

Runaway climate change still “a real possibility”: UN Secretary-General

Greater ambition, urgency and action are needed if we are to prevent ever greater climate-related crises, said UN Chief [Antonió Guterres](#) on Wednesday, at the launch of the 2018 [New Climate Economy](#) report, at UN Headquarters in New York

The document, published by the [Global Commission on the Economy and Climate](#) – a project comprising several UN bodies, and other institutions – finds that the benefits of smarter and clearer growth are significantly under-estimated, and that bold climate action could deliver \$26 trillion in economic benefits through to 2030.

Other benefits of switching to a clean economy include the creation of over 65 million new low-carbon jobs, and 700,000 fewer air pollution-related deaths.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former Finance Minister of Nigeria and Co-Chair of the Global Commission, said that “policy makers should take their feet off the brakes, send a clear signal that the new growth story is here and that it comes with exciting economic and market opportunities. \$26 trillion and a more sustainable planet are on offer if we act decisively now.”

Speaking at the launch, Secretary-General Guterres said that momentum for climate action is growing every day, with over 130 of the world’s most influential companies now committed to using only renewable energy, fossil fuel-dependent countries looking to diversify, and over 250 investors with \$28 trillion in managed assets signing on to the [Climate Action 100+ initiative](#).

Shifting to a sustainable growth path has many other benefits. Climate resilient water supply and sanitation could save the lives of more than 360,000 infants every year, restoring degraded lands means better lives for farmers, and clean air has vast benefits for public health.

Mr. Guterres that clean energy systems help developing countries, where over 1 billion people still do not have access to electricity,” adding that “it can help deliver access to energy to the one billion people who currently lack electricity. For example, Bangladesh has installed more than four million solar home systems. This has created more than 115,000 jobs and saved rural households over \$400 million dollars in polluting fuels.”

Lord Nicholas Stern, Economics and Government Professor at the London School of Economics, who also Co-Chairs the Global Commission, said “we know we are grossly underestimating the benefits of this new growth story. And further, it becomes ever more clear that the risks of the damage from climate change are immense, and tipping points, irreversibilities, getting ever closer.”

Underlining the risks faced by the world, the UN chief said that climate change is “running faster than we are”, and that women, the poorest and the most vulnerable are hit first and worst by storms, floods, droughts, wildfires and rising seas.

Mr. Guterres reminded those present that the last 19 years included 18 of the warmest on record, that greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere continue to rise, and that there is still a significant gap between national commitments to lower emissions, and actual reductions.

The Secretary-General told those present that climate change will be high on the agenda of the 2018 opening session of the General Assembly, as part of efforts to galvanise action ahead of the milestone 2020 meeting of parties to the 2015 [Paris Agreement](#).

Libya has ‘lurched from one emergency to another,’ high-level UN official tells Security Council

The status quo in Libya is “untenable,” Ghassan Salamé, Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) told the Security Council on Wednesday.

The UN Special Representative pointed to the violence in the capital, Tripoli, that began on 26 August as shattering “the façade of calm that had prevailed since May 2017,” relaying that tanks and heavy artillery were deployed into residential neighborhoods, leaving 61 Libyans dead and injuring nearly 160.

“Many of those who died were civilians, including children. Families were forced to flee their homes. Looting and crime became common place as gangs took to the streets. Hundreds of criminals broke out of prison. Migrants were either trapped in detention centres, or turned onto the street,” he detailed.

Against the backdrop that the city was “on the brink of all-out war,” he said that on 4 September, UNSMIL brokered a ceasefire between the major parties to the conflict, halting the fighting and restoring some order.

Mr. Salamé said that as a first step for peace to take root, the Mission was offering technical assistance and its good offices in support of the ceasefire.

“Groups that violate the ceasefire must be held to account,” he stated, adding that the UN and the international community are watching. “The time

for impunity is behind us.”

He noted that in recent weeks, “the nation has lurched from one emergency to another.” Fearing that it “may become a shelter for terrorist groups of all persuasions,” he asked the Council for more help at this critical juncture.

Groups that violate the ceasefire must be held to account – *Special Representative Ghassan Salamé*

Alerting the Council that the presence and operations of the terrorist group ISIL are spreading, he cited an attack that claimed the lives of four police officers on 23 August claimed by the extremists; as well as on 10 August when armed groups forcibly evicted displaced Tawerghan families from the Tariq al-Matar IDP Camp; and a 2 May attack on the High National Elections Commission.

The Special Representative highlighted fighting between Chadian Government and opposition forces operating from Southern Libya, underscoring that “the recent Agreement signed between Chad, Sudan, Niger and Libya needs to be implemented, so Libya does not also become an alternative battleground for others.”

Meanwhile, he continued, the country’s citizens suffer “deteriorating standards of living,” and for many, “every day is a personal emergency.”

In tackling the underlying causes, he stressed the need for strong, unified civilian and military institutions, explaining UNSMIL’s dual track approach.

“First,” he said “we are working to revise the security arrangements in Tripoli” to reduce armed groups and work with Libyans to identify steps towards reshaping security in the capital and develop sustainable arrangements.

“The Mission’s second priority is to address the economic issues, which underpin the crisis and erode the daily lives of citizens across the country,” he informed the chamber, noting that if the plundering continues, there is little chance to move either the economic reforms or political process.

“We are also committed to advocating for a more equitable distribution of wealth in Libya focused not on appeasing groups based on their military strength, but on providing for citizens based on their need,” stressed Mr. Salamé.

He maintained that Libyans want change in their political leadership: “I will not mince words. Many members of the House of Representatives are failing to do their job,” he stated. “They simply have no intention of relinquishing their positions. They have put in place legal provisions to maintain their authority in perpetuity.”

He said that Libya needs the “unified, determined and vocal position” of the

Council, to find the peace and tranquility it is desperately looking for.

[Peace must be built 'block after block' UN General Assembly President tells key forum](#)

Under the theme of charting “A Credible Pathway to Sustaining Peace,” Miroslav Lajčák, President of the [72nd](#) General Assembly, convened this year’s one-day High-level Forum for Member States and others on Wednesday, to further promote a global culture of peace.

In opening the forum, he underscored three points. “The first is time,” he stated, noting that peace “must be [built up](#) – block after block, layer after layer. And this must be done, not by the hands of internationals, but by the people on the ground; the people who were there – in their countries, and in their villages – when peace was not.”

The second, he said, could be summed up in the single word, “simplicity,” saying that “it is around us, every day. It’s in what we do...where we go...how we speak. And if peace is not a part of these everyday habits, then we simply do not have a culture of peace.”

“Hope” was the third element he cited, pointing out that “we have chosen not to accept” the conflicts, terrorism and intolerance permeating the world, which brings “a powerful message of hope.”

Mr. Lajčák spotlighted the 1945 [UN Charter](#) saying that peace “is embedded in every word” of the Organization’s founding document.

Moving “from reactive to proactive; from response to prevention; from concentrating on the effects of conflict to exploring the accelerators of peace,” the Assembly president noted that we are “all part of a larger cycle of sustaining peace. Not just in theory. But also, in practice.”

He listed the UN ongoing efforts toward this goal saying that the world body was:

- reforming the UN’s peace and security pillar
- investing more in mediation and peacebuilding capacities
- reviewing the way peacekeeping operations work on the ground
- looking at how efforts for Sustainable Development and human rights have a direct impact on the prospects for peace
- and moving the whole international system towards a culture of peace.

Mr. Lajčák highlighted the need to be thoroughly inclusive, emphasizing that “gender equality is crucial.”

He concluded by quoting the late Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s Nobel Lecture, saying: “Peace must be made real and tangible in the daily existence of every individual in need.”

[Albinism: UN official welcomes latest developments in ‘landmark’ Malawi murder case](#)

The top United Nations representative in Malawi is urging the Government to [promptly prosecute](#) those allegedly responsible for the death of a young man with albinism whose butchered body was found earlier this year.

MacDonald Masambuka, 22, went missing in February. His body was discovered in April. Local media reported that his legs and arms had been removed.

Maria Jose Torres, UN Resident Coordinator in the African country, has welcomed the end of investigations into his killing.

Twelve people—among them a police officer and a priest—have entered pleas on a series of charges that include murder and causing harm to persons with disabilities.

“We call on the Government to promptly prosecute the alleged perpetrators in this landmark case,” she said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

Ms. Torres added that the UN remains concerned about continued attacks against persons with albinism.

People with the condition are born with lighter than normal skin, hair and eye colour, making them sensitive to the sun and bright light. In some communities, they are attacked or even killed for their body parts which are erroneously believed to possess magical powers.

At least 10 people with albinism remain missing in Malawi, according to Ms. Torres.

She said the most recent case concerns Joseph Kashingwe, a 12-year-old boy who disappeared in July after attending independence celebrations. Another boy, aged five, narrowly escaped abduction just last month.

The UN official called on the national authorities to intensify efforts to resolve the outstanding cases and to step up protection and support to

victims and their families.

She also urged them to prioritise investigations and prosecutions of crimes against persons with albinism, in line with commitments made at a [meeting](#) in June, convened by the UN in the capital, Lilongwe.

The global community has been working to fight stigma, discrimination and violence against persons with albinism, with 13 June celebrated each year as [International Albinism Awareness Day](#).

[UN media seminar on peace in the Middle East, highlights 'power of words over weapons'](#)

Engaging in debate over how best to advance peace in the Middle East and resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is “a welcome reminder of the power of words over weapons,” said United Nations chief António Guterres on Wednesday.

That was a key part of the Secretary-General’s message delivered at the start of the two-day United Nations 2018 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, being held in Moscow.

It has been organized by the UN’s Department of Public Information ([DPI](#)) as part of the Special Information Programme on [The Question of Palestine](#), in collaboration with Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with the support of the UN Association of Russia, and the Russian Peace Foundation.

In his message, delivered in the Russian capital by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, [Alison Smale](#), said that the seminar provided an “important platform to discuss media-related topics connected to the difficult and challenging situation in the Middle East” adding that it was “encouraging that it remains strong, 27 years after its inception”.

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains central to the Middle East quagmire. The recent tensions in Gaza are a painful reminder of how fragile the situation is,” she said, on behalf of Mr. Guterres.

“The people of the region and the world cannot afford another escalation of violence”, she added, noting that the UN remains “strongly committed to a just, comprehensive and lasting two-State solution that ends the 50-year occupation and resolves all final status issues. This is key for security and stability in the entire region”.

The event brings together more than 150 diplomats, journalists, media experts and youth representatives from Israel, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East, Russia, the United States, Europe, and beyond.

Subjects for discussion and debate on Wednesday and Thursday include a look back at the legacy of the 1993 Oslo Accords; how journalists cover the whole Israel-Palestine conflict and can better protect themselves covering conflict; and the narrative of Palestine refugees, 70 years on from the Nakba, or “catastrophe” by which Palestinians commemorate their mass-displacement during the 1948-1949 war.