

## Secretary-General urges increased support to Lake Chad countries following latest Boko Haram attack

The recent killing of villagers in Nigeria's Borno State has been [condemned](#) by the UN Secretary-General.

At least 19 people were killed when fighters with the terrorist group Boko Haram attacked the village of Malairi on Sunday, according to media reports.

UN chief António Guterres is calling for those responsible for their deaths to be brought to justice.

"The Secretary-General remains deeply concerned about the persisting violence in the Lake Chad Basin region," said his spokesman, in a statement issued on Monday evening.

"He commends national and regional initiatives to bring peace and stability to the area and to address the root causes of the conflict."

The Lake Chad Basin region includes Cameroon, Chad and Niger, as well as Nigeria.

The Boko Haram insurgency began in north-eastern Nigeria nearly a decade ago, spilling over the border to the neighbouring countries.

The group's activities, which include abductions and forcing captives to serve as suicide bombers, have displaced around 10 million people, as of 2017.

The Secretary-General again called on the international community to increase support to regional efforts to fight the militants, which include the establishment of a Multinational Joint Task Force.

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## Syria: WHO appeals for funding to sustain critical health care for millions trapped by conflict

With conflict raging in northwest Syria, the United Nations health agency has appealed for \$11 million to provide life-saving care to parts of Aleppo, Hama, Idleb and Lattakia governorates.

"The health situation in north-west Syria is already [dire](#) and looks set to deteriorate," said Michel Thieren, Regional Emergencies Director for the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

"If WHO does not receive additional funding, more than two million people caught in the cross-fire may have no access to essential health care services, including life-saving trauma care."

Fleeing mounting insecurity and violence, hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have already been displaced, may be forced to move again. Idlib is in particularly dire straits, as more than half a million people have been displaced to and within the governorate since January 2017.

Geert Cappelaere, [UNICEF](#) Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, had said that there was "at least one million [children at risk](#) in Idlib alone."

Meanwhile, growing crime and inter-factional fighting are adding to the insecurity as targeted assassinations and kidnappings also rise.

The health situation in north-west Syria is already dire and looks set to deteriorate – *World Health Organization*

Many internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living in makeshift, overcrowded shelters with little access to health care, safe water and sanitation, according to WHO.

After more than seven years of conflict, which has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and forced millions to flee, those remaining are faced with degenerating health services, leaving them vulnerable to communicable disease as acute malnutrition is predicted to increase.

Moreover, a decline in vaccination coverage rates threaten renewed outbreaks of preventable diseases, such as polio, and jeopardize WHO's efforts to globally eradicate the disease.

"As matters stand, over half of the country's public health care facilities have been destroyed or forced to close after years of conflict," said Dr. Thieren.

Facing widespread need across many parts of the country, the humanitarian community is finding itself increasingly compromised as a gap in funding for health has placed millions of vulnerable Syrians at increased risk.

WHO said it would use any additionally received donor funds to support primary health care, childhood vaccination and trauma services in north-west Syria; and to strengthen referral systems to transfer critically ill and wounded patients to hospitals for specialized care.

The UN health agency flagged that it would also facilitate medical evacuations and deliver essential life-saving medicines and equipment to

hospitals, clinics and mobile teams to treat people in need.

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## [Somalia has 'once in a generation' gender equality opportunity – UN Women chief](#)

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations entity dealing with issues related to gender, [UN Women](#), has encouraged Somalia to continue making progress in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka's comments were made on Sunday in Baidoa, the interim capital of Somalia's South West State (SWS), at the start of a three-day visit to the country, said [UNSOM](#), the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia.

Visiting as part of a delegation led by the Somali Minister of Women and Human Rights Development, Deqa Yasin, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka met with the acting president of South West State, Hassan Hussein Mohamed, cabinet ministers, female members of the SWS regional assembly and civil society representatives.

There are 31 female legislators in South West State's parliament, more than in any of Somalia's other states. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka congratulated Mr. Mohamed for the high participation of women in the parliament, whilst urging him to go further, saying "We expect you to do even better in the future."

Somalia is currently reviewing its constitution, ahead of federal elections planned for 2020. The previous federal elections, in 2016, were held under an indirect suffrage system, which a report from UNSOM, released earlier this month, credited with the formation of a more diverse Parliament: almost a quarter of those elected were women, up from 14 per cent in 2012.

The report called for the 2020 elections to establish a system of representation that is inclusive of all citizens, based on the one person, one vote principle.

Speaking during Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka's visit, Minister Yasin said: "We can have an impact on the constitutional review process to make sure (a future constitution) contains language that gives women opportunities in a very specific way, so that girls and women will benefit in the future."

With the UN Official's visit to Baidoa coinciding with [World Humanitarian Day](#), Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka took the opportunity to thank humanitarian workers in the country for their sacrifices and their dedication to communities who are

targets of violent people and extremism.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been an estimated 74 incidents of violence affecting humanitarian personnel in Somalia, resulting in the deaths of seven workers. A further 18 were abducted, and six are still being held captive.

“We are there with them [every step of the way](#),” added Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka. “(We) call on all of those who work in the humanitarian space to have targeted interventions to ensure that the security of women and girls is addressed and their participation as leaders and not just as victims is also enhanced.”

On arrival in the country on Saturday, the senior UN official met with Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairé and Foreign Minister Ahmed Isse Awad in the capital, Mogadishu, as well as with women representatives from the business community, politics and civil society.

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## [‘Think beyond farm jobs’ to reach sustainable development, UN agriculture chief advises African youth](#)

For the African continent to achieve sustainable development, more jobs must be created for its young people, including in the digitalized agriculture sectors, the United Nations agriculture chief told an international conference on Monday.

“We need to take action to [make agriculture more attractive to young people](#),” underscored José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), at the [Youth Employment in Agriculture Conference](#) in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.

“They must perceive agriculture as a remunerative and profitable sector and the dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in rural areas play an important role in this regard,” he added.

Over 60 percent of Africa’s estimated 1.2 billion people are under the age of 25 –mostly living in rural areas.

Yet, there is a growing uncertainty over the continent’s preparedness to tap this precious resource, which requires that tens of millions of rural area jobs be created annually for the continent to harness the dividends of its

youth.

Mr. Graziano da Silva's remarks came at the opening of the two-day event, which is co-organized by FAO, the Rwandan Government and the African Union (AU) to share knowledge and best practices on agriculture, youth employment, entrepreneurship and ICT innovations to prioritize interventions going forward.

Other keynote speakers included Li Yong, Director-General of the UN Industrial Development Organization ([UNIDO](#)); Geraldine Mukeshimana, Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources; and Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture.

We need to take action to make agriculture more attractive to young people – *UN agriculture chief*

## **Growing population means growing food demands**

Mr. Graziano da Silva noted that due to continued population growth, rapid urbanization and dietary changes accompanying rising household incomes, Africa's food demand is projected to grow in the coming years by more than 50 per cent, providing "an invaluable and untapped potential" to address youth unemployment challenges, albeit amid numerous constraints.

He pointed out that young people are usually employed on a casual or seasonal basis, with limited access to relevant education and technical training; limited access to finance, information and markets; and low involvement in decision-making processes.

"These constraints become a bottleneck that also impede young people to start an agricultural business of their own. As a result, young rural people are migrating," explained the FAO chief.

Meanwhile, the [World Bank](#) expects that by 2030, African agribusinesses will create a \$1 trillion market.

"In the coming years, more and more of the agricultural activities and employment will require digital skills," he stressed, calling cooperatives "the best way to provide family farmers and young professionals with technical assistance, capacity building, and access to modern technologies."

Mr. Graziano da Silva also encouraged youth to "think beyond farm jobs" and explore employment opportunities across the agri-food chain, such as in food processing, distribution, marketing and retail.

This "new kind of rural transformation" means equipping rural areas with basic services such as education, health, electricity, internet access and so on. "These services are themselves another important source for employment, especially for women and young people," he said.

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## UN mission welcomes Afghan government's announcement of Eid holiday ceasefire

After a surge in hostilities in Afghanistan over the past weeks, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) welcomed on Monday the Government's announcement of a conditional ceasefire for the Eid al-Adha holiday and called on warring parties to use this "momentum" to put an end to the conflict.

"A mutual ceasefire would further the prospects for talks to take place between the parties to the conflict to find a political settlement," [said](#) UNAMA chief [Tadamichi Yamamoto](#) in response to the Government's announcement of the pause, which reportedly would begin today.

If it holds, this would be the second ceasefire between the Government and the Taliban to be respected since conflict started in Afghanistan almost 20 years ago, following a brief pause in mid-June during the three-day Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

"It is important to seize all opportunities for a negotiated end to the conflict so that all Afghans can enjoy the life of peace they so desperately want and need," said Mr. Yamamoto, the top UN official in Afghanistan.

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 UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties in 2009.

In the past week alone, a deadly battle for the city of Ghazni, south-west of Kabul, led to the death of over 150 civilians. UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) released a statement on Thursday stressing the "urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and the opening of talks between the parties to the conflict to negotiate a sustainable peace."

UNAMA, whose mandate it is to support the peace and reconciliation process, reiterated that it stands "ready to play any role requested by the parties to the conflict to achieve a negotiated peace".

"This momentum must be upheld and the strong popular desire for peace must not be betrayed," said the UN mission's statement.