

Amid 'volatile' environment, UN mission chief urges Iraqi leaders to 'listen to the voice of the people'

Despite a myriad of “long-neglected social, economic and development needs”, the Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq ([UNAMI](#)) on Wednesday said progress had been made towards recovery and stability in the battle-scarred country, and called for Iraqi political leaders to continue to “work for national reconciliation” through “inclusive” solutions.

Briefing the Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, started by updating Members on the manual ballot recount completed on Monday, in response to “complaints and allegations of electoral fraud and mismanagement” following parliamentary elections on 12 May. Mr. Kubiš noted the monitoring and support role played by UNAMI, as well as the oversight and advice provided by the UN throughout the process.

“I welcome the orderly, transparent, credible and well-organised conduct of the recount,” he noted, applauding “the dedication and professionalism of all recount staff,” which, he said, “increased public confidence in the electoral process.”

As for the ongoing civil unrest that has broken out across Basra and various southern Governorates, and which resulted in the death of at least 18 persons with 519 injured in recent months, he commended the “major efforts to provide swift and tailored responses to legitimate popular demands, bringing a temporary relief to people living under strenuous conditions”.

“These measures, however, remain insufficient to address the depth of people’s needs and concerns,” he added, urging “political leaders to listen to the voice of the people, seize the opportunity and accelerate the process of formation of a patriotic, inclusive and non-sectarian national government that will put all the rich resources of Iraq at the disposal, and for the benefit, of its people.”

The Head of UNAMI insisted on the need to ensure that women in particular have access to “leadership positions in Iraq” so they are “not left behind in recovery and rebuilding efforts” and can “play key roles” in shaping the future of a country that “owes them a lot.”

In his briefing, the Special Representative mentioned that the country’s security and human rights situation remains “volatile” with sporadic terrorist attacks against civilians and government entities, and kidnappings.

“I note with concern that although the level of violence in Iraq has decreased since last year, armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a toll on civilians,” he said, adding that improvised

explosive devices remain the number one cause of civilian casualties.

He also mentioned as “unacceptable” the plight of over 3,100 Yazidis who remain in the hands of ISIL or Da’esh, including those simply missing since their region in northern Iraq was overrun by the terrorist group in August 2014.

As the humanitarian and protection situation remains dire, the Special Representative went on to highlight the major reconstruction efforts undertaken across the country, especially in Mosul’s old city, with the support of various UN agencies.

“I note with appreciation that one year after the liberation of Mosul, [UN] clearance teams have removed 43,700 explosive hazards in the city” from roads, bridges, schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, water treatment plants and municipal buildings, he told the Council.

He also commended the efforts made on health care provision and access to education, noting however the “funding remains a critical issue”. According to the UN’s [Financial Tracking Service](#), as of 8 August, a \$202 million (36 per cent) funding gap remains based on requirements laid out in the 2018 [Humanitarian Response Plan](#).

Mr. Kubiš urged the Members of the Security Council to continue to support Iraq in its path to stability and prosperity. “In tandem with our collective humanitarian and stabilization efforts, recovery and development efforts are critical to Iraq and Member States are requested to continue supporting them”, he said.

Among other things, in his briefing, the Special Representative also updated the Security Council on the National Government’s relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government, the continued presence of Turkish armed forces along the border in the north of Iraq, the plight of Syrian refugees living in the country, and the search for 625 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals who went missing after the 1990 conflict.

[In Tokyo, UN chief expresses full support for US-Japan dialogue with North Korea](#)

At a joint press conference in Tokyo on Wednesday with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, [UN Secretary-General](#) António Guterres welcomed the ongoing talks between the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), as well as Japan’s renewed initiative of dialogue with the country.

“As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am obviously totally committed to the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions on North Korea,” he told reporters, adding that he fully supported the negotiations taking place “with the objective that we all share, to see a total denuclearization that is verifiable, that is irreversible, to make sure that North Korea can be a normal member of the international community in this region.”

In mid-June, US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un held a historic summit in Singapore, signing a joint statement which included a pledge to end DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme. Days after conducting its sixth nuclear test last September, a North Korean ballistic missile flew over mainland Japan, drawing condemnation from the Security Council, which had just ratcheted up sanctions.

Standing alongside the Japanese leader, Mr. Guterres went on to express his support for Japan’s willingness to hold fresh talks with the North Korean leadership, following Prime Minister Abe’s offer of a high-level summit with the country.

The UN chief hailed these developments as timely, coming in the wake of a United Nation’s disarmament initiative, launched in May of this year. The new agenda, “[Securing Our Common Future](#)”, sets out his bold new vision for a world without nuclear arsenals and other deadly weapons. It focuses on three priorities – weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons and new battlefield technologies.

He declared that “the North Korea and the Iran situations are two central aspects of our concerns to make sure that we preserve non-proliferation, but also recognizing that non-proliferation needs to be accompanied by effective disarmament, progressive disarmament measures in the nuclear dimension. And, at the same time, the full implementation of the ban on chemical weapons and biological weapons.”

He added that the agenda represented “disarmament to save lives”, taking into account the “devastating impact” of conventional weapons on civilian populations in urban centres and “disarmament for the future generations, namely to make sure that we do not develop arms, systems of arms, that fully escape the control of human beings and responsibility of human beings”.

The Secretary-General travelled to Nagasaki later on Wednesday, where he was due to meet Mayor Tomihisa Taue, and other local officials, as well as with some *hibakusha*, or survivors of the atomic bombs.

On Thursday, he visits the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and the Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims, before taking part in the 73rd Nagasaki Peace Ceremony.

'Well-being of two million' in Gaza at stake as emergency fuel runs dry: UN humanitarian coordinator

To avert hospital closures and raw sewage overflowing onto the streets of Gaza, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator on Wednesday called on Israeli authorities to allow UN-purchased emergency fuel back across the border of the Palestinian enclave.

“Restricting the entry of emergency fuel to Gaza is a [dangerous practice](#), with grave consequences on the rights of people in Gaza,” Jamie McGoldrick, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Palestine said in a statement.

“The well-being of 2 million people, half of whom are children, is at stake. It is unacceptable that Palestinians in Gaza are repeatedly deprived of the most basic elements of a dignified life,” he added.

In the context of tightened import and export restrictions, Israel has prohibited fuel into the Gaza Strip since 2 August – following an earlier restriction that lasted from 16–24 July. According to the Israeli authorities, the intensified measures were in response to the continuing launch of incendiary kites launched from Gaza into Israel, which have sparked multiple fires.

Meanwhile, the fuel, which is being held up at the Israeli border, is urgently needed to power back-up generators which are in huge demand due to Gaza’s chronic energy crisis.

To ensure that hospitals, water and sanitation services function properly over the next four days, the respective humanitarian partners have indicated that at least 60,000 litres of emergency fuel must be delivered as soon as possible, to some 46 facilities across the strip.



OCHA

Garbage accumulated in the Ash Sheikh Radwan area in Gaza City, 2 March 2018.

According to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), around 40 of Gaza's 132 water and sanitation facilities have enough fuel for between one and two days – leaving 1.2 million Palestinians at imminent risk of sewage overflow.

To avoid sewage flooding into populated areas, Gaza City has reportedly had to direct the equivalent of four Olympic-sized swimming pools of sewage each day towards a storm water lagoon in the city's north, placing those surrounding communities at risk of overflow.

Gaza City sewage treatment has also reduced solid waste collection, leaving around 15,000 tons of garbage accumulating in the streets and increasing the risks of waterborne disease.

Hospitals and other health services are reducing operations, with five hospitals in danger of closing, placing more than 2,000 patients who rely on electrical devices at highest risk.

Moreover, medical services for over 1.6 million others may suffer at Gaza's main health facilities.

Compounding the situation, emergency fuel funding will run out for all critical facilities in mid-August, with \$4.5 million required to keep a minimum level of essential services running through the end of the year.

"Gaza desperately needs longer-term solutions so we can move past this cycle of repeated or worsening crises, including that Palestinian authorities prioritize provision of fuel for essential services," said Mr. McGoldrick.

"Until that happens, Israel must reverse the recent restrictions, including on the entry of emergency fuel, and donors must step in and fund emergency

fuel, in order to avoid a disease outbreak or other major public health concern," he concluded.

Let Nagasaki remain 'the last city' to suffer nuclear devastation says museum director as UN chief arrives

António Guterres was in Tokyo on Wednesday where he held talks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as meeting the city's Mayor and atomic bomb survivors, before traveling north to participate in the 73rd Nagasaki Peace Ceremony.

The number of survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – or hibakusha as they are known in Japanese, is decreasing each year.

Japan's health ministry says that as of last March, only 155,000 survivors remain, with 90,000 having died over the past decade. Moreover, the number of survivors directly exposed to radiation in the cities and their surrounding areas, has dipped below 100,000 for the first time, with the average age being 82 years old.

Before the commemoration, Akitoshi Nakamura, Director of Atomic Bomb Museum spoke to *UN News*.

Having started working at the Museum 60 years after the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, just three days after Hiroshima, Mr. Nakamura enthusiastically shared the citizens "high hopes" as they "eagerly" await Mr. Guterres' arrival.

"We are, from the bottom of our hearts, welcoming the SG's visit here," he asserted.

Laying out plans for the Secretary-General's visit, Mr. Nakamura shared his hopes that the UN chief would join local children in making origami cranes, a symbol of peace, before touring the museum where highlights include a clock that stopped at 11:02 am, when the bomb was dropped; documents charting the catastrophe after the bombing; and the broken belfry dome of the Urakami Cathedral.

"We would like him to see those," said the curator. "But more than anything, we would like him to see the photos of hibakusha."

"What is most horrific is the effect of nuclear radiation, so we would like him to see the documents and panels that show the effects of nuclear radiation on health," Mr. Nakamura elaborated.

The museum traces the catastrophe that unfolded after the bomb.

“We want people to see what a horrific weapon an atomic bomb is, and the kind of devastation over 14,000 nuclear weapons around the world can bring,” Mr. Nakamura stressed, explaining the museum’s aim to eliminate stockpiles of nuclear weapons, by illustrating the horrors they inflict.

“The two atomic bomb museums, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are about something that happened in the past, but they also are important in the sense that they trigger an awareness of the danger that nuclear weapons may cause in the future,” he said.

After 73 years, Mr. Nakamura does not want the experiences of the dwindling number of survivors to be forgotten along with them.

Calling it “the most important thing,” he said that “the museums continue telling the story of what happened at the time, in order for it to not be forgotten.”

Hiroshima was the first city to be devastated by an atomic bomb, on 6 August, 1945, and for the time being at least, Nagasaki is the last. With that distinction, Mr. Nakamura spells out “it’s very important to prevent another exposure to an atomic bomb.”

“We, the citizens of Nagasaki, have been appealing to the world to make Nagasaki the last city devastated by an atomic bomb,” he said.

As hibakusha numbers decline, education that carries on their voices becomes ever more important.

[UN chief calls for ‘increased commitment’ to resolution on 10th anniversary of Georgia conflict](#)

Ten years after conflict involving Georgia, Russia and the South Ossetia region broke out, [United Nations chief, António Guterres](#) said on Tuesday that “increased commitment” is needed by “relevant actors” to advance the on-going reconciliation and peace process.

“The Secretary-General recalls that it is a reminder of the need to resolve this and other protracted conflicts in Europe,” said a statement issued by his Spokesperson. “This requires increased commitment by the relevant actors, backed by strong political will and a reinvigoration of mediation processes.”

Conflict erupted in August 2008, between Russian and Georgian forces over the

pro-Russian enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which led later in the year, to the launch of international talks to resolve the crisis, known as the Geneva International Discussions, or [GID](#). In 2009, the Incident Response and Prevention Mechanism grew out of the GID, providing a forum to discuss issues between the various regions and governments, relating to on-going concerns.

The GID is co-chaired by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, and the UN, bringing together the countries and regions, as well as the United States.

“The Secretary-General urges all the participants in the Geneva International Discussions to adopt a constructive, forward-looking approach that would allow this indispensable mechanism to fulfill its mandate”, said the statement.

All concerned should prioritize progress through appropriate dialogue and refrain from divisive policies and unilateral actions that may adversely impact regional peace and security,” continued the UN chief.

Mr. Guterres recalled that while the GID and Mechanism have “substantially contributed to strengthening stability in recent years, more should be done on key security and humanitarian issues, including those related to the plight of the many internally displaced persons and refugees.”

He said the UN would “continue to fully support this important mechanism and work with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to achieve progress on all issues.”