

Peace operations 'not a substitute' for diplomatic efforts, Security Council told

20 September 2017 – United Nations peace operations must be deployed in support of – not in place of – active diplomatic efforts, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told the Security Council today, as he outlined some critical changes necessary to make these missions more effective.

“Today we gather to fortify this flagship UN activity,” Mr. Guterres said during an open debate on the reform of UN peacekeeping, noting that every day, peacekeepers create the conditions for lasting peace. Yet, he added, they also often face unreasonable and dangerous demands.

Over the years, 55 UN peacekeeping operations have successfully completed their mandate as have many political missions.

Mr. Guterres outlined his reform efforts, noting that they aim in part to bring about the critical shifts called for in the 2015 report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

First, the ‘primacy of politics’ must be recognized so that peace operations are deployed in support of active diplomatic efforts, not as a substitute,” he stated. “If we can do better on prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, we can reduce the unrealistic and dangerous demands on our colleagues in uniform.”

Second, peace operations should be properly equipped, and third, they must embody UN values, meaning that sexual exploitation and abuse are not acceptable.

Fourth, the UN must build stronger partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the African Union and the European Union.

Recalling the framework for enhanced partnership signed by the UN and the African Union in April, the Secretary-General said he looked forward to signing a similar agreement with the European Union and to exploring the possibility of establishing trilateral collaborative mechanisms.

José Ramos-Horta, the former Chair of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, told the Council that the 2015 report “reflected the collective experience and recommendations of hundreds of people from many walks of life – retired and serving military and police officers who saw wars close up, community leaders and activists who live in the midst of conflicts.”

He welcomed the Secretary-General’s focus on conflict prevention and proposals for restructuring the peace and security pillar, including the delegation of authority to the field.

At today's meeting, which was scheduled to hear from around 70 speakers, including many from the highest levels of government, the Council unanimously adopted a resolution stressing that "the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict," and that conflict prevention remains a primary responsibility of States.

The 15-member body also reaffirmed its determination to pursue more prioritisation when evaluating, mandating and reviewing peacekeeping operations.

[Concerned at ongoing rights violations in Yemen, UN advisers back call for international probe](#)

20 September 2017 – As civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict in Yemen, two United Nations Special Advisers have voiced their concern over continued allegations of grave human rights abuses and expressed support for the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an international investigation.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner ([OHCHR](#)), the total number of verified civilian casualties since March 2015 stands at 13,920, including 5,159 people killed and 8,761 injured. The actual numbers are likely to be "far higher," said the Office, which also noted that coalition airstrikes continue to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, including of children.

In addition, the UN estimates that 17 million people are food insecure, including seven million people on the brink of famine. The unprecedented rise in the cholera epidemic has reached over 690,000 suspected cases with 2,090 associated deaths – the largest ever outbreak in a single year.

"We call on the international community – and particularly the Security Council and Human Rights Council – to take action to end the carnage and remedy this man-made crisis," Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Ivan Šimonovic, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, said in a [statement](#) issued on Tuesday.

"The international community has a moral and legal responsibility to support accountability in Yemen by immediately establishing an impartial international mechanism to comprehensively investigate allegations of serious abuses and violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict, and their allied forces with a view to ending impunity.

“The perpetrators must be brought to account. Justice must be served to the victims. It is incumbent on the international community to halt the suffering that is being inflicted on the Yemeni population,” the Advisers stated.

OHCHR said yesterday it was “very disturbed” that civilians, including children, continue to be killed in attacks carried out by both the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis and army units loyal to the former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, as well as by the Saudi-led coalition.

Just over the past five days, the Office has confirmed that three children died and seven others were injured in attacks by Houthi/Saleh forces in the Salah district of the city of Taizz; while a coalition airstrike in Marib killed a further five children along with seven adults.

These are just the latest in a series of incidents that demonstrate “the horrific impact on children and families, and all civilians, of the ongoing brutal war,” OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville [told](#) reporters in Geneva.

“Once again, we urge all sides to exercise restraint and to cease all indiscriminate attacks and take all possible precautions to properly distinguish military objectives from civilian objects and to ensure that their attacks are never directed either at civilians or civilian objects.”

[Panama vows to combat drug trafficking, asks for help to eliminate ‘blood money’ driving scourge](#)

20 September 2017 – The most effective way to solve problems that affect the world’s people is always placing human beings at the centre of all decisions, the President of Panama told the United Nations General Assembly today, stressing that his country, which joins North and South and which is bordered by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, would continue to be a beacon of cooperation and understanding.

“I have always been aware of Panama’s calling as facilitator of dialogue and understanding; a country [that will] work in the service of the international community [and] contribute our resources to address the common problems affecting the region” contributing to wider peace and security, Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez said in his address to the Assembly’s annual general debate.

While the countries of the wider region, including Colombia, are indeed making solid progress, he said “our continent faces a problem which transcends borders: increasing production of drugs and drug trafficking,” he

said calling on leaders to tackle this pressing challenge head on.

Panama, for its part, reiterated its commitment to maintain a fight against drug trafficking, putting all its capacities and resources at the service of the region to eliminate the scourge. "At the same time, I appeal to the leaders and Heads of State of producing countries and consumers of drugs to support us in this struggle; every dollar generated by the drug trafficking represents a death in our region," he underscored.

Turning to Venezuela, he said it would be a serious miscalculation for that country's Government to try to impose a single-party political model. Among other things, such an action would increase outward migration. Amid such challenges, he vowed to remain "on the front line" of efforts to strengthen unity among countries of the Americas and called on Panama's neighbours to do to the same.

"We do not have time and space to waste in squabbling amongst ourselves," he said as he turned to global challenges. Condemning all acts of terrorism, he called on the Security Council to strengthen measures to foster lasting peace in such places as Syria and Iraq, and condemned the irresponsible leadership of such Governments as that in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which sought to destabilize regions.

[Full statement \(in Spanish\) available here](#)

Focus on people's prosperity key to sustainable development, says Kyrgyz leader at UN Assembly

20 September 2017 – Noting that the only source of power in his country is its people, the President of Kyrgyzstan highlighted that the country's path to sustainable development has a focus on ensuring the Kyrgyz peoples welfare and prosperity.

Over the last five years, extreme poverty has fallen by 45 per cent, said Almazbek Atambaev, adding that system-wide efforts have been introduced to address corruption and that the country has embarked on major projects to improve infrastructure, achieve energy independence and create a stable energy sector.

"Kyrgyzstan is among the most free and stable in the Euro-Asian region and boasts a strong civil society," he highlighted.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, President Atambaev said Kyrgyzstan is elaborating a

strategy for sustainable development through 2040, which is aimed at creating jobs, ensuring social well-being, raising living standards and promoting a parliamentary democracy with a strong civil society.

Turning to the challenges posed by climate change, he said that being a mountainous country, Kyrgyzstan is particularly prone to its effects, with all sectors feeling the impact. Calling the transition to sustainable development “a matter of survival,” the President said the protection of endangered wildlife, such as the snow leopard, is also critical.

Further in his remarks, the Kyrgyz President underscored that future prosperity is, in part, contingent on the effective use of scarce water resources, he urged for cooperation among countries to resolve any disputes.

In conclusion, he also drew attention to the increasing threat of terrorism and extremism and urged international collaboration and cooperation to combat the scourge, including through tackling the issue of money-laundering and drug trafficking.

At General Assembly, Iran's chief denounces those seeking to rip apart nuclear pact

20 September 2017 – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, speaking at the same United Nations podium from which the United States yesterday denounced the accord curbing Iran's nuclear programme as one of the ‘worst deals ever,’ today pledged his country's continued adherence to the pact.

“I declare before you that the Islamic Republic of Iran will not be the first country to violate the agreement, but it will respond decisively and resolutely to its violation by any party,” he told world leaders on the second day of the General Assembly's 72nd annual general debate.

“It will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by ‘rogue newcomers’ to the world of politics, the world will have lost a great opportunity,” he said. “By violating its international commitments, the new US Administration only destroys its own credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it, or accepting its word or promise.”

Endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between its five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran, set out rigorous mechanisms for monitoring limits on Iran's nuclear programme, while paving the way for

lifting UN sanctions against the country.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Mr. Rouhani said Iran never threatens anyone but also does not tolerate threats, adding that peace, security, stability and the progress of all nations are intertwined.

“It is not possible that a rogue and racist regime trample upon the most basic rights of the Palestinians, and the usurpers of this land enjoy security,” he declared. “It is reprehensible that the rogue Zionist regime that threatens regional and global security with its nuclear arsenal and is not committed to any international instrument or safeguard, has the audacity to preach peaceful nations.”

[Full statement available here](#)