

# [UN chief proposes \\$5.4 billion budget for 2018-2019 biennium](#)

11 October 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today presented the Organization's proposed programme budget for the 2018-2019 biennium, amounting to just under \$5.4 billion, to the UN General Assembly's main administrative and budget committee.

The proposal (before re-costing) is about \$200 million – about four per cent – below the appropriation for the current biennium, and reflects an overall net decrease of 92 posts compared to the current budget.

“In taking the oath of office last December, I promised to work with the Member States to reform the UN thoroughly and continuously,” Mr. Guterres [told](#) the General Assembly's [Fifth Committee](#).

“Reform is for the people we serve and, indeed, for everyone who serves under the UN flag or is part of the enterprise of building a better world for all.”

In formulating the proposal, explained the UN chief, ways to make the Organization more nimble, responsive and effective in managing its staff and resources, and in supporting its Member States were explored.

An extensive review of our internal policies and administrative instructions is under way to remove duplication, reduce fragmentation and streamline procedures, he added.

In his briefing to the Committee, Mr. Guterres spoke of the new UN strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, strategy on gender parity, strengthening whistle-blower protection, the new counter-terrorism office and strengthening the development pillar of the Organization.

As part of the reforms, the Secretary-General noted that he is delegating managerial authority to programme managers and demanding greater accountability from them for mandate delivery; proposing changes to the UN management and support structures; and proposing measures to streamline and improve the planning and budgeting processes; measures to improve his ability as the chief administrative officer to redeploy resources within parts of the budget to better support the implementation of mandates.

“The reform proposals will not affect the budget proposal for the biennium 2018-2019,” he said.

The UN chief also noted that for the new management structure, a breakdown of functions and a costed proposal for the two new departments in 2018 will be provided. Some of the changes will be reflected in the support account for 2018/2019, and others will be accommodated within the approved staffing table for the regular budget.

The changes to the planning and budgeting cycles and documentation will come,

if approved, into effect in 2020.

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## [At UN, robot Sophia joins meeting on artificial intelligence and sustainable development](#)

11 October 2017 – Artificial intelligence has the potential to accelerate progress on global development goals, but also poses a range of complex challenges, including ethical questions, human rights issues and security risks, speakers told a United Nations event today that featured a robot as one of the panellists.

A moment that drew big applause during the day-long event, '[The future of everything](#) – sustainable development in the age of rapid technological change,' came when Sophia, a humanoid robot, had brief interaction with UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed.

To Ms. Mohammed's question about what the UN can do to help people in many parts of the world who have no access to the Internet or electricity, Sophia said "the future is already here. It's just not very evenly distributed [...]," quoting renowned science fiction writer William Gibson. "If we are smarter and focused on win-win type of results, A.I. [artificial intelligence] could help proficiently distribute the world's existing resources like food and energy."

Sophia is Hanson Robotics' latest and most advanced robot. Sophia has also become a media sensation, having given numerous interviews to multiple media outlets, performed in concert, and even graced the cover of one of the top fashion magazines.

In her [opening speech](#), Ms. Mohammed warned that despite profound potential for accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), if technological progress is not managed well, it risks exacerbating existing inequalities.

"The influence of technology on our societies should be determined by the actions of us, humans, not by machines," she said. "Technology is here for us to explore and use for the benefit of all."



Sophia the robot at UN Headquarters. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

The meeting was co-organized by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly's main economic and financial body ([Second](#)

[Committee](#)).

ECOSOC President Marie Chatardová said that the long-term consequences of the deep technological changes underway, for economies and societies at large, are unknown.

“We are only starting to see the benefits, but we do need to assess the risks of these technologies,” she said.

Sven Jürgenson, of Estonia, Second Committee Chairman, said that AI-based solutions are taking his country’s digital society to the next level.

He said the Government is working on a full legal and cyber-risk management framework for using fully autonomous vehicles in regular road and traffic conditions. And door-to-door robot transport will reshape how goods are shipped and delivered locally.

“Today, Internet access is a social right in Estonia. Every Estonian resident has an electronic ID and nearly all public services are accessible online, including i-Voting in Estonian Parliamentary elections,” he said.

“The development of e-Estonia has not happened in one day – it took us 17 years to start from changing legislation and creating our first e-solutions,” he added.

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## [Cutting greenhouse gases, reducing disaster risk, vital for sustainable development – UN envoy](#)

11 October 2017 – A new United Nations report has underscored the importance of a “risk-informed” approach to sustainable development and called for integrating global agreements on disaster risk reduction and climate change into national socio-economic planning.

Presenting the report’s findings Monday to the General Assembly’s main economic and financial body ([Second Committee](#)) Robert Glasser the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction said that the failure to include such risks in investments have resulted in rapidly rising disaster-related costs.

In his [briefing](#), Mr. Glasser noted that over the past two decades, more than 1.35 million lives and in excess of \$2.5 trillion have been lost to disasters.

“In the light of this disturbing picture,” he said, “delivering on the

promise of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development will only be possible if we cut greenhouse gases as rapidly as possible in line with the [Paris Agreement](#) and reduce climate and disaster risk in accordance with the ambitious global targets agreed [...] in the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#).”

The report, [Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), also warned that the developing world remains at particular risk from disasters, which have resulted in annual average loss of more than 20 per cent equivalent of social expenditure.

According to the report, by 2050, urban populations exposed to hurricanes will increase from 310 million today to 680 million. Urban assets vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding could reach \$35 trillion by 2070 – 10 times more than the current levels.

To overcome the challenges, the report urged, UN Member States to prioritize and resource the development of inclusive national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020, as a key element of efforts to reduce climate risk and disaster risk more broadly.

It also called on them to identify and seize opportunities to coherently incorporate the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement into social and economic planning and investments within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

The report comes ahead of the [International Day for Disaster Reduction](#), to be marked this Friday. The 2017 theme of the International Day, *Home Safe Home: Reducing Exposure, Reducing Displacement*, seeks to raise global awareness about effective actions, policies and practices taken to reduce exposure to disaster risk at the community level, thereby contributing to saving homes and livelihoods.

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## [‘EmPOWER’ girls before, during and after crises, UN says on International Day of the Girl Child](#)

11 October 2017 – The world’s 1.1 billion girls are a source of power, energy, and creativity – and the millions of girls in emergencies are no exception, the United Nations said on the [International Day of the Girl Child](#), which kicks off a year-long effort to draw global attention to and action on the challenges and opportunities girls face before, during, and after crises.

“Because of entrenched gender inequalities, disasters and conflict can make [a bad situation even worse for girls](#),” said UNFPA Executive Director Dr.

Natalia Kanem, in a statement marking the International Day, which this year is on the theme, 'EmPOWER Girls: Before, during and after crises.'

"They and their families, struggling to survive, are left with few choices, leaving girls even more vulnerable to child marriage, sexual- and gender-based violence, including trafficking, rape and sexual slavery," she added.

According to the Organization's main entity on gender issues, [UN Women](#), due to growing conflict, instability and inequality in 2017, 128.6 million people are expected to need humanitarian assistance, and more than three-quarters of those forced to flee are women and children.

"No society will flourish and no peace agreement will be lasting without [empowering girls in peacebuilding and reconstruction](#)," said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)). "It is time to put this imperative at the heart of all of our efforts in addressing fragility, conflict and violence."

Our special photo story on the International Day examines the challenges girls face during emergencies and highlights the critical role they play in building a better future for themselves and their communities.



Since 2012, the UN has observed 11 October as the International Day of the Girl Child to highlight and address the challenges girls face, while promoting their empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights. The internally displaced girls photographed here are sitting in a UNICEF school tent in Police Rah informal settlement near Herat city, Afghanistan. Credit: UNHCR/Jim Huylebroek



In her message, Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, noted that this year's observance of the Day comes during turbulent times, with the world facing the rising challenges of forced displacement, climate change and violent extremism. The girl pictured here was driven from her home in Chad, along with her family, by Boko Haram militants. Photo: UNICEF/Sokhin



This year's theme aims to spur global attention and action to the challenges and opportunities girls face before, during, and after crises. Together, women and girls account for more than 75 per cent of the refugees and displaced persons at risk from war, famine, persecution and natural disaster. The girls pictured here are in Syria's Tariq Al-Bab neighbourhood, where UN agencies are distributing relief items. Photo: UNHCR/Bassam Diab



Women and girls are also vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, during conflicts and in refugee camps. The two girls peering through a reed fence were photographed at a site for displaced people in Damaturu, Nigeria. Photo:



Due to entrenched gender inequalities, disasters and conflict can make a bad situation even worse for girls, says Dr. Natalia Kanem, the Executive Director of the UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)). Seen here are women in Les Cayes, Haiti, awaiting relief assistance after a hurricane. Photo: MINUSTAH/Logan Abassi



They and their families are left with few choices, leaving girls even more vulnerable to child marriage, trafficking, rape and sexual slavery. The girl seen here is from Yemen, where incidents of gender-based violence have increased by more than 63 per cent since the conflict escalated, according to UNFPA. Photo: Giles Clarke/OCHA



Despite the challenges, many girls manage to play a critical role in their homes and communities, even in crises, where they are often the first responders who care for their families. Protecting and promoting their rights, health, and well-being is therefore an essential element of crisis preparedness, effective response and recovery, UNFPA stresses. The girls above play on the ground floor of a partially destroyed home in Gaza city. Photo: UNICEF



UNFPA supports the development of more inclusive health, education, and empowerment programmes that are age- and gender-responsive, often girl-led, and enhance the voices of girls at the community level. The girl students pictured here are attending a conference on 'Financing the Future: Education 2030' at the UN in New York. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

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## [UN launches innovative plan to significantly cut new HIV infections](#)

11 October 2017 – Despite a 50 per cent drop in AIDS-related deaths since the peak of the epidemic, new HIV infection declines among adults are lagging, prompting the United Nations to launch a 10-point plan that lays out immediate, concrete steps countries can take to accelerate progress.

As part of global efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), the UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) and other partners launched on Tuesday the [HIV prevention 2020](#) road map at the first meeting of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition to reduce new HIV infections by 75 per cent by 2020.

“Scaling up treatment alone [will not end AIDS](#),” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, in a statement.

“We need more energy and action put into HIV prevention – stronger leadership, increased investment and community engagement to ensure that everyone, particularly people at higher risk of HIV, can protect themselves against the virus,” he added.

While new HIV infections among children have fallen by 47 per cent since 2010, new HIV infections among adults have declined by only 11 per cent.

In 2016, in the [UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS](#), countries committed to reduce new HIV infections by 75 per cent – from 2.2 million in 2010 to 500,000 in 2020. The new road map will fast-track countries to achieve this target.

“In many places, lack of access to education, lack of agency and lack of autonomy over their own bodies keep adolescent girls from claiming their human rights,” UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem added.

“And the poorest girls have the least power to decide whether, when or whom to marry and whether, when or how often to become pregnant. This lack of power makes each one of these girls extremely vulnerable to HIV infection, sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy,” underscored Dr. Kanem.

The HIV prevention 2020 road map contains a 10-point action plan that lays out immediate, concrete steps for countries to accelerate progress, such as conducting up-to-date analysis to assess where maximum impact opportunities lie; developing guidance to identify gaps and actions for rapid scale-up; and addressing legal and policy barriers to reach the people most affected by HIV, including young people and key populations.

It identifies factors that have hindered progress, including political leadership gaps, punitive laws and a lack of HIV prevention services in humanitarian settings, and highlights the importance of community engagement to advocate for service delivery and accountability.

“UNAIDS is urging commitment and leadership for measurable results,” said Mr Sidibé. “Leadership to address sensitive political issues and leadership in mobilizing adequate funding of HIV prevention programmes.”

Cutting new infections by 75 per cent will require a focus on HIV prevention, combined with scaled-up HIV testing and treatment. A location-population-based method for efficient planning and programming along with a people-centred approach for those at higher HIV risk will be critical.

Concerted efforts will be needed, including to reach adolescent girls, young women and their male partners; to increase the availability and uptake of condoms; and to ensure that preventative medicines are available to people at higher risk of HIV.

The road map encourages countries to develop a 100-day plan for immediate actions, including setting national targets, reviewing progress made, reassessing national prevention programmes and taking immediate remedial action.