russian actors – and accused Russia of “working across the board to undermine the sanctions regime.”



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Vassily Nebenzia (foreground), Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN and Vladimir K. Safronkov (left), Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, at the Security Council meeting on 17 September 2018.

In response, Vassily Nebenzia, the Russian Federation's Ambassador to the United Nations, claimed that the United States was using the meeting to try to "impose on the international community their own vision of the situation." Mr. Nebenzia said that the work of the Panel of Experts had become "increasingly politicized" and that the first version of the report did not meet the required standards of objectivity and impartiality.

He continued by saying that the Russian Federation, and other members of the North Korea Sanctions Committee, "expressed a number of comments which were reviewed correctly by the Experts, and then taken on board, when they transferred the report to the Security Council."

Sustainable farming, 'key' to world free of hunger, malnutrition, says UN agriculture chief

There will be "no sustainable future without eradicating poverty and hunger," the United Nations agriculture agency chief spelled out on Monday, launching the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) latest flagship publication, on the world's [Agricultural Commodity Markets](#).

Focusing this year on the links between agricultural trade, climate change and food security, Director-General José Graziano da Silva said in the foreword that "ensuring food security for all is both a key function of, and a challenge for agriculture, which faces ever-increasing difficulties."

"As populations rise, urbanization increases and incomes grow, the agricultural sector will be under mounting pressure to meet the demand for safe and nutritious food," Mr. da Silva explained.

Climate change will have an increasingly adverse impact on many regions of the world, with those in low latitudes being hit the hardest – *FAO chief*

He sized up that agriculture must generate decent jobs to support billions of rural people globally, especially in developing countries where hunger and poverty are concentrated.

Turning to the warming planet, he underscored that agriculture is pivotal in helping to sustain the world's natural resources and biodiversity.

"Climate change will have an increasingly adverse impact on many regions of

the world, with those in low latitudes being hit the hardest,” he said.

The report points out that by the middle of this century, higher temperatures, precipitation changes, rising sea levels, extreme weather events and a likely increase in damage due to pests and disease, will all significantly impact agriculture and food security.

Climate change impacts will be affect different places in different ways, with variations across crops and regions. Arid and semi-arid regions will be exposed to even lower rainfall levels and higher temperatures, lowering crop yields.

Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America will be disproportionately affected, many of which already suffer from poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Conversely, countries in temperate, largely more-developed areas, may benefit from warmer weather during their growing season, further exacerbating existing inequalities and widening the development gap.

“Unless we take urgent action to combat climate change, we can expect to see a very different global picture of agriculture in the future,” the FAO chief stressed.

Agricultural trade impact



FAO/Robert Atanasovski

04 September 2017, Skopje, Macedonia – A man selling fresh produce in a green market in Skopje.

The relationship between agricultural trade and food security is increasingly important in both trade and development agendas, with developing countries requiring international support to cope with climate change.

While international trade can potentially stabilize markets and reallocate food from surplus to deficit regions, Mr. Graziano da Silva emphasized: "We must ensure that the evolution and expansion of agricultural trade is equitable and works for the elimination of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition globally."

Against the backdrop that the world's food system overall in 2050 will need to produce almost 50 per cent more, compared to 2012, according to the report, the sector needs to adjust to climate change effects and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while meeting a growing demand.

Producing more with less, while preserving natural resources and enhancing the livelihoods of small-scale family farmers, will be a key challenge for the future.

"Developing and implementing policies that shift global agricultural production onto a more sustainable path, protect the most vulnerable countries and regions...will be key if we are to see a world free of hunger and malnutrition by 2030," concluded the Director-General.