

## At high-level forum, UN stresses importance of education in building 'culture of peace'

7 September 2017 – Education can promote ideals of non-violence, equality and mutual respect, United Nations officials said today at a high-level event on how to achieve a culture of peace amid current global challenges and threats to stability, prosperity and the planet.

“We have to teach our children the values of [peace, tolerance, equality and respect](#). They should be under no illusions as to the self-destructiveness of the alternative,” said the President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson, who convened the all-day event in New York with a focus on early childhood development.

“We must equip them with the skills and education they need to peacefully resolve disputes; to confront injustice and intolerance; and to reject all forms of discrimination and hate,” he added.

Mr. Thomson noted that creating peaceful and just societies is dependent on eradicating poverty, increasing inclusive prosperity, promoting human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and building effective and accountable institutions – the goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda which has guided the international community’s anti-poverty efforts since 2015.

“Fostering a culture of peace requires all of us – individuals, nations and international organisations – to work together to promote understanding of our common humanity,” the senior official said. “We must promote intercultural respect, strengthen interreligious understanding, and inspire people’s hopes for the future. Above all we must unite for peace.”

The event brought together representatives from UN Member States, UN system entities, civil society, media, the private sector and others with an interest in exchanging ideas and suggestions on ways to build and promote a Culture of Peace, and to highlight emerging trends that impact its implementation.

In addition to early childhood education and investment in children, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres stressed the need to invest in youth to promote world peace.

He called young men and women “the barometer of social discontent, economic marginalization and political exclusion,” and said they must be recognized as active agents of change and custodians of peace.

In a speech delivered by his Senior Advisor on Policy, Ana María Menéndez, the Secretary-General also recognized women’s contributions and participation in long-term peace efforts. He said that women’s meaningful participation

generates a different perspective in solving problems, and needs to be supported in all aspects of life.

Mr. Guterres also highlighted the importance of investing in inclusion and cohesion, so that diversity is seen as a benefit and not a threat.

“To prevent intolerance, violent extremism and radicalization, we need to promote the [inclusion, solidarity and cohesion](#) of multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious societies. It is the best antidote to racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism,” he noted.

The first such forum on the Culture of Peace was held in September 2012, and recognized the need for continual support to further strengthening the global movement for peace.

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## [UN supporting national relief efforts as Hurricane Irma threatens nearly 50 million people](#)

7 September 2017 – United Nations agencies are supporting relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Irma, which has already wreaked havoc on Antigua and Barbuda and other Caribbean islands and is en route towards the United States.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), Irma, a Category 5 storm, [made landfall](#) on northeast Caribbean islands during the early hours of 6 September, affecting Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, St Barthélemy, St. Martin, the US Virgin Islands and other islands in the eastern Caribbean Sea.

Irma was predicted to hit Puerto Rico before continuing to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Turks and Caicos and south-eastern Bahamas.

About 49 million people are directly in Hurricane Irma’s projected path, including more than 10.5 million children.

“The Secretary-General [is saddened](#) by the reports of immense destruction and loss of life in the Caribbean region since Hurricane Irma made landfall on Antigua and Barbuda on Wednesday,” said a statement issued today by his Spokesman.

“The United Nations system is already working to support national relief efforts,” added the statement.

Also issuing a statement today was the new UN Emergency Relief Coordinator,

Mark Lowcock.

“In the days preceding the storm’s landfall, humanitarian agencies began to pre-position supplies and technical experts to support national and regional relief efforts,” he stressed.

OCHA said there is continued risk of catastrophic damage from hurricane force winds, storm surge, and flooding in areas on Irma’s trajectory.

In a press release, the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned that [more than 10.5 million children](#) live in the countries that are likely to be exposed to the damage from Hurricane Irma.

Children in the islands of the Eastern Caribbean, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba are at risk, including over 3 million under the age of five.

“Strong winds and torrential rains have already barreled through some of the smallest and most exposed islands in the eastern Caribbean, including Anguila and Barbuda,” said Patrick Knight, Head of Communication for UNICEF in the Eastern Caribbean, speaking from Barbados. “As the extent of the damage becomes clear we are seeing severe levels of destruction. Our priority is to reach all those children and families in the affected communities as soon as possible.”

Early estimates suggest that 74,000 people, including 20,000 children, have been affected.

Local authorities said communication networks in many of the affected areas have been affected either totally or partially. Infrastructure, including roads, bridges, hospitals and schools have also suffered varying degrees of damage.

In Barbuda, 90 per cent of the infrastructure has been destroyed, and it is anticipated that this will include up to 132 schools.

UNICEF’s immediate concern is providing drinking water and sanitation to affected communities, as well providing child protection services for both children and adolescents, including psycho-social support for those affected. UNICEF will also support the reestablishment of education systems and early learning systems as safe spaces.

The World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) said yesterday that [an aircraft bound for Haiti](#) and carrying some 80 metric tons of emergency food supplies and other equipment on behalf of WFP, CARE and Catholic Relief Services is due to leave the UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai early this morning local time.

Also yesterday, the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) said it is [sending experts](#) on crisis recovery to support the people of the Caribbean.

UNDP has activated its crisis preparedness plans in several countries in the region, and will support them both during the immediate response to this disaster and in crucial early recovery activities like debris and waste management, emergency employment and supporting core government functions, if

asked.

“The Hurricane may severely impact people’s livelihoods—directly affecting women, men and children—impacting crucial activities for people, communities and entire countries such as agriculture, fisheries and small and medium enterprises,” said Jessica Faieta, UNDP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

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## [Marginalization, perceived abuse of power pushing Africa’s youth to extremism – UN study](#)

7 September 2017 – Deprivation, marginalization and perceived state violence or abuse of power are pushing young Africans into the clutches of violent extremism, a groundbreaking study by the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) reveals.

“This study sounds the alarm that as a region, [Africa’s vulnerability to violent extremism is deepening](#),” Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, UNDP Africa Director, said today at the launch of the report in New York.

“Borderlands and peripheral areas remain isolated and under-served. Institutional capacity in critical areas is struggling to keep pace with demand. More than half the population lives below the poverty line, including many chronically underemployed youth.”

Exploring the factors that shape the dynamics of the recruitment process, prompting some individuals to gravitate toward extremism, where the vast majority of others do not, the study [Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment](#), also finds that many who joined faced marginalization and neglect over the course of their lives, starting in childhood.

With few economic prospects or outlets for meaningful civic participation that can bring about change, and little trust in the state to either provide services or respect human rights, the study suggests that such an individual could – upon witnessing or experiencing perceived abuse of power by the state – be tipped over the edge into extremism.

*Source: Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment report.*

### ***Government action the 'tipping point'***

In one of the study's most striking findings, 71 per cent of recruits interviewed said that it was some form of government action that was the 'tipping point' that triggered their final decision to join an extremist group.

Seventy-one per cent those interviewed said that it was some form of government action that triggered their final decision to join an extremist group

The actions cited most often were killing or arrest of a family member or friend.

Against this backdrop, the study urges governments to reassess militarized responses to extremism in the light of respect for the rule of law and human rights commitments. It also highlights the importance of focusing on development in addressing security challenges.

"Delivering services, strengthening institutions, creating pathways to economic empowerment – these are development issues," Mr. Dieye added.

Another key recommendation calls for local-level interventions, such as supporting community-led initiatives building social cohesion, as well as amplifying the voices of local religious leaders who advocate tolerance.

However, it cautions that these initiatives must be spearheaded by trusted local actors.

### ***Key findings***

Based on responses to questions including on family circumstances, childhood and education, religious ideologies, economic factors, state and citizenship, the study also finds that:

- Majority of recruits come from borderlands or peripheral areas that have suffered longstanding marginalization and report having had less parental involvement growing up.
- Most recruits expressed frustration at their economic conditions – with employment the most acute need at the time of joining – as well as a deep sense of grievance towards government: 83 per cent believe that government looks after only the interests of a few, and over three-fourths said they have no trust in politicians or in the state security apparatus.
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- Recruitment in Africa occurs mostly at the local, person-to-person level, rather than online, as is the case in other regions – a factor that may alter the forms and patterns of recruitment as connectivity improves.
- Some 80 per cent of recruits interviewed joined within a year of introduction to the violent extremist group – and nearly half of these joined within just one month.
- In terms of exiting a violent extremist group, most interviewees who surrendered or sought amnesty did so after losing confidence in the ideology, leadership or actions of their group.

The report is based on a two-year, in-depth study, including interviews with some 495 voluntary recruits who joined Africa's most prominent extremist groups, including Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab.

According to UNDP estimates, some 33,300 people in Africa have lost their lives to violent extremist attacks between 2011 and early 2016.

Violence perpetrated by the Boko Haram terrorist group alone has resulted in the deaths of at least 17,000 people and displaced millions in the Lake Chad region.

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## [Global food prices fall in August as cereal output heads for record high – UN](#)

7 September 2017 – Global food prices dipped in August, mainly as the prospect of bumper cereal harvests pushed up expectations for larger grain inventories, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) said today.

A [news release](#) said that the FAO Food Price Index declined 1.3 per cent from July, ending three months of consecutive increases.

However, the Index – tracking the monthly change in international market prices for five key commodity groups – remained 6 per cent above its value a year earlier.

The drop in August was largely driven by a 5.4 per cent decline in cereal prices, reflecting a sharp fall in wheat prices as the outlook for production in the Black Sea region improved.

FAO raised its forecast for global cereal production to a record 2,611 million tonnes. Worldwide stocks of cereals are also expected to reach an all-time high by the close of seasons in 2018, according to the latest FAO

Cereal Supply and Demand Brief, also released today.

The new estimates reflect larger anticipated wheat harvests, as improved production prospects in Russia more than offset downward revisions made for Canada and the United States, as well as higher maize and barley outputs in Brazil and Russia. Global rice production in 2017 is also now forecast to reach a record high.

Meat prices dropped 1.2 per cent in the month, while sugar prices slipped by 1.7 per cent – driven by favourable cane harvest prospects in leading producers Brazil, Thailand and India, as well as by weaker international demand in the wake of higher tariffs imposed by China and India.

But vegetable oil prices rose 2.5 per cent, led by rising quotations for palm, soy, rapeseed and sunflower oils.

Dairy prices also rose 1.4 per cent from July, led by greater demand for butterfat in Europe and North America.

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## **FEATURE: Does drone technology hold promise for the UN?**

6 September 2017 – Drone technology appears to be taking off at the United Nations, with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) being used for various purposes, including in humanitarian, development and peacekeeping operations.

Although this technology is not a magic solution, “the promise of drones is really tremendous,” said Christopher Fabian, principal advisor on innovation at the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), in an interview with *UN News*.

For UNICEF and other humanitarian and development agencies, he said, drone technology can make a big difference in three ways.

First, drones can leapfrog over broken infrastructure in places where developed transportation networks or roads do not exist, carrying low-weight supplies.

Second, UAVs can be used for remote sensing, such as gathering imagery and data, in the wake of natural disasters like mudslides, to locate where the damage is and where the affected peoples are.

Third, drones can extend WiFi connectivity, from the sky to the ground, providing refugee camps or schools with access to the Internet.

As big as a Boeing 737 passenger jet and as small as a hummingbird, a huge variety of drones exist. According to research firm Gartner, total drone unit sales climbed to 2.2 million worldwide in 2016, and revenue surged 36 per

cent to \$4.5 billion.

Although UNICEF's use of drones has been limited, the agency is exploring ways to scale up the use of UAVs in its operations, Mr. Fabian said.

In late June, Malawi, in partnership with UNICEF, launched Africa's first air corridor to test the humanitarian use of drones in Kasungu District.

**VIDEO:** The use of drones for humanitarian and development operations. Credit: UNICEF

Also with UNICEF, Vanuatu has been testing the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of drones to deliver life-saving vaccines to inaccessible, remote communities in the small Pacific island country.

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 islands separated over 1,600 kilometres. Many are only accessible by boat, and mobile vaccination teams frequently walk to communities carrying all the equipment required for vaccinations – a difficult task given the climate and topography.

To extend the use of drones, UNICEF and the World Food Programmes ([WFP](#)) have formed a working group. In addition, UNICEF, together with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), chairs the UN Innovation Network, an informal forum that meets quarterly to share lessons learned and advance discussions on innovation across agencies.

Drones are also used in other parts of the UN system. The International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) and its partners have introduced a new quadcopter drone to visually map gamma radiation at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which was damaged by the devastating 2011 tsunami.

Last year, an IAEA-supported drone won fourth place in the 2016 United Arab Emirates Drones for Good Award competition, which received over 1,000 entries from more than 160 countries.

ROME0, or the Remotely Operated Mosquito Emission Operation, met the competition's aim of improving people's lives. It was designed to transport and release sterile male mosquitoes as part of an insect pest birth control method that stifles pest population growth.

Some UN peacekeeping missions, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Central African Republic, have deployed unarmed surveillance UAVs to improve security for civilians.



Residents watch a drone operated by Chief Air Traffic Controller Steve Mkandawire, one of five civil aviation certified pilots, hover during a demonstration for residents in Thipa vllage, Kasungu District, Malawi (29 June 2017). Photo: UNICEF/UN070534/Andrew Brown





ROMEO, a customized drone, soars through the sky to help control disease-carrying mosquitoes to save lives. Photo: N. Culbert/IAEA



Former head of UN peacekeeping Herve Ladsous is briefed by the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on its use of unarmed UAVs (December 2013). UN Photo/Sylvain Liechti



Demonstration at the UN Office at Geneva of a so-called quadrocopter, a device used by the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) for mapping and close-up visual assessments. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

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Drone technology, however, can be a double-edged sword. UN human rights experts have spoken out against the lethal use of drones.

“Hardware itself does not violates human rights. It is the people behind the hardware,” said Mr. Fabian, stressing the need to “make sure that any technology we bring in or work on falls within the framing of rights-based documents,” such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF has a set of guiding principles for innovation, which includes elements like designing with the end-user.

For drone applications to spread further, Mr. Fabian said, the UN has a strong role in advocating this technology and ensuring that policy is shared with different governments.

In addition, governments have to clearly define why they need drones and what specifically they will be used for, while also building up national infrastructure to support their use.

The private sector must understand that the market can provide them real business opportunities.

In 10 to 20 years, drones might be “as basic to us as a pen or pencil,” said Mr. Fabian.

“I believe this technology will go through a few years of regulatory difficulty but will eventually become so ubiquitous and simple that it’s like which version of the cell phones you have rather than have you ever use the mobile phone at all,” he said.