

[DR Congo: Hunger crisis, scarce funds could push Kasais to brink of catastrophe, UN agency warns](#)

7 December 2017 – An acute hunger emergency ravaging Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)'s strife-torn Greater Kasai region could transform into a long-term disaster if additional resources are not made available urgently, the United Nations food relief agency warned Thursday.

[“Without immediate donor support, many – particularly women and children – will die,”](#) said Claude Jibidar, the head of the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) operations in the DRC.

The eruption of violence in what used to be a poor but peaceful region has claimed countless lives and forced nearly 1.4 million people from their homes.

The crisis has also resulted in traditionally high malnutrition rates to skyrocket and according to estimates, 3.2 million people are “desperately” short of food, the UN agency said.

“A lull in fighting has allowed more staff to be deployed [and] aid workers have fanned out into the Kasai countryside. [We have] co-ordinated multi-agency logistics and humanitarian flights,” it added.

WFP has been working against the clock to help ever more people. Its efforts have helped a population that is growing rapidly by the day – from 42,000 people assisted in September to 115,000 in October and 225,000 in November.

However, money is quickly running and WFP plans to feed almost half a million people in December seem impossible as its resources are so depleted that only half-rations can be distributed.

At the same time, donor assistance is extremely scarce.

Hunger not only puts lives at risk: it is forcing people into prostitution and increasing the risk of sexual violence, stressed Mr. Jibidar, calling on Government partners to do all in their power to “spare Kasai from the kind of decades-long humanitarian catastrophe that has plagued other DRC regions.”

[Global cooperation vital to maximize](#)

benefits of migration, says UN envoy

7 December 2017 – Commitment and cooperation from the global community is critical to maximize the benefits of migration and to overcome its challenges, said a senior United Nations official at the conclusion of a stocktaking meeting on the Global Compact on international migration.

While there are challenges, including changing demographics, stresses in the environment, poverty and conflict, human mobility offers immense benefits, such as the promise of more sustainable development, more attuned to international labour market needs and improved working standards, highlighted Louise Arbour, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration.

“We stand today tasked with the mandate to weave these challenges and opportunities into a global effort to enhance State cooperation in the management of migration,” she said Wednesday at the end of a [three-day meeting](#) in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, that reviewed and analysed the data and recommendations gathered during the [consultation phase](#).

In her remarks, Ms. Arbour reminded the meeting of the “tragedy of large mixed flows of people on the move and how to deal with those who are ineligible for international refugee protection yet for whom humanitarian assistance and longer-term solutions are no less urgent.”

She also expressed the determination of the UN system to support all Member States in the implementation of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

The next step in this process towards the Global Compact is the Secretary-General’s report on migration, expected to be released before mid-January 2018, followed by [intergovernmental negotiations](#) (expected to begin in February and conclude in July).

The Global Compact will be presented for adoption at an intergovernmental conference on international migration that will be held in Morocco at the end of 2018.

Also speaking at the closing of the meeting, Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly, spoke of the results achieved so far and added that “tough negotiations” lay ahead.

The path forward, Mr. Lajčák suggested, is to focus on the “strong common positions,” the first of which is the acknowledgment that the current response to international migration is not sustainable and this is a global phenomenon that needs an international response.

“The UN is the best and, in fact, the only forum in which this response can be formulated,” Mr. Lajčák said, noting that this does not mean a diminution of State sovereignty, stating “Member States will determine their own migration policies.”

The meeting in Puerto Vallarta was co-chaired by Juan José Gómez Camacho, the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN, and Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN, who serve as the co-facilitators of the Global Compact process.

[‘Mission accomplished,’ president of UN tribunal for Former Yugoslavia tells Security Council](#)

6 December 2017 – After more than 24 years of operations, the United Nations tribunal set up to prosecute crimes committed during conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, has now completed all judicial work, the court’s President told the UN Security Council on Wednesday.

“Despite all the sceptics, the naysayers, the deniers who, from the very beginning, embarked on a campaign against the Tribunal and have been at pains to question our legitimacy and integrity and portray a doomsday scenario, I am proud to appear before this esteemed Council today and say: [mission accomplished](#),” declared Carmel Agius, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ([ICTY](#)), in his [final briefing](#) to the 15-member body.

Recalling the Security Council’s decision to create the Tribunal back in May 1993, Mr. Agius stated: “In retrospect [...] the establishment of the ICTY was one of the international community’s proudest moments.”

Noting that the body had developed a completion strategy and delivered judgements in the final trial case against Ratko Mladic on 22 November and the final appeal case against *Jadranko Prlic et al.* on 29 November, Mr. Agius said that in supporting the creation of the court, his predecessors had put their signature on an important page in the history of international justice and the fight against impunity.

There was another history, however, he said, namely of those who were afraid to accept the Tribunal and even denounced it, “of those who did not choose to fight impunity, but, for reasons of political or personal gain, blind nationalism and ethnic hatred,” preferred immunity and even glorified those who had committed atrocities.



Judge Carmel Agius, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Serge Brannmertz, Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ([MICT](#)), briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



Judge Theodor Meron, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT), briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Security Council Meets on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). UN Photo/Kim Haughton



Security Council Meets on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). UN Photo. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

[<](#) [>](#)

The Tribunal's achievements did not begin and end in The Hague, where the body is headquartered, Mr. Agius continued. He was disturbed by the numerous crimes yet to be prosecuted before domestic courts in the Former Yugoslavia. The rise of revisionism and nationalism throughout the region could not be ignored.

"Do not delude yourselves; the absence of war does not mean peace," he said. Ending impunity for mass crimes is not the preserve of any one institution – it is a common goal that ties all together in the shared quest for justice, peace and stability.

In closing, President Agius stated: "As the international community now looks on while mass crimes continue to take place, even as I speak, and geopolitical roadblocks impede any kind of comprehensive justice solutions, we must not forget the political courage that sparked the ICTY's existence, the Tribunal's long trajectory, and the need to stay the course."

Beyond the Tribunal's success, reconciliation remains a significant challenge

Theodor Meron, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, affirmed that the Tribunal had made plain that even complex trials could and must be conducted in accordance with the panoply of due process guarantees. As a result, the principles of international law were stronger and, "accountability for grave crimes is increasingly the expectation rather than the exception."

Describing the current activities of the [Residual Mechanism](#), which will maintain the Tribunal's legacy and carry out its remaining functions, he said it is "serving as a new, effective and efficient model of international

court” in carrying out duties such as preparations for administration disposition of records, in further developing its legal and regulatory framework and working on provision of assistance to national jurisdictions.

The fulfilment of the Mechanism’s mandate depends on the ongoing support of the Council and the broader international community and on the commitment to all concerned to the invaluable legacies of the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

In his remarks, the Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanisms for Criminal Tribunals, Serge Brammertz, said his Office [remains focused](#) on expeditiously completing the limited number of trials and appeals transferred from the ICTY and on locating and arresting the remaining eight fugitives indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

He acknowledged that the Tribunal failed to achieve reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia, where many still viewed convicted war criminals as heroes while victims and survivors were ignored and dismissed. “The reality is that there is still no true will within the region to accept the immense wrongdoings of the past and move forward – sadly, most of all among the political leadership,” he said.

Too many people listen to war criminals, who hide behind claims of collective responsibility, when in fact no community bore responsibility for what those men had done. He emphasized that justice is an essential precondition for achieving reconciliation.

Find out more about the ICTY and discover how its ground-breaking work changed the face of international humanitarian law [here](#)

[UN study uncovers horrors of sexual violence against Syrian refugee boys and men](#)

6 December 2017 – A study carried out by the United Nations refugee agency has revealed disturbing details a little-known side to the Syrian conflict: sexual violence against boys and men.

The report, by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), was published on Wednesday, and compiled interviews with dozens of victims in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

Interviews with 73 humanitarian personnel from 34 agencies were conducted, as well as 21 focus group discussions with 196 refugees. According to UNHCR, those interviewed for the study provided shocking accounts of what they, or

others known to them, had experienced.

Reported forms of sexual violence included rape and mutilation of or shooting of genitals at point-blank range. Much of this was reported as occurring in detention or makeshift prisons. UNHCR researchers heard accounts of violence against boys as young as 10, and against men including those in their 80s.

The findings and recommendations presented in the report, entitled [We Keep it in Our Heart](#), offer a starting point for unpacking and addressing a complex, under-investigated issue.

Given the challenges in researching this taboo topic, sexual violence against men and boys is likely occurring under a variety of circumstances not identified in this exploratory study. Additional investigation and attention are imperative to clarify the scope of sexual violence against males, prevent this violence where possible, and effectively meet the needs of survivors.

Harrowing testimonies

Among the harrowing testimonies recounted is that of “Tarek,” detained during the war in his native Syria, and held in a darkened cell for a month with 80 other people. But those harsh conditions were the least of it.

Kept naked, he and other detainees were strung up by their hands at night, tortured with electric shocks to their genitals and gang raped by their captors, said UNHCR.

“They would come into the cell to violate us, but it was dark – we couldn’t see them. All we could hear were people saying, ‘Stop! Don’t! ... I thought we would die,” Tarek recalled.

A further read of the study reveals that Tarek’s experience is far from unique.

“These are most disturbing accounts [revealing just how grave the risk](#) of sexual violence has become both for women and girls and, as shown by this recent report, also men and boys,” said Volker Türk, UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

We are faced with a vicious cycle here of little help being available [...] and a culture of silence UN refugee agency protection chief
Volker Türk

“And it’s clear too that we are faced with a vicious cycle here of little help being available, limited outreach to male survivors, inaccessible services, and a culture of silence – all of which reinforce a myth that this problem is rare,” he added.

The study makes a number of recommendations geared towards humanitarian agencies and others involved in working with refugees. These include the need for stronger prevention strategies, better confidentiality arrangements,

protection against reprisals, improved survivor care, and strengthened awareness among humanitarian agencies and staff.

It also recommends that further research be done with a view to more effectively preventing and responding to sexual violence against males in conflict and displacement.

AUDIO: Horrors of sexual violence against Syrian boys and men revealed

[UN designates 2021-2030 'Decade of Ocean Science'](#)

6 December 2017 – The United Nations today designated the years 2021 to 2030 as the 'Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development' to boost international coordination and cooperation in research and scientific programmes for better management of ocean and coastal zone resources and reducing maritime risks.

The UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) will be leading the campaign.

"The [ocean is a new frontier](#) – it covers 71 per cent of the globe [but] we have explored less than 5 per cent. The Decade will ensure greater coordination of research," said Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO, urging all stakeholders to join the endeavour.

"[We are] proud to be at the forefront of this effort," she added.

Across the world, close to three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity to meet their needs.

Oceans – critical for survival of all people across the planet – absorbs around a third of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by humans and reduces the impact of climate change.

Given this important, the [2030 Agenda](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) call for specific action for the conservation and sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources (SDG 14).

The importance of oceans was also underscored at a major conference this June at the UN Headquarters, in New York.

However, the cumulative effects of human activities on this vital important, including the impact of pollution, warming and acidification are yet to be fully evaluated scientifically and surveying the ocean requires costly ships and equipment, satellite imaging, underwater robots and remotely controlled

vehicles.

It also requires thousands of scientists collecting and analysing the data, either in laboratories or in marine environments.

“One of the priorities of the Decade will be to strengthen and diversify financial sources, particularly for small island developing States and least developed countries,” said UNESCO.

“This Decade, will provide a framework for international coordination and partnership to reinforce research capacities in marine sciences and the transfer of technology,” it added.