

## [‘Imagine the potential of one billion children;’ UNICEF urges investment as Africa’s youth population surges](#)

26 October 2017 – If Africa is to keep pace with an unprecedented demographic transition – African’s under-18 population will reach 750 million by 2030 – scaled-up investment in health, education and women’s protection and empowerment will be needed or the continent will face a ‘bleak’ future, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) reported Thursday.

“Investing in health, protection, and education must become an [absolute priority](#) for Africa between now and 2030,” said Leila Pakkala, UN Children Fund (UNICEF) Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa.

According to UNICEF’s report [Generation 2030 Africa 2.0](#), some 11 million education and health personnel will be needed to keep pace with the projected unprecedented population growth of children in Africa – an increase of 170 million children between now and 2030.

“We are at the most critical juncture for Africa’s children,” Ms. Pakkala underscored. “Get it right, and we set the foundation for a demographic dividend, which could lift hundreds of millions out of extreme poverty, and contribute to enhanced prosperity, stability, and peace.”

The report identifies three key issues for investment: health care, education and the protection and empowerment of women and girls. Concretely, to meet minimum international standards in health care and best practice targets in education, Africa will have to add 5.6 million new health workers and 5.8 million new teachers by 2030.

According to the report, almost half of the continent’s population is under 18 years old – and the majority of the population in around one-third of the 55 African Union member States is children. Current projections foresee the number of Africa’s children topping one billion by 2055.

### ***‘Imagine the potential of one billion children’***

“Imagine the potential of one billion children,” said Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF’s Regional Director for West and Central Africa. “If Africa steps up its investments in children and youth now, transforms its education systems and empowers women and girls to participate fully in community, workplace and political life, it will be able to reap faster, deeper and longer dividends from its demographic transition.”

Conversely, if investments do not occur in Africa’s youth and children, the once-in-a-generation opportunity of a demographic dividend may be replaced by a demographic disaster, characterized by unemployment and instability.

UNICEF recommends three policy actions to create the socio-economic conditions for Africa's coming generations.

The first is to improve health, social welfare, and protection services to meet international standards; or beyond, in countries close to attaining them.

Secondly, it recommends Africa's educational skills and vocational learning system be adapted through curricula reform and access to technology to meet the needs of a twenty-first century labour market.

The report also prescribes that Africa secures and ensures the right to protection from violence, exploitation, child marriage and abuse; removes barriers preventing women and girls from participating fully in community, workplace and political life; and enhances access to reproductive health services.

---

## [UN-Americas action plan seeks to strengthen protection of human rights defenders in region](#)

26 October 2017 – The United Nations human rights office and its counterpart in the Americas have launched a new and deeper cooperation plan to address one of the most pressing problems in that region – the protection of human rights defenders.

Human rights defenders are vital for the healthy functioning of societies, and yet in recent years they have been [increasingly targeted](#) in the Americas, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in a news release.

They are subjected to threats, smear campaigns, arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment, and even torture. Many run the risk of violent, even fatal attacks, including by private individuals linked to business interests or powerful criminal gangs, he added.

*Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* was launched Wednesday by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), a principal and autonomous organ of the Organization of American States.

In 2016, three out of every four recorded murders of human rights defenders worldwide took place in the Americas, and 41 per cent of these killings were of people standing up against extractive or development projects, or

defending the right to land and natural resources of indigenous peoples, according to the release.

“Amid continuing impunity for perpetrators, we are seeing a worrying trend of the law being misused to criminalize the activities of human rights defender to silence them or punish them,” said IACHR Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders José de Jesús Orozco.

“This is one of the reasons why the launch of our joint action mechanism is so important and timely as, by acting together and systematically, we can have a greater impact,” he added.

The joint action mechanism will strengthen the two organs’ already extensive cooperation on emblematic human rights cases and situations of particular concern, building on their national, regional and international capacities, drawing on their complementary strengths and creating stronger connections between their staff.

Among the specific actions that are planned, IACHR and OHCHR will study the measures countries in the region have in place to protect human rights defenders, and produce a manual of best practices.

---

## [UN will accompany Haiti in shaping a sustainable future, deputy Mission chief says](#)

25 October 2017 – The United Nations will remain side by side with Haiti on the country’s path to sustainable development, the Organization’s senior official in the island nation has said.

“Haiti is one of the 193 countries that have adopted the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and has set itself the goal of becoming an emerging country and economy by 2030,” Mamadou Diallo said Tuesday in his first press conference as the Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti ([MINUJUSTH](#)).

“Not only are these objectives possible, but they represent the commitment of Haiti with its children and grandchildren for a better future, and the United Nations will remain side-by-side with Haiti on this path,” he told reporters in the country’s capital, Port-au-Prince.

Regarding MINUJUSTH, which began its mandate on 16 October 2017, he said the operation represents a new window of opportunity to foster sustainable development in the country.

“MINUJUSTH [can assist the country] to consolidate the political stability achieved during the last years towards a democratic, stable and prosperous future for all Haitians,” he stated.

Mr. Diallo called on Haiti’s youth and women to help address the challenges facing the nation.

“I would like to stress that the United Nations regards youth and women as a priority sector of the population and driving forces for the country’s development,” he emphasized.

In his capacity as UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator, Mr. Diallo affirmed that the UN system in Haiti remains engaged with the Haitian people to provide humanitarian assistance and support development.

“Nevertheless, the UN’s priority and approach will strengthen the resilience of institutions and the population to better prevent, respond to and overcome external shocks and humanitarian situations. We are convinced that this is the way to gradually reduce the need for humanitarian assistance and build a solid foundation for development,” he explained.

---

## [UN Economic and Social Council urges ‘action now;’ long-term measures to tackle natural disasters](#)

25 October 2017 – The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on Wednesday called on UN Member States and the international community to ensure that in the wake of the devastating floods, hurricanes and earthquakes that impacted numerous countries, the humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Following yesterday’s ECOSOC [Special Meeting](#) on the ‘Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient [2030 Agenda](#),’ Council President Marie Chatardová issued a Statement expressing the UN body’s deepest condolences to the victims, and extending solidarity to all the affected people and Governments in the hurricane-hit Caribbean, Central America and the United States, as well as in Mexico, which was struck by successive earthquakes, and in Africa and South Asia, where severe flooding wreaked havoc.

“Early [humanitarian response has been critical](#) for saving lives and livelihoods and the provision of essential services,” said the Statement. “Preparedness and partnerships played an essential role as prepositioned personnel, logistics and stocks allowed the humanitarian response and emergency supplies to arrive more quickly.”

As assessments continue amid displacement and disruptions to livelihoods, immediate needs concentrate in the sectors of health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and shelter.

The Statement emphasized that the international community must ensure that a humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts to put countries “on a sustainable path to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda.”

It stressed that efforts build on existing initiatives to help affected countries reconstruct with resilience and called for greater investment in disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, early warning and early action, while urging greater risk-informed investment in infrastructure and housing.

“We call for stronger collaboration, connectivity and complementarity between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate action to define and deliver collective outcomes to reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years,” said the Council, indicating that specific attention must be given to the most vulnerable people facing climate change and extreme weather events.

Elaborating on the measures needed in both the medium and long term, the Council called for longer term recovery, development and reconstruction programmes, pointing to, among others, the regeneration of industries, including tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

“Importantly, key industries and livelihoods must be made sustainable and resilient to the impacts of future extreme weather events and other hazards. We must support efforts of affected and vulnerable countries to diversify their economies and harness the benefits of digital economy to enhance their economic resilience,” the Statement continued.

“We need to act urgently,” the members of the Council asserted, adding: “The Council is committed to continue to promote coordination in the work of the UN development system and intends to follow-up in 2018 to ensure strong progress on the ground.”

---

## **Poor maritime connectivity hurting weaker, smaller nations – UN report**

25 October 2017 – A United Nations report out Wednesday revealed the poor maritime connectivity continues to keep smaller and weaker economies from reaching world markets, highlighting the need for evidence-based improvements to trading systems and procedures to address these challenges.

“Planning and forecasts can be significantly improved if data on maritime transport networks are included in the relevant policy processes, such as negotiating trade deals and transport infrastructure development plans,” said Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)), in a [news release](#) announcing the findings.

According to the UNCTAD [Review of Maritime Transport](#), lack of access is particularly challenging for landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and least developed countries leading to fewer, unreliable and expensive transport connections.

These obstacles also further widen the rift between the best- and worst-connected countries, added the news release, calling for increased interconnectedness between national, regional and intercontinental liner shipping services.

“In many countries, domestic shipping services for [transport of goods] are protected from foreign competition. Such market restrictions can lead to unnecessary inefficiencies and a loss of maritime connectivity,” it noted.

Furthermore, well-designed policies allowing – under clearly defined conditions – international shipping lines to also carry domestic or international cargo from feeder vessels can enhance both the competitiveness of a nation’s seaports and the access of importers and exporters to international shipping services, highlighted UNCTAD.

Explaining the benefits, Shamika N. Sirimanne, the Director of the Technology and Logistics Division at UNCTAD said: “Fostering competition among ports is important to ensure that port operators maximize efficiency and pass on efficiency gains to their clients.”

Equally important is improving multimodal transport links: efficient regional trucking markets, inland waterways, rail and road infrastructure, and transit regimes all have an important role to play.

#### ***Importance of direct connections***

UNCTAD research also revealed that four in five trading country-pairs do not have a direct connection between them which in turn leads to lesser trade between them.

“A key question for trade and transport analysts is whether there are no direct connections between the two countries because there is not enough demand, or [...] because the two trading partners are not well connected,” highlighted Jan Hoffmann, the Chief of the Trade Logistics Branch at UNCTAD.

Improving links can, therefore, help boost trade between countries, lower costs associated and also help improve connectivity.