

UN will 'not tolerate' sexual harassment in its ranks – Guterres

2 February 2018 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Friday made clear that the United Nations will not tolerate sexual harassment “anytime, anywhere,” within its ranks and laid out a five-point plan to ensure equality across the Organization, which he said was critical to tackle on the challenge of such behavior.

“I reaffirm my total commitment to the UN’s zero tolerance policy on [sexual harassment](#),” Mr. Guterres told the press at the Organization’s Headquarters in New York.

Noting that like sexual abuse and sexual violence, sexual harassment is rooted in the historic power imbalances between men and women, the UN chief said he is well aware of the male-dominated culture that permeates governments, the private sector, international organizations and even areas of civil society.

“This creates obstacles to upholding zero tolerance policies on sexual harassment, including here at the United Nations. I am determined to remove [those obstacles],” he said.

Because equal rights and representation are so important in this regard, he launched a gender parity strategy at the UN, and for the first time in its history, the same number of women occupy senior management positions as men at the UN Secretariat; In fact, 23 women to 21 men.

“This is a start,” he stressed, urging equality at all levels and outlining some concrete steps to address sexual harassment, including taking every allegation seriously, past and present, and making sure all staff affected know what to do and where to go for help.

He said a new helpline for staff within the Secretariat who seek confidential advice will be operational by mid-February.

Mr. Guterres has also established a Task Force of leaders from across the UN system to step up efforts to tackle harassment and boost support for victims, including mandatory staff training on this issue.

He has also strengthened the protection of whistleblowers and reminded staff of their duty to call out sexual harassment and to support those affected.

A survey among Secretariat staff will be conducted soon to obtain better information on prevalence and reporting rates.

“In this effort and beyond, my message is simple: we will not tolerate sexual harassment anytime, anywhere,” he said. “And we will continue to change the dynamic and put greater power into the hands of women to prevent and end sexual harassment and all abuse of power in the UN.”

Russia-sponsored talks on Syria

The Secretary-General also addressed the topic of the Syrian political process and the Russia-sponsored Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue in Sochi, to which Mr. Guterres dispatched his Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura.

The UN chief highlighted three key points from the final Sochi statement.

First, it embraced a vision of Syria for all Syrians – as reflected by the 12 living intra-Syrian principles put forward by de Mistura in Geneva late last year.

Second, the Congress affirmed that a Constitutional Committee should be formed under UN auspices in accordance with Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#).

He said that there is an understanding that such a Committee should at the very least comprise the Government, opposition representatives in the [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, Syrian experts, civil society, independents, tribal leaders and women. It would also include adequate representation of Syria's ethnic and religious components.

Third, the Congress made it clear that a final agreement on the mandate, terms of reference, powers, rules of procedure, and selection criteria for the composition of the Constitutional Committee is to be reached in the UN-led talks in Geneva.

“My Special Envoy will now draw on this Sochi outcome to meet our shared goal: full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué,” Mr. Guterres said.

Turning to the humanitarian situation in Syria, he noted that over the last two months, not a single convoy of life-saving relief has reached a besieged area – no medical supplies and no food.

He appealed for humanitarian access, strict respect for international humanitarian law and, in particular, the protection of civilians.

“I call on the Government and opposition delegations and all States with influence to cooperate with my Special Envoy,” he said, stressing that the UN-led process must move ahead in Geneva, credibly and seriously because “we don't have a moment to lose.”

Cereal prices remain stable, dairy and

[sugar values dip – UN](#)

2 February 2018 – Global food prices have remained largely unchanged since December 2017, with January prices stable for cereals and vegetable oils; weaker for dairy and sugar values; and steady for meat, the United Nations agricultural agency said Thursday.

In January 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Food Price Index, which tracks the monthly change in international market prices for five key commodity groups, averaged almost three per cent below the corresponding period last year.

Cereal prices in January were up almost 2.5 per cent from December, and 6.3 per cent from January 2017. Despite large supplies, wheat and maize prices received some support from a weakened dollar and weather concerns. Meanwhile, renewed Asian demand continued to firm up international rice values in January.

Meat prices remained virtually unchanged since its slight December revision – 7.4 per cent higher than its January 2017 value and 19.5 per cent below its all-time high of August 2014. Driven by higher export availabilities amid weak import demand, poultry and pork prices continued to slide while beef prices rose marginally.

Weakening commodities

Although dairy prices dipped 2.4 per cent since December, pushing the index further down for the fourth consecutive month, they remain 41 per cent higher than during their April 2016 slump.

Abundant milk supplies in the northern hemisphere and Australia heavily influenced an international decline in butter and cheese prices. At the same time, the possibility for lower-than-expected seasonal milk production in New Zealand lent support to whole milk powder prices. Skim milk powder values also increased, mostly because of strong import demand.

Sugar prices were down 1.6 per cent from December and as much as 30.4 per cent below the corresponding month last year. Downward trending international sugar quotations were mostly driven by ample export availabilities in major producing countries.

[World Cancer Day: UN agency chief](#)

urges greater access to diagnosis, prevention and treatment services

2 February 2018 – Millions of people suffering from cancer in developing countries still lack access to effective prevention, screening, early diagnosis and treatment, the head of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) said Friday, urging continued efforts to ensure greater access to these vital services.

“Twenty-eight African countries do not have a single radiotherapy machine,” [said](#) Yukiya Amano, the Director-General of IAEA, at an event commemorating World Cancer Day, marked annually on 3 February.

“The IAEA will continue to work hard to change that, and to improve facilities in other regions of the world where the need is also great,” he added, noting that addressing the challenges confronting the developing world will remain a priority for the Agency.

“We will strive to continuously improve the services we offer our Member States so they can provide better care – and hope – for their people,” he stressed.

Globally, cancer is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide, with approximately 14 million new cases and 8 million cancer-related deaths annually and there are concerns that the number of new cases could rise by about 70 per cent over the next 20 years.

Observed every year on 4 February, [World Cancer Day](#) aims to raise awareness on the broad class of disease which can affect any part of the body, and the increased global burden that cancer inflicts on people – both poor and rich.

This year, the observation [includes](#) a discussion on applications of nuclear techniques in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, as well as one on importance of multidisciplinary team for optimal cancer care.

The commemoration also includes a “health fair” showcasing a variety of information and services including detection of various types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon, and skin cancer. It is being held at the Vienna International Centre Rotunda.

Many cancer can prevent by avoiding risk factors such as smoking – WHO

[According](#) to the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), between 30 to 50 per cent of cancers can currently be prevented by avoiding risk factors and implementing existing evidence-based prevention strategies.

Some of these risk factors include tobacco use including cigarettes and smokeless tobacco; being overweight or obese; unhealthy diet with low fruit and vegetable intake; lack of physical activity alcohol use; sexually transmitted Human papillomavirus (HPV)-infection; infection by hepatitis or

other carcinogenic infections; ionizing and ultraviolet radiation; urban air pollution; and indoor smoke from household use of solid fuels.

Tobacco use is the single most important risk factor for cancer and is responsible for approximately 22 per cent of cancer-related deaths globally.

The cancer burden can also be reduced through early detection of cancer and management of patients who develop cancer.

SEE ALSO: [WHO Factsheet on Cancer](#)

Some prevention strategies, according to WHO, can include increase avoidance of the risk factors listed above; vaccination against HPV and hepatitis B viruses; controlling occupational hazards; and reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation and ionizing radiation.

Furthermore, many cancers have a high chance of cure if diagnosed early and treated adequately.

“When identified early, cancer is more likely to respond to effective treatment and can result in a greater probability of surviving, less morbidity, and less expensive treatment,” said the UN health agency in a fact-sheet, noting that significant improvements can be made in the lives of cancer patients by detecting cancer early and avoiding delays in care.

[Ahead of monsoon season, UN supports Bangladesh's efforts protect Rohingya camps from floods, landslides](#)

2 February 2018 – The United Nations refugee agency and its partners are ramping up to assist Bangladesh's efforts to mitigate some expected impacts of the upcoming monsoon season in the country, during which, according to an initial risk analysis, at least 100,000 Rohingya refugees could be in grave danger from landslides and floods.

“The adverse weather conditions, including [potential cyclones](#), could put tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees staying at the highly congested settlements in Cox's Bazar district at serious risk,” Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) told reporters at the regular press briefing in Geneva, Switzerland, on Friday.

The findings of an initial risk analysis of the world's largest refugee settlement area in Kutapalong and Balukhali indicate that at least 100,000 of the more than 569,000 refugees there could be in grave danger from landslides and floods.

Up to one third of the settlement area could be flooded. As a result, more than 85,000 refugees could lose their shelters. Another 23,000 refugees living on steep slopes within the site could be at risk of landslides, Mr. Mahecic said.

Key services in the settlement are also at risk of being washed away, including latrines, washrooms, tube wells, and health centres, and access roads into the settlements could be blocked and inaccessible to vehicles, making it hard to provide emergency aid. There is also a high risk for public health situation, especially of outbreaks of communicable diseases, he added.

The Government of Bangladesh has acknowledged and committed to addressing these concerns, while UN and humanitarian partners have set up an emergency preparedness group to co-ordinate these efforts.

UNHCR has already taken a number of steps, including provision of biodegradable sandbags to help anchor the structures in heavy rains.

Several engineering projects are also underway to build bamboo-reinforced footpaths and stairs, raised bridges, bamboo/brick/concrete retaining walls for soil stabilisation and drainage networks.

The work is scheduled to start within the next few weeks to level some of the steep hilltops to reduce the risk of landslides, as well as to increase the amount of useable area.

A relocation of some families living in the most precarious parts of the camp will also start soon.

Early warning systems are also being put in place, with public information campaigns also underway. UNHCR is also working with the Bangladeshi authorities and other key operational agencies to pre-position materials and heavy-lifting machinery.

Bangladesh: Three decades of service and sacrifice in UN peacekeeping

2 February 2018 – United Nations peacekeepers come from diverse cultures and speak different languages, but share a common purpose: the protection of vulnerable communities and the provision of support to countries struggling to move from conflict to peace.

Bangladesh is one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. The South Asian nation first deployed uniformed personnel to serve with the Organization in 1988 when they were deployed to help monitor the armistice between Iran and Iraq. Over the past three decades, the contributions of

these brave men and women in the countries in which they serve have been immense.

As of December 2017, there were 7,246 Bangladeshi troops and police personnel in 10 missions around the world. Bangladeshi peacekeepers work in various roles – some provide protection, others heal and design roads – but all serve under the blue flag to support the governments and peoples of the countries in which they serve.

Below is a snapshot of where Bangladeshi peacekeepers work and what they do.



Photo: Logan Abassi/MINUSTAH

In Haiti, an all-female Bangladeshi Formed Police Unit served with the UN mission, known as MINUSTAH, from 2015 until October 2017, when the mission completed its work. Pictured, the contingent at its departure ceremony. The 160-strong contingent focused on reconstruction efforts after the deadly earthquake in 2010.



Photo: MONUSCO/Abel Kavanagh

UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh work in some of the world's hotspots, including the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Darfur region of Sudan. Above, peacekeepers on patrol in Bunia, Ituri Province, DRC. At least 132 Bangladeshi peacekeepers have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Bangladeshi troops regularly patrol villages to ensure security. Above, a patrol commander from the Bangladeshi battalion meets with the chief of ADA village, in the Ituri Province of eastern DRC, during a routine security patrol. Bangladesh is currently the second-largest troop-contributing country to UN peacekeeping.

Members of the Bangladeshi contingents play different roles in UN peacekeeping missions around the world. Pictured, a UN peacekeeper from Bangladesh provides free medical consultations to residents of a community in the Central African Republic.

In 2017, Bangladesh sent two female combat pilots to the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) – Flight Lieutenant Nayma Haque

and Flight Lieutenant Tamanna-E-Lutfi.

Bangladeshi engineers serving with the UN mission in South Sudan are leading efforts to improve a 78-kilometre stretch of road between Gumbo and Mangalla, on the artery between Juba and Bor. The road connects local communities, allowing them to more easily bring goods to the market.