

UN chief honours those who suffered shameful Transatlantic slave trade, urges respect for dignity of every human being

Honouring those who suffered the brutalities of the Transatlantic slave trade, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said the International Day set aside to remember this “epically shameful” chapter of human history is an opportunity raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

“More than 15 million men, women and children from Africa were enslaved,” Mr. Guterres pointed out in a video message for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, explaining its *raison d’être* “[to acknowledge a brutal chapter](#) in human history, and to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today.”

Every year on 25 March, the Day of Remembrance offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system, borne of the largest forced and legally sanctioned movement of people in human history.

“As we mark the 70th anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) this year, let us honour those who perished or suffered under slavery,” the UN chief continued.

To permanently honour the victims, the United Nations in 2015 erected a [memorial](#), *The Ark of Return* by Haitian-American architect Rodney Leon, at its Headquarters in New York.

The Ark of Return, the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, located at the Visitors’ Plaza of UN Headquarters in New York. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Also, from 5 to 28 March, UN Headquarters will host a temporary exhibition entitled [Remember Slavery: Say it Loud](#). It features the work of 11 male and 11 female architects of African descent, whose perseverance, creativity and unique perspective have given them a voice on how public spaces are presented and utilized.

Again this year, the Day is being commemorated during the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), which runs from through 2024.

“Let us celebrate the gains of people of African descent,” Mr. Guterres

concluded, “and let us press, every day and everywhere, to defend the dignity of every human being.”

[Earth Hour: UN joins iconic landmarks ‘going dark’ globally with a call to protect environment](#)

The United Nations this evening turned off the lights at its iconic Headquarters in New York as well as at other facilities around the world in observance of “Earth Hour” – a global event highlighting the need for climate action and sustainable energy consumption.

In a video message, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) urged people around the world to join him in “turning out the lights and turning up the pressure” for a healthy planet.

“Climate change is moving much faster than we are. Its alarming impacts are upon us; resources and ecosystems across the world are under assault. Earth Hour is an opportunity to show our resolve to change,” he said.

“Protecting the environment is preserving life itself,” stressed the UN chief.

Organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Earth Hour encourages individuals, companies, organizations and Governments throughout the world to switch off their lights for one hour at 8:30 p.m. local time.

This year, Earth Hour is stressing the link between climate change and biodiversity loss, as thousands of plant and animal species are threatened with extinction as a result of increasing temperatures.

First launched in 2007 in Australia, Earth Hour has been commemorated every year since, mobilizing hundreds of millions of individuals to participate and growing to become one of the world’s largest grassroots movement for the environment and climate action.

[UN chief denounces terrorist attack in](#)

southern France; commends response of security forces

Strongly condemning the terrorist attack in France, the United Nations Secretary-General has reiterated his support to the Government in its fight against violent extremism.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) also commended the response of the security forces, noting “[their] quick action helped save lives.”

“The UN stands in solidarity with the Government of France in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism,” the statement added.

Mr. Guterres also extended his condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

According to reports, three people lost their lives and at least 16 were injured in the attack that took place at a supermarket in the town of Trèbes in southern France.

Among those who died was a French police official who swapped himself for one of the hostages taken by the gunman.

UN Commission delivers a blueprint to ensure the rights and development of rural women and girls

The United Nations’ largest annual gathering on gender equality and women’s rights wrapped up Friday in New York with the strong commitment by its Member States to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

Coming on the heels of unprecedented global activism and public outcry to end gender injustice and discrimination worldwide, the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW](#)) reached a robust agreement highlighting the urgency of empowering and supporting those who need it most and have, for too long, been left behind.

The outcome of the two-week meeting, known as the Agreed Conclusions adopted by Member States, puts forth concrete measures to lift rural women and girls

out of poverty and to ensure their rights, well-being and resilience.

These include ensuring their adequate living standards with equal access to land and productive assets, ending poverty, enhancing their food security and nutrition, decent work, infrastructure and technology, education and health, including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and ending all forms of violence and harmful practices.

- Please read the full wrap up of CSW62 from UN Women [here](#).

[Security Council can and must do more to break the link between conflict and hunger, says UN relief officials](#)

Hunger is on the rise worldwide mainly because “people won’t stop shooting at each other,” the head of the United Nations food relief agency said Friday, telling the Security Council that if it did more to break the link between conflict and hunger, countless lives could be saved.

David Beasley, the head of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) told the 15-member body that resolving conflicts and ensuring peace are indispensable to achieve food security.

That link, he underscored, is both strong and highly destructive.

“If you don’t know where your child’s next meal is coming from, you may be forced to make impossible choices,” he said, noting that for one per cent rise in the rate of hunger, there is a two per cent increase in migration.

Speaking via videoconference from Biel, Switzerland, he called on the Council to help end war and stressed that the price of programmes to tackle the root causes of hunger is far cheaper than the cost of the current conflict cycle.

WFP can save one billion dollars a year if all armed groups respected international humanitarian law and provided unimpeded access to civilian populations, explained Mr. Beasley.

Briefing the Council alongside the WFP chief, Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, explained that almost two-thirds of the world’s hungry live in conflict-torn countries.

Conflict – often conflated with extreme climatic shock and high prices of staple food – is the main driver of global food insecurity – *UN aid chief Mark Lowcock*

“Conflict – often conflated with extreme climatic shock and high prices of staple food – is the main driver of global food insecurity,” he added, speaking via videoconference from Dublin.

On top of this, the conduct of combatants worsens the situation with their actions – contrary to international law – resulting in damage and destruction of water systems, farms, livestock and markets.

It is, therefore, crucial that all States ensure that international humanitarian law is respected by parties to conflict as per their obligation to do so, said Mr. Lowcock, calling on the Security Council to investigate violations of international law and ensure that those who violate it are held accountable.

“This Council’s main responsibility is peace and international security. In other words, this Council can help prevent famine to ever occur again,” he stressed.