

No one in Myanmar should be left behind on the path to a better future, stresses UN official

Protecting the most vulnerable people in Myanmar – whatever their ethnicity or religion – must be at the heart of the response to the humanitarian crisis in the region, the deputy United Nations aid chief has said.

“Regardless of their ethnicity, religion and citizenship status, we need to [...] ensure that [no vulnerable conflict-affected people are deprived](#) of safe and sustained access to humanitarian protection and assistance,” Ursula Mueller, the UN Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, said on Sunday at the end of a six-day visit to Myanmar.

The international community’s humanitarian response must be focused on protecting the most vulnerable people in Myanmar, she said, must be at the heart of the humanitarian response by the international community, national aid organizations and the Government.”

At the outside of her mission, the senior UN relief official met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi where they discussed the importance of ending conflict and to strengthen peace and reconciliation efforts in Myanmar.

Ms. Mueller also met with a number of senior Government officials where discussions focused on humanitarian challenges in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states.

‘Humanitarian crisis on both sides of Bangladesh-Myanmar border’

Ms. Mueller, also the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, visited Rakhine state – where widespread violence last year forced hundreds of thousands of minority Muslim Rohingyas to flee their homes for safety, with most [finding refuge](#) in neighbouring Bangladesh.

In Maungdaw township, located near the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, she met with local communities affected by the violence; visited a refugee return transit site that the Government of Myanmar is constructing, some new housing projects; and witnessed areas where villages had been burned down or bulldozed.

“There is a humanitarian crisis on both sides of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border that is affecting the world’s largest group of stateless people,” said Ms. Mueller, noting that while the crisis in Cox’s Bazar (Bangladesh) has captured the world’s attention, over 400,000 still living in Rakhine state continue to face a life of hardship and marginalization due to movement restrictions.

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

Humanitarian workers also face access restrictions in different parts of Rakhine.

Furthermore, the situation in Myanmar’s Kachin (far north) and Shan (east) states has also deteriorated since the beginning of this year, with some 100,000 people displaced as a result of conflict between the military and armed groups.

“The conflict in Kachin is one the world’s longest running, yet it is a forgotten humanitarian crisis,” said Ms. Mueller, calling on all sides to ensure the protection of all civilians in line with international law.

Implement recommendations of Rakhine panel ‘in the spirit’ they were written in

Ms. Mueller also underscored the need for the holistic and impartial implementation of [recommendations](#) made by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State “in the spirit that they were written.”

That panel, headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, outlined long-term solutions to help end the violence and marginalization for all communities in Rakhine. It also focused on issues of citizenship and freedom of movement.

The senior UN aid official also reminded that the conditions for the dignified, voluntary, and sustainable return of refugees as well as positive outcomes for internally displaced people in camps can only be reached if the critical issues of freedom of movement, social cohesion, livelihoods, and access to services are addressed.

“The lives of the poorest and most vulnerable communities of Rakhine state, whether they are ethnic Rakhine, Muslim, or from other minority groups, will be profoundly transformed if each recommendation is genuinely addressed and implemented,” she said.

[UN launches global network of judges to strengthen integrity in courts](#)

The United Nations on Monday launched an initiative to connect judges around the world so that they can learn from each other about ways to strengthen integrity in courts, such as by preventing corruption and undue political interference into judicial appointments and decisions.

“This Network brings together lead institutions responsible for upholding the rule of law, and as such for attaining peace and justice,” UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed said in a video message to a two-day event in Vienna organized by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to [launch](#) the Global Judicial Integrity Network.

More than 350 high-level members of the judiciary, who gathered for the event, discussed key topics, with a view to present recommendations on strengthening judicial integrity at the global level.

The Network will serve as a platform to assist judiciaries around the world to uphold judicial integrity, promote knowledge-building and peer learning, as well as provide access to a large database of thousands of resources, good practices and other judicial documents for immediate reference.

Justice Elisabeth Lovrek, Vice-President of Austria’s Supreme Court, said: “The Network will strengthen judicial cooperation between courts and tribunals from different legal and cultural traditions. In an increasingly globalized world, this is more important than ever.”

In this first gathering, the Network discussed solutions for some of the key challenges confronting judiciaries today, ranging from undue political interference by the executive and legislature into judicial appointments and decisions, reducing budgets in the face of exploding case-loads and corruption in the justice sector, as well as diminishing public confidence.

Substantive sessions will cover an array of measures to help judiciaries tackle those challenges such as developing codes of conduct; establishing functioning disciplinary bodies and proceedings; balancing accountability and independence; and introducing financial disclosure rules for judges.

The Network will also discuss ways to deal with emerging issues, such as educating judges on the use of social media and the impact of digitalization on judicial integrity.

“Judges need the opportunity to share experiences, exchange good practices and support each other. The Network will continue to serve as a resource for addressing new and emerging challenges, such as those posed by social media and other technological developments,” UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov in his message.

A plenary session on the Network’s specific role in promoting judicial integrity was addressed by Diego García-Sayán, UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers; Christophe Régnard, President of the International Association of Judges; and Judge Rudolf Mellinghoff, President of the Federal Court of Finance of Germany and Member of the Judicial Integrity Group, which is the group of judges that initiated the dialogue on corruption in the justice system in 2000 and developed the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct.

[UN counts on Chinas' leadership to implement 2030 Agenda, diplomatic solution on Korean Peninsula](#)

During an official visit, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Sunday met in Beijing with Xi Jinping, President of China where he congratulated the President on his recent re-election.

Mr. Guterres expressed his appreciation for President Xi's [support to the UN's work](#) and told him that the UN continues to count on China's leadership and commitment to the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#), including through international cooperation under the [Belt and Road Initiative](#).

The Secretary-General also commended China's consistent and constructive advocacy for a diplomatic solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Moreover, he underlined the UN's commitment to assist in supporting a process of sincere dialogue, leading to sustainable peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

[Syria: 'Critical that civilians be protected' says UN chief amid fresh attacks in Eastern Ghouta](#)

Following a period of relative calm in Syria's Eastern Ghouta, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed deep concern on Sunday over renewed, intensive violence in Douma.

"The Secretary-General calls on all parties to [cease fighting](#) and restore the calm that had been in place and adhere fully to Security Council resolution 2401 (2018)," said Stéphane Dujarric, his spokesperson.

"He reiterates there is no military solution to the conflict," he added.

Through his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres explained that over the last 36 hours, he has received reports indicating sustained airstrikes and shelling on Douma

that have killed civilians, destroyed infrastructure and damaged health facilities.

There has also been shelling on Damascus city, reportedly killing civilians.

Mr. Dujuric underscored that the Secretary-General is particularly alarmed by allegations of chemical weapons used against civilian populations in Douma.

While the UN is not in a position to verify these reports, he continued, "the Secretary-General notes that any use of chemical weapons, if confirmed, is abhorrent, and requires a thorough investigation."

"It is critical that civilians be protected," Mr. Dujuric stressed.

"The Secretary-General calls on all sides to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, including humanitarian access across Syria to all people in need, as per relevant Security Council resolutions," he concluded.

Since 11 March, some 25,000 people have reportedly left East Ghouta, seeking shelter in the rural Damascus villages of Dweir, Adra and Herjelleh.

[UN Security Council condemns in "strongest terms" fresh attack in Mali, peacekeeper slain](#)

Late Friday night the United Nations Security Council condemned "in the strongest terms" an attack earlier in the day on a vehicle of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) that killed a Nigerian peacekeeper in Gao.

"The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest condolences and sympathy to the family of the victim, as well as to the Government of Niger and to MINUSMA," the Council said in a statement paying tribute to the peacekeepers who risk their lives and calling on the Malian Government to swiftly investigate the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice.

"Attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law," the statement underlined, stressing that "involvement in planning, directing, sponsoring or conducting attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers constitute a basis for sanctions designations pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolutions."

The Council members reaffirmed that terrorism constitutes one of the most

serious threats to international peace and security and emphasized the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.

They stressed that those responsible should be held accountable, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the relevant authorities.

The Council reiterated that “any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable,” and reaffirmed the need for all States to combat, in accordance with the [UN Charter](#) and other obligations under international law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

They echoed their full support for MINUSMA, the French forces that support it, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Mali Mahamat Saleh Annadif and for the UN Mission to assist the Malian authorities and people in their efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to their country – including through the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (the Agreement).

The Council recognized the determination and ownership of the Governments of the Group of Five for the Sahel States (G5 Sahel) to address terrorism and transnational organized crime, including through cross-border joint military counter-terrorist operations.

The members expressed concern over Mali’s security situation and the transnational dimension of the terrorist threat in the Sahel region, urging the Malian parties to “fully implement the Agreement without further delay.”

“They noted that the full implementation of the Agreement and the intensification of efforts to overcome asymmetric threats can contribute to improving the security situation across Mali,” the statement continued.

The Council maintained that the efforts of the G5 Sahel’s Force Conjointe to counter the activities of terrorist and other organized criminal groups will contribute to a more secure Sahel region.

“The members of the Security Council further stressed the importance that MINUSMA has the necessary capacities, including combat convoy companies, to fulfil its mandate and promote the safety and security of the United Nations peacekeepers, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2364 (2017),” concluded the statement.

The UN mission in Mali is one of the most dangerous, having taken more than 160 peacekeepers’ [lives](#). In late February, [four peacekeepers were killed](#) when their convoy came under attack in Mopti, central Mali and on 5 April two Chadian peacekeepers were slain in Aguelhok, Kidal region.