

UN scaling up assistance as number of Rohingya refugees grows to over 400,000

19 September 2017 – As the number of Rohingya who have fled to Bangladesh surpasses 400,000, United Nations agencies are scaling up their efforts to assist the displaced and [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres renewed his call on the authorities in Myanmar to take steps to address the crisis.

“We are all shocked by the dramatic escalation of sectarian tensions in Myanmar’s Rakhine state,” Mr. Guterres remarked today in his [address](#) to the opening of the General Assembly’s high-level debate. “A vicious cycle of persecution, discrimination, radicalization and violent repression has led more than 400,000 desperate people to flee, putting regional stability at risk.”

He stressed that the authorities in Myanmar must end the military operations, allow unhindered humanitarian access and recognize the right of refugees to return in safety and dignity. They must also address the grievances of the Rohingya, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long, he added.

Marzuki Darusman, the Chairperson of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, [told](#) the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that it is clear that there is “a grave humanitarian crisis” underway that requires urgent attention.

In addition to the over 400,000 people who have sought refuge in Bangladesh since 25 August, Mr. Darusman noted that there are reports that nearly 200 Rohingya villages in the affected area have been emptied.

“It is important for us to see with our own eyes the sites of these alleged violations and abuses and to speak directly with the affected people and with the authorities,” he stated, noting that the Commission has requested the Government of Myanmar for unfettered access to the country.

UN aid agencies scaling up assistance

As the number of those crossing the border into Bangladesh increases, the UN refugee agency ([UNHCR](#)) is ramping up its operations, including moving new arrivals into family tents and temporary communal shelters at a new extension site next to the Kutupalong camp near Cox’s Bazar.

Spokesperson Duniya Aslam Khan [told](#) a news conference in Geneva that refugees have told UNHCR staff that they suffered from cold and rain during their treks from Myanmar.

“Many had fallen ill, particularly small children. There is urgent need for more latrines, not least to reduce risks of a spread of disease with so many

people living in close quarters. Many also complained of hunger and said they had eaten little on their journeys, which took up to 10 days on foot," she stated.

With an estimated 415,000 refugees having arrived since late August the humanitarian challenges have become immense, according to UNHCR, which noted the "remarkable generosity" by many individual Bangladeshis, with people trucking food and clothes to the refugees in the camps and others camping along the single main road.

However, the Government needs more support, and UNHCR will be issuing an appeal this week for the emergency humanitarian response in Bangladesh till the end of year.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) is providing critical support to step-up health services delivery in Cox's Bazar.

"Vulnerable populations require access to health services, including emergency and basic health care. Access for women to reproductive health services is especially important," noted Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia.

The agency added in a [news release](#) that poor nutrition, communicable diseases (including vaccine-preventable and water-borne diseases), injuries and other concerns such as mental health provide immense public health challenges that the Bangladeshi Ministry of Health, WHO and other health partners are working to address.

[Over 40 million people caught in modern slavery, 152 million in child labour – UN](#)

19 September 2017 – More than 40 million people around the world were victims of modern slavery – forced labour and forced marriage – in 2016, a United Nations study has found, revealing the true scale of such practices that disproportionately affect women and girls.

Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage [show](#) that among the victims, about 25 million were in forced labour, and 15 million were in forced marriage.

Of the total, almost 29 million – or 71 per cent – are women and girls. Women represent 99 per cent of victims of forced labour in the commercial sex industry and 84 per cent of people in forced marriage.

The study was prepared jointly by the UN International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) and Walk Free Foundation, in partnership with the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

A separate ILO study, Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016, confirmed that about 152 million children, aged between 5 and 17, were subject to child labour.

Child labour remains concentrated primarily in agriculture, at 70.9 per cent. Almost one in five child labourers, or 17.1 per cent, work in the services sector while 11.9 per cent of child labourers work in industry.

“The world won’t be in a position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals unless we dramatically increase our efforts to fight these scourges,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

“These new global estimates can help shape and develop interventions to prevent both forced labour and child labour,” he added.

[Repair ‘world in pieces’ and create ‘world at peace,’ UN chief Guterres urges global leaders](#)

19 September 2017 – Addressing the annual gathering of world leaders at the United Nations Headquarters, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today spotlighted several threats – including the nuclear peril, climate change, and ongoing conflicts – that must be overcome to create a better world for all.

“We are a world in pieces. We need to be [a world at peace](#),” said Mr. Guterres as he presented his annual [Report on the work of the Organization](#) ahead of the general debate of the UN General Assembly, in which Heads of State and Government and other high-level representatives from around the world discuss key global issues.

He said that the world is seeing insecurity rising, inequality growing, conflict spreading, climate changing, societies fragmenting and political discourse polarizing.

The UN chief noted that global anxieties about nuclear weapons are at the highest level since the end of the Cold War due to provocative nuclear and missile tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“The solution must be political. This is a time for statesmanship. We must not sleepwalk our way into war,” he warned, as fiery talk can lead

to fatal misunderstandings.

On terrorism, the Secretary-General stressed the need to address the roots of radicalization. "It is not enough to fight terrorists on the battlefield," he said.

Stressing the need for "a surge in diplomacy today" and "a leap in conflict prevention for tomorrow," he said that it is possible to move from war to peace, and from dictatorship to democracy. Only political solutions can bring peace to the unresolved conflicts in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, the Sahel, Afghanistan and elsewhere. That was why he announced the creation of a high-level advisory board on mediation, he added.

On Myanmar, Mr. Guterres said the Asian country's authorities must end the military operations in Rakhine state, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and address the grievances of the Rohingya Muslims, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long.

He went on to take note of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's address today "and her intention to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State that was chaired by Kofi Annan within the shortest time possible.

On the Israel-Palestine conflict, the two-state solution remains the only way forward, he said.

Turning to climate change, Mr. Guterres urged Governments to implement the historic [Paris Agreement](#) with greater ambition.

"We should not link any single weather event with climate change. But scientists are clear that such extreme weather is precisely what their models predict will be the new normal of a warming world," he said, noting that mega-hurricanes, superstorms and rain bombs are added to the vocabulary to describe what is happening.

While explaining how globalization and technological advances have brought uneven benefits, he also highlighted the dark side of innovation, such as cybersecurity threats as well as the possible negative implications of artificial intelligence and genetic engineering.

Lastly, Mr. Guterres said safe migration cannot be limited to the global elite and stressed the need to do more to face the challenges of migration. Refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants are not the problem; the problem lies in conflict, persecution and hopeless poverty.

To tackle these challenges, he said, the UN has launched initiatives to reform itself.

Looking over the packed General Assembly Hall, he said that the UN is needed, and "multilateralism is more important than ever" when there are competing interests and even open conflict.

"We call ourselves the international community; we must act as

one, he concluded.

[UN and partners launch initiative to reach equal pay for women at work](#)

18 September 2017 – Striving to raise up women’s pay across the world to equal men’s, a new global coalition – which includes the United Nations labour agency and Organization’s entity promotion of women’s rights – launched today on the eve of the General Assembly debate.

The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) includes the UN International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), UN Women, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

“One hundred years is too long to wait, and we must all work together to make equal pay for work of equal value a reality,” [said](#) Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the ILO, noting that equal pay for equal work is enshrined in the ILO Constitution of 1919.

Median monthly earnings for women in 2014 were on average 17 per cent below those of men, according to OECD. In addition, in many countries, the higher the level of earnings and skills, the larger the differences in pay between men and women.

Equal pay for women translates into lifelong benefits for them as well as their families, ILO said in a press release, boosting career prospects and lifetime earnings, greater independence, and higher investments in their children’s education and health.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, said “there is no justification for unequal pay for a woman when her job is of equal value to a man’s. This injustice has been unseen for too long, and together we are changing that.”

In addition, equal pay empowering women, impacts other key goals, such as promoting inclusive societies, reducing poverty, and creating conditions for decent work and gender equality, EPIC will “bring together a diverse set of actors at the global, regional and national levels to support governments, employers and workers and their organizations, and other stakeholders, to make equal pay between women and men for work of equal value a reality,” according to the press release.

The aims tie in to the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), in particular the target under [Goal 8](#), which calls for equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

UN General Assembly's annual debate to 'focus on people,' ensuring decent life for all

18 September 2017 – Global leaders gathering at United Nations Headquarters in New York this week for the annual round of top-level diplomatic talks known as the [General Debate](#) will shine a spotlight on the needs of the world's people, with discussions on vital issues such as sustainable development and climate change, and set the stage for what the President of the UN General Assembly has dubbed a “year of firsts,” which will see the negotiation of the first intergovernmental compact on migration and the signing of the first agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The theme of the Debate of the 72nd session of the UN [General Assembly](#) is ‘Focusing on People – Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet,’ and in that spirit monarchs, presidents and prime ministers are also expected to launch discussions that will define international responses to many of the global challenges of the day, including protracted conflicts, extreme poverty and hunger, and the refugee crisis.

On Tuesday, ahead of the Debate, which runs through 25 September, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres will present his annual [Report on the work of the Organization](#). This year's Assembly President, Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia, will then deliver the keynote opening speech. This will then be followed by Brazilian President Michel Temer, whose country holds the traditional role of first national speaker. He will be followed by United States President Donald Trump, as leader of the host nation.

Mr. Guterres began this week of intense diplomatic activity Monday with a round of high-level events, among others, on [UN reform](#), financing the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, and on the [prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse](#) .

Other highlights include a an event tomorrow on women's economic empowerment; a ministerial-level Security Council debate, set for Wednesday 20 September, on [reform of UN peacekeeping operations](#); as well as, immediately after the debate, a special meeting of the Assembly to commemorate the [International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#) and a two-day high-level meeting on the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, set for 27-28 September.

VIDEO: Explainer: What is the General Assembly?