

Myanmar can draw on UN expertise in tackling Rohingya returns, Security Council told

12 December 2017 – The United Nations can help repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, the Organization's top political official said Tuesday, stressing that the Asian country in democratic transition can also tap the UN's capacities and extensive experience in tackling other challenges.

"We hope Myanmar will draw upon the wealth of expertise the UN can offer," Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman [told](#) the Security Council in his briefing on developments in Myanmar.

The estimated number of refugees who entered Bangladesh from Myanmar since 25 August now exceeds 626,000.

One of the major developments Mr. Feltman highlighted was a bilateral agreement on the issue of returns reached on 23 November between the two countries – a pact that recognizes the need for a comprehensive and durable solution through the safe, dignified, and voluntary return in accordance with international law.

Mr. Feltman said returns must be supported by reconciliation efforts, and central to this is the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations.

The Advisory Commission, established by Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, recommends that the Government take concrete steps, such as ending enforced segregation of Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims and ensuring full and unfettered humanitarian access throughout Rakhine state.



Jeffrey Feltman (center), Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in Myanmar. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Mr. Feltman said that during his October visit, he explored with the authorities potential UN support in key areas.

"We urge all Myanmar leaders, including in the military, to condemn incitement to racial hatred and violence. We encourage them to adopt measures to defuse tensions between communities and create an environment for safe and dignified repatriation, including through interfaith initiatives," he said.

"The origins and solutions to the Rohingya crisis rest in Myanmar," he said. "Repatriation and reconciliation policies will fail without accountability

and non-discriminatory rule of law and public safety measures to address the fears and distrust among communities in Rakhine.”

Mr. Feltman noted that the 2020 national elections will stand as an important test in the consolidation of the nation’s democratic institutions.

He noted that the General Assembly is expected to approve a resolution that requests the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy for Myanmar. This initiative can strengthen the partnership between the UN and Myanmar, in close consultations with interested Member States in the region and beyond.

Related article: [UN warns of trafficking, sexual abuse in shadow of Rohingya refugee crisis](#)

“We believe we have much to offer in working with Myanmar on a number of challenges the country faces, in full respect of Myanmar’s sovereignty,” he concluded.



Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in Myanmar. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Today’s meeting is a follow-up to the Council’s presidential statement on the situation in Myanmar adopted on 6 November, which requested the Secretary-General to brief on developments 30 days after its adoption.

Also briefing the Council was Pramila Patten, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who [visited](#) Bangladesh from 5 to 13 November.

[Armed hostilities on rise again in Ukraine, where conflict ‘never really stopped,’ says UN rights wing](#)



Entrance to Sloviansk city, Ukraine, pockmarked with bullets and shrapnel. Photo: UNICEF Ukraine/Pavel Zmey

12 December 2017 – An uptick in armed hostilities in Ukraine has resulted in more deaths and new damages to critical water infrastructure storing dangerous chemicals – posing a grave threat to human life and the environment, according to a new United Nations report.

The [report](#) of the [Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine](#), published on Tuesday, warned that that daily ceasefire violations coupled with falling temperatures further aggravated a dire human rights and humanitarian situation on both sides of the contact line.

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[Ukraine: UN and partners seek \\$187 million amid humanitarian crisis that is ‘worse than it’s ever been’](#)

[UN Assembly calls on Member States to ‘accelerate progress’ on goal of universal health coverage](#)

12 December 2017 – The United Nations on Tuesday called for greater efforts on the part of its Member States to ensure universal health coverage, and designated 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day.

In one of the two resolutions adopted today, the UN General Assembly – composed of all 193 UN Member States – called for efforts ensure that all people have equal access, without discrimination of any kind, to quality promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative basic health services.

It also encouraged all Member States to promote the effective, full and meaningful participation of all – in particular those who are vulnerable or in vulnerable situations – in the design, implementation and monitoring of law, policies and programmes relevant to realizing the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and to implementing the health-related Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), including strategies for universal health coverage.

Also in the resolution, the General Assembly called for reinforcing the protection of medical and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, and hospitals and other medical facilities, especially in armed conflict, consistent with their specific obligations under international humanitarian law.

Further, the Assembly also announced that it would hold a high-level meeting in 2019 on universal health coverage.

Acting on a related text, the Assembly proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day and invited all Member States,

entities of the UN system and all other relevant stakeholders, including the civil society and the private sector to observe the International Day annually “in an appropriate manner and in accordance with national priorities, through education and activities, in order to raise awareness of the need for strong and resilient health systems and universal health coverage.”

SEE ALSO: [WHO Factsheet on Universal Health Coverage](#)

New compact to improve refugee response ‘a chance to chart a different course’ – UN agency chief

12 December 2017 – The head of the United Nations refugee agency on Tuesday kicked off in Geneva a dialogue on protection challenges with a stark warning: the tragedy of forced displacement has deepened – one year after the world pledged to improve its response to refugee situations.

“Our mission is [more urgent than ever](#),” said Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, opening the High Commissioner’s [10th Dialogue on Protection Challenges](#), which focused on the proposed [Global Compact for Refugees](#).

“The exodus from Myanmar into Bangladesh is the most visible, but innocent civilians still flee for their lives in CAR [Central African Republic], the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo], Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and elsewhere,” he continued.

The meeting, which takes place from 12-13 December, is taking stock of the results of the 2016 [New York Declaration](#) – a global deal that committed the UN’s 193 Member States to share responsibility for the world’s refugees and hosting communities, including by drawing up a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

The High Commissioner noted that throughout the world people are still fleeing their homes – victims of a collective failure by the international community to prevent and resolve conflicts.

The global compact should be the instrument to transform [...] commitment into action, so that refugees have a fighting chance to rebuild productive and meaningful lives UN refugee agency chief Filippo Grandi

“The global attention on refugees may wax and wane amidst the vagaries of

international politics, but the New York Declaration remains as a high-level political commitment to change the way we respond to refugee crises,” he said.

“The global compact should be the instrument to transform that commitment into action, so that refugees have a fighting chance to rebuild productive and meaningful lives, and contribute to the communities that host them and to their own futures,” stressed Mr. Grandi.

He called for the compact to change how the international community engages with refugee issues, maintaining that “refugees pay the price” of failure, “as do the handful of countries who bear the brunt of hosting refugees without reliable support from others with greater means,” citing closed borders, restricted access and the politicization of refugee movements.

“At a time when multilateralism is faltering in other spheres, the global compact on refugees is our chance to chart a different course through practical engagement and cooperation based on humanitarian values,” he underscored.

Global compact will build on existing framework for refugee protection

Mr. Grandi described the New York Declaration as a milestone, giving refugee situations high political visibility and commitment and an important reaffirmation of fundamental humanitarian values.

He praised the 13 countries that have already started the CRRF rollout, and those who have participated in reviewing key lessons learned, along with experiences from other large-scale refugee situations and welcomed the results of recent pledging conferences.

Some 500 representatives – including from governments, international organisations, local authorities and civil society – from around the world are expected to attend the talks.

The global compact will build on existing international framework for refugee protection, including the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), and aims to share more equitably the responsibility for hosting the world’s refugees and helping them to rebuild their lives.

It will set out concrete steps for governments and others to ensure that refugee-hosting communities get the support they need and that solutions to their plight are sought from the start of a refugee situation.

In February, UNHCR will begin with governments and other stakeholders, [formal consultations](#) on the compact, which the High Commissioner will propose to the UN General Assembly towards the end of 2018.

'Invest in the future, not the past;' green business key to winning war on climate change – UN chief

12 December 2017 – Those who fail to bet on a green economy will be living in a grey future, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres warned Tuesday, calling for greater ambition by governments, civil society, the private sector and finance partners to help tackle the global climate challenge.

[“Green business is good business,”](#) the UN chief said, speaking at the opening of the One Planet Summit, in Paris, alongside French President Emmanuel Macron and Jim Yong Kim, the President of World Bank.

“Renewables are now cheaper than coal-powered energy in dozens of developed and developing countries [...] we need to invest in the future, not the past,” he added.

The Summit, taking place on 12 December, the anniversary of the adoption of the historic [Paris Agreement](#), is providing an opportunity to fast-forward action on climate change.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres pointed to the large under-utilized global financial resources and called for ensuring that financing – which by its nature is forward-looking – is used for the future of people and the planet in addition to being used for profit.

“It is a fact that fossil fuels remain heavily subsidized – meaning we are investing in our own doom,” he emphasized, noting cities, regions, states and territories across the globe along with thousands of private enterprises – including major oil and gas companies – are already taking climate action, resulting in new industries and markets as well as in healthier environments and more jobs.

“I have heard it said that the stone age did not end because we ran out of stones. We don’t have to wait to run out of coal and oil to end the age of fossil fuels,” he stated, adding: “The message is simple: those who fail to bet on a green economy will be living in a grey future.”

The UN chief stressed that it is not funds but trust that is lacking. “We need to fix it. This means, first and foremost, ensuring that rich countries honor their commitment and provide \$100 billion a year through 2020 for developing countries.”

It also means that the [Green Climate Fund](#) must become an effective and flexible instrument, especially for the most vulnerable countries such as small island States and least developed countries. “These two conditions are essential for trust between developed and developing countries,” he

emphasized.

“We need to build trust and reduce risk, make the best use of available resources, and find innovative ways of financing, such as green bonds whose viability and success are already realities,” the Secretary-General said.

Also at the summit, Jim Yong Kim, the President of the World Bank Group, [announced](#) that the Group will no longer finance upstream oil and gas after 2019 and that it would be mobilizing finance for climate change impact mitigation and resilience.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) a subsidiary of the World Bank Group will invest up to \$325 million in the Green Cornerstone Bond Fund, a partnership with the asset management company, Amundi, to create the largest ever green-bond fund dedicated to emerging markets.

“This is a \$2 billion initiative aiming to deepen local capital markets, and expand and unlock private funding for climate-related projects. The fund is already subscribed at over \$1 billion,” read the announcement.