

Acts that undermine the Libyan State must not become the 'new normal,' UN Security Council told

Libya's shaky financial position, looming humanitarian crisis and the inability of State authorities to provide services have created a "vicious cycle" where groups with vested interests are trying to step in and undermine the Government, the United Nations envoy to the north African warned on Wednesday.

"For many Libyans this abnormal state of affairs has become the new normal. This vicious cycle must stop," Ghassan Salamé, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Libya, told the Security Council Wednesday via teleconference from capital Tripoli.

In his briefing, Mr. Salamé informed the 15-member Council that the UN Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)), which he heads, remains focused on conducting free, fair and credible elections before the end of 2018 and in that process, recently concluded voter registration process, adding one million new voters to the rolls (taking the total number of voters to 2.5 million).

At the same time, the country continues its efforts to adopt a permanent national constitution, including the approval of a draft by the Constitution Drafting Assembly in July last year.

However, challenges persists vis-a-vis a constitutional referendum and the question of referendum legislation remains hotly debated, added the senior UN official, noting that the political process must progress and a status quo is untenable.

In addition, Libya remains fraught with violence and localized conflicts, and armed groups – including those formally integrated in State structures – continue to operate outside the law and perpetrate human rights abuses.

There has also been a sharp rise in crime, human trafficking, and illegal flow of arms into the country continues unabated.

"In a country awash with arms [...] the arrival of more arms will only hamper such efforts and damage the political process," warned the senior UN official, calling on the Security Council to exert its utmost influence to stop arms from entering into Libya.

Also in his briefing, Mr. Salamé spoke of the challenges confronting migrants – both those originating from Libya as well as those using the country as a transit – and called for the issues to be addressed taking into account its trans-boundary nature.

He also informed the Council of the Libyan [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) launched in January that aims to reach over a million people with assistance.

To cultivate art and mind is also to cultivate peace, UNESCO chief says on World Poetry Day

Not merely limited to beautiful and poignant words and phrases, poetry holds the extraordinary power to open new horizons, bridge differences and illuminate a path to peace and dialogue, the head of the United Nations cultural agency said on [World Poetry Day](#).

In a [message](#) paying tribute to all who bring the art to life, Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), recalled the words of poet Langston Hughes which illustrate a person's desire for freedom despite all adversities:

"Dreams

Hold fast to dreams

For if dreams die

Life is a broken-winged bird

That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams

For when dreams go

Life is a barren field

Frozen with snow " – Langston Hughes

Poet Hughes, who was also a writer, playwright and leader of the Harlem Renaissance – an artistic, social and intellectual movement that took place in the Harlem district in New York, in the 1920s – placed his art at the service of the fight against the discrimination suffered by the African American community.

"His poetry is inseparable from his commitment to civil rights and it remains a source of inspiration for all the advocates of fundamental freedoms around the world," added Ms. Azoulay.

Commemorated every year every year on 21 March, World Poetry Day recognizes the prominent art as one of humanity's most treasured forms of cultural and linguistic expression as well as identity.

It also draws attention to the challenges confronting its traditions and forms, many of which are in danger of disappearing, as is the case for many lesser-used and minority languages.

To maintain living traditions, UNESCO has included a number of poetic forms in the intangible heritage of humanity.

These include the poetic art of Ca trù singing from Viet Nam, Al'azi from the United Arab Emirates, Baul songs from Bangladesh and the oral heritage of Gelede shared by the Yoruba-Nago community living in Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

Poetry also a tool to promote education

Not just limited to art and culture, poetry is also a conduit for formal and informal education, highlighted the UNESCO chief in her message, noting that it provides effective support for lifelong learning.

"This is why [we] encourage and support artistic education since it strengthens intellectual, emotional and psychological development, shaping generations that are more well-rounded and capable of reinventing the world," she added.

Finally, since poetry is an act of creating and sharing, UNESCO invites everyone, on this World Day, to create, invent, share, and be open to other languages and other ways of naming the world, to rejoice in all that is different in our diversity. Since to cultivate art and cultivate the mind is also to cultivate peace.

UN agency envoy Cate Blanchett warns of 'race against time' as Rohingya refugee camps brace for monsoon rains

As heavy rains and potential cyclones threaten more than one hundred thousand Rohingya refugees living in congested settlements in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, United Nations refugee agency envoy Cate Blanchett is urging increased international support to protect them from the worst impacts of the upcoming monsoon season.

"I've seen first-hand how UNHCR [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees] – with its partners and with the refugees themselves – is working

flat out to avoid an emergency within an emergency in Cox's Bazar district," said UNHCR Ambassador Blanchett Wednesday.

Having returned this week from a visit to Bangladesh's Kutupalong, Nyapara and Chakmarkul settlements, she said UNHCR staff on the ground are distributing shelter and pre-monsoon kits to the vulnerable families, reinforcing roads, bridges, steps and other infrastructure at risk of being washed away, and relocating families to safer places where land is available

"But more is urgently needed to ensure refugees stay safe," she said.

Since August 2017 when violence broke out in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state, some 671,000 Rohingya Muslims fled to Bangladesh seeking safety. Before the latest crisis began, the country was already hosting a verified population of well over 200,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar – and likely many more.

"The Rohingya refugees have already experienced targeted violence, human rights abuses and horrific journeys. They have shown unimaginable resilience and courage," Ms. Blanchett underscored.

"But now, as the monsoon season approaches, the Government of Bangladesh, supported by UNHCR and its partners, are in a race against time to ensure the refugees are as safe as they can be to deal with potential floods and landslides," she added, calling for the international community to show solidarity and share the responsibility.

"The people of Bangladesh and host communities have been the first to respond to this crisis, supported by agencies like UNHCR and its partners. But I cannot stress how much more help is needed for these vulnerable stateless refugees, the majority of whom are women and children.

Kevin J. Allen, Head of UNHCR's emergency operation in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh said, "Bangladesh saved thousands of lives when it opened its borders and arms to Rohingya refugees. It is now critical that we stand firmly with Bangladesh and the refugees we serve to protect them from cyclonic winds and heavy rains."

While UNHCR is working to build dignified and decent lives for the Rohingya refugees, it stresses that the solution lies in Myanmar, calling on that country to create conditions in Rakhine state to permit the safe, sustainable repatriation of those who choose to return home.

"This is the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world, the monsoons are coming and it is critical that the international community, private sector and individuals all do what they can to support these stateless refugees and the communities hosting them," concluded Ms. Blanchett.

Somalia: Poor rains forecast put food security, livelihoods at risk, warns UN agency

Below-average rains forecast for Somalia could lead to devastating cattle losses and exasperate malnutrition in the Horn of Africa nation, the United Nations food security agency has warned.

The grim scenario follows massive livestock deaths due to drought – up to 60 per cent of herds in some areas – that have severely damaged pastoralists' livelihoods.

“Somalia is traditionally an agro-pastoral economy [and] [livestock losses have severely affected its economy and people](#),” Daniele Donati, the head of the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO) programmes in the country, said in a news release Wednesday.

“It is crucial that we continue to support pastoralist households build resilience against climate-related shocks by providing timely veterinary and feeding assistance for their animals,” he added.

According to the UN agency's [Global Information and Early Warning Report](#), while the country's overall food security situation improved to some extent in early 2018, primarily due to large-scale and sustained humanitarian assistance, the number of Somalis [suffering severe food insecurity](#) still remains 170 per cent above pre-crisis levels.

Furthermore, recent cattle losses have also resulted in sharp rises in prices of livestock and livestock products, including milk. Pastoral households in the worst-hit northern and central regions have also reported increased household debts, driven by credit purchase of water, food and for care of their animals.

The losses have also severely hit Somalia's exports, a country where the livestock sector accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

FAO response

Responding to the situation, FAO stepped up its response, providing health services to some 38.3 million animals, supplementary feeding interventions to close to 1 million, and delivered over 53 million litres of water in 2017.

In 2018, the UN agency aims to support some 2.7 million rural Somalis and has [appealed for \\$236 million](#) to sustain its livestock interventions, help farmers secure a good harvest and provide cash transfers to the most

vulnerable so families can afford to eat while restoring their own food production.

“Providing livelihood support and cash in rural areas not only fights hunger, but minimizes displacement and the sale of productive assets that ultimately feed people and sustain their livelihoods,” it said.

[With Caribbean still rebuilding after devastating storms, UNICEF helping to boost resilience ahead of next hurricane season](#)

Despite a massive humanitarian effort over the past six months in the Eastern Caribbean, Cuba and Haiti, there is still much work to be done to rehabilitate water and sanitation and other infrastructure damaged by powerful hurricanes Irma and Maria, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported on Tuesday.

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“So long [as] [children are in need](#) or in danger, we will continue working tirelessly so that everyone can look to the future with hope,” María Cristina Perceval, Regional Director of UNICEF for Latin America and the Caribbean said, noting that some \$11.5 million in international donations continue to help the agency’s work in the region.

UNICEF said it continues to work on the ground, whilst at the same time preparing for the arrival of the new hurricane season with the aim of minimizing potential damage and impact on the most vulnerable areas.

In September 2017, at least 1.4 million people, including 357,000 children, were affected by the two category 5 hurricanes that wreaked havoc through Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, Haiti, the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos.

“Following the storms,” Ms. Perceval continued, “UNICEF responded immediately, mobilizing supplies and human resources to meet the needs of those affected and save lives.”

The agency continues to prioritize safe water and hygiene, giving more than 400,000 affected people, including children, access to drinking water and purification tablets – fundamental actions that save lives and prevent the outbreak and transmission of waterborne diseases, such as cholera and diarrhoea.

On protecting children, another of its priorities, some 16,000 participated in psychosocial activities and 1,500 people were trained to continue carrying out these programmes.

In addition, UNICEF and its partners launched a cash transfer system benefiting more than 4,600 of the most vulnerable families following the hurricanes.

“Along with these emergency response actions,” Ms. Perceval said “UNICEF and its partners maintain their work in the Caribbean to contribute to an inclusive, equitable and prosperous region that guarantees the provision of quality services and support to children in the areas of education, child protection, social protection and resilience to guarantee the realization of children’s rights.”

With the next hurricane season in the region officially beginning on 1 June, UNICEF is working to improve capacities and reduce vulnerability at national and community level.

“The objective is to mitigate the impact on boys, girls and women and ensure a rapid return to normality,” concluded the spokesperson.