

'New and better deal' needed for climate resilience in Caribbean, UN chief tells donor conference

21 November 2017 – Caribbean countries need “a new and better deal” – one that includes access to concessional finance and adequate insurance – if they are to build climate resilience, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Tuesday at an international conference to mobilize support for the reconstruction of communities devastated by a series of powerful hurricanes.

“During my visits to Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, I saw [a level of devastation](#) that I have never witnessed before in my life,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that in these islands alone, damage is estimated at \$1.1 billion, and total economic losses at \$400 million.

This year’s Atlantic hurricane season was particularly active, with storms having been more frequent, and stronger. Of the 13 named storms, eight were hurricanes and of those, four were major hurricanes, including Irma and Maria. Across the entire Caribbean region, there was tragic loss of life and widespread devastation.

The pledging conference today at UN Headquarters in New York, was co-organized by the UN and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which is a regional grouping of 20 countries.

“Let’s not forget that these island States are not only interlinked by geography, but also interlinked by the economy, so when one country suffers, all countries suffer,” Mr. Guterres said.



Secretary-General António Guterres delivers remarks at High-Level Pledging Conference: Building a more Climate-resilient Community. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

He noted that extreme weather is becoming the new normal and sea levels have risen more than 10 inches since 1870. Over the past 30 years, the number of annual climate-related disasters has nearly tripled and economic losses have quintupled.

Countries in the Caribbean need a new generation of infrastructure that is risk-informed, to underpin resilient economies, communities and livelihoods, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), adopted in 2015 by 193 UN Member States.

But financing is a key challenge for many Caribbean countries, which have limited access to concessional finance because of their ‘middle income’

classification. They also have high levels of debt, much of it incurred through investment in recovery and resilience.

Caribbean countries are also paying hundreds of millions of dollars a year in remittance fees. Disaster insurance has also proved inadequate to this unprecedented hurricane season. Debt instruments should be sensitive to the ability to pay, and have catastrophe clauses built in.

“In short: we need a new and better deal for the Caribbean, if these countries are to build climate resilience and achieve the [SDGs](#),” Mr. Guterres said, urging international financial institutions and donors to coordinate risk sharing and concessional lending terms.

“Today must be about more than speeches and pledges,” he said. “It is an opportunity to forge a partnership for a better future, and to deepen a vision for recovery that brings together all actors and puts people at its centre, as active development agents.”

Also addressing the conference was UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who highlighted [three key steps](#) the international community can take.

We should not let the people be punished once by nature and twice by outdated economic policies. General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák

First is commitment to support the rebuilding effort. Funding and technical assistance are urgently needed to help the affected countries to get back on their feet. Housing, telecommunications, water and sanitation, healthcare services and education facilities are needed.

Second is to rebuild with greater resilience, he said, commending CARICOM’s goal of becoming the first climate-resilient region in the world.

Third, he continued, there is a need to recognize that small island developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters and external shocks. To compound this, middle income small island developing States face inadequate access to grant and concessional funding because of how their development is measured.

“We should not let the people be punished once by nature and twice by outdated economic policies,” he said.

[Still far too much secrecy surrounding use of death penalty, says senior UN](#)

human rights official

21 November 2017 – A senior United Nations human rights official has stressed the need for greater transparency by countries that still use the death penalty, noting that this is vital for families, who have a right to know the fate of their loved ones, as well as for lawyers so they can provide an effective defence.

“There is far too much secrecy, and it’s quite indicative the fact that although many countries are giving up the practice, those that retain it nevertheless feel that they have something to hide,” Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour said in an interview with *UN News*.

The UN has long advocated for the abolition of the death penalty. While some 170 States have either abolished the practice – which [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called “barbaric” – or refrained from it, prisoners in a number of countries continue to face execution.

Mr. Gilmour noted that the vast majority of executions today take place in five countries – China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Last December, the General Assembly in its regular resolution calling for a moratorium on executions added a new element to try to resolve the issue of transparency, which is a prerequisite to assess whether the death penalty is being carried out in compliance with international human rights standards.

It also honours the right of all people to know whether their family members are alive or dead, and the location of their remains.

Mr. Gilmour recalled one recent case of a family that heard on the radio that their son had been executed, even though just the previous week the mother had been to the prison to ask for news about her son and they had refused to give it to her.

VIDEO: Senior UN human rights official Andrew Gilmour emphasized the need for common decency, as he called for greater transparency in the use of the death penalty in some countries.

“Some of this seems to be unnecessarily cruel, additional punishment on the families,” he pointed out, highlighting the need for “common decency.”

“You may believe that someone deserves to be executed, or you may not, but even if you do, surely there’s no need to punish the family by keeping them in doubt.”

Also an issue is that some governments conceal executions and enforce an elaborate system of secrecy to hide who is on death row, and why. Others classify information on the death penalty as a state secret, making its release an act of treason, Mr. Gilmour noted, as in the case of Belarus and

Viet Nam.

This lack of transparency shows “a lack of respect” for the human rights of those sentenced to death and to their families, according to Secretary-General António Guterres, who added that it also damages the administration of justice more generally.

“Full and accurate data is vital to policy-makers, civil society and the general public. It is fundamental to the debate around the death penalty and its impact,” he told an event at UN Headquarters last month to mark the World Day Against the Death Penalty.

“Secrecy around executions undermines that debate, and obstructs efforts to safeguard the right to life.”

As part of the effort to abolish secret executions, the UN human rights office ([OHCHR](#)) supports an initiative launched in September known as the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade, which aims to end the trade in goods used to carry out the death penalty and torture.

These include batons with metal spikes, electric shock belts, grabbers that seize people while electrocuting them, chemicals used to execute people and the forced injection systems that go with them.

“There’s something truly grotesque about medieval forms of torture, in a way, being advertised in mail-order catalogues and using the jargon of commercialization,” said Mr. Gilmour. “So I think it’d be a step forward in civilization to block this trade, and luckily there are some major drug companies who are refusing to allow their drugs to be used in instances of execution.”

Earlier this year, four men were executed within the span of eight days in the US state of Arkansas because the state’s supply of one of the drugs used in lethal injections – midazolam – was due to expire at the end of the month and it was unclear whether further supplies could be obtained.

“I’ve heard various arguments, absurd arguments for executing and some rather obscene arguments for executing,” Mr. Gilmour stated, “but I don’t really think I’ve heard many more obscene ones or absurd ones than the fact that the drugs for executing had reached their sell-by date.”

World community has ‘collective responsibility’ to stop human

trafficking, support victims – UN chief

21 November 2017 – Briefing the Security Council Tuesday, top United Nations officials, including the Secretary-General and the head of the Organization's anti-crime office, underscored the international community's collective responsibility to stop criminals and terrorists from preying on vulnerable populations and migrants.

"Their brutality knows no bounds: sexual exploitation, forced labour, the removal of bodily organs and slavery are the tools of their trade," said [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, Tuesday, alongside Yuri Federov, the head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, connected via video conference.

["We must act urgently to protect the human rights and dignity of migrant populations](#), [bring] the perpetrators to justice, [and] increase humanitarian aid," he added.

Noting, in particular, the horrific images of African migrants being sold as "goods" in Libya, Mr. Guterres also stressed the need to help Libyan authorities strengthen their own capacity to protect and provide for vulnerable men, women and children.

At the same time, he highlighted the urgent need to create more opportunities for regular migration, to restore the integrity of the refugee protection regime, and to increase the number of refugees resettled in developed countries.

"We must also do more to support the victims and survivors of trafficking," Mr. Guterres said, underlining that they should be treated as victims of crime and not detained, prosecuted or punished for unlawful activities they were compelled to engage in, in order to survive.

Slavery and other such egregious abuses of human rights have no place in the 21st century
Secretary-General Guterres

Also in his briefing, the UN chief recalled the steps taken by the Security Council – the body within the UN system tasked with maintaining international peace and security – including through resolutions to combat financial flow to traffickers.

He also stated that along with the Political Declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, [adopted](#) by the General Assembly this September, the global community has built a framework for action rooted in international law.

"Cooperation, mutual legal assistance and information-sharing are the mainstays of our activities," he added, calling for intensification of

efforts by Member States as well as the UN system and use all tools at their disposal to combat human trafficking.

Together with action on these fronts, he cited the need to address poverty and exclusion in line with the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

"The international community's commitment is being tested," said Mr. Guterres, calling for a display of "determination to end human trafficking, help its many victims and hold those responsible accountable for their crimes."

Channel 'collective horror' into action against human trafficking – UN anti-crime chief

Also at today's meeting, Yuri Fedotov, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime urged the international community for a global partnership against human trafficking.



On the screens, Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

"Collective horror at [the situation in Libya] serves an important purpose: it can quicken the pace of our actions," he said.

Mr. Fedotov also stressed that UNIDO is "fully prepared" to help Libyan authorities strengthen their ability to prosecute the criminals behind such appalling crimes as well as to support them investigate the finances flowing from such activities.

The Security Council [...] reaffirms its condemnation in the strongest terms of all instances of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, who make up the vast majority of all victims of trafficking in persons in areas affected by armed conflicts
Council resolution 2388 (2017)

Other speakers at the open debate included Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

The Security Council open debate on preventing trafficking in persons in conflict situations was convened by Italy, the Council President for the month of November.

The debate also saw the unanimous adoption of a resolution by the 15-member Council in which it called on all Member States "to reinforce their political commitment to and improve their implementation of applicable legal obligations to criminalize, prevent, and otherwise combat trafficking in persons."

The text also urged for strengthening efforts to detect and disrupt such

activities, including through robust victim identification mechanisms and providing access to protection and assistance for identified victims.

It also called for combatting crimes that might be connected with trafficking in persons in areas affected by armed conflict, such as money-laundering, corruption, the smuggling of migrants and other forms of organized crime.

UNICEF warns of contaminated drinking water in camps for Rohingya refugees

21 November 2017 – The United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) is working with authorities in Bangladesh to urgently investigate high levels E.coli contamination in water drawn from wells inside the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar.

“The latest figures from the World Health Organization suggest that 62 per cent of water available to households is contaminated,” UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulhierac told reporters Tuesday at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

“We are also concerned by an increase in cases of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) which have included several deaths,” he added.

Between 25 August and 11 November 2017, a total of 36,096 AWD cases were reported, including 10 related deaths – 42 per cent, or 15,206, of which were children under age five.

“We are seeing an upward trend in infection rates. Whilst the exact cause of increased cases of AWD remains uncertain, it may be linked to contaminated food or water, Mr. Boulhierac elaborated.

Some of the wells inside the camps were dug too shallowly, less than 40 meters deep; have been poorly sited; and are very congested with no safeguards to prevent bacterial contamination at ground level.

“Contamination may be being caused through poor hygiene practices, such as the use of dirty containers [and] bad hygiene habits of the population in water handling,” the spokesperson said.

UNICEF and the Bangladesh authorities are investigating levels of contamination to ensure better construction practices for tube wells that meet international standards and have an appropriate ceiling.

“We are stepping up measures to distribute water purification tablets to provide for water treatment at the household level as well as promoting good hygiene practices,” he said, noting that providing safe drinking water

has been one of UNICEF's highest priorities in responding to the Rohingya refugees' needs.

Smaller settlements at risk of being overlooked

Since 25 August, some 622,000 refugees fleeing violence in Myanmar have sought refuge in Cox's Bazar bringing the total number of refugees there to an estimated 834,000.

As international attention focuses on the main Kutupalong and Balukhali settlements, the thousands who have settled in smaller villages in the southern part of the district risk being [excluded from humanitarian aid](#) programmes, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) said.

Access to clean water is also a major concern across all the locations, particularly as the dry season approaches. Aid agencies providing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are racing to identify solutions to this potentially life-threatening problem.

Although most are in the main settlements, 22,067 refugees live in Shamlapur, with 16 people sharing one latrine that are mostly full or dangerous; 22,130 in Leda, which has only one latrine per 47 people – well below the humanitarian 'Sphere' standard of one per 20 people; and 29,915 in Unchiprang, where there is also only one well per 57 people. This totals more than 74,000 Rohingya refugees in all.

Many are contaminated with E.coli or are too shallow to provide enough clean water for the population through the dry season.

IOM emergency managers say that the three sites urgently need to be developed, including providing vital infrastructure – access roads, lighting and waste management.

Most of the temporary pit latrines are full. With little to no land for de-sludging, they are becoming unusable and a danger to communities living nearby, said IOM WASH specialist Stephen Waswa Otieno.

[UN report urges Sudan to address plight of millions of displaced people in Darfur](#)

21 November 2017 – The United Nations human rights office has called on the Government of Sudan to pursue effective, transparent and durable policies to enable the 2.6 million people who have been internally displaced by the long-running conflict in Darfur to return home voluntarily or to reintegrate into

host communities.

I urge the Government to address [fundamental issues](#) that are preventing the return of displaced people, such as continued violence, including from armed militias, which raise continuing and justifiable fears for their safety and the lack of basic services that leave them dependent on aid," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a news release Tuesday.

Compiled by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) and the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur ([UNAMID](#)), the report details the situation of internally displaced people (IDPs) from January 2014 to December 2016, a period largely marked by the Government military campaign [Decisive Summer](#) that led to mass civilian displacement.

The report says there are [reasonable grounds](#) to believe that the military operations resulted in serious violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law.

While calling on the Government to carry out a prompt and comprehensive disarmament of armed militias to create an enabling and safe environment for IDPs to return, the report emphasizes the need for extensive consultations with IDPs to ensure that their return and reintegration are carried out in full respect of their rights.

The report however notes that despite a ceasefire between the Government and various armed opposition groups, which has largely held since June 2016, violence against IDPs remains widespread and impunity for human rights violations persists.

Tensions between ethnic groups, frequently over land, continued to surface, often erupting in violence and triggering further displacement.

While State governments, native administrations and traditional leaders have made considerable efforts to prevent and respond to such violence, the underlying causes of such conflict, remain unaddressed, the report says.

In the majority of the 66 camps across Darfur, UNAMID continued to document cases of random shootings at night, acts of criminality and harassment of displaced persons and sexual violence, including rape, within and around IDP camps and farmlands.

Victims cited the absence of police stations, lack of confidence in the authorities, social stigma and fear of reprisals as reasons for not reporting the attacks.

The cessation of hostilities has provided the opportunity to focus on the situation of IDPs, which is so crucial to achieving peace. I urge the Government of Sudan to implement key elements set out in the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and renew my call to all parties to fully engage in efforts to bring lasting peace to Darfur," said UNAMID Joint Special Representative Jeremiah Mamabolo.