

Security Council extends support for African Union force in Somalia

The Security Council on Tuesday gave its backing to the African Union force in Somalia, AMISOM, extending its deployment until at least the end of July.

In the resolution, unanimously adopted, the Council also recalled its earlier decision to authorize the AU to reduce the Mission's level of uniformed personnel to 20,626 by 30 October this year from 22,126 now; but to include a minimum of 1,040 AMISOM police personnel, including five specialist Formed Police Units.

It also requested that the UN Secretary-General continue to provide logistical support for AMISOM, its 70 civilian personnel; the 10,900-strong Somalia National Army jointly operating with AMISOM, and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

The Council resolution adopted at the end of August last year, requested the AU and the UN to conduct a joint assessment of AMISOM's operations – but this assessment has been delayed, leading to Tuesday's decision to extend the deployment of AMISOM for just over two months, in order to assess the merits of a longer extension.

Briefing the Council, Michael Keating, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, said that AMISOM continues to play [an indispensable role](#), "at great human cost", in protecting population centres, main supply routes and Somalia's overall political progress.

"Suffice to say that successful security transition will require not just deep reform of the Somalia security forces but also, as the AU Commission Chairperson and UN Secretary-General's Envoys noted, transformation of AMISOM," he said.

Such transformation would entail more flexible joint operations and combat mentoring; greater emphasis on policing; adequate enablers and force multipliers, together with stronger accountability.

More flexible operational support by the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) will also be needed, along with predictable financing.

"The AU-UN joint review is likely to underscore that the foremost requirement for success is the need for unity of purpose among Somali actors, as well as between the Somalis, the AU, the troop-contributing countries, and principal security partners," he said.

UN health agency launches new diagnostic tool to ensure effective treatment

Although correctly identifying disease is essential for successful treatment, many have no way of accessing an accurate diagnosis, the United Nations health agency said on Tuesday, launching new tool to close this critical gap.

“An accurate [diagnosis is the first step](#) to getting effective treatment,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, of the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO).

“No one should suffer or die because of a lack of diagnostic services, or because the right tests were not available,” he added.

WHO’s first “Essential Diagnostics List” – a catalogue of the tests needed to diagnose the most common conditions as well as numerous diseases deemed to be a “global priority” – concentrates on *in vitro* tests, such as blood samples or urine specimens.

The list contains more than 100 products involving 58 tests for detecting and diagnosing a wide range of common conditions; and providing an essential package for screening and managing patient care.

Other tests are designed to detect, diagnose and monitor “priority” diseases, such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis B and C, human papillomavirus and syphilis.

Some tests are particularly suitable for primary health care facilities, where laboratory services are often poorly resourced or even non-existent, said WHO. For example, tests that can rapidly diagnose a child for acute malaria, or glucometers to test diabetes, do not require an electrical charging or trained personnel.

Other tests are more sophisticated and suitable mainly for larger medical facilities.

“Our aim is to provide a tool that can be useful to all countries, to test and treat better, but also to use health funds more efficiently by concentrating on the truly essential tests,” said Mariângela Simão, WHO Assistant Director-General for Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals.

“Our other goal is to signal to countries and developers that the tests in the list must be of good quality; safe and affordable.”

For each test category, the list specifies the type of test, intended use, format and – if appropriate – for primary care or health facilities with

laboratories.

The list also provides links to WHO Guidelines or publications and, when available, to prequalified products, as well as a reference point for countries to update or develop their own list of essential diagnostics.

To benefit patients, Governments must ensure appropriate and quality-assured supplies, trained health care workers and safe use. WHO will support countries as they adapt the list for local context.

WHO will update the list on a regular basis and add categories to the next edition. It will expand over the next few years as it incorporates other important health challenges; including antimicrobial resistance, emerging pathogens, neglected tropical diseases and additional noncommunicable diseases.

[UN rights office urges restraint over intensifying violence in northern Myanmar](#)

The United Nations human rights arm has voiced deep concern over escalating conflict between the military and armed groups in Myanmar's Kachin and Shan provinces that has displaced over 100,000 civilians and trapped many in the midst of active fighting.

[“The protracted conflict in Kachin and northern Shan states has already caused immense suffering](#), and we urge all sides to work to resolve the situation through a genuine, meaningful dialogue,” Rupert Colville, Spokesperson for the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday.

On Saturday, at least 14 civilians were reportedly killed and over 20 injured in attacks by armed groups, along with a counter-offensive by government troops in Shan province. There are also reports that Myanmar's military, known as the Tatmadaw, has used heavy weaponry and aerial bombing in the region.

In addition, at least 7,400 people have been displaced in Kachin since early April, adding to the 100,000 already displaced. About 2,000 of these civilians, who were trying to flee the fighting were trapped in dense jungle, before they were reportedly relocated to other towns in the province.

Many more remain trapped in areas of active fighting, with

extremely difficult escape routes through mountains and forests, and in need of humanitarian support – *Rupert Colville, OHCHR spokesperson*

“Many more remain trapped in areas of active fighting, with extremely difficult escape routes through mountains and forests, and in need of humanitarian support,” said Mr. Colville.

“We urge all sides to exercise restraint and to fully respect human rights and international humanitarian law, ensuring the protection of civilians at all times,” he added.

At the news briefing, the OHCHR spokesperson also raised alarm over reports that peaceful demonstrators calling for an end to hostilities, had been arrested in Kachin.

“We call on the authorities in Myanmar to respect the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression,” said Mr. Colville.

The escalation of conflict in Myanmar’s northern Kachin and eastern Shan provinces (bordering China) comes a few months after widespread violence against the minority Muslim Rohingya community in the country’s Rakhine province, drove more than 700,000 civilians across the border of southern Bangladesh where they are living in overcrowded camps, facing the onset of the approaching monsoon season.

[Security Council calls for calm following deadly Gaza clashes; diplomats debate US embassy move](#)

“For the people of Gaza, yesterday was a day of tragedy,” said the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, briefing the Council.

According to reports, he said, at least 60 people – including six children – were killed and more than 1,300 were injured on Monday in the Palestinian enclave occupied by Israel, whose troops fired live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters assembling along the perimeter fence.

“Israel has a responsibility to calibrate its use of force, to not use lethal force, except as a last resort, under imminent threat of death or serious injury,” Mr. Mladenov said. “It must protect its borders from infiltration and terrorism, but it must do so proportionally.”

He also called on Hamas, the militant group which controls Gaza, not to use the protests as a diversion for carrying out violent attacks at the border, and provoke Israeli forces. "Its operatives must not hide among the demonstrators and risk the lives of civilians," he said.

Demonstrations which organizers have called "the Great March of Return" started on 30 March, building up to Tuesday's marking of "al-Nakba" or "the Catastrophe," by which Palestinians remember their mass displacement during the 1948-1949 war, surrounding the creation of Israel.

Mr. Mladenov said that, as part of the march, and to protest the relocation of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, an estimated 35,000 demonstrated along the fence in Gaza and hundreds joined protests in the West Bank cities of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho, Nablus, and East Jerusalem. No fatalities were reported there.

The UN official also said that Hamas and other militants had engaged in violent and provocative acts, including the placing of improvised explosive devices at the perimeter fence, which detonated by an Israeli vehicle.

Israeli security forces, Mr. Mladenov said, carried out 18 airstrikes and fired shells in the direction of 26 Hamas targets in response to attacks.

"This cycle of violence in Gaza needs to end," the UN official said, "for if it does not, it will explode and drag everyone in the region into another deadly confrontation."

"The international community must step in and prevent war," he stressed.

During the ensuing debate, Nikki Haley, US Ambassador to the UN, said that violence was widespread not just in Gaza but across the Middle East, and in defence of Israel said that "the double standard is all too common in this chamber, and working overtime today."

She said that the Council should examine Iran's role in recent attacks on Israeli positions in the Golan Heights, and missile launches by what she called Iranian proxy forces in Yemen into Saudi Arabia. Hamas terrorists, backed by Iran, have incited attacks against Israeli security forces and infrastructure, she added.

Ms. Haley argued that the US embassy move to Jerusalem reflected "the reality" that it has served as Israel's capital since the founding of the State and it is the ancient capital of the Jewish people.

"There is no plausible peace agreement under which Jerusalem would no longer remain the capital of Israel. Recognizing this reality makes peace more achievable, not less," she said, adding that her country is prepared to support negotiations and a peace agreement in every way – "a peace in which people of all faiths are free to worship in Jerusalem."

European members in the Council, however, unanimously called for a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians on the status of Jerusalem.

The United Kingdom's position "is clear and long-standing," said its UN Ambassador, Karen Pierce. "Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states."

She also stressed the need for an independent, transparent investigation to "establish facts" involving Monday's casualties, and hold those responsible to account, including the determination of whether Israel's use of force was in line with the international law.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debeb

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, addresses the Security Council on 15 May 2018.

Also addressing the Council, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, described Monday's events as an "odious massacre", describing Israel's occupation of Palestinian land as the main source of tension.

The provocative transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem violated Council resolutions, he said, emphasizing that no country has the right to imperil Palestinian territory under occupation, especially since the status of Jerusalem should be determined through negotiations.

"How many more Palestinians have to die before you take action?", he asked, wondering how Council members would react if unarmed demonstrators had been killed in similar circumstances in their own countries.

"Our people have waited for a long time. We can no longer wait for an end to this injustice," he said.

Danny Danon, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, said that Israel had disengaged from Gaza in 2005, but the enclave has never reached its potential because Hamas has taken it over following elections in 2006. Rather than invest in education, infrastructure and the economy, the group has spent its resources on "terrorizing Israel", he said.

The international community, with a few brave exceptions, has done nothing to stop Palestinians from terrorizing Israel, he added.



UN Photo/Manuel Elias

Danny Danon, the representative of Israel addresses the Security Council on 15 May 2018.

Amid the celebrations around this week's 70th anniversary of the State of Israel, those claiming that the decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem lay behind Palestinian violence should re-examine history, he said.

Ambassador Danon said that Palestinian claims that the embassy move had provoked demonstrations, was just another "excuse" for violence against Israel. He said the Council was obliged to "call out lies", condemn Hamas violence and "place itself on the right side of history."

Climate change: An "existential threat" to humanity, UN chief warns global summit

None of the world's challenges loom as large as climate change, the United Nations chief told a major climate action summit on Tuesday, reiterating his belief that global warming poses an "existential threat" to humanity.

Both leadership and innovation are essential for climate action, [Secretary-](#)

[General António Guterres](#) said in his keynote address to the global gathering, known as the R20 Austrian World Summit – a long-term initiative to help regions, States and cities implement the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and meet the [Paris Agreement](#) targets.

Mr. Guterres spelled out: “We must use all our resources to build a sense of urgency”, to raise ambition, while keeping temperature rises in the years ahead, as close to 1.5 degrees Celsius as possible.

He said there was reason to hope, declaring that “the world is seeing a groundswell of climate action”, citing examples, including Morocco’s building of a solar farm “the size of Paris, that will power over a million homes by 2020” and China’s achievement in already passing it’s 2020 goal of producing 105 gigawatts of solar power capacity.

“We must build on this,” the UN chief emphasized, calling renewable energy – which already produces a fifth of the world’s electricity – power that also delivers significant health benefits.

The [World Health Organization](#) reports that more than 80 per cent of people living in urban areas are exposed to poor-quality air that is damaging human health.

Financing to accelerate climate action is necessary if we are to bend the emissions curve *Secretary-General António Guterres*

“Investments in clean, green infrastructure need to be scaled up globally,” he explained. “For that, we need leadership from the finance and investment community and by local, regional and national governments who will decide on major infrastructure plans over the coming years.”

Mr. Guterres encouraged private sector leaders attending the UN General Assembly-backed summit in the Austrian capital, to announce new financing for clean energy projects.

While the 30-member independent [International Energy Agency](#) estimates that 2017 investments in renewable electricity amounted to \$242 billion, said the UN chief, that was still far less than the funds invested in new fossil fuel development. Billions of dollars more needs to be invested in renewables if we are to see a “full-scale transition to clean energy” by 2020, said Mr. Guterres.

Moreover, some 75 per cent of the infrastructure needed by 2050 has still not been built.

“Mobilizing and equipping local governments with the capacity and financing to accelerate climate action is necessary if we are to bend the emissions curve,” he maintained.

Noting that climate change continues to move faster than climate action, Mr. Guterres quoted the UN [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) saying: “The

more we disrupt our climate, the more we risk severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts."

"But," he added, "it does not have to be that way," pointing to solar, wind and cutting-edge technologies, such as electric vehicles or energy from algae in the ocean, which promises a new era of clean air.

"Let's join a race to the top, a race where there are only winners," concluded the Secretary-General.