

Security sector reform ‘core element’ of sustaining peace, say top UN officials

Top United Nations officials have underscored the importance of security sector reform, which they say could mean the difference between peace and conflict, and between life and death.

“Security sector reform is key to sustaining peace,” Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly, said Monday at a high-level roundtable on the subject.

“Security actors have many powerful tools at their disposal. This goes beyond guns and handcuffs. Instead, they hold the tools which can pull societies back from the brink of conflict.”

Mr. Lajčák, however, added that their roles can also be negative. In some cases they can be politicized; widen divisions, stoke fears and tensions; and they can abuse their positions, to target and persecute one group or one community.

He went on to elaborate that with effectiveness, accountability, professionalism as well as proper governance, security sector is more likely to promote sustaining peace.

To make sure that security sectors drive peace, the President of the General Assembly underscored that the security sector reform process needs to have national ownership as well as regional engagement.

Equally important is the participation of women, he added, noting also the importance of sufficient resources, and coherence and coordination among the actors involved.

Today’s event comes on the eve of the two-day [High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#) that the Assembly President will convene on Tuesday and Wednesday to assess efforts undertaken and opportunities to strengthen the UN’s work in this area.

At its heart SSR is about ensuring safety and enabling women, men and children to live their lives free from fear – *Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed*

Speaking alongside Mr. Lajčák, Amina J. Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, also underscored the importance of security sector reform for delivering on the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) as well as other global commitments

Security sector reform figures prominently in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), and in particular [Goal 16](#) on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. Strengthening of the security sector is also part of Goal 2 of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

“In short, [security sector reform is a core element of prevention and sustaining peace agenda](#),” said Ms. Mohammed, noting that in developing countries and countries emerging from conflict, it is both essential as well as a difficult process to manage.

“At its heart SSR is about ensuring safety and enabling women, men and children to live their lives free from fear,” she underscored.

In her remarks, the UN deputy chief also said that addressing challenges related to security sector reform during peace processes contributes to stabilization efforts, as well as highlighted its importance as a preventive measure.

[UN chief condemns airstrikes on civilians in Yemen; calls for prompt, transparent investigation](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for a prompt, effective and transparent investigation into recent airstrikes on civilians in Yemen, which claimed at least 50 lives, including children, and injured many others.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres reminded all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law concerning the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure during armed conflicts.

One of these airstrikes hit a wedding party in Hajjah, north-western Yemen, late Sunday.

In another tragic incident over the weekend, civilian vehicles were hit in Taizz, located in the south-west.

Ongoing [conflict in Yemen](#) between international coalition forces supporting President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi on one side, and Houthi militias and allied units of the armed forces on the other has taken an enormous toll on the civilian population, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

Across the war-torn country, more than 22 million people – over three-fourths of the population – remain dependent on humanitarian aid. A staggering 8.4 million among them do not know how they will obtain their next meal.

[At development financing forum, top UN officials urge breakaway from ‘short-termism’](#)

The United Nations will support countries’ path to sustainable development by brokering partnerships, pursuing innovative finance, leveraging resources and building the necessary capacities, senior officials said Monday, highlighting the need for a change of mind-set from “short-termism” to long-term investments.

“I will count on world leaders and all of you to invest in a sustainable and prosperous future for all,” [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said in his video message to the opening of the financing for development [follow-up forum](#) in New York.

The forum, organized by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), will discuss the main findings of the [2018 report](#) of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, which provides a first assessment of progress made in such financing.

“Mobilizing [financial resources](#) is crucial for advancing human well-being and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” said Mr. Guterres, who will convene a High-level Meeting on Finance in September.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, in her speech to the Forum, underscored [several areas](#) for attention.

“Domestic resource mobilization is fundamental,” she said, stressing the need to unlock domestic capital and fight tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows that erode domestic resource bases.

The deputy UN chief also highlighted the critical importance of development cooperation to supporting SDG implementation, calling on governments to meet their commitments on official development assistance. Further, she called for a global environment supportive of long-term investment.

“Short-termism is a persistent threat to successful poverty eradication efforts,” she said, explaining that most corporate executives – according to the recent Inter-Agency Task Force report – say they would delay investments

in projects with positive returns in order to hit quarterly earnings targets.

Short-termism is a persistent threat to successful poverty eradication efforts – *Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed*

“This mindset needs to change,” she stressed.

Ms. Mohammed also urged the international community to find ways to speedily unlock resources and access to finance for countries with urgent needs, such as those affected by crises or disasters.

Although there are some innovative solutions being devised in this area – such as insurance-like mechanisms that can be supported where needed, or loans that reduce repayment during crises – many of these are yet to be implemented or taken to scale, she said.

Also, the global community must dramatically scale up investments, she said. For example, to achieve universal access to clean water and sanitation, there is a need to triple the amount spent to around \$114 billion per year.

Finally, she said, governments and partners from the private sector must work more effectively to overcome current financing challenges.

General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said that the investment gap in developing countries alone is some \$2.5 trillion per year for major SDG sectors, given the much-quoted SDG price tag of \$7 trillion per annum.

“But we cannot aim to just throw money at the problem. Instead, we must have a strategic and targeted approach,” he said. “The Addis Ababa Action Agenda sets out the strategy. It calls for maximizing all kinds of resources to support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.”



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Miroslav Lajčák, President of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, addresses the Economic and Social Council's third Financing for Development Forum, held during the 2018 session at UN Headquarters in New York.

"The Forum provides opportunities to dig deeper into questions of supporting implementation," he added.

On Sunday, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized the [SDG Investment Fair](#) to provide a platform for direct interaction between 100-150 participants representing governments of developing countries, private sector investors, financial intermediaries and other relevant stakeholders.

"After all, it is the public sector that is responsible for establishing a regulatory and policy framework that encourages responsible long-term investment into the SDGs," said Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, in his opening remarks. "At the same time, multilateral institutions continue to play an indispensable part in providing additional funding and catalyzing private and public investment."

Marie Chatardová, ECOSOC President, said that a greatest challenge policymakers face in raising resources for sustainable development is excessive short-term decision-making in the private sector as managers' compensation is often tied to short-term performance measures and benchmarks.

But "an increasing number of asset managers and owners have committed to integrate ESG criteria in their capital allocation process," she said, referring to environmental, social and governance (ESG) indicators that have a material impact on returns.

[With threat of nuclear weapon use growing, non-proliferation treaty more vital than ever – UN official](#)

The United Nations disarmament chief said on Monday that the world today faces similar challenges to the context that gave birth to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and that the threat of use of nuclear weapons is growing.

"The geopolitical environment is deteriorating. Some of the most important instruments and agreements that comprise our collective security framework

are being eroded. Rhetoric about the necessity and utility of nuclear weapons is on the rise. Modernization programmes by nuclear-weapon States are leading to what many see as a new qualitative arms race,” said Izumi Nakamitsu.

Ms. Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, was among the speakers at the opening of the preparatory meeting that began today in Geneva for the 2020 NPT review conference.

The Treaty entered into force in 1970 at the height of the Cold War and is regarded as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

It was designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to further the goals of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

“Half a century later the NPT has transcended its initial purpose and has become a core component of our international architecture – the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and an essential framework for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament,” the High Representative noted.

“Its near universal membership, legally binding commitment to disarmament and verifiable non-proliferation safeguards undergird its status as one of the most successful and credible multilateral security instruments,” she stated.

“That success and that credibility cannot and should not be taken for granted.”

Today’s meeting takes place just days after the announcement by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to freeze its ballistic missile programme and nuclear tests, a decision that has been welcomed by the UN.

Ms. Nakamitsu said that “the decision by the DPRK to suspend nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and to dismantle its nuclear test site, are welcome developments which we hope will contribute to building trust and to sustaining an atmosphere for sincere dialogue and negotiations.”

She added that the Secretary-General looks forward to a positive outcome of the Inter-Korean Summit and hopes for early agreement on a framework for resumption of negotiations leading to verifiable denuclearization and sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Youth ‘the missing peace’ to tackling

global challenges, UN envoy tells Security Council

Tapping the potential and creativity of young people is indispensable to prevent conflict and build peace, the United Nations youth envoy said Monday, urging governments to create conditions that allow their meaningful participation in civic and political lives.

Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's [Envoy on Youth](#), underlined three critical areas – supporting youth's peace efforts; prioritizing their political participation; and partnering with them.

"I will not ask you to let young people lead, as they are already leading. But they need inclusive and safe spaces and enabling environments to succeed," she said, speaking at an [open debate of the Security Council on youth, peace and security](#).

"Recognize [their work], fund it, scale it up, protect it."

Ms. Wickramanayake also called for dispelling misconceptions surrounding youth, citing studies that illustrate only a small minority of young people ever engage in violence.

Yet, she added, they face suspicions and undue restrictions, including when it comes to travelling across borders and many had difficulties in obtaining travel permits to be at today's meeting.

"My generation represents promise – not peril. We should be seen as an asset – not a problem."

In her remarks, Ms. Wickramanayake also called on all concerned to fully engage with young people in electoral processes and political party structures and not to consider them "too young to run" for Public Office.

Include young people in political, civic and economic life, she urged.

Do not demonize or patronize the youth – study author

Speaking alongside the UN youth envoy, Graeme Simpson, the lead author of '[The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security](#),' also called for tackling stereotypes, debunking assumptions and policy myths associated with the younger generation.

"It necessitates a new culture and new societal norms, that do not demonize, romanticize or patronize youth," he said.

"The interests of young people and the work they do, naturally traverses the pillars of peace, development and human rights, and they make it clear that protection and prevention are inseparable."

The open debate was convened by Peru in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of April.

It comes ahead of a [high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace](#) convened by the President of the General Assembly, 24-25 April, at UN Headquarters in New York.