

HIV/AIDS still impacting work and costing billions in lost earnings – new UN agency report

Outlining the economic and social toll HIV and AIDS continues to take on workers around the world, the International Labour Organization (ILO) called on Thursday for an “urgent effort” to improve treatment, step up testing and ensure healthier and more productive workplaces.

Prepared in collaboration with the UN agency dedicated to tackling the virus, UNAIDS, [The impact of HIV and AIDS on the world of work: Global estimate](#), examines the past and future effects of HIV epidemic, and development of antiretroviral therapy (ART), while assessing the economic and social impact on workers and their households.

The report shows that workers’ deaths attributed to HIV and AIDS are projected to fall to 425,000 worldwide in 2020, from 1.3 million in 2005; with people in their late-30s the most affected.

“This is the age workers are normally at the peak of their productive life,” said Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General.

“These deaths are totally avoidable if treatment is scaled up and fast-tracked,” he added.

In addition to the toll on lives, the report indicates that the disease costs billions of dollars in lost earnings – largely due to the hundreds of thousands of preventable HIV- and AIDS-related deaths.

Although the lost earnings have decline substantially from almost \$17 billion in 2005, they are still projected to amount to \$7.2 billion in 2020.

The good news is that ART is keeping employees healthy and productive, causing the number of workers living with HIV, either fully or partially unable to work, to drop dramatically since 2005.

The total number of those estimated to be fully unable to work is expected to decline to about 40,000 in 2020 from a 2005 level of about 350,000 – an 85 per cent decline for men and a 93 per cent drop for women.

The report recommended that treatment be scaled up and stressed the need to produce better integrated health data with social and economic components to capture the full impact of AIDS-related diseases.

The Impact of HIV also looked at “hidden costs,” such as those being exacted on household members.

It predicts that in 2020, some 140,000 children will carry what ILO refers to

as the “child-labour level chore burden”, while an additional full-time equivalent of 50,000 workers will perform unpaid care work.

It also shows that the number of workers living with HIV increased from 22.5 million in 2005 to 26.6 million in 2015 and is projected to rise to some 30 million in 2020, even if ART is scaled up.

“Mere scaling up of treatment is not enough,” stressed Mr. Ryder.

“Testing and HIV prevention measures also need to be stepped up if we are going to end AIDS. This makes human sense. And this makes astute economic sense,” he concluded.

UN chief launching new global disarmament agenda

The UN chief is expected to launch a major new global disarmament agenda on Thursday, “that saves lives” in pursuit of a safer, more secure world.

United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) is expected to argue that a deteriorating, more complex and dangerous international security environment makes it imperative to bring disarmament “back to the centre” of what the UN does.

The agenda, entitled “Securing Our Common Future”, will aim to promote arms control measures – covering conventional, nuclear and biological weapons – that will help bolster both national security in the 21st Century, as well as the world’s collective security system.

The UN chief is expected to lay out three key priorities: disarmament to save humanity itself; an agenda that helps save the maximum number of lives; and the implementation of a disarmament framework which safeguards future generations.

Surveying the increasingly dangerous proliferation of nuclear weaponry, the UN chief is expected to say that the existential threat they pose, must lead to the “total elimination of nuclear weapons”.

We will be reporting the speech in detail from Geneva, including LIVE COVERAGE, from 1430 GMT.

Peace and security challenges in Africa's Sahel region require 'holistic approach', says UN official

A "holistic approach" is needed to address peace and security challenges in Africa's vast Sahel region, a senior United Nations peacekeeping official told the Security Council on Wednesday, calling for more investment in better government, social services and youth opportunities.

Briefing Council members on when the new multinational security force established by five Sahel countries – known as the G5-Sahel Joint Force – might become operational, Bintou Keita, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, said that combatting terrorism and transnational organized crime, remained the major challenge.

"Let us not forget those who suffer the most, the local population – civilians – who continue to be intimidated and harassed and live in fear for their lives on a daily basis; who cannot send their children to school or have their most basic needs met, including access to food and nutrition," he said.

Ms. Keita added that since the authorization of the Joint Force by the African Union last April, and the renewal of its mandate last month, "notable progress" has been made, including the deployment of troops on the ground, and setting up of command posts and sector headquarters.

"Nonetheless, a lot of work remains ahead of us. The operationalization of the Joint Force has incurred delays and has yet to attain full operational capability," she said, calling on G5 Sahel member States to deploy remaining troops as soon as possible.

She also underlined the importance of addressing recent reports of human rights violations by security forces in the region and called on the countries to establish a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework that could be rapidly put into operation.

In her remarks, while Ms. Keita applauded the international community for their support to the Joint Force, she said that keeping it running would require "perpetual resource generation efforts" and that in the medium to long term, it will be challenging to sustain the funding momentum.

"What is more, the United Nations will continue to depend on others, to be able to implement the support measures it has been mandated to provide to the G5-Sahel Joint Force by Security Council [Resolution 2391 \(2017\)](#)," she said.

In that resolution, the Council [requested](#) the Secretary-General to conclude a technical agreement among the UN, the European Union and G5 Sahel States – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – with a view to providing

operational and logistical support through the [UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali](#) (MINUSMA) to the joint force conducting cross-border counter-terrorist operations across the region.

Transforming the world requires input from all society: UN deputy chief

International efforts to create a world where no one is left behind will only become a reality if all sectors in society participate, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General told ambassadors in New York on Wednesday.

Amina Mohammed was addressing a special meeting of the Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), the UN forum that supports implementation of [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

The global action plan, agreed by world leaders three years ago, seeks to end poverty and hunger, protect the planet and ensure all people enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives.

"The success of our collective journey to 2030 will greatly depend on how we involve Government, parliaments, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community and the private sector," Ms. Mohammed said.

"In short, the transformation promised will only be achieved by engaging all actors right across society."

The UN deputy chief called for an end to barriers that exclude people, particularly the most vulnerable, from taking part in processes that affect their daily lives.

She said inclusive sustainable development that is rooted in respect for human rights is the foundation for universal prosperity and well-being, and a healthy planet.

It also is "our best defence against violent conflict which so rapidly and dramatically erodes development gains," she added.

With interconnected challenges such as climate change, forced migration and urbanization affecting all people, ECOSOC president Marie Chatardová called for a "paradigm shift" in how the world responds to these issues.

"The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness, in particular, have also great potential to accelerate human progress and bridge the digital and other divides, thus helping to develop inclusive and people-centred societies," she said.

Ms. Mohammed, the UN deputy chief, outlined five areas for action; including the need for responsible leadership and greater investment in transparent and accountable institutions.

Women and girls, as well as young people, must also be encouraged to contribute, while investing in the so-called “green economy” can create jobs and improve health outcomes.

She said: “The 2030 Agenda needs the participation of all actors to ensure no one is left behind and that all can enjoy prosperity, dignity and opportunity in a world of peace.”

Urgent action needed to avoid war, alleviate suffering in Gaza – UN envoy tells Security Council

Gaza is on the verge of collapse and its people becoming increasingly desperate, a United Nations envoy told the Security Council Wednesday, urging international action to avoid another war, alleviate suffering and empower more responsible government within the enclave.

“In this Chamber, Council members have often spoken of the need to prevent war; and the Secretary-General has put preventive diplomacy at the heart of his agenda. It is time for our words to be tested in Gaza,” Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process told the Council by video teleconference from Jerusalem.

He reiterated his call for the Council to condemn “in the strongest possible terms” the actions that have cost so many lives in Gaza, especially the deaths and injuries caused by live-fire from Israeli forces along the border fence.

With at least 60 protesters of all ages confirmed dead from the violence of 14 May, “the number continues to climb” he said, and he cited UN figures reporting 76 Palestinians killed by Israel Defence Forces during the past month, and more than 3,000 injured.

He said Israel had a responsibility to not use lethal force “except as a last resort” and “investigate every incident that has led to a loss of human life”.

Mr. Mladenov also told the Council that the militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, “must not use the protests as cover to place bombs

and the fence and create provocations.”

The Special Coordinator welcomed Egypt’s move to open the border crossing at Rafah throughout the month of Ramadan and hoped that the security situation would allow regular movement.

He also acknowledged Israel’s recent efforts to ensure the delivery of goods to Gaza, despite the serious damage done at the Kerem Shalom crossing by protesters in recent weeks.

It is time for our words to be tested in Gaza *Nickolay Mladenov,*
Special Coordinator

Turning to the humanitarian situation, the UN envoy pointed out that Gaza’s electricity, water networks and health system “teeters on the verge of total collapse”.

He detailed four proposals to address the situation, namely prioritizing agreed-upon infrastructure projects via an established liaison committee; the adoption of fast-track approach to speed up implementation; coordinate with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Egypt to overcome blockages; and the upholding of the 2014 ceasefire.

The UN envoy explained that these would strengthen “the unification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority in line with the Quartet Principles; and an end to the occupation and resolution of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

Recent developments

Meanwhile he noted the first meeting of the Palestinian National Council on 30 April, the first in 22 years and Palestine’s accession to the UN Nations Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)), the UN Industrial Development Organization ([UNIDO](#)) and the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#).

Concerning the decision by some countries – including the United States – to relocate their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Mr. Mladenov said: “Given its importance to Jews, Christians and Muslims, Jerusalem is a highly sensitive and charged issue for millions,” and “upholding the status quo at the Holy Sites remains critical for peace and stability.”

He reiterated the UN’s position that “Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties.”

In closing, the Special Coordinator said that the office of the Middle East Quartet – established by the UN, the European Union, the United States, and Russia – remained a key forum for resolving the conflict, including within the broader regional context.

“We must continue to work together,” he stated, adding that there was no alternative other than on the basis of two States, “for achieving a peaceful

future for all the people of this troubled land.”