

Republic of Korea, at General Assembly, calls for more active UN role in solving nuclear crisis

21 September 2017 – The United Nations must play a more active role in resolving the crisis posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear and missile programmes, both by promoting dialogue and through sanctions, Republic of Korea (ROK) President Moon Jae-in told world leaders today.

“The most important role the United Nations is asked to play today is to come up with fundamental measures to stop the vicious cycle of increased provocations and heightened sanctions,” he told the General Assembly’s 72nd general debate, stressing the need for a political solution to what UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called ‘most dangerous crisis we face today.’

“In the wake of the (recent sixth) nuclear test, the Korean Government has made enhanced efforts to convince countries in the region and beyond of the necessity for stronger sanctions and pressure to make North Korea stop its provocations and choose the path of dialogue,” Mr. Moon said, vowing that his country seeks neither the DPRK’s collapse nor unification by absorption.

Calling on his northern neighbour to “cease making reckless choices that could lead to its own isolation and downfall and choose the path of dialogue” by abandoning its hostile policies against other countries and giving up its nuclear weapons programme, he held out the prospect of a new economic era for the Korean peninsula.

“The spirit of the United Nations is to realize global peace through multilateral dialogue,” he said. “The Korean Peninsula is where that spirit is most desperately needed. The realization of peace is the issue for which the United Nations was created, for which it is aiming and which it is in the process of achieving. We need the United Nations to play a more active role on the Korean Peninsula.

Highlighting the need to prevent the outbreak of war, Mr. Moon called for “stable” management of the situation “so that tensions will not become overly intensified or accidental military clashes will not destroy peace.”

[Full statement available here](#)

[At UN, Serbian President discusses future of peaceful, prosperous Western Balkans region](#)

21 September 2017 – Kicking off the third day of the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly, Aleksandar Vucic, the President of Serbia, drew attention to the future of the Western Balkans region – with a focus on how to preserve peace and ensure prosperity.

Mr. Vucic said that while Serbia does not recognize “the unilateral declaration of independence of the so-called Kosovo,” he would not speak about disrespect for his country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, but instead about Serbia’s efforts to resolve the problem because “peace and reconciliation are more important than gaining easy political points.”

Noting his country’s commitment to responsible fiscal practices, he laid out a list of its achievements that included a decrease in unemployment, a new flexible labour market and its investment in its youth. “Digitalization and artificial intelligence are becoming important topics in Serbia and not only in the most developed countries of the world,” the President explained.

A better and improved economy is also a priority for the region, including Serbia. Mr. Vucic stressed that Serbs are eager to continue with economic reforms along with the creation of the Regional Economic Zone. Telling the Assembly that the former Yugoslavia is a respected market that attracts investors and international attention, he pointed out that today, the regional countries are too small as individual markets, but he believed that “unique customs zone and taxation system is the future of the region.”

As part of Serbia’s economic progress, the President also underscored the importance of its becoming a member of the European Union. Calling the EU Serbia’s “most important trade and investment partner,” he elaborated that membership is seen as “a path towards greater stability, economic progress and strengthening democracy acquis.”

[Full statement available here](#)

[Security Council approves probe into ISIL’s alleged war crimes in Iraq](#)

21 September 2017 – The United Nations Security Council today authorised the establishment of an investigation team to support Iraq’s domestic efforts to

hold the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) accountable for acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in the country.

According to the unanimously adopted resolution, the team will be headed by a Special Adviser to be appointed by the Secretary-General, and will consist of both international and domestic experts who will work "on equal footing," with an initial mandate of two years.

The Council underscored that the team should operate with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its jurisdiction over crimes committed in its territory. In addition, evidence of crimes collected and stored by the team in Iraq should be for eventual use in fair and independent criminal proceedings conducted by competent national-level courts, with the relevant Iraqi authorities as the primary intended recipient.

Another Member State may request the team to collect evidence of acts committed by ISIL on its territory, but only with the approval of the Security Council, which may request the Secretary-General to submit separate terms of reference.

The Council requested the Secretary-General to establish, as a supplement to financing by the UN, a trust fund to receive voluntary contributions to implement the resolution.

[UNICEF urges countries to prioritize early childhood development](#)

21 September 2017 – There is no period more critical in a child's development than the first 1,000 days of life, and yet 32 countries – including Bangladesh and the United States – lack three basic national policies to support parents of babies and young children, says a new United Nations report issued today.

According to [Early Moments Matter for Every Child](#), published by the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), only 15 countries – including Cuba, France, Portugal, Russia and Sweden – have the three policies critical to support young children's healthy brain development: two years of free pre-primary education; paid breastfeeding breaks for new mothers for the first six months; and adequate paid parental leave.

These policies, UNICEF noted in a [news release](#), help parents better protect their children and provide them with better nutrition, play and early learning experiences in the crucial first years of life when the brain grows at a rate never to be repeated.

The report states that around 85 million children under five are growing up in 32 countries without any of the three critical policies in place; 40 per cent of these children live in just two countries – Bangladesh and the US.

“What’s the most important thing children have? It’s their brains. But we are not caring for children’s brains the way we care for their bodies – especially in early childhood, when the science shows that children’s brains and children’s futures are rapidly being shaped,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

“We need to do more to give parents and caregivers of young children the support they need during this most critical period of brain development.”

The report also points out that millions of children under five live in areas affected by conflict, are starved of nutritious food, and are deprived of stimulating activities fundamental for healthy brain growth.

Urging governments to invest in children and their families, UNICEF called for actions to support early childhood development. Among these is to make family-friendly policies, including two years of free pre-primary education, paid parental leave and paid breastfeeding breaks, a national priority.

“Policies that support early childhood development are a critical investment in the brains of our children, and thus in the citizens and workforce of tomorrow – and literally the future of the world,” said Mr. Lake.

At the beginning of 2017, UNICEF launched the #EarlyMomentsMatter campaign, aimed at raising awareness about the critical impact that early experiences have on children’s brain development during their first 1,000 days of life.

More than half of children and youth worldwide ‘not learning’ – UNESCO

21 September 2017 – About 617 million children and adolescents worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, signalling a learning crisis that could threaten progress on global development goals, a report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) shows.

The figures are staggering both in terms of the waste of human potential and for the prospects of achieving sustainable development, said Silvia Montoya, Director of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, in a press release.

The [report](#) suggests some 387 million children of primary school age (or 56 per cent) and 230 million adolescents of lower secondary school age (or 61

per cent) will not achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, 202 million children and adolescents are not learning these fundamental subjects. Nearly 90 per cent of children between the ages of about 6 and 14 will not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.

Central and Southern Asia has the second highest rate, with 81 per cent, or 241 million, not learning.

Surprisingly, two-thirds of the children who are not learning are in school. Of the 387 million primary-age children unable to read proficiently, 262 million are in classrooms. There are also about 137 million adolescents of lower secondary age who are in classrooms, but unable to meet minimum proficiency levels in reading.

The report indicates that along with a lack of access to school and a failure to retain children in school, the poor quality of education in the classroom is among the three common problems.

Ms. Montoya said the new data was a "wake-up call" for far greater investment in the quality of education.

The global goals for education are clear: Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) signals a commitment from governments to ensure an "inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all."