

# Security tensions may have deepened rights violations in DPRK, Security Council told

11 December 2017 – People’s rights are reportedly violated in “almost every aspect” of their lives in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the United Nations human rights chief warned Monday, stressing that security tensions on the Korean Peninsula should not negate concerns about the situation of ordinary people there.

“I regret that it is impossible for me to point to any significant improvement in the human rights situation [...] Indeed, security tensions seem to have deepened the extremely serious human rights violations endured by the DPRK’s 25 million people,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein told the Security Council via video link from Paris.

He said that while his Office ([OHCHR](#)) struggles to paint the complete picture of the situation due to the lack of access to the DPRK, “escapees have reported to us extremely widespread violations of rights in almost every aspect of people’s lives.”

Those violations include widespread torture in detention centres, where it is used to extract information or confessions from people suspected of such activities as planning to leave the country or communicating with the outside world. Detainees work in mines or infrastructure projects in conditions of severe deprivation.

Moreover, there is absolute secrecy about people detained in the five political prison camps which are also reportedly operational, Mr. Zeid said, noting that OHCHR’s interviews with persons who have left the DPRK indicate that fear of being sent to these facilities is a powerful instrument of control.

Repatriated escapees are routinely subjected to multiple forms of torture and ill-treatment at detention centres, including beatings, forced labour, deprivation of food and healthcare and sexual violence. Women are subjected to invasive body searches that may amount to rape under international law.

Mr. Zeid also said that no progress has been made regarding cases of international abductions and enforced disappearances of foreign nationals.

“The people of the DPRK also face severe violations of their economic, social and cultural rights,” Mr. Zeid said, noting that they face chronic food insecurity, and pervasive corruption that is forcing even very poor people to frequently pay hefty bribes to enable their children to pursue primary or higher education, to engage in private business, and access healthcare.

Mr. Zeid said sanctions imposed by the Security Council on the DPRK may be

adversely affecting the humanitarian assistance provided by UN agencies and others, which is literally a lifeline for some 13 million acutely vulnerable individuals in the country, asking the 15-member body to conduct an assessment of the human rights impact of sanctions, and minimize their adverse humanitarian consequences.

Above all, every effort must be made to ensure the Government of the DPRK makes urgent changes to the country's laws and policies, to enable greater freedom and access to fundamental services and goods.

OHCHR is strengthening monitoring efforts by recruiting criminal law experts and establishing a repository of cases to be used in future prosecutions.

While there is debate whether it is adequate for the Council to discuss human rights issues, today's meeting was OHCHR's fourth briefing to the Council on the DPRK in as many years.

Also briefing the Council was Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenca, who recalled that in response to the accelerated nuclear and ballistic missile testing by the DPRK, the Council has strengthened its DPRK sanctions regime with three additional resolutions since the last briefing.

Citing the possibility that sanctions may have a detrimental impact on livelihoods and medical care, he encouraged all international and non-governmental organizations who are facing operational challenges to use the established process to inform or seek the necessary guidance or exemption from the DPRK sanctions regime.

This will help to remove ambiguity and provide reassurance for the relevant entities and partners to facilitate the work of such organizations in the DPRK, he said, urging the sanction's regime to continue to expeditiously review these requests.

Mr. Jenca also urged all Member States to support the lifesaving activities in the country, as some \$114 million are required to address the critical humanitarian needs in the DPRK.

He also called on financial institutions to exercise their corporate social responsibility and provide the lifesaving banking services for humanitarian organizations in the country. The channel would be sent to the Security Council for approval.

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**[Lift in global economy prompts](#)**

# opportunities to tackle deep-rooted development issues – UN

11 December 2017 – A three per cent upturn in the global economy has paved the way to readjust policy towards longer-term issues, such as addressing climate change, tackling existing inequalities and removing institutional obstacles to development, according to a new United Nations report on global economic prospects.

Launched in New York on Monday, among other things, the World Economic Situation and Prospects ([WESP](#)) 2018 offers policy imperatives that include tackling inequality and delinking economic growth from environmental degradation.

“The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 demonstrates that current macroeconomic conditions offer policy-makers greater scope to address some of the deep-rooted issues that continue to hamper progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals,” stated UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres in the Foreword.

According to the report, 2017 global economic growth had reached three per cent – its highest since 2011 – as crisis-related fragilities and the adverse effects of other recent shocks have subsided.

The improvement is widespread. Roughly two-thirds of the world’s countries have experienced stronger growth in 2017 than in the previous year, and movement is expected to remain steady at three per cent in 2018 and 2019.

Noting that the recent pickup in global growth stems predominantly from firmer growth in several developed economies, the report states that East and South Asia remain the world most dynamic regions.

Despite the improved short-term outlook, the global economy continues to face longer-term challenges, including trade policy changes and rising geopolitical tensions.

The report highlighted that the improved macroeconomic situation has opened a door for reorienting policies, including to increase economic diversification; reduce inequality; support long-term investment; and tackle institutional deficiencies. It noted that addressing these challenges can generate stronger investment and productivity, higher job creation and more sustainable medium-term economic growth.

## ***Uneven Growth***

However, the recent economic improvements have been unevenly distributed across countries and regions.

Through 2019, negligible per capita income growth is expected in several parts of Africa, Western Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean –

underscoring the urgent need to foster an environment that will both accelerate medium-term growth prospects and tackle poverty through policies that address income and opportunity inequalities.

The report also found that – hindered by institutional deficiencies, inadequate basic infrastructure and greater exposure levels to natural disasters, along with challenges to security and political instability – very few least developed countries (LDCs ) are expected to reach the [Sustainable Development Goal](#) target for GDP growth of “at least 7 per cent” (SDG 8.1) in the near term.

In addition to mobilizing financial resources to meet LDC investment needs, policies must also focus on conflict prevention and removing barriers that continue to hinder more rapid progress.

After remaining flat for three consecutive years, preliminary estimates suggest that 2017 global energy-related CO2 emissions increased, according to WESP.

“While the upturn in global growth is a welcome sign of a healthier economy, it is important to remember that this may come at an environmental cost,” said Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin.

As the frequency of weather-related shocks continues to rise, the urgent need to build resilience against climate change and prioritize environmental protection is becoming more prevalent.

International shipping and aviation emission policies, which do not fall under the purview of the [Paris Agreement](#), must be strengthened as their emissions continue to grow faster than those from road transport.

“This calls for stronger efforts to delink economic growth and environmental degradation – as also emphasized by the UN [Climate Change Conference](#) in Bonn last month,” stressed Mr. Liu.

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## **Make digital world safer for children, increase online access to benefit most disadvantaged – UNICEF**

11 December 2017 – Governments and the private sector have not kept up with the game-changing pace of digital technologies, exposing children to new risks and harms – both on and offline – and leaving millions of the most disadvantaged behind, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said Monday in a new report.

Pointing out that one in three Internet users worldwide is a child, the agency in its *State of the World's Children 2017: [Children in a Digital World](#) report, highlights digital divides and explores current debates about the impact of the Internet and social media on children's safety and well-being.*

“For better and for worse, digital technology is now an irreversible fact of our lives,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. “In a digital world, our dual challenge is how to mitigate the harms while maximizing the benefits of the internet for every child.”

The report presents UNICEF's first comprehensive look at the various ways in which digital technology is affecting children's lives and life chances — identifying dangers as well as opportunities.

It argues that governments and the private sector have not kept up with the pace of change, leaving children exposed to new risks and harms, and leaving behind millions of the most disadvantaged children.

The report explores the benefits that digital technology can offer the most disadvantaged children, including by increasing their access to information; building skills for the digital workplace; and giving them a platform to connect and communicate their views.

The Internet was designed for adults, but it is increasingly used by children and young people — and digital technology increasingly affects their lives and futures

“The Internet was designed for adults, but it is increasingly used by children and young people — and digital technology increasingly affects their lives and futures,” maintained Mr. Lake.

However, the report shows that millions of children are missing out. Around one third of the world's youth, or 346 million young people, are not online — exacerbating inequities and reducing children's ability to participate in an increasingly digital economy.

The report also examines how the internet increases children's vulnerability to risks and harms, including by misusing their private information, accessing harmful content, and cyberbullying.

The report notes that the ubiquitous presence of mobile devices has made online access for many children less supervised — and potentially more dangerous.

Moreover, digital networks, like the 'Dark Web' and cryptocurrencies, are enabling the worst forms of exploitation and abuse, such as trafficking and 'made to order' online child sexual abuse.

The report presents current data and analysis about: children's online usage; the impact of digital technology on their wellbeing; digital “addiction” and the possible effect of screen time on brain development.

According to the report, young people are the most connected age group. Worldwide, they have a 71 per cent presence online compared with 48 per cent of the total population.

However, African youth are the least connected, with around three out of five not online, compared to just one in 25 in Europe.

Approximately 56 per cent of all websites are in English and many children cannot find content they understand or that is culturally relevant.

It also reveals that more than nine in 10 child sexual abuse URLs are hosted in Canada, France, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and the United States.

The report says that only collective action by governments, the private sector, families and children themselves can help level the digital playing field and make the internet safer and more accessible for children.

Practical recommendations include safeguarding children's privacy and identities online and

putting children at the centre of digital policy.

“Digital policies, practices, and products should better reflect children's needs, children's perspectives and children's voices,” Mr. Lake concluded.

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## [Human Rights Day: UN launches campaign for 70th anniversary of Universal Declaration](#)

10 December 2017 – The United Nations on Sunday kicked off in Paris, France, a year-long campaign to honor the foundational human rights document, which next year marks its 70th anniversary.

Since the proclamation of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) in 1948, “human rights have been one of the three pillars of the United Nations, along with peace and development,” said [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres in his message for [Human Rights Day](#), annually observed on 10 December.

As “one of the world's most profound and far-reaching international agreements,” the Universal Declaration proclaimed the inalienable rights of every human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or

other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

Mr. Guterres noted that while human rights abuses did not end when the Universal Declaration was adopted, the instrument has helped countless people to gain greater freedom and security, and has also helped to prevent violations, obtain justice for wrongs, and strengthen national and international human rights laws and safeguards.

Despite these advances, the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration are being tested in all regions, he said, citing rising hostility towards human rights and those who defend them by people who want to profit from exploitation and division.

We see hatred, intolerance, atrocities and other crimes. These actions imperil us all, he said, urging people and leaders everywhere to stand up for all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – and for the values that underpin hopes for a fairer, safer and better world for all.

The [year-long campaign](#) started at Palais de Chaillot in Paris on Sunday, with an event also to be held on Monday at UN Headquarters in New York. UN Information Centres around the world will also launch commemorative activities.

**VIDEO:** In his annual Human Rights Day message, Secretary-General António Guterres calls for translating the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into action.

For his part, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said that thanks to the Universal Declaration, the daily life of millions has been improved, untold human suffering has been prevented and the foundations for a more just world have been laid.

“While its promise is yet to be fulfilled, the very fact that it has stood [the test of time](#) is testament to the enduring universality of its perennial values of equality, justice and human dignity,” he said.

The period leading up to 10 December 2018, the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, will be a year of intense and profound reflection on the continuing and vital importance of each and every one of the 30 articles contained in this extraordinary document.

Today, as World War II and the Holocaust grow distant, that awareness appears to be evaporating at an alarming rate, and the enormous progress that has been achieved through progressive enactment of human rights principles, as laid out in the Universal Declaration, is being increasingly forgotten or willfully ignored, Mr. Zeid said.

He said it is right to honour its achievements and pay tribute to its inspired architects on the 70th anniversary year, but we should be

under no illusions: the legacy of the Universal Declaration is facing threats on many fronts.&#8221

&#8220We must organize and mobilize in defence of human decency, in defence of a better common future... We must take a robust and determined stand: by resolutely supporting the human rights of others, we also stand up for our own rights and those of generations to come,&#8221 he said.

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## [Not enough being done to shield civilians from violence in Somalia – UN report](#)

10 December 2017 – The armed conflict in Somalia continues to exact a heavy toll on civilians, damaging infrastructure and livelihoods, displacing millions of people, and impeding access to humanitarian relief for communities in need, according to a United Nations report launched today in the country's capital, Mogadishu.

&#8220Ultimately, civilians are paying the price for failure to resolve Somalia's conflicts through political means,&#8221 said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating. &#8220And parties to the conflict are simply not doing enough to shield civilians from the violence. This is shameful.&#8221

The [report](#) &#8211 &#8220Protection of Civilians: Building the Foundation for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Somalia&#8221 &#8211 covers the period from 1 January 2016 to 14 October 2017, and was produced by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia ([UNSOM](#)), which Mr. Keating also heads.

During this reporting period, UNSOM documented a total of 2,078 civilian deaths and 2,507 injuries, with 60 per cent of the casualties attributed to Al Shabaab militants, 13 per cent to clan militias, 11 per cent to State actors, including the army and the police, four per cent to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and 12 per cent to unidentified or undetermined attackers.

Civilians were the victims of unlawful attacks &#8211 by being directly targeted and through the use of indiscriminate bomb and suicide attacks &#8211 by non-State groups. Such attacks, which are prohibited under international human rights and humanitarian laws, are, in most cases, likely to constitute war crimes, and it is imperative that perpetrators are identified and held accountable, the report notes.



Ultimately, civilians are paying the price for failure to resolve Somalia's conflicts through political means. UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia

The worst incident on a single day was the twin bomb blasts in Mogadishu on 14 October, attributed to Al-Shabaab by Somali government officials and in which at least 512 people are officially recorded to have died as of 1 December, along with 316 injured. The attack received widespread condemnation, including from UNSOM and [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres.

"This barbaric act was the deadliest attack with an improved explosive device in Somalia's history and surely one of the worst ever on the continent, if not the world," said Special Representative Keating at the report's launch. "Sadly, its impact will be felt for a long time."

A significant number of recorded civilian casualties – 251 killed and 343 injured – was attributed to clan militias, in areas where federal or state security forces are largely absent. "The drought has intensified clan conflict due to competition over resources. These conflicts are exploited by anti-government elements to further destabilize areas, diminish prospects for lasting peace and weaken civilian protection," the report states.

#### ***Casualties attributed to State actors and AMISOM***

It goes on to note that the number of casualties attributed to the Somali National Army and Police, as well as to AMISOM, was significantly smaller than those attributed to Al Shabaab militants.

"Nevertheless, such casualties are of utmost concern as they undermine the Somali population's trust in the Government and the international community, which in turn expands the space in which anti-government elements continue to operate," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

"While achieving the balance between human rights and security is challenging," he added, "the respect of human rights and the protection of civilians are essential as the foundation of a strong, legitimate State that works for the benefit of all its people."

Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency routinely disregards international human rights law when carrying out arrests and detentions, according to the report, which adds that journalists and people suspected of belonging to Al Shabaab are often detained without charge.

The report also flags that information on the conditions of people living under Al Shabaab control is scant. Verifying human rights violations and abuses in those areas remains problematic due to the lack of access and fear of reprisals.

Somalia has been plagued by armed violence for decades, as well as poverty, marginalization, natural hazards, insecurity and political instability. UNSOM

is working with the East African country's authorities to support national reconciliation, provide strategic and policy advice on various aspects of peacebuilding and state-building, monitor and report on the human rights situation, and help coordinate the efforts of the international community.