

[UN deputy aid chief shines light on plight of 400,000 Rohingya still inside Myanmar](#)

Although the massive outflow of Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh grabbed worldwide headlines, the international community must not forget that more than 400,000 of the minority group are living in dire situations at home, a senior United Nations official said Tuesday.

“There is a humanitarian crisis on both sides of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border that is affecting the world’s largest group of stateless people,” [Ursula Mueller](#), the UN’s deputy relief chief, told reporters in New York, following her recent visit to Myanmar.

“The unfolding tragedy in the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar [Bangladesh] rightly captured the world’s attention, but we cannot, and must not, forget the plight of over 400,000 Muslim people still living in Rakhine State who continue to face a life of hardship and marginalization due to movement restrictions,” she added.

These restrictions severely compromise their rights and obstruct their access to health, livelihoods, protection, education, and other essential services, she said.

Prior to the press conference, Ms. Mueller, who is the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, spoke to *UN News* about what she had seen inside Myanmar and about a meeting with some top officials, including State Counsellor and Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

“We discussed the importance of ending the violence, of stability and peace and reconciliation. I offered the support of the United Nations to address the humanitarian needs and the protection needs that are across the whole country, and advocated for access for humanitarian actors,” Ms. Mueller said of the meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi.

The UN deputy relief chief digs deeper into the crisis in our full interview [here](#):

[As conditions worsen in Yemen, new UN](#)

envoy hopes to rekindle peace talks

The new United Nations envoy for war-torn Yemen called Tuesday for all parties to the conflict to abandon preconditions and begin negotiations, and said he would offer a new framework for talks within the next two months.

“A negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue is the only way to end the Yemeni conflict and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis,” Martin Griffiths, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, told the Security Council today.

“Peace becomes possible when we see the good in our foes, even though we can see clearly the cruelties of war,” he added.

In his first briefing to the Security Council since assuming his responsibilities in March, Mr. Griffiths informed its members that he plans to develop principles for peace negotiations within the next two months.

The promised drive for a settlement comes as living conditions in Yemen become increasingly desperate, in what now the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Speaking alongside the Mr. Griffiths, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, said: “More than 22 million people urgently require some form of humanitarian help, including 8.4 million people who struggle to find their next meal.”

Peace becomes possible when we see the good in our foes, even though we can see clearly the cruelties of war – *UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths*

While he said it was his perception that the warring sides in Yemen desire peace, Mr. Griffiths drew attention to the increased number of ballistic missiles launched towards Saudi Arabia, intensified military operations in north-west Yemen, and airstrikes in the capital of Sana’a and other cities that are causing civilian deaths and diminishing hopes for peace.

Conflict is ongoing there between an international coalition of forces supporting President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi on the one side, and Houthi militias and allied units of the armed forces on the other.

“The people of Yemen are in desperate need of signs that this war will soon end,” Mr. Griffiths said.

Mr. Griffiths assumed his responsibilities on 11 March, succeeding Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed who had served as the Special Envoy since April 2015.



UN Photo/Manuel Elias

Martin Griffith, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, briefs the Security Council meeting on the situation in that country.

Efforts to provide humanitarian relief to millions of Yemenis has been severely hampered, Mr. Lowcock, the Organization's aid chief, said, because of bureaucratic obstacles imposed by authorities as well as restrictions on imports and customs clearance, and long delays and searches at checkpoints.

"Sana'a airport also remains closed to commercial traffic, preventing thousands of critically ill patients from travelling abroad to seek treatment unavailable in Yemen," Mr. Lowcock said.

Another risk of cholera outbreak

Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, warned that another major outbreak of cholera looms, though aid workers are trying to take preventive measures and are pre-positioning supplies should it occur.

"A successful response requires safe unimpeded and unhindered access across and into Yemen for humanitarian staff and humanitarian supplies," he said, as well as predictable fuel imports to keep hospitals and water treatment plants running.

[Upswing in global growth won't last](#)

forever; IMF says world must prepare now for leaner times ahead

While the world economy continues to show [broad-based momentum](#), a new report released Tuesday by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is warning that there may be choppy seas ahead, caused by increasing protectionism or tit-for-tat trade wars.

“Global growth is projected to soften beyond the next couple of years,” said the report, explaining that: “Once their output gaps close, most advanced economies are poised to return to potential growth rates well below pre-crisis averages – held back by aging populations and lackluster productivity.”

Looking at the largest economies, the [World Economic Outlook](#), the Fund’s semiannual report on the health of the international economy, shows growth projections at 2.4 per cent for the euro area, 1.2 per cent for Japan, 6.6 per cent for China and 2.9 per cent for the United States.

“Despite the good near-term news, longer-term prospects are [more sobering](#),” said Maurice Obstfeld, Economic Counsellor and Director of Research at the IMF, the specialized United Nations agency working to ensure stability in the global financial system.

“Advanced economies – facing aging populations, falling rates of labor force participation, and low productivity growth – will likely not regain the per capita growth rates they enjoyed before the global financial crisis,” he continued.

Mr. Obstfeld painted a diverse picture for emerging and developing economies, saying that among non-commodity exporters, some countries can expect longer-term, pre-crisis type growth rates.

However, despite some improvement in the outlook for commodity prices, he pointed out that some exporters will need to diversify their economies to boost future growth and resilience.

The IMF, which is holding its annual Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C., with the World Bank, continued to echo its advice that the current cyclical upswing offers policymakers a good opportunity to make longer-term growth more resilient and inclusive.

“Sound policies can extend the upswing while reducing the risks of a disruptive unwinding,” Mr. Obstfeld stated. “Countries need to rebuild fiscal buffers, enact structural reforms and steer monetary policy cautiously in an environment that is already complex and challenging.”

Trade tensions

While some governments are pursuing substantial economic reforms, trade disputes risk diverting others from the constructive steps they would currently need to take to improve and secure growth prospects, Mr. Obstfeld warned.

Despite widespread economic growth, public optimism has been eroding over time by job and wage polarization trends, raising the threat of political developments that could destabilize various economic policies – even beyond those of trade.

“Governments need to rise to the challenges of strengthening growth, spreading its benefits more widely, broadening economic opportunity through investments in people [...] that could radically transform the nature of work,” underscored Mr. Obstfeld. “Fights over trade distract from this vital agenda, rather than advancing it.”

Trade tensions started in early March when the US announced it would levy steel and aluminum tariffs for national security reasons, provoking China’s announcement of retaliatory tariffs on US imports.

In the present environment, excessive global imbalances should be reduced multilaterally.

“Plurilateral arrangements, if consistent with multilateral rules, can also provide a useful springboard to more open trade,” stated Mr. Obstfeld.

While each Government can do much on its own to promote stronger, resilient and inclusive growth, multilateral cooperation remains essential to address a range of challenges – including climate change, infectious diseases, cyber-security, corporate taxation and corruption.

“Global interdependence will only continue to grow and unless countries face it in a spirit of collaboration, not conflict, the world economy cannot prosper,” Mr. Obstfeld underscored.

[UN and League of Arab States ink pact to partner on counter-terrorism](#)

The United Nations and the League of Arab States on Tuesday signed an agreement on working together to tackle terrorism – previewing the type of partnerships the UN hopes to forge in June at a gathering of counter-terrorism chiefs in New York.

“We have much to learn from each other,” UN Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, said in Riyadh after the signing of the agreement, known as a Memorandum of Understanding, between his office and the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council.

“In the Memorandum, we declare our wish to coordinate our activities with a view to achieving our shared counter-terrorism goals. We commit each other to enhance consultations, coordination and the sharing of information and skills,” he explained.

The two organizations will develop joint activities, such as seminars, workshops, trainings, projects and other initiatives, to build the capacity of members of the Arab League in the fields of counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism.

The signing ceremony took place in the Saudi capital on the margins of an advisory board meeting of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), which was attended by UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#).

The UN chief is seeking to forge new partnerships during a high-level conference of heads of counter-terrorism agencies he will convene in June at the UN’s New York Headquarters.

Addressing the advisory board meeting, Mr. Guterres stressed the [importance of preventing terrorism](#) by addressing the root causes that turn grievances into destructive action, as well as the need to sustain the world body’s funding to help countries develop their counter-terrorism capacities.

“First, we need a sustained focus on prevention,” said Mr. Guterres. “No one is born a terrorist, and nothing justifies terrorism, but we know that factors such as prolonged unresolved conflicts, lack of the rule of law and socioeconomic marginalization can all play a role in transforming grievances into destructive action.”

Second, Mr. Guterres said, UNCCT should continue to meet the changing needs of Member States for counter-terrorism capacity-building support.

UNCCT is the capacity-building part of the UN Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT), which is headed by Mr. Voronkov, who is also UNCCT’s Executive Director.



King Salman Humanitarian Centre

Secretary-General António Guterres (right) is greeted upon arrival at the King Salman Humanitarian Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

UNCCT was established in 2011. Saudi Arabia, with a donation of \$110 million, is the largest contributor to the UN Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism, which resources UNCCT.

Since April 2012, UNCCT has implemented more than 60 capacity-building projects at global, regional and national levels. It focuses its activities on countries and regions where the threat of terrorism is most acute, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia.

While in the Saudi capital, the UN Secretary-General met with King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and discussed several issues of mutual concern, including the Middle East peace process.

In that connection, he thanked the King for the country's contribution to support the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)), and also for his contribution to Yemen's Humanitarian Response Plan.

The Secretary-General also thanked Saudi Arabia for its financial and political support for United Nations counter-terrorism efforts, and for hosting the UNCCT advisory board meeting.

UN agency launches appeal to reach over 340,000 with assistance in crisis-struck Ukraine

Amid critical humanitarian needs in eastern Ukraine, the United Nations migration agency on Tuesday launched a \$38 million funding appeal to reach more than 340,000 people with assistance this year – a sharp increase over the number reached to date.

“We note that the 340,000 people in critical need this year is an increase on the 215,000 the organization has assisted over the four years since the start of the conflict,” Joel Millman, a spokesperson for the UN [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM), said at a regular media briefing in Geneva.

“[Acute humanitarian needs persist](#), these include the basics: food, healthcare and water, and of course, employment,” he added.

Latest IOM data indicates that more than 10,000 people have been killed in the fighting, over 200,000 injured, and over 1.4 million displaced from their homes. Food security has also significantly worsened and so has the water, health and sanitation situation.

Nearly four years of ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine has had a significant impact on all aspects of life for the communities residing in the region and severely reduced their coping capacities.

Against the backdrop of the protracted crisis, [2018 will be a critical year](#) for the transition from humanitarian assistance to longer-term recovery effort, IOM said.

“Bridging the gap between humanitarian and development interventions is critical to simultaneously address the urgent and longer-term needs of conflict affected communities,” it urged.