

Outrage and 'revulsion' voiced by UN mission in Afghanistan over latest suicide attack

A suicide attack on a voter-registration centre in the Afghan capital Kabul which left at least 30 dead on Sunday, has been condemned by the UN mission in the country, [UNAMA](#).

"The UN family in Afghanistan feels a deep sense of revulsion at today's outrage," [said the head of the mission](#), Tadamichi Yamamoto, adding that "the killing appears to be part of a wholly unacceptable effort by extremists to deter Afghan citizens from carrying out their constitutional right to take part in elections."

Sunday's attack took place when a suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt, blew themselves up near the election facility in the west of Kabul – an area mostly populated by Shi'ite Muslims, according to UNAMA.

Special Representative Mr. Yamamoto expressed his deep condolences to the family and victims, and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

News reports said that the ISIL extremist group had claimed responsibility for the bombing, and many women and children are believed to be among the victims.

Voter-registration began last week for parliamentary and district elections scheduled to take place on 20 October.

UNAMA said that since then, "there have been a number of violent incidents around the country against the centres where citizens are required to sign up for the upcoming ballot."

Two police officers were shot and killed by armed assailants at a registration place in the city of Jalalabad on Thursday, and gunmen also torched a centre in Ghor; abducting electoral and security officials.

They were released the following day.

'We need accountability' to end the

crime of chemical weapons use in Syria, says Guterres

UN Security Council members need to find a way to unite and punish anyone found to have used chemical weapons in Syria, in line with international law.

That was the message [on Saturday](#) from Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaking to reporters in Sweden, where he is hosting a retreat for Council members in the home which belonged to his predecessor in the 1950s, [Dag Hammarskjöld](#); and inspirational leader of the world body, who was tragically killed in a plane crash in what is now Zambia, in 1961.

Following the [recent alleged use](#) of chemical weapons in the formerly-besieged Syrian city of Douma, and previous instances verified by the UN since the brutal conflict began, Mr. Guterres said that a way had to be found to end their use.

“We cannot go on living with impunity in relation to what has been happening with weapons that should have disappeared from the face of the world,” he said.

In response a question on whether the 15-member Council had a roadmap for a solution to end the conflict now in its seventh year, the Secretary-General said that “everything” needed to be put on track, and there was “still a long way to go” to achieve unity.



Photo: Moa Haeggblom

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

The UN chief added that the closed-doors session in Sweden provided an opportunity for the Council to prove that it “can be effective when it is united.”

“The problem is that in many aspects, we have not yet been able to have a united Security Council,” he added.

Quoting former Secretary-General Hammarskjöld, Mr. Guterres said that “more than ever, the world is one world” and mankind does not have “the right” to allow new and old divides to cause so much suffering and pain.

“To do the right thing is to overcome contradictions, to overcome differences and to understand that we all really must work for what is really one world,” he told reporters.

[“Path is open” to peaceful denuclearization of Korean Peninsula: UN chief](#)

Following the leader of North Korea’s announcement that nuclear and missile tests are to end, the UN chief António Guterres [said on Saturday](#) that the “path is open for the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula”.

Kim Jong-un, leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), otherwise known as North Korea, said earlier in the day – according to news reports – that after conducting a total of six nuclear tests since 2006, further missile tests as part of the country’s nuclear weapons programme, were no longer needed.

In [a statement](#) released by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, Mr Guterres welcomed the decision, describing it as “a positive step forward” which would contribute to building trust between DPRK and its southern neighbour, the Republic of Korea (RoK), as well as other countries in the region.

In early March, the UN chief welcomed the announcement of an agreement between the United States and DPRK, to hold a formal summit meeting in the coming weeks, following months of rising tension between the two countries over the north’s refusal to stop ballistic tests.

The Secretary-General said in Saturday’s statement that he wished the leaders of the two Koreas “every success in their courageous and important task of resuming sincere dialogue, leading to sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula”.

An inter-Korean summit is due to take place next week, on 27 April.

Mr Guterres also commended the setting up of a direct telephone link between the two leaders which he hopes will “further build trust and narrow differences in understanding.”

US President Donald Trump described the north’s decision to suspend tests as “good news” and the RoK’s president, Moon Jae-in’s office issued a statement saying it represented a “significant step” towards denuclearization.

[Health experts at UN meeting press for action to address ‘double burden’ of malnutrition in Africa](#)

Africa’s attempts to achieve health for all by 2030 could be threatened unless the continent address the twin challenges of undernutrition and obesity, experts attending a United Nations meeting in Nairobi this week have [warned](#).

Undernutrition occurs when people do not get enough to eat, resulting in conditions such as wasting, which is when a child becomes dangerously thin. On the other hand, people who are obese have body fat levels that may impair their health.

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) Regional Office for Africa calls these two issues “the double burden of malnutrition.”

Together with diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, they are leading to “catastrophic costs” for citizens, communities and national health care systems across the continent.

A 2016 study showed an estimated 59 million children in Africa were stunted, which is when a child is too short for their height: another condition caused by undernutrition.

Additionally, 14 million children suffered from wasting, which the WHO Office said is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five.

Meanwhile, 10 million Africans were overweight, which is nearly double the number from 2000, while a 2014 report estimated that five per cent of men and 15 per cent of women over 18-years-old were obese.

“Improving nutrition sustainably requires consideration of how to produce, deliver, and ensure access to healthy diets and essential nutrients, not just greater quantities of food,” said Dr. Felicitas Zawaira, Director of the

Family and Reproductive Health Cluster at the WHO Regional Office.

In 2015, Heads of State adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) which seek to bring about a more just and equitable world for all people and the planet by 2030.

[SDG 3](#), which focuses on good health and well-being, calls for achieving universal health coverage by this deadline, among other targets.

“Tackling all forms of malnutrition for the achievement of [universal health coverage] and the health-related SDGs requires remedial actions from multiple sectors and on many fronts,” Dr. Zawaira stated.

Measures include implementing policies and action to control the marketing and consumption of unhealthy foods, or to promote consumption of healthy foods through taxation and subsidies.

[Do not send refugees back to the violence they fled from, UN agency urges Cameroon](#)

Despite warnings, Nigerian refugees and asylum-seekers who fled Boko Haram violence continue to be returned from Cameroon, the United Nations refugee agency has said, underscoring the need to accord international protection to those in need.

“We appeal once again to the authorities in Cameroon to [refrain from further forced returns](#) and to ensure protection to those fleeing insecurity and persecution in Nigeria, in accordance with Cameroon’s national and international obligations,” the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) said in a statement.

Since the beginning of 2018, 385 Nigerians refugees and asylum-seekers have been forcibly returned from Cameroon – the majority of them last month, including 160 on 10 April and a further 118 a week later.

In total, the UN agency has registered some 87,600 Nigerian refugees in the country.

“The forced returns are in violation of the principle of no forced returns or *non-refoulement*. They are also a significant setback to progress previously achieved by Cameroon in granting asylum to Nigerian civilians fleeing Boko Haram violence,” said UNHCR.

In the statement, UNHCR also noted that it recognized legitimate national

security concerns of States affected by the Boko Haram crisis, and stressed that it is important that refugee protection and national security are not seen as being incompatible.

“Properly functioning screening, registration and asylum systems help safeguard host country security,” it said, reiterating its support to the Government of Cameroon to ensure that all those seeking international protection have access to efficient screening and registration procedures, as well as appropriate reception arrangements.