

# European Union and UN launch new initiative to eliminate gender violence

20 September 2017 – The European Union and the United Nations today launched a joint initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe.

“It is a harsh but true reality – one in three women will face violence throughout their lifetime,” UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres [said](#) at the launch event, held on the margins of the General Assembly’s high-level annual debate.

“Violence against women and girls devastates lives, and causes pain across generations,” he added.

The [EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#) is supported by a multi-stakeholder trust fund, with the EU as its main contributor in the order of half a billion Euro, which is open to other donors.

“The European Union is committed to combatting all forms of violence against women and girls, as they undermine our core fundamental rights and values, such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality,” EU High Representative Federica Mogherini told the event.

“We need first to ensure that we keep women and girls safe, in order to empower them to deploy their full potential.”

**VIDEO:** Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; trafficking and economic exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence.

Core areas of intervention will include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Consistent with the principles of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to ‘leave no-one behind.’

The Spotlight Initiative is “truly historic,” said Mr. Guterres. “When we

shine a spotlight on the empowerment of the world's women and girls, everyone's future is brighter."

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## [World leaders gathered at UN commit to boosting investment in education](#)

20 September 2017 – World leaders today pledged to tackle the education crisis that is holding back millions of children and threatening economic development, at a high-level event at United Nations Headquarters in New York aimed at securing finance for this critical goal.

"Financing education is indeed the best investment we can make for a better world and a better future," stressed UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres in his [remarks](#) to the event, titled "Financing the Future: Education 2030," held on the margins of the General Assembly's annual debate.

"I started as a teacher. I saw for myself decades ago in the schools and slums of Lisbon why education is a basic human right, a transformational force for poverty eradication, an engine for sustainability, and a force for peace," he said.

More than 260 million children, adolescents and youth are out of school. Despite some progress in achieving gender equality in the world's poorest countries, far more girls than boys still do not have access to a quality education, according to a news release.

Also addressing the event was UN Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai, who said girls in many parts of the world are pushing back against poverty, war and child marriage to go to school.

"We have big goals, but we will not reach any of them unless we educate girls," she said, referring to the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by UN Member States in 2015.

The event – co-organized by governments, the private sector, civil society and UN agencies – was held to boost political commitment and investment in quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education.

"Delivering an education to all – and not just some children – is the civil rights struggle of our time," said Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education.

"Confronted by the largest refugee crisis since the close of the Second World War, and with education receiving less than 2 per cent of humanitarian aid, it is vital we marshal the funds to provide an education for all children – especially those left out and left behind: refugee children," he added.

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## International community must remain united to address global challenges, stresses Italian leader

20 September 2017 – Stressing that terrorism and violent extremism continue to cause much suffering around the globe, Paolo Gentiloni, the President of the Council of Ministers of Italy, called for broad collaboration among countries as well as regional and global organizations to successfully tackle the threat.

In particular, he underscored the need to act against all the dimensions employed by terrorist groups, including the Internet and social media, as well as financing of terrorist activities.

In his address to the 72nd general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Gentiloni also highlighted Italy's close involvement in assisting crisis-struck countries around the world, and said that addressing such distressing situations, such as many conflicts across Africa, required dialogue and reconciliation.

Turning to the heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula due to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear weapons development programme, he underlined that unity in the international community and determination in its response is vital.

"Full implementation of the pertinent Security Council resolutions [...] is crucial [...] North Korea must immediately end its missile and nuclear proliferation and all provocative actions," he said.

He also noted the progress made by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – under which Iran reaffirmed that it would not seek, develop or acquire nuclear weapons – and said that it remains a "success story in the framework of global efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

Further in his remarks, the Italian leader stressed the importance of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and expressed his country's pledge to do its part to ensure its strong implementation.

Mr. Gentiloni also expressed his nation's support for the reform plans proposed by [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres as well as his focus on empowerment of women and girls, and gender equality.

[Full statement available here](#)

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## [Addressing Assembly, Portugal highlights need for UN reform, conflict prevention measures](#)

20 September 2017 – Portugal’s Prime Minister António Luis Santos da Costa took the podium of the General Assembly to reiterate his country’s support of the Secretary-General’s agenda, which includes boosting conflict prevention activities and creating a stronger more adaptable world Organization.

“Your priorities, Mr. Secretary General, are the same as ours: an Organization that is stronger, offers greater solidarity and is capable of preventing conflicts, alleviating human suffering and promoting peace and prosperity.” the Minister said, also mentioning the importance of having a “more transparent, more effective and more adaptable” UN.

As for organizational reform, he said consolidating a culture of conflict prevention requires action across the board and an integrated vision of the three pillars of the UN system –peace, human rights and sustainable development – as well as closer institutional cooperation between the organs of the Charter, namely the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Mr. Santos Costa said the Security Council must be reformed to ensure a better representation of today’s world. “The African continent cannot be denied a permanent presence, and Brazil and India are also two inescapable examples,” he added in his address to the Assembly’s annual general debate.

During his speech, he positioned Portugal as a multilateral country contributing to the battle against terrorism, supporting the protection of migrants and refugees, and makes participation in peacekeeping operations one of the clearest priorities of its foreign policy.

“Multilateralism is the only framework for the defense of the common good of humanity and the collective promotion of peace, security and development. In no way does it diminish the sovereignty of each nation, nor the capacity for decision of their people and institutions,” he told world leaders.

[Full statement available here](#)

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## [Conflict prevention, migration and](#)

## terrorism key concerns for EU and member countries at UN

20 September 2017 – On the second day of the United Nations General Assembly’s high-level debate, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, underscored that the UN must rise to address many global challenges, including forced displacement and terrorism.

Mr. Tusk said the European Union (EU) continues to receive people in need of protection. He echoed his appeal to the international community to take responsibility for refugee protection and irregular migration, underscoring the EU’s support of the UN process to develop Global Compacts on Refugees and on Regular, Safe and Orderly Migration.

“Your engagement is needed right now, both in terms of money for humanitarian assistance, and more resettlement for those displaced by conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, and especially across Africa,” he told the Assembly.

In connection with the refugee crisis, Mr. Tusk urged a “crackdown on human smugglers that exploit vulnerable people and violate sovereign borders,” and welcomed the International Criminal Court investigation on smugglers in Libya for crimes against humanity.

Against the backdrop of repeated terrorist attacks, he stressed the need for the constant strengthening of the global fight against that scourge and violent extremism, including doing more on counter-radicalization. He reiterated his plea to the world’s Muslim leaders to stand strong against Islamist extremism as a real support in fighting terrorism. “In short,” the President said “we must be more determined than they are.”

[Full statement available here](#)



Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

In his address, the President of Finland called the Secretary-General’s determination to reform the UN “laudable,” spotlighting that transparency, accountability, efficiency and gender balance “should be the guiding principles of the UN system.”

Sauli Niinistö also welcomed the Secretary-General’s focus on conflict prevention, advocating for the marginalized to be given a voice in peace processes. “Women, children and adolescents often pay the highest price in conflicts but they can also help to pave a way out of the crisis,” he told the Assembly, while pointing to Finland’s contribution in establishing a Nordic network of women mediators who provide inclusive and meaningful participation in all phases of peace processes.

Pledging his support for UN peacekeeping reform, he drew attention to Finland's increased participation in UN police missions – now through seven UN operations, including a specialized team on sexual and gender based violence in South Sudan. “It is my strong view that no UN peacekeeper nor any other UN personnel should be associated with misconduct of any shape or form. In particular, there must be ‘zero tolerance’ with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse,” he stressed.

Turning to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Niinisto called that country's nuclear weapons programme “a threat to global peace and stability,” that must be stopped. While stressing the importance of the continued unity of the Security Council, he underscored: “Such behaviour cannot be tolerated by the international community.”

Before leaving the podium, Mr. Niinisto expressed his strong belief that global challenges and threats be addressed together by the world community. “Peace and security, human rights and development belong to all of us. Only together can we make this world a better place,” he concluded.

[Full statement available here](#)



Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also taking the podium, President Rumen Radev of Bulgaria spoke in depth about international peace and its links to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), telling the Assembly that the UN peace and security architecture, together with the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, “have provided a solid foundation for achieving peace and prosperity.”

Mr. Radev stressed that Bulgaria supports a surge in diplomacy for peace that places prevention as an overarching priority. “Prevention and mediation are essential means of reducing human suffering, including in addressing the root causes of forced displacements, bringing humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts together,” he elaborated.

The President pointed out that armed conflicts in many parts of the world continued to undermine peace and human values, asserting that “protracted conflicts require a holistic UN response encompassing preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace-building and effective special political missions.”

Calling climate change “one of the biggest challenges of our time,” he noted that the phenomenon not only impedes the well-being of countries, but also poses security threats to many of them.

Mr. Radev wrapped up his address by drawing attention to the need for promoting equality, countering discrimination and ensuring respect for human rights as keys to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development, saying “we believe that the protection of human rights should be placed at the centre of all action undertaken by the UN.”

[Full statement available here](#)



Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session

For his part, Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte pointed out that the problems confronting today's world, such as climate change, migration, terrorism and cybercrime, are by definition international.

"No single country can tackle them in isolation. We need each other. [...] In this turbulent world, the importance of the UN is growing every day, he told the Assembly.

The Prime Minister said "cooperation is key" when it comes to preventing terrorism, and that the UN is the prime forum for international cooperation. As a good example of cooperation, he pointed to the Global Counterterrorism Forum, saying its work "is not high-profile – most of it goes on behind the scenes – but it saves many lives."

Turning to conflict, Mr. Rutte flagged that not enough attention is being devoted to the early its early stages of development, saying "That has to change." He pointed to the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission in Mali where the Netherlands is using intelligence to carry out long-range reconnaissance work in anticipation of conflict – instead of waiting for it to happen.

Conflict prevention ties in with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which he calls "the ultimate prevention agenda" as "they address the drivers and root causes of instability and conflict."

"Investing in human dignity, eradicating poverty, fostering climate resilience and promoting economic and social progress will reduce the incidence of conflict, instability and despair. Development and lasting peace – all in one package," Mr. Rutte maintained.

[Full statement available here](#)