

As relevant as ever, UN Charter is 'our living template' for tackling global challenges – Guterres

The Principles outlined in the United Nations Charter remain the foundations of international relations and global harmony at a time when conflicts have come more complex, new threats and challenges have emerged and impacts of instability are felt far beyond their source, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Wednesday.

“So, while the Charter’s Principles are [as relevant as ever](#), we must continue to update its tools, we must use those tools with greater determination, and we must go back to the Charter’s roots for inspiration as we strive to deliver for ‘we the peoples’,” Mr. Guterres told a [ministerial-level briefing](#) of the Security Council on the purposes and principles of the [United Nations Charter](#).

Calling for rebalancing the approach to international peace and security, the UN chief underscored the need to help countries avert the outbreak of crises – both natural and man-made – as well as the importance of full commitment to all human rights and inclusion of women in peace efforts.

“Preventing crises is primarily the responsibility of Member States. [Chapter VI](#) of the Charter [on Pacific Settlement of Disputes] describes the tools that are available to them for that purpose – negotiation; enquiry; mediation; conciliation; arbitration; judicial settlement; and other peaceful measures and means,” stressed the Secretary-General, adding that the UN, including his own good offices, stand ready to help prevent, manage or resolve conflicts.

Mr. Guterres also highlighted the role of Chapters [VII](#) and [VIII](#) on action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression; and regional arrangements, respectively, and said that regional perspectives are critical in understanding challenges and regional ownership essential for sustainable solutions.

In that context, the UN chief noted the partnership between the Organization and the African Union on peace and security, and the alignment of the 2030 Agenda with Africa’s Agenda 2063.

“The Purposes and Principles of the Charter speak to today’s challenges as firmly as they spoke to people who had just lived through the most horrible war the world has ever seen,” said Mr. Guterres.

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General Guterres

“The Charter is our living template for serving “we the peoples”,” he added.

The UN chief began his remarks with an appeal for an immediate suspension of all war activities in Syria’s conflict-battered eastern Ghouta, where, he said, “a human tragedy is unfolding in front of our eyes [with] 400,000 people living in hell on earth.”

“I don’t think we can let things go on in this horrendous way,” said Mr. Guterres, explain that an estimated 700 people in the town, near the Syrian capital, Damascus, need urgent treatment that cannot be provided there. I pause in the violence would allow for evacuations and for other civilians to be treated on site.

He also noted that acknowledged that the liberation of Kuwait from the forces of Saddam Hussein took place 27 years ago this month. This anniversary – of an undertaking in which the international community used the collective security principles outlined in the [UN Charter](#) to address a breach of the peace – “is a fitting backdrop to today’s discussion.”



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses a Security Council meeting on maintenance of international peace and security. February 2018.

Speaking alongside Mr. Guterres, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, also highlighted that that the primary responsibilities in the Security Council to maintain international peace and security are “[needed now more than ever.](#)”

“In order to effectively respond to non-traditional and transnational security challenges such as climate change, terrorism and violent extremism, nuclear proliferation, and cross-border insecurity, the Security Council should undergo reforms to be more flexible in its decision-making process,”

he said.

Mr. Ban also noted that multilateralism cannot be upheld by only one Member State or a group of states and urged the UN system, including the Security Council to strive to overcome “whatever challenges may loom over the horizon.”

He also emphasized the need for the entire membership of the Organization to faithfully and thoroughly implement the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the Paris Agreement on climate change while coping with other new challenges including, among others, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

[We can stop global deforestation, says UN official at start of conference on protecting forests](#)

A future with zero net global deforestation is possible with the right mix of policies, social action and political will, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said as a major international conference on sustainable forest management kicked off this week in Rome.

“[We have the knowledge and tools to stop global deforestation](#) [...] but it calls for ambitious, concerted action across all agricultural sectors and beyond, underpinned by political and societal will,” said Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General for Climate and Natural Resources, at the conference’s opening on Tuesday.

With rapid population growth driving global demand for forest products and services – timber, fibre, fuel, food, fodder and medicine – institutional, governance and policy innovations are vital to address those interlinkages.

Such efforts are all the more critical in tropical and low-income countries, where one of the major causes of deforestation is the demand for agricultural production, and converting forests to arable land.

Noting that over the past 25 years, the global deforestation rate has slowed by more than 50 per cent, Manoel Sobral Filho, the head of the UN [Forum on Forests](#) said that if the trends continue and forest restoration and plantation efforts continue, a future with zero net global deforestation “can go from being an aspiration to reality.”

Hosted by FAO, the three-day conference will promote dialogue across sectors and stakeholder groups on how to collectively achieve the global development

targets, including under the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of halting deforestation and increasing forest cover.

The outcomes of the event will be submitted to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – the UN body for all matters relating to sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs.

In addition to Government officials, civil society, cooperatives and private sector, the conference will also see the participation of indigenous peoples associations.

'Our values, beliefs and identity' are embedded within language, UNESCO says on Mother Language Day

Every two weeks, one of the world's languages disappears, along with the human history and cultural heritage that accompanies it, the chief of the United Nations cultural agency warned on Wednesday, calling for greater efforts to preserve and promote mother languages and indigenous languages, to bolster inclusion, diversity and ultimately, sustainable development.

"A language is far more than a means of communication; it is the very [condition of our humanity](#). Our values, our beliefs and our identity are embedded within it," said Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on the occasion of International Mother Language Day.

"It is through language that we transmit our experiences, our traditions and our knowledge. The diversity of languages reflects the incontestable wealth of our imaginations and ways of life," she added.

The 2018 theme for Mother Language Day is "Linguistic diversity and multilingualism count for sustainable development."

Calling the Day an "essential component of the intangible heritage of humanity," Ms. Azoulay underscored UNESCO's long-standing commitment to preserving and vitalizing language, defending linguistic diversity and promoting multilingual education.

"This commitment concerns mother languages in particular, which shape millions of developing young minds, and are the indispensable vector for inclusion in the human community, first at the local level, then at the global level," she elaborated.

UNESCO supports policies, particularly in multilingual countries, which promote mother languages and indigenous languages and recommends using them from the first years of schooling, because children learn best in their mother language.

The UN agency also encourages their use in public spaces and especially on the Internet, where multilingualism should become the rule.

“Everyone, regardless of their first language, should be able to access resources in cyberspace and build online communities of exchange and dialogue,” said Ms. Azoulay, calling it “one of the major challenges of sustainable development, at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.”

According to the UN, at least 43 per cent of the estimated 6,000 [languages spoken](#) in the world are endangered. Only a few hundred languages have genuinely been given a place in education systems and the public domain, and less than a hundred are used in the digital world.

Pointing out that every two weeks a language disappears, Ms. Azoulay underscored that “promoting multilingualism also helps to stop this programmed extinction.”

Ms. Azoulay quoted Nelson Mandela in saying: “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

“On the occasion of this international day, UNESCO invites its Member States to celebrate, through a variety of educational and cultural initiatives, the linguistic diversity and multilingualism that make up the living wealth of our world,” she concluded.

[UN chief ‘deeply alarmed’ by escalating hostilities in Syria’s east Ghouta](#)

Deeply alarmed by the escalating violence in Syria’s east Ghouta, the United Nations has reiterated a call for an end to hostilities so that the sick and wounded can be immediately evacuated and humanitarian aid deliveries can reach those in need.

“Nearly 400,000 people in Eastern Ghouta have been subjected to [airstrikes, shelling and bombardment](#),” said a statement issued Monday by UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

Secretary-General António Guterres “is deeply alarmed by the escalating situation in Eastern Ghouta and its devastating impact on civilians,” noted the statement, adding that more than 100 people were reportedly killed since Monday, including at least 13 children, while five hospitals or medical clinics were hit by airstrikes.

Over 700 individuals require immediate medical evacuation. In addition, there are reports of shelling from Eastern Ghouta on Damascus.

“Eastern Ghouta is part of a de-escalation agreement reached in Astana,” the statement said, referring to the Syria talks brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey in the Kazak capital.

“The Secretary-General reminds all parties, particularly the guarantors of the Astana agreements, of their commitments in this regard,” the statement added.

The Secretary-General urges all stakeholders to ensure basic principles of international humanitarian law are adhered to, including unhindered humanitarian access, unconditional medical evacuations, and the protection of civilians and their infrastructure, the statement said.

Targeted support, reconstruction needed as displaced Iraqis return and rebuild their lives, urges UN agency

Iraqi civilians, driven from their homes in fear by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, Da’esh), are now starting to make their way back home after the terrorist group has been uprooted from its bastions in the country, the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported.

According to [data](#) as of 31 January, more than 3.3 million Iraqis have returned to their areas of origin, with most coming back to their homes in the governorates of Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Anbar. In all, some six million Iraqis were displaced due to ISIL and the subsequent military operation to drive the group away.

“As Iraq enters the recovery phase after three years of conflict, we should remember that real reconstruction of the country will not only be based on rebuilding infrastructure,” said the head of the IOM operations in the country, Gerard Waite, in a [news release](#) Tuesday.

“Provision of specialized support to all who survived the conflict is also

needed, alongside reconstruction of infrastructure.”

At the recent Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, the UN system launched a two-year [Recovery and Resilience Programme](#), as part of which IOM will assist the Government of Iraq in addressing the multiple needs for rebuilding and reconstruction in the country.

The UN migration agency is also working on assistance efforts in areas of return, specific programmes include mobile community information centres, light infrastructure projects, housing rehabilitation, strengthening health facilities, relief kit distribution and livelihood support.

As of the some 2.5 million Iraqis yet to return to their origins, about half (51 per cent) are reportedly living in private settings – such as with families or friends – and about a quarter (26 per cent) in camps.