

Unity in Security Council was key to recent easing of tensions on Korean Peninsula – UN chief

The unity within the Security Council played an essential role in creating the positive momentum that led to a decision by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to suspend nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles, the United Nations chief said Monday, noting however that the 15-member body has so far failed to achieve such unity to tackle the Syrian crisis.

"I have no doubt that if we are today on track... for a peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, that is due to a number of reasons," [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said at a press conference in Stockholm, following a meeting with Sweden's Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven.

"I would say the most important of those reasons is [the unity of the Security Council](#) that was able to come together and to have a very strong and meaningful set of sanctions that I believe had a very important impact, and to a certain extent made North Korea realize that it was necessary to come forward, to enter into dialogue with the international community, and especially with both the Republic of Korea and the United States of America," he added.

He also cited the important role played by the United States, China and other countries.

Mr. Guterres was in Sweden for his annual retreat with the Security Council, which was held this year at Backåkra, the private estate of Dag Hammarskjöld, the late Swedish diplomat and the UN's second Secretary-General.

The Council members have used this retreat, normally held outside its chambers, as an opportunity to reflect on larger themes relevant to the work of the Council and the UN system with the Secretary-General and senior members of the Secretariat.



Photo: Moa Haeggblom

Secretary-General António Guterres and the 15 members of the United Nations Security Council in Backåkra, Sweden. Photo: Moa Haeggblom

To questions on Syria, Mr. Guterres said that “unfortunately [...], the unity of the Security Council has not existed.”

But at the retreat, there was “a unanimous recognition” of the need for a political solution to be achieved through intra-Syrian dialogue with UN facilitation, in line with Council resolution 2254, as well as “a strong commitment” to securing access to deliver humanitarian aid to the Syrian people in need, he said.

On questions about a proposal to create a mechanism to determine who is responsible for chemical attacks in Syria, Mr. Guterres explained that the report produced by the Joint Investigation Mechanism (JIM) that had existed exactly for that purpose was contested by some countries, namely by Russia, and as a result, the mandate of JIM was not renewed.

And after that, different proposals have been put forward to create a successor mechanism but have not been accepted.

“And this is the impasse in which we are, and this impasse is extremely negative and dangerous,” he said, adding that effort was made at the retreat “not to discuss what the solution is, but to try and really create an environment in which countries would understand that we need to overcome this impasse.”

The UN chief said that there was a recognition that such an independent and impartial mechanism is necessary, and “this was underlined by all, including by Russia.”

Describing Sweden’s role as “a pillar of multilateralism” and a “bridge builder” in today’s divided world, Mr. Guterres also acknowledged the

Scandinavian country's contributions to peace and security, humanitarian aid, development and the combat against climate change.

[Imprisoned Egyptian photojournalist to receive UN press freedom prize](#)

A photojournalist who has been in jail for nearly five years after being arrested for covering a demonstration in Cairo has been selected to receive this year's press freedom prize from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

An independent jury of media professionals selected Mahmoud Abu Zeid, known as Shawkan, for the 2018 [UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Press Freedom Prize](#), which will be awarded on 2 May in connection with [World Press Freedom Day](#).

"The choice of Mahmoud Abu Zeid pays tribute to his courage, resistance and commitment to freedom of expression," Maria Ressa, President of the jury, said in a [press release](#).

According to UNESCO, Shawkan has been in jail since 14 August 2013 when he was arrested while covering a demonstration at Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square in Cairo. In early 2017, the prosecutor in his case reportedly called for the death penalty.

His arrest and detention have been deemed arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, and contrary to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The \$25,000 Prize recognizes a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence or promotion of press freedom, especially in the face of danger.

It is named in honour of Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper, El Espectador, in Bogotá, on 17 December 1986. It is funded by the Cano Foundation (Colombia) and the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation (Finland).

UNESCO will lead the 25th celebration of World Press Freedom Day next week in Accra, Ghana. The global theme for this year is "Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law," and covers issues such as media and the transparency of the political process and the independence and media literacy of the judicial system, as well as contemporary challenges of ensuring press freedom online.

Guterres hails predecessor Dag Hammarskjöld as 'my reference and my inspiration'

[Secretary-General António Guterres](#) on Sunday described his predecessor Dag Hammarskjöld as his “fundamental inspiration,” who should be regarded as the “central reference” point for the whole United Nations ideal today.

Delivering the annual [Dag Hammarskjöld](#) Lecture in Uppsala, Sweden, the childhood home of the second UN Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres said Mr. Hammarskjöld made the “supreme sacrifice” in September 1961, when he died in a plane crash in what is now Zambia, while trying to negotiate a complex ceasefire agreement.

“The values that he fought for[...] make him a fundamental inspiration for us all, that want to pursue the same goals, the same objectives, with reference to the same values,” Mr. Guterres said.

He said that even more inspiring than Mr. Hammarskjöld’s personality was that he had been “not only a man of action, not only an extremely sophisticated diplomat” but also “a man of culture.”

“And that is probably what is today more lacking in statespersons, and in high-ranking officers of international organizations like the UN, is that strong link to culture,” added the UN chief.

He recounted that his predecessor had called poetry an “indispensable complement to diplomacy” quoting the Swede as saying that “the diplomat, like the poet, works with words – transposes words – using them as a key although not necessarily a master key.”

Turning to today’s world and his own diagnosis of some of the fundamental problems facing society, Mr. Guterres said that his predecessor had noted the same dangers of nations turning inwards, as opposed to looking outwards, and placing their faith in multilateralism.



UN Photo/MB

Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in March 1954.

“If it’s true that globalization has provided enormous benefits to humankind in wealth; in trade in the increase of a huge middle-class; in the increase of the time of life; in the reduction in absolute poverty; the truth is that globalization has increased inequalities in a dramatic way,” said the UN chief.

“Many are the losers of globalization in the rust-belts of this world” he said, adding that an environment had been created now where faith in multilateral bodies like the UN “has been dramatically reduced.”

One of today’s great conundrums is how to build trust in the idea that there are solutions to the world’s current problems and challenges he said.

“The problems of our times are global problems that can only be solved with global solutions, but there is a certain trend for isolationism that was mentioned by Dag Hammarskjöld with all the consequences we are witnessing today.”

The lecture is given each year by an “outstanding international personality” in memory of the former Secretary-General, and co-organized by Uppsala University and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

[Climate Action Special Envoy Bloomberg](#)

pledges \$4.5 million to help UN fight climate change in line with the Paris Agreement

The UN Special Envoy for Climate Action, Michael Bloomberg, announced on Sunday a contribution of \$4.5 million to the organization's Climate Change Secretariat, the [UNFCCC](#).

The billionaire philanthropist and former Mayor of New York City, pledged last June to make up the Secretariat's funding shortfall, caused by US President Donald Trump's announced withdrawal from the historic 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

The contribution will go towards general operations, including assisting countries to meet targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions in line with the accord; agreed by 193 States in the French capital.

In late March, the United States Congress announced that it was cutting funding for this year to the UNFCCC by \$4.5 million; from \$7.5 million, down to \$3 million, according to a media release from Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Mr. Bloomberg made the announcement of his contribution on the CBS television programme, 'Face the Nation', saying that "America made a commitment and as an American, if the government's not going to do it, we all have a responsibility."

UN [Secretary-General António Guterres said via Twitter](#) that he was "very grateful to Michael Bloomberg, not only for his generous support to the United Nations, but also for his global leadership on climate action."

[The UNFCCC said that](#) with many contributions from signatories to the agreement still outstanding and "a decline in voluntary contributions" the funding was arriving at "a critical time".

It "strengthens UN Climate Change's capacity to support developing countries" and allowed more "strategic outreach to promote climate action among stakeholders including cities, regions, business and civil society," said the Secretariat statement.

The UNFCCC's Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa, said that "when countries adopted the historic Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise, they also recognized that achieving that goal would take broad-based global climate action in all sectors, public and private."

"I welcome this generous contribution from Bloomberg Philanthropies as an important, practical recognition of our need to work together and to step up our response to climate change," she added.

Mr. Bloomberg added that despite the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and funding cuts, he was confident that the US would “meet its commitment by 2025 to reduce greenhouse gases by an agreed amount, and if we do it, hopefully other countries will do it as well.”

[UN chief condemns fatal shooting of International Red Cross staffer in Yemen](#)

The UN Secretary-General has condemned Sunday’s killing of a senior staff member working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Yemen, who was attacked while travelling in a vehicle on the outskirts of Taiz.

[In a statement](#), the ICRC identified the victim as Lebanese national, Hanna Lahoud, who was in charge of the organization’s detention programme in Yemen.

“Mr. Lahoud was rushed to hospital where he died as a result of his injuries. The colleagues he was travelling with were unharmed in the incident,” said ICRC.

The UN chief said [in a statement](#) released through his Spokesperson, that those responsible for the attack must be “apprehended and prosecuted”.

“The Secretary-General expresses his deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the aid worker killed and expresses his solidarity with the President and staff of the ICRC,” added the statement.

Mr. Guterres also emphasized the need for all parties to Yemen’s bloody conflict – which has left 22 million in need of aid – to protect humanitarians providing lifesaving assistance.

ICRC’s Middle East Director, Robert Mardini, said: “We are all in shock. Hanna was a young man, full of life and was widely known and liked. Nothing can justify Hanna’s murder and we are in deep mourning for our friend and colleague.”

Mr. Lahoud had worked for the ICRC – an independent global humanitarian organization that offers protection and support to all victims of violence – since 2010, in different field positions and at its headquarters in Geneva.