

Security Council stresses need of 'sustainable solutions' for millions displaced in Darfur

31 January 2018 – Despite improvements in the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, continued challenges remain, the United Nations Security Council has said, underlining the need for sustainable solutions for the region's 2.7 million internally displaced persons.

"The Security Council reiterates its demand that all parties to the conflict in Darfur create the conditions conducive to allowing the voluntary, informed, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons," said the 15-member body in a Presidential Statement it [adopted](#) Wednesday.

The Council also voiced concern that improvements in the security situation has not translated into a commensurate reduction in the level of human rights violations and abuses, such as sexual and gender-based violence, and serious violations against children, perpetrated with impunity.

Further, the Council also said that six years after the adoption of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, the people of Darfur had yet to fully benefit from it.

In that context, the UN body reiterated its support for the Doha Document as a viable framework for the peace process, and welcomed the signing of an African Union (AU) High-Level Implementation Panel road map by the Government and armed movements and urged them to make immediate progress on its implementation.

Turning to the AU-UN Mission In Darfur ([UNAMID](#)), the Council said it was "still too early to reach conclusions on the full impact of [the Mission's] reconfiguration" and requested that UNAMID and the UN country team closely monitor the reconfiguration's impact on the ground and to promptly report back on any adverse effects.

With phase two of UNAMID's [reconfiguration](#) due to begin on 31 January, the Council said it supported a recommendation by the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General for a review – prior to the renewal of UNAMID's mandate in June – that would consider a new mission concept with adjusted priorities reflective of trends and the situation on the ground.

Over \$46 billion lost to premature cancer deaths in BRICS economies, UN research finds

31 January 2018 – Over \$46 billion lost to premature cancer deaths in BRICS economies, UN research finds. Premature deaths as a result of cancer is costing major emerging economies tens of billions of dollars a year, a new United Nations health study has found, underlining the need for context-specific strategies for both prevention as well as treatment for those suffering from the disease.

The economic impact of cancer in fast-developing economies not only underlines the high cost of the disease in terms of the lives it claims and the impact on the economy, but also highlights the “[urgency of tackling preventable cancers in these countries](#),” said the study’s lead author, Alison Pearce.

Published in the medical journal *Cancer Epidemiology*, the [study](#) led by the World Health Organization (WHO) cancer research centre reveals that the total cost of lost productivity because of premature cancer mortality for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – collectively known as BRICS countries – was \$46.3 billion in 2012 (the most recent year for which cancer data was available for all these countries).

These countries together account for more than 40 per cent the world’s population and a quarter of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, these countries are also home to 42 per cent of the global cancer deaths.

“Although they have diverse levels of wealth, and health indicators, the BRICS countries have all undergone particularly rapid demographic and economic growth,” noted the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in a news release announcing the findings.

Each of the BRICS countries has a distinct cancer profile, and therefore a tailored approach to national cancer control policy is required. WHO IARC

These countries are all affected by infection-related cancers as well as cancers associated with changing lifestyles such as changes in diet, lack of physical activity, obesity and reproductive patterns.

“Yet each of these countries has a distinct cancer profile, and therefore a tailored approach to national cancer control policy is required,” added IARC.

The largest productivity loss at \$28 billion was recorded in China, a country particularly affected by liver cancer, with hepatitis B virus infections and exposure to aflatoxins primary factors for the loss.

Lifestyle-related risk factors in Russia, South Africa and Brazil – high consumption of alcohol, smoking and rapidly increasing obesity, respectively, added to the factors causing losses, noted the study.

Focusing on tobacco control, vaccination programmes, and cancer screening, combined with access to adequate cancer treatment, would yield significant health and economic gains for BRICS countries

Director of WHO IARC

In India, the use of chewing tobacco was a leading cause of economic loss due to premature mortality from cancers of the lip and oral cavity.

Policies to influence lifestyle changes and reduce cancer risk are, therefore, critical, highlights IARC.

“The study demonstrates the economic importance of targeted primary prevention activities embedded in national cancer control policies. Focusing on tobacco control, vaccination programmes, and cancer screening, combined with access to adequate cancer treatment, would yield significant health and economic gains for the BRICS countries,” said Christopher Wild, the Director of IARC.

“Investing in evidence-based preventive interventions as a part of national cancer control plans is not only cost-effective and life-saving but also a powerful lever for sustainable economic development.”

[Holocaust Remembrance: Never lose sight of what went wrong, UN memorial event told](#)

31 January 2018 – Describing the Holocaust as the “culmination of hostility towards Jews across the millennia,” a “systematic campaign of extermination,” United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday warned against ignoring signs the hatred, xenophobia and other types of discrimination that exist in today’s world.

“Since hatred and contempt of human lives are rampant in our time, we must stand guard against xenophobia every day and everywhere. Across the world, the state of hate is high,” Mr. Guterres told a UN Holocaust Memorial Ceremony held at the world body’s Headquarters in New York.

Featured speakers included Thomas Buergenthal, a Holocaust survivor and a retired Judge of the International Court of Justice, Professor at George Washington University Law School and Eva Lavi, the youngest survivor on

Schindler's List.

Also delivering remarks were the representatives of Israel, Germany and the United States.

Four days ago, 27 January marked the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

"The gargantuan horror of those 12 years, from 1933 to 1945, reverberates to this day," Mr. Guterres said. "This annual Day of commemoration is about the past, but also the future; it is about Jews but also all others who find themselves scapegoated and vilified solely because of who they are."

The UN chief said that "genocide does not happen in a vacuum" and "the Holocaust was the culmination of hostility toward Jews across the millennia."

"We must not lose sight of what went wrong," he declared, warning against manifestation of resurgent hatred, such as the march of 60,000 people waving signs reading "White Europe" and "Clean Blood" in one capital two months ago.

The ceremony, hosted by Alison Smale, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, began with a minute of silence in honour of the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust.

For his part, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said: "We are not here today just to remember the Holocaust. We are also here to remind ourselves of our collective failure to prevent it."

He said that the Holocaust did not happen overnight. "We saw it coming, and we did not stop it."

And, when it was over, a promise was made not to repeat it, "never again." But, unfortunately, this promise has not always been kept.

"No, we have not had another world war. Nor have we seen anything on the scale of the Holocaust. But we have felt tremors in the ground. We have seen red warning flashes lighting," he said, citing acts of genocide, systematic discrimination, anti-Semitism, racism, intolerance, Islamophobia and hate speech.

"Too often we did not have the courage to call things exactly what they are – and to act accordingly," he said.

"So, we need to reflect on our inaction – and, indeed, our failures. But we must also use this occasion to inspire change."

More to follow...

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South-East Asia region aims to close immunity gap, wipe out measles by 2020 – UN health agency

31 January 2018 – The so-called ‘big six’ countries in the World Health Organization’s ([WHO](#)) South-East Asia region are meeting today in New Delhi on an accelerated strategy to wipe out measles and rubella in the next three years by targeting as many as 500 million children with vaccines.

“Eliminating measles would [avert half a million deaths](#), while controlling rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) would promote health of pregnant woman and the infants they give life to,” said Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director for the World Health Organization (WHO) South-East Asia, referring to the ‘big six;’ Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand.

While Bhutan and Maldives eliminated measles in 2017, other regional countries are carrying out large-scale immunization drives to achieve the same. WHO noted that nearly 4.8 million children in the region miss their measles vaccines every year.

Through routine immunization and supplementary immunization campaigns, over the next two years, nearly 500 million children in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand are being targeting for measles and rubella vaccines.

According to Dr. Khetrpal Singh, sharing challenges and lessons learned from recent achievements and initiatives will help member countries address their specific problems to close the immunity gap against measles, rubella and CRS.

In recent years, WHO South-East Asia Region has made unprecedented progress against vaccine-preventable diseases: Certified polio-free in 2014 and having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus as a public health problem in 2016.

Further accelerated and focussed efforts are needed.

Nearly 38 million children are born in the Region every year, of which approximately 87 per cent receive the first dose of measles-containing vaccine. Though this is a marked improvement from previous years, it still means around 4.8 million children are deprived of the most basic protection against measles each year.

Immunization programme managers of the ‘big six’ countries, along with WHO, UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Centre for Disease control are deliberating challenges, experiences and lessons learned in immunization in the Region that can be harnessed to eliminate measles and control rubella / congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

“This dynamism and positive exchange is at the very core of south-south and triangular cooperation,” said Dr. Khetrupal Singh, who announced measles elimination and rubella / CRS control as one of her flagship programme at the start of her tenure in 2014.

Since then, all South-East Asia Region member countries have introduced two doses of measles-containing vaccines in their childhood immunization programme.

Measles elimination and rubella /CRS control strategies include ensuring over 95 per cent coverage with two doses of measles and rubella containing vaccine in each district through routine and/or supplementary immunization activities, and developing and sustaining sensitive measles surveillance supported by an accredited measles laboratory network.

Eliminating measles and controlling rubella would also mean extending the benefits of vaccine to all people everywhere, including communities in hard-to-reach or remote areas, the underserved or the neglected or marginalized; and advancing universal health coverage.

[With ‘little hope’ of a quick return to stability in Lake Chad Basin, UN and partners launch aid appeal](#)

31 January 2018 – With more than a quarter of a million people affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin region, the United Nations refugee agency and its humanitarian partners launched on Wednesday an inter-agency funding appeal for \$157 million.

“The [Boko Haram crisis lingers on](#) and is far from over,” said Kelly T. Clements, Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at the appeal launch in Niger’s capital Niamey.

The 47 UN agencies, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), and humanitarian organizations participating in the [2018 Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) will provide support to some 208,000 Nigerian refugees and 75,000 of their hosts in Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

“The world should not forget the victims of this deadly conflict, especially as there appears to be little hope for a return to peace and stability in the near future,” Ms. Clements underscored.

Nigerian refugees continue to arrive in very remote, impoverished communities in neighbouring countries. Since it started in 2013, the Boko Haram conflict has internally displaced another 2.4 million people in north-east Nigeria,

Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

UNHCR called the menacing threat of food insecurity and severe malnutrition “one of the most devastating side effects of the conflict.”

Please see the UN relief wing’s snapshot of the Lake Chad Basin Crisis [here](#)

Last September more than 7.2 million people in the Lake Chad Basin, which spans seven countries, including most of Chad and a large part of Niger, were food insecure. Across the vast region, food insecurity and malnutrition have reached critical levels, a situation only made worse over the eight years of the Boko Haram insurgency.

“The future of young generations in the region is at stake, as food insecurity not only affects the dignity of families, but has serious consequences on the physical and cognitive development of children,” stressed Ms. Clements.

In a region where education levels were already among the lowest in the world, the conflict has had a devastating impact – forcing hundreds of schools to close, making education inaccessible and causing school attendance rates to drop.

Refugee-hosting communities are also in dire need of assistance, as their capacity, including basic services infrastructure, is stretched to the limit. Humanitarian aid is needed to uplift services, including in the shelter, health, education, and water and sanitation sectors.

In 2017, a \$241 million appeal was only 56 per cent funded.