

UN Security Council pledges support for regional push to revive South Sudan's peace pact

14 December 2017 – As the brutal conflict in South Sudan enters its fifth year, the United Nations Security Council on Thursday said it remains deeply concerned over the situation there, and expressed strong support for a regional initiative aimed at salvaging a 2015 peace deal.

In a presidential statement, the 15-member Council said it “is deeply concerned about the actions of all parties to the conflict that are perpetuating this, with 7.6 million people now in need of aid, four million displaced, and six million lacking enough food to feed themselves.”

The world's youngest country, South Sudan has spent much of its short life mired in conflict, riven by a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar that erupted into full-blown war late in 2013.

The Council also took note of the September 2017 mid-term report of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and its findings that the parties to the conflict have failed to implement substantive elements of the 2015 peace agreement, which sought to end the fighting that broke out in December 2013.

The Council expressed its strong support for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) High-Level Revitalization Forum, which was established to revitalize efforts to implement the 2015 peace agreement, adding that it “looks forward” to the convening of a fully inclusive Forum and substantive progress on the initiative by the end of December.

IGAD is a regional mechanism in Eastern Africa consisting of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

The Council strongly urged all parties to engage constructively in the process to revitalize the 2015 peace agreement, underlining that no party should set pre-conditions for participation.

The Council noted with deep concern the continuing obstacles that hinder the delivery of vital lifesaving assistance to the South Sudanese people, condemning attacks on national and international humanitarian personnel and compounds.

The Council reiterated that perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights must be held accountable, to break the prevailing cycle of impunity.

RELATED: [Security Council extends mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan \(UNMISS\)](#)

Respiratory diseases linked to seasonal flu claim thousands of lives every year – UN health agency

14 December 2017 – Respiratory diseases from seasonal influenza takes up to 650,000 lives annually, according to new estimates released Thursday by the United Nations health agency and global partners.

“These figures indicate the [high burden of influenza](#) and its substantial social and economic cost to the world,” Dr. Peter Salama, Executive Director of the World Health Organization’s ([WHO](#)) Health Emergencies Programme said on Thursday.

“They highlight the importance of influenza prevention for seasonal epidemics, as well as preparedness for pandemics,” he added.

This marks an increase of the previous global estimate of 250,000 – 500,000 from over ten years ago, which covered all influenza-related deaths, including cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

The new figures of 290,000 – 650,000 deaths are based on recent data from more diverse countries and exclude deaths from non-respiratory diseases. They consider findings from recent influenza respiratory mortality studies, including by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

According to CDC, most deaths occur among people aged over 75 years, and in the world’s poorest regions. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for the world’s greatest flu mortality risk, followed closely by the Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Asia.

“All countries, rich and poor, large and small, must work together to control influenza outbreaks before the arrival of the next pandemic,” continued Dr. Salama. “This includes building capacity to detect and respond to outbreaks, and strengthening health systems to improve the health of the most vulnerable and those most at risk.”

Nearly all deaths among children under five with influenza-related lower respiratory tract infections occur in developing countries, but the effects of seasonal influenza epidemics on the world’s poorest are not fully known.

WHO is working with partners to measure the global influenza burden and its economic consequences, and to provide guidance and expertise to Member States.

Further surveillance and laboratory studies of other diseases, which can be

influenza-related, are expected to yield substantially higher estimates over the next few years.

WHO encourages countries to prioritize influenza prevention and produce national estimates to inform prevention policies.

In Tanzania, UN peacekeeping chief pays tribute to 'blue helmets' killed in DR Congo

14 December 2017 – The head of United Nations peacekeeping operations on Thursday attended a ceremony in the port city of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in honour of the country's peacekeepers recently killed during their mission in a neighbouring country.

"We are here today to honor 14 fallen peacekeepers from Tanzania who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace," said Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean Pierre Lacroix.

"The Greek Philosopher Thucydides once said, 'The bravest are surely those that have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding go out to meet it,'" he added.

These peacekeepers were killed in the attack by suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements that took place at the base of the peacekeepers in Semiliki in North Kivu of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on 7 December.

These peacekeepers are the bravest, he said, offering condolences to the Government and the people of Tanzania.

Mr. Lacroix said to the members of their families that "no word can express your sorrow but we also know that you can be very, very proud of them."

"Perhaps better than any of us, they knew the dangers they would face in this troubled region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo – a country that is so important for the security of the region," he said.

"They knew that these armed groups that are preying on the population have no qualms about attacking UN peacekeepers and yet they placed their lives on the lines to serve the people of this region and of the DRC," he added.

He stressed that "to truly honor these brave men, we must ensure that the sacrifice was not made in vain."

"As we mourn this terrible loss, we must work together to ensure that our

peacekeepers have the means to achieve our common goal of bringing peace back to the Democratic Republic of Congo,” he added.

Mr. Lacroix will also attend a ceremony in Goma, DRC, on Friday to honour the peacekeepers.

UN forum sees ‘moderate’ recovery for Latin American and Caribbean economies in 2018

14 December 2017 – New economic projections for Latin America and the Caribbean show moderate recovery in 2018 and growth the following year – with favoured expansions in consumption and domestic investment, the United Nations reported Thursday.

The Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Bárcena, unveiled on Thursday the [Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2017](#), which analyses the economies’ performance and updates its latest growth projections.

“Although there is reduced fiscal space in the region, we need to [promote active public policies](#) to sustain the expansion cycle,” stated Ms. Bárcena, adding that they include strengthening regulation, productive development, tax collection and intraregional trade.

After notching 1.3 per cent growth on average in 2017, the report maintains that regional economies would recover moderately in 2018, and grow 2.2 per cent the following year – noting that the regional economic projections are evolving in a more favourable international context than over the last few years.

According to the report, the global economy will expand at a rate close to that of 2017, or around 3 per cent, next year with emerging economies showing greater dynamism than developed ones.

In the monetary sphere, the current situation of ample liquidity and low international interest rates is seen holding steady.

Domestic demand will cause growth acceleration in 2018. While driven by private consumption, ECLAC attributes recovery in gross fixed capital formation in indicating that investments next year would contribute greatly.

“Spending that has a greater impact on growth and inequality must be prioritized, along with avoiding sharp adjustments in public investment to

protect growth in the medium term," Ms. Bárcena stressed.

ECLAC also noted some challenges and latent risks that may affect the consolidation of growth in the medium term, including a possible United States tax reform that would cause financial volatility due to an increase in capital flows to that country.

In its subregional analysis, ECLAC foresees that economies in South America are expected to grow by two per cent; Central America by 3.6 per cent; and the Caribbean by 1.5 per cent.

[In Japan, UN chief spotlights power of universal health coverage to unlock economic growth](#)

14 December 2017 – Health is everyone's right and a driver of economic development, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres stressed Thursday, expressing the UN's readiness to help countries move towards health coverage for all.

"Our goal must be to protect and promote [physical and mental well-being](#) for all. Health is both an outcome and a driver of progress," Mr. Guterres told the global Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017, currently taking place in Tokyo, Japan.

"It is at the centre of our vision of a more sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future [...] When we invest in health – particularly of women and adolescents – we build more inclusive and resilient societies," he added.

Commending Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's announcement of \$2.9 billion to fund universal health coverage programmes in developing countries, the UN chief acknowledged Japan for being one of the first countries to demonstrate the power of universal health coverage, achieving it in 1961 and unlocking economic growth for the decades that followed.

Next September marks the 40th anniversary of the Alma Alta Declaration, which famously set out a goal of achieving health for all.

Mr. Guterres said that targeted investments in recent decades led to major progress on a variety of health challenges.

"More women have access to modern contraception. Vaccination levels are up. More people living with HIV have access to anti-retrovirals. More people at risk of malaria are sleeping under an insecticide-treated nets. And an end

to diseases such as polio is within sight,” he said.

However, gross inequities continue to leave the most vulnerable behind. For too many, health is inaccessible, unaffordable or altogether unavailable. Out-of-pocket spending on health causes an estimated 100 million people to fall below the poverty line every year.

Health not just the lack of illness. Our goal must be overall well-being, physically and mentally for everyone in all countries.UN
Secretary-General Guterres

Furthermore, new threats, such as antimicrobial resistance, the impacts of climate change and the spread of non-communicable diseases, have emerged.

All of this will require more integrated health systems capable of responding effectively and equitably to the unique needs of their communities, he said.

Noting that every \$1 spent on health yields up to \$20 in full-income growth within a generation, Mr. Guterres stressed the critical importance of political commitment to unlocking these investments.

“There is of course no one-size-fits-all solution, and each country must walk its own path toward universal health coverage,” he said, pledging UN support in that regard.

“Just as peace is not simply the absence of conflict, so is health not just the lack of illness. Our goal is not only a band-aid or a single dose of medicine, important as those are. Our goal must be overall well-being, physically and mentally for everyone in all countries,” he concluded.

The Secretary-General will convene a General Assembly high-level meeting on universal health coverage in 2019.