

## World 'failing to stop the war on children,' says UNICEF Middle East, North Africa director

5 February 2018 – Describing January as “a dark month” in crisis-torn Middle East and North Africa, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) director for the region said Monday that the violence has had a devastating toll on children, who were being killed in ongoing conflicts or suicide attacks, or freezing to death as they fled active warzones.

“It is [simply unacceptable](#) that children continue being killed and injured every single day,” said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

In the month of January alone, escalating violence in Iraq, Libya, the Palestine, Syria and Yemen has claimed the lives of at least 83 children.

“These children have paid the highest price for wars that they have absolutely no responsibility for. Their lives have been cut short, their families forever broken in grief,” he added.

Mr. Cappelaere said that as the Syrian conflict enters its eighth year, intensifying fighting has reportedly killed 59 children in the past four weeks.

Moreover, across Yemen the UN has verified the killing of 16 children in attacks and continues to receive daily reports of more killed and injured children amidst escalating fighting.

Additionally, a suicide attack took the lives of three children in Libya’s Benghazi while three others died playing near unexploded ordnance – a fourth child remains in critical condition after the blast.

Turning to the old city of Mosul in Iraq, a child was killed in a booby-trapped house, and in Palestine, a boy was shot dead in a village near Ramallah.

Furthermore, 16 refugees, including four children, froze to death in a harsh winter storm in Lebanon – fleeing the war in Syria – where many more children were hospitalized with frost bite.

“We collectively continue failing to stop the war on children,” stressed Mr. Cappelaere.

He underscored, “not hundreds, not thousands but millions more children in the Middle East and North Africa region have their childhoods stolen, maimed for life, traumatized, arrested and detained, exploited, prevented from going to school and from getting the most essential health services; denied even the basic right to play.”

Mr. Cappelaere maintained that we have no justification, no reason to accept this as a new normal.

“Children may have been silenced. But their voices will continue to be heard. Their message is our message: The protection of children is paramount under all circumstances, in line with the law of war,” he argued.

“Breaching that law is a most heinous crime and jeopardizes the future – and not just for children,” concluded the UNICEF Regional Director.

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## [Development indicators trending downward for world's poorest countries, UN warns](#)

5 February 2018 – The least developed countries (LDCs) – 48 nations categorized as requiring special attention from the international community – will fall short of goals set out in the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development unless urgent action is taken, new United Nations analysis has revealed.

The analysis by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also highlights that LDC growth averaged 5 per cent in 2017 and will reach 5.4 per cent in 2018, below the 7 per cent growth envisaged by target 1 of Sustainable Development Goal 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

In 2017, only five LDCs achieved economic growth of 7 per cent or higher: Ethiopia at 8.5 per cent, Nepal at 7.5 per cent, Myanmar at 7.2 per cent, Bangladesh at 7.1 per cent, and Djibouti at 7 per cent.

“The international community should strengthen [its support to LDCs](#) in line with the commitment to leave no one behind,” Paul Akiwumi, Director of UNCTAD’s Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, Mr. Akiwumi said.

“With the global economic recovery remaining tepid, development partners face constraints in extending support to LDCs to help them meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Inequalities between the LDCs and other developing countries risk widening,” he said.

### ***Relying on commodities***

The analysis contends that too many LDCs remain dependent on primary commodity exports.

While international prices for most primary commodity categories have trended upwards since late 2016, this modest recovery barely made a dent to the significant drop experienced since 2011, particularly in the cases of crude petroleum and minerals, ores and metals.

In 2017, LDCs as a group were projected to register a current account deficit of \$50 billion, the second-highest deficit posted so far, at least in nominal terms.

In contrast, non-LDC developing countries registered current account surpluses, so did developing countries as a whole and developed countries.

Projections for 2018 suggest that the current account deficits of the LDCs are expected to grow further, making worse possible balance-of-payments weaknesses.

#### *Aid levels*

Special foreign aid commitments for LDCs amounted to \$43.2 billion, representing only an estimated 27 per cent of net aid to all developing countries &#8211; a 0.5 per cent increase in aid in real terms year-on-year.

This trend supports fears of a levelling-off of aid to LDCs in the wake of the global recession. In 2016, only a handful of donor countries appear to have met the commitments under target 2 of Sustainable Development Goal 17.

Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom provided more than 0.20 per cent of their own gross national income to LDCs, while the Netherlands met the 0.15 per cent threshold.

&#8220This analysis signals a clarion call for action,&#8221 said Mr. Akiwumi. &#8220The international community needs to pay increased attention to their commitments toward LDCs.&#8221

The analysis was presented to UNCTAD member States at a meeting of its governing body in Geneva, Switzerland, on 5 February.

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## [UN calls on Maldives to respect Supreme Court decision, says 'ready' to help ease political impasse](#)

3 February 2018 – Following the Maldives' Supreme Court decision ordering the release of convicted opposition leaders and the reinstatement of 12 parliamentarians, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has expressed the world body's continued readiness to facilitate all-party talks

in finding a solution to the Indian Ocean nation's political stalemate.

The Secretary-General takes note of [the important ruling](#) by the Supreme Court and calls on the Government to respect it, said a statement issued overnight by his Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric.

The Secretary-General reiterates his belief in finding a solution to the political stalemate in the Maldives through all-party talks, which the United Nations continues to stand ready to facilitate, the statement added.

On Friday, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) also urged the Government of the Maldives to [fully respect](#) the Supreme Court decision, which also overturned the conviction of former President Mohamed Nasheed and ordered to retry his case.

We are concerned by what appears to be an initial heavy-handed reaction by security forces in the capital Malé against people celebrating the Court's decision, Spokesperson Rupert Colville told reporters at a press briefing in Geneva, Switzerland, urging them to show understanding and restraint, and to act in full accordance with international laws and standards governing the policing of protests and other forms of public assembly.

We also urge all those celebrating, or protesting, to do so in a peaceful fashion, he added.

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## [UN forum's key message: Young people must be meaningful participants in policy-making](#)

### **UN forum's key message: Young people must be meaningful participants in policy-making**

2 February 2018 –

Young people must be involved at all levels of policy-making and in all processes that affect them, including in the design of national plans, according to a summary statement issued at the end of a United Nations forum on youth.

The [statement](#) – issued by the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Marie Chatardová – highlights key messages and recommendations emerged from discussions during the 2018 ECOSOC [Youth Forum](#), held on 30 and 31 January in New York.

The Forum, which the Council has been convening since 2012, continued to grow in size and stature, bringing together 38 Ministers and senior officials, the largest number to date, and more than 700 youth participants from around the world, the statement said.

Through plenary discussions and breakout sessions, the Council listened to a wide diversity of voices and ideas from young people across all regions.

“We were inspired by [young people’s proposals](#) to climate change and social inequity – smart water, energy efficiency, compost and recycling, decentralized economy think tanks, biodiversity and forest conservation and preservation of indigenous knowledge,” the statement said.

Policymakers shared their approaches to engaging young people in decision-making and implementing of the [2030 Agenda](#) and addressing their priorities in their national Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) implementation strategies.

Youth focused their attention on access to water, sanitation (SDG 6), and energy (SDG 7); sustainable and inclusive cities (SDG 11), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12); sustainably managed forests (SDG 15); use of science, technology and innovations in facilitating youth engagement, development and resilience (SDG 17).

The Forum called on Member States to ensure that young people have the institutional and political space to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at country, regional and global levels.

“The voices of young people can be amplified at the global level if they are included as youth delegates at the UN and if they are part of national delegations for the review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the High-Level Political Forum,” the statement said, adding that they should hold their Governments accountable for their commitments, including through vigorous shadow reporting.

*Full Text of Presidential Statement on Economic and Social Council Youth Forum*[here](#)

The statement also said that “ministries responsible for the youth portfolio have a huge responsibility to ensure young people are prioritized.”

They were urged to do this through collaboration with other line Ministries while fostering partnerships with youth and other civil society organizations.

The Forum was also told about the need to channel resources from all sources – public, private, philanthropic and official development assistance – to promote direct investment in the priority issues that affect young people, including youth initiatives and enterprises, youth organizations, and in productive sectors and activities that benefit them most.

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## Partnership key to ensuring all children can access education – senior UN officials

2 February 2018 – Stressing the importance of quality education for the future of young people and children, senior United Nations officials, including the head of its education agency and the UN youth envoy, called for cooperation to strengthen education and learning programmes in all corners of the world.

“No single country or agency can tackle the challenges of demographics, persisting conflicts, unequal access of girls and women to education, radicalization by groups with vested interests or environment degradation,” Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), said in a [Tweet](#) (in French), referring to her participation at the Global Partnership for Education Financing Conference.

“Partnership is the only way to make this possible,” she added.

Convened by the Presidents of France and Senegal, in Dakar, the Conference seeks to raise funds to support education efforts in both humanitarian and non-humanitarian contexts. It is also the first time that a donor and a developing country are co-hosting the event.

Also speaking at the Conference, Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, highlighted the importance of empowering young people with the skills they would need to adapt in a fast changing work.

“In a world of rapidly advancing digital technologies and artificial intelligence that will impact the outlook of the future of work, we have to rethink our approaches on skills development,” said Ms. Wickramanayake.

“Beyond traditional classroom interventions, investing in non-formal and informal learning is essential to developing skills that fit the world of tomorrow,” she added.

With over half the global population under the age of 25, the world “cannot afford to not invest in education,” expressed Ms. Wickramanayake and urged leaders and policy makers to redouble their efforts to ensure that every young person can enjoy their universal right to education.