

93 million children with disabilities 'among the most likely to be left behind': UN rights chief

Speaking at a Human Rights Council event highlighting how disabled youngsters are more exposed to violence, abuse and neglect, Ms. Bachelet explained that they have the same rights as all children.

Children with disabilities must have a say in all matters that affect the course of their lives – *UN rights chief Bachelet*

Their empowerment depends upon these rights being realized, she said – particularly the equal right to education – before highlighting how learning gives everyone the potential to escape poverty and exploitation.

“Children with disabilities must have a say in all matters that affect the course of their lives...They must be empowered to reach their full potential and enjoy their full human rights – and this requires us to change both attitudes and environmental factors.” Ms. Bachelet insisted.

Discrimination against children with disabilities can begin as soon as they are born, the High Commissioner noted, from authorities choosing not to register births, to separating them from families and placing them in care institutions.

Another key factor preventing the inclusion of disabled youngsters in their communities, and their ability to exercise their rights, is ongoing segregation into special schools, institutions and sheltered homes.

“This is a legacy of a model which has caused exclusion and marginalisation,” said [Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, Special Rapporteur](#) on the rights of persons with disabilities. “We can no longer have children being hidden away and isolated, children with disabilities must have the opportunity to dream of a full and happy life,” she added.

Addressing the Council, Ms. Aguilar insisted that children with disabilities “face stigma, discrimination, prejudice and barriers. They are abandoned, neglected, socially excluded, segregated, over protected, not given accessibility and the services and support they need.”

In addition to these challenges, she said one in three school-age children with disabilities do not have a primary education, while a child with learning difficulties is almost five times more likely to suffer sexual violence than their peers.

Echoing her message, Moldova children’s rights advocate [Dumitrița Cropivnitchi](#) from the non-governmental organization Lumos, described her

experience of discrimination, linked to disability.

“Because of my disability, at the age of five, I was sent to live in an institution as it was the only place I could receive an education,” she said. Can you imagine what it would be like, she added, “for a five-year old to be sent to a huge cold building, that smelt of porridge, and to have her parents replaced by educators, to share a room with 11 others, clothes and live by the rules of the institution?”

After staying there for five years, Ms. Cropivnitchi returned home and benefited from reforms that introduced mainstream schools that she could attend, including one in her village.

“It is indisputable that childhood is meant to be the most beautiful yet also, the most vulnerable stage in life,” she told the Human Rights Council. “During childhood, a child is dependent on adults. Children with disabilities can continue to be dependent and vulnerable their whole life... I ask myself now, how is this correct’, she said, to do this to “the thousands, millions of children around the world?”

[‘Once lost , hearing doesn’t come back’: World Health Organization warns on World Hearing Day](#)

Worldwide, some 466 million people have disabling hearing loss, and the WHO estimates that by 2050 that figure will almost double, affecting one in 10 people. The cost of unaddressed hearing loss is believed to be around US\$ 750 billion.

To mark World Hearing Day 2019, WHO has launched a new mobile and web-based app called “[hearWHO](#),” which allows people to check their hearing regularly, and intervene early in case of hearing loss. It can also be used by health workers to screen people in the community, and refer them for diagnostic testing if they fail the screening.

Users are asked to concentrate, listen and enter a series of three numbers when prompted. These numbers have been recorded against varying levels of background sound, simulating listening conditions in everyday life. The app displays the user’s score, and its meaning, and stores the outcome of the test so that the user can monitor hearing status over time.

Symptoms indicating the onset of hearing loss include a ringing sensation in the ear, known as tinnitus; frequently missing parts of a conversation; or a tendency to increase the volume of television, radio or audio devices.

The app is of particular benefit to people who are often exposed to high levels of sound, such as those who listen to loud music or work in noisy places; people who use medicines that are harmful to hearing; and people aged above 60 years.

In a statement released by WHO, Dr. Shelly Chadha, Technical Officer of the organization, said that “once lost, hearing does not come back. Through World Hearing Day, and with the support of this app, we encourage people to [‘Check your hearing!’](#) in order to help preserve this valuable gift that helps us to enjoy life.”

[Children still dying in Yemen war, despite partial ceasefire, says UNICEF chief](#)

In a [statement](#) released on Saturday, Ms. Ford said that “In Yemen, children can no longer safely do the things that all children love to do – like go to school or spend time with their friends outside. The war can reach them wherever they are, even in their own homes.”

The warring parties in the country signed a UN-led partial [ceasefire agreement](#) last December, but this did not spare the five children from being killed in an attack on the Tahita District, to the south of Hudaydah, which is a crucial gateway for the entry of aid, desperately needed to save millions in Yemen from starvation.

“Each day, eight children are killed or injured across 31 active conflict zones in the country,” continued Ms. Ford, “talks and conferences have so far done little to change the reality for children on the ground. Only a comprehensive peace agreement can give Yemeni children the reprieve from violence and war that they need and deserve.”

Last Monday, Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said that the “mind-boggling violence” in Yemen “has not spared a single child.” His comments came the day before a high-level pledging event for Yemen, held in Geneva, which raised \$26 billion to support Yemenis facing a crisis described by UN chief [António Guterres](#) as an “overwhelming humanitarian calamity.”

Mr. Cappelaere also noted that generosity and aid will not, on their own, bring an end to children’s suffering in Yemen, and called on warring parties to “put an end to violence in hotspots and across all of Yemen, protect civilians, keep children out of harm’s way and allow humanitarian deliveries to children and their families wherever they are in the country.”

[Ocean life faces 'onslaught of threats' from human activity, but tools exist to save it](#)

This is the first time that World Wildlife Day has focused on life below water, the crucial importance of marine species to human development, and how we can continue to save marine biodiversity for future generations.

Marine wildlife has sustained human civilizations for thousands of years, providing food; materials for construction; and enriching lives culturally, spiritually and recreationally. Today, some three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods.

But human activity is posing major problems, both for the planet's oceans and for human lives, particularly in coastal communities. These problems include the over-exploitation of marine species, pollution, the loss of coastal habitats and climate change. Around one-third of fish stocks are being consumed at unsustainable levels, and up to half the world's coral reefs have been lost due to factors such as warming sea temperatures, ocean acidification and a range of land-based activities.

However, international frameworks to halt or reverse these negative trends have existed for some time. For example, the targets of the internationally agreed [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#) – for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources – call for restrictions on the trade of marine species; the [Clean Seas](#) campaign, the world's largest global alliance for combatting marine plastic pollution, with commitments covering more than 60 per cent of the world's coastlines, is supported by 57 countries; whilst some 143 states back the [Regional Seas Programme](#) to promote the sustainable management and use of marine and coastal environments.

This year, UN Environment's [Wild for Life](#) campaign, which aims to conserve wildlife on land and oceans, has ramped up its awareness-raising efforts, with the addition of new advocates, including actor Adrian Grenier, best known for playing Vincent Chase in the TV series *Entourage*, who was designated a [UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador](#) in 2018 in recognition of his long-standing environmental activism.

In an exclusive interview with UN News, Mr. Grenier said that we can all make a contribution to improving the oceans and marine life: "Overfishing is a problem, so we want to reduce it as much as possible; consider where food comes from; and make sure it's organic, because a lot of the chemicals in pesticides sprayed on crops end up running off into rivers, and can poison the sea."

March 3 was proclaimed World Wildlife Day by the UN General Assembly in 2013,

the day the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)) was signed, as a way to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants. It has become the most important global annual event dedicated to wildlife.

[UN chief urges Somalis not to be 'deterred' by latest deadly terror attack](#)

The [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said on Friday that he “strongly condemns the deadly terrorist attacks” that took place in the Somali capital Mogadishu late on Thursday local time, which reportedly killed more than 20 people, with scores injured.

According to news reports, all three gunmen from the al-Shabab extremist group, who fought for hours against Somali Government special forces, were killed, after taking over a building in the centre of the capital. Reports say it was the longest siege by the group since it was forced out of Mogadishu in 2011.

The terrorists set off two car bombs that killed more than 20 and injured around 80 others. One detonated by a hotel patronized by government officials and the other near the home of Appeals Court Chief Judge Abshir Omar, news reports said.

Mr. Guterres extends his condolences to the families and friends of the victims, wished “a swift recovery to those injured” and commended “the response of the Somali emergency services to the bombings.”

The Secretary-General trusts that “Somalis will not be deterred by such violence from pursuing a peaceful and prosperous future” and reiterated the UN's support and solidarity with the people and Government of Somalia.

In a tweet, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) also strongly condemned “last night's twin bomb explosions”, saying “no political agenda can be served by violent extremism”.