

More than 128 countries back pledged reforms to shape '21st century UN'

18 September 2017 – Pledging to overhaul the United Nations bureaucracy to make the world body stronger and more responsive to the people it serves, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today launched a pledge of support for reforms that has the backing of 128 countries.

“Our shared objective is a [21st century UN](#) focused more on people and less on process, more on delivery and less on bureaucracy,” the Secretary-General said at the event co-hosted by United States President Donald Trump.

He added that “value for money while advancing shared values – this is our common goal.”

Mr. Guterres said someone recently asked him what kept him awake at night – bureaucracy, was the simple answer. “Fragmented structures. Byzantine procedures. Endless red tape,” he added.

“To serve the people we support and the people who support us, we must be nimble and effective, flexible and efficient,” he stated.

The 10-point Declaration for support for UN reforms aims to simplify procedures and decentralize decisions, with greater transparency, efficiency and accountability, according to Mr. Guterres.

In recent months, the UN embarked on plans to achieve gender parity among the Organization’s middle and senior-management positions, and is working to reorganize the peace and security sections so they are refocused on prevention and mediation.

The UN has also prioritized ending sexual exploitation and abuse. At a high-level meeting scheduled for today, the UN is due to announce a ‘Circle of Leadership’ which will include Heads of State and Government committed to ending impunity and strengthening measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping and political mission, among other international deployments.

In his speech today, Mr. Guterres also noted reforms to the UN’s development system, to become more coordinated, focused on the people and more accountable to better assist countries along the 17 priorities in the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

These aims, Mr. Guterres said, will be measured through “tangible results in the lives of the people we serve” and in “the trust of those who support our work through their hard-earned resources.”

The UN chief quoted President Trump who he said on multiple occasions noted that “the UN has tremendous potential.”

“All of us have a responsibility to make sure we live up to it,” Mr. Guterres said.

School meal funding crisis puts 1.5 million West, Central African children at risk, UN agency warns

18 September 2017 – As the 2017-2018 school year starts, more than 1.5 million children across West and Central Africa risk going to school hungry or dropping out altogether, due to lack of financing for nourishing school meals, the United Nations food relief agency said today.

“By failing to fully fund school meals, we are collectively [short-changing the next generation](#) and Africa’s future,” said Abdou Dieng, West and Central Africa Regional Director of the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) in a news release.

“School meals are one of the best investments the international community can make to ensure a head start for young children in some of the world’s poorest countries.”

In many areas of the region, WFP is the sole or main provider of school meals. Over the years, however, WFP has shrunk its coverage for lack of funds.

In Burkina Faso, WFP’s school meals programme for nearly 83,000 children is 0 per cent financed, while the programme in Senegal is only five per cent funded.

In conflict-torn Central African Republic, the programme for more than 200,000 youngsters is half funded, and in Niger, the programme for more than a quarter of a million pupils is 19 per cent financed.

Other particularly at-risk countries include Liberia, Mali and Mauritania, but the funding dearth stretches across the region.

Altogether, WFP’s regional programme faces an \$76 million funding gap, the agency warned, as experts were meeting in Montreal, Canada, for an annual forum on child nutrition, co-sponsored and hosted by WFP’s Centre of Excellence against Hunger.

The news release noted that repercussions are dramatic, since the hearty and nutritious WFP-provided lunches and snacks are the only meal many youngsters eat all day. More broadly, the funding crunch puts at risk a whole generation, with broader spill-over effects on national economies and

development.

"This is a crisis for education, but also a crisis for nutrition and food security which are the fundamental pillars of development," said Mr. Dieng,

Studies show the meals help improve attendance and performance rates. They are also a key incentive for parents to send their children – particularly girls – to school and to keep them there.

[UN-supported campaign to immunize 150,000 Rohingya children against deadly diseases](#)

17 September 2017 – As thousands of Rohingya refugees – including many children – having fled violence in Myanmar continue to arrive in Bangladesh, a United Nations-supported vaccination campaign has been initiated to prevent the spread of potentially deadly diseases.

According to a [news release](#) by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the agency and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) are supporting the Bangladeshi Ministry of Health-led campaign targeting measles, rubella and polio to inoculate some 150,000 Rohingya children below the age of fifteen in 68 refugee settlements near the country's border with Myanmar.

"We are happy that we were able to initiate the immunization campaign so quickly to protect the population from a possible measles outbreak" said Navaratnasamy Paranietharan, the head of WHO in Bangladesh.

The seven-day campaign was planned by the UN health agency, which is also managing and monitoring its field implementation. UNICEF has provided vaccines, syringes and Vitamin A capsules.

"Measles is a very infectious and dangerous disease during emergencies, especially for children who are already weak and malnourished," added Edouard Beigbeder, the head of UNICEF in Bangladesh.

"With thousands of children crossing the border every day, vaccination is crucial to prevent the spread of potentially deadly diseases."

RELATED: [Rohingya crisis one of the fastest growing in recent years, warns UN refugee agency](#)

In addition to the vaccination campaign, the two UN agencies are also helping the Government reinforce maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health

services; renovate delivery and new-born care units; improve water, sanitation and hygiene in health facilities; and strengthen disease surveillance, early warning and health-related information systems.

According to estimates, more than 410,000 Rohingya refugees have arrived in Bangladesh since August 25, with children making up about 60 per cent of that number.

[Use political weight to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse, UN official urges global leaders](#)

17 September 2017 – Ahead of a high-level United Nations meeting on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, the Organization's Special Coordinator on the issue is urging global leaders to join the "Circle of Leadership," lend the political weight of their offices, and act both at the national and international levels to eradicate the scourge.

"Sexual exploitation and abuse is not an issue that is only concerning peacekeeping or military or uniformed personnel, it is a scourge that exists everywhere across our system," Jane Holl Lute, the [Special Coordinator on improving the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse](#), said in an interview with *UN News*.

"Through this initiative [we are] asking political leadership, to personally, associate with this agenda and lend the political weight of their office to its success."

The [High-level Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), to be held on Monday at UN Headquarters on the eve of the high-level segment of the General Assembly's 72nd session, will see [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres announce the *Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in UN operations*. The Circle will comprise Heads of State and Government committed to ending impunity and strengthening measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in international deployments.

UN chief's priority since assuming office

Combatting the scourge is one of the key priorities for Mr. Guterres, who since being elected to the position took a number of steps to stomp it out. In his first week in office, the UN chief established a special task force to look at the issue and to recommend concrete actions.

The matter was also the subject of his [first report to UN Member States](#) in March this year, in which, among other matters, he called for the High-level Meeting to make a political demonstration of solidarity with the Organization's efforts to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse.

He also called for a system-wide Victims' Rights Advocate, who will stand for the rights and dignity of victims alongside their need for assistance and attention in the wake of allegations and abuse.

The meeting will also [introduce Jane Connors](#), the Victims' Rights Advocate, who was appointed last month.

It will also present the state of the Secretary-General's Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and make an appeal for additional contributions, and we will also update Member States on the state of the compacts between them and the UN on more specific measures to combat sexual exploitation and abuse," added the Special Coordinator.

Indicators of progress

Speaking on progress made in combatting sexual exploitation and abuse, Ms. Lute highlighted the appointment of the Victims' Rights Advocate, as well as practical actions such as the use of a new, uniform information reporting form to consistently collect information, mandatory e-learning course, surveys and increased awareness.

Our systems are beginning to generate the kind of trust that we want them to generate so that people know if they bring an allegation forward, it will be handled discretely, humanely, and that we are seeking the appropriate and rapid justice for victims

But above all, the generation of a "kind of trust" has been a key marker, stressed Ms. Lute.

"On the ground we are seeing a few more cases being reported. We take that as a sign that our systems are beginning to generate the kind of trust that we want them to generate so that people know if they bring an allegation forward, it will be handled discretely, humanely, and that we are seeking the appropriate and rapid justice for victims," she said.

Follow-up after the High-level Meeting

On actions following tomorrow's meeting, Ms. Lute spoke of a follow-on consultation with civil society at which the UN will solicit views on what the Organization needs to do to visibly and tangibly achieve its goals, as well as what support they can provide to the UN.

The Special Coordinator also spoke of the personal commitment of the Secretary-General for the cause and his leadership at the highest level.

"I think it is impossible to find someone in the UN system who does not

know about this issue, and does not know about the importance the Secretary-General places on it, we need to translate that knowledge and awareness into action,” she underscored.

[UN refugee agency 'shocked' by killings in eastern DR Congo](#)

16 September 2017 – Expressing shock and sadness over the violent death of numerous Burundian nationals – among them likely refugees and asylum seekers – in Kamanyola town, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations refugee agency called for an investigation into the incident.

According to initial reports more than 30 have been killed and over 100 injured, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said in a [news release](#) today.

“The precise circumstances are not yet clear [but] reports indicate that in the course of a confrontation with Burundian demonstrators, Congolese security forces opened fire on the crowd,” the UN agency added.

The town hosts some 2,005 refugees and asylum seekers from Burundi, most of whom arrived in 2015. There are a total of 43,769 Burundian refugees living in DRC.

The news release also noted that UNHCR and its partners have sent teams to Kamanyola, including medical staff, to treat the injured.