

[‘Robust’ economic growth in Asia-Pacific last year and ‘promising’ prospects ahead – UN report](#)

Economies in the Asia-Pacific region registered robust growth in 2017 and prospects for this year look promising, the United Nations development arm in the region said, urging countries to take advantage of positive conditions and address underlying vulnerabilities.

Recent strong growth can also provide resources critical to realizing the ambitious [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), said the UN [Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific](#) (ESCAP).

“The prospects for [mobilizing financing for development](#) purposes are promising,” said Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, which is based in Thailand.

According to the [Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific](#) – ESCAP’s long-running flagship publication – developing economies are on track to record an overall growth rate of 5.8 per cent in 2017, compared with 5.4 per cent the previous year.

For 2018 and 2019, these economies are projected to grow by 5.5 per cent, with concern over debt levels in China offset by a recovery in India and steady performance in the rest of the region.

Strengthening resilience to mitigate future risks

Bolstering the fundamentals will be important as the medium-term outlook sees growth trending downward in several countries owing to ageing populations, slower capital accumulation and modest productivity gains.

At the same time, “rapid technological advancements, while promising immense opportunities are also posing considerable challenges in terms of job polarization and income and wealth inequalities,” said Ms. Akhtar.

The report also made the case for the use of so-called macroprudential measures (measures which look at the financial system as a whole) to mitigate risks and keep economies stable.

“Lifting productivity will require a ‘whole-of-Government approach’ for fostering science, technology and innovation and investments in relevant skills and infrastructure,” urged ESCAP, highlighting the need to strengthen social protection and efficient use of resources.

Tax reform and strengthening tax collection could also add as much as 8 per cent to the gross domestic product (GDP) of countries such as Myanmar or Tajikistan; and about 3 to 4 per cent in larger countries, like China, India

or Indonesia, according to ESCAP.

[UN chief denounces attack on village in north-west Nigeria](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has strongly condemned an attack this weekend on a village in the Nigerian province of Kaduna and underscored the need to hold the perpetrators to account.

“Those responsible” must be “swiftly brought to justice,” said the Secretary-General in [a statement](#) released by his Spokesperson’s office.

Mr. Guterres also expressed his continued concern over the persisting violence in the region and urged all actors to “work together to bring peace and stability to the country.”

The UN chief extended his condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Nigeria, and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

According to media reports, at least 51 people – including children – were killed in Saturday’s attack on Gwaska village, located about 230 kilometres (140 miles) north-west of the capital, Abuja.

Last month, 14 miners were reportedly killed in an attack by gunmen in the same area.

The country’s north-east, meanwhile, has been facing a long-running Boko Haram insurgency that has claimed tens of thousands of lives and driven over two million people from their homes

[‘Silence the guns’ urges UN disarmament chief as global week of action begins](#)

The international community must present a united front against gun violence which kills nearly 250,000 each year and injures many more, said a senior United Nations official on Monday, marking the start of a Global Week of

Action Against the scourge.

“Every day, hundreds of lives are lost due to [gun violence](#) worldwide,” the UN Disarmament Affairs chief, Izumi Nakamitsu, said in her message at the start of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence. “Guns are responsible for about half of all violent deaths – nearly a quarter-million each year.”

The High Representative said that for every death, there were “many more injured, maimed and forced to flee their home and community” and those who just live with the threat of being shot.

The pandemic of gun violence has many roots, such as a lack of adequate legislation and regulation on gun control; an insufficient ability to enforce existing laws; youth unemployment and a lack of job opportunities for former gang members and ex-combatants.

Ms. Nakamitsu also singled out a culture in some places that “glorifies violence and equates guns with masculinity”.

Such complex problems require multi-faceted, sustainable solutions that address root causes, Ms. Nakamitsu said.

The Global Week “is a conduit” for fostering cooperation on this critical issue among all stakeholders, including government, international and regional organizations, businesses, and civil society, and for them to pool their experience, strength and expertise, she said.

Ms. Nakamitsu also highlighted the explicit link to sustainable development and security, stating that without tackling this scourge head-on, the ambitious goals set out in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) would not be achieved.

From 18-29 June, States will gather at the UN Headquarters in New York, for the [Third Review Conference](#) on the Programme of Action on small arms – the key global instrument that has guided international action against the illicit trade in small arms over the past two decades.

“The Conference will provide an important opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to silence the guns that affect so many innocent lives, and to continue its work towards achieving our common goal of peace, security and development for all,” she said.

[UN forum to coordinate global efforts](#)

to address worsening water woes

With extreme weather costing hundreds of billions a year and fears that by 2050, one in four people will be living in a country affected by severe water shortages, a global conference got underway on Monday convened by the United Nations meteorological agency to manage the precious resource more sustainably.

The problem has been further complicated due to the lack of comprehensive water supply data and monitoring systems which is making it hard to respond to the growing crisis.

[“We cannot manage what we do not measure,”](#) said Harry Lins, the President of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Commission for Hydrology.

“And yet the systems and data collection which underpin these vital services to society are under real pressure,” he added, underscoring that informed decision-making must be based on comprehensive facts and figures.

This sums up the key challenge underlying the agency’s [HydroConference](#), taking place in Geneva from 7-9 May, is seeking to address.

It brings together the full gamut of so-called “water stakeholders” – decision makers, meteorological and hydrological services; the private and academic sector; non-governmental organizations, and UN entities – around the same table to coordinate efforts as well as leverage individual knowledge and collective expertise to maximum effect.

WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said it was important for all actors to cope with the scale of the challenges that lie ahead, citing the two extremes of droughts and floods.

“Effective flood and drought policies can be implemented only with data and models for assessing the frequency and magnitude of extreme events,” he said, adding that the same also holds for other goals related to water and its efficient use; including those in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Sustainable Development Goal 6 ([SDG 6](#)) explicitly calls for sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Water is also a key component for other Goals including those on eliminating extreme poverty ([SDG 1](#)); as well as [Goal 2](#), to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, as well as [Goal 13](#) on mitigating climate change.

Largest-ever global response to cholera targets 2 million people in Africa

The largest cholera vaccination drive in history targeting two million people across Africa is underway, the United Nations announced on Monday, in response to a series of recent deadly outbreaks of the water-borne disease.

“Oral cholera vaccines are [a key weapon](#) in our fight against cholera,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) in a statement, “but there are many other things we need to do to keep people safe.”

“WHO and our partners are saving lives every day by improving access to clean water and sanitation, establishing treatment centres, delivering supplies, distributing public health guidance, training health workers, and working with communities on prevention,” he added.

The drive targets Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, South Sudan and Nigeria, and will be completed by mid-June.

The vaccines are funded by the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private partnership known as Gavi, and were sourced from the global stockpile.

Oral cholera vaccines are a key weapon in our fight against cholera
– WHO chief

The burden of cholera remains high in many African countries. As of 7 May, there are at least 12 areas or countries, reporting active cholera transmission in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the beginning of this year, WHO has led the way providing technical expertise and guidance, working closely with Health Ministries and other partners in the five target countries to plan and implement the vaccination campaigns. The ambitious effort is part of a global push to reduce cholera deaths by 90 percent by 2030.

In the 15 years between 1997 and 2012, a modest 1.5 million doses of cholera vaccines were used worldwide. In just the first four months of this year, more than 15 million doses have been approved for use globally.

Oral cholera vaccine is normally administered in two doses. The first gives protection for six months, the second for between three and five years.

“Every rainy season, cholera springs up and brings devastation to communities across Africa,” said Matshidiso Moeti, WHO’s Regional Director for Africa.

“With this historic cholera vaccination drive, countries in the region are demonstrating their commitment to stopping cholera from claiming more lives. We need to build on this momentum through a multisectoral approach and ensure that everyone has access to clean water and sanitation, no matter where they are located.”

A resolution on further action to combat cholera will be proposed by Zambia and Haiti at this month’s World Health Assembly in Geneva, calling for renewed political will and an integrated global approach to eliminate cholera, including more investment in clean water, sanitation and hygiene.