

South Sudan's leaders bear 'direct responsibility' for conflict, UN Security Council told

24 August 2017 – A senior United Nations peacekeeping official today called on the leaders of South Sudan to show genuine political will to achieve sustainable peace in the strife-riven country, stressing that those whose long-time rivalry sparked the ongoing conflict can be the ones to resolve it.

The conflict in South Sudan is a man-made conflict for which the leaders of South Sudan bear a direct responsibility, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping El-Ghassim Wane told the Security Council. But the same leaders can also bring the country back from the impending abyss.

He noted that the dire economic situation and continued conflict in the country have combined to create a dangerous and precarious situation for its citizens, and all that is needed is genuine political will to halt military operations, peacefully negotiate and make the necessary compromises.

I would also urge the Security Council to pronounce itself in this regard. It is critical that the leaders of South Sudan hear the international community's unified demand of what is expected of them, he stated.

Tomorrow marks the second anniversary of the signing of the South Sudan Peace Agreement between warring parties – the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA in Opposition backing then First Vice-President Riek Machar.

South Sudan, the world's youngest country, which gained its independence from Sudan in 2011, has faced ongoing challenges since a political face-off between the two leaders erupted into full-blown conflict in December 2013.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement that formally ended the conflict, fighting and instability have persisted.

According to Festus Mogae, Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), little meaningful progress has been achieved in the implementation of the agreement, Mr. Wane said.

More than ever before there is a critical need for continued and close coordination between Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the African Union, the UN and the larger international community to leverage collective influence to bring an end to the suffering of the civilian population and help put South Sudan on a more positive trajectory, he stated.

IGAD comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

Security situation remains cause for 'very serious concern'

Mr. Wane said the security situation in South Sudan remains a cause for very serious concern. The expected ceasefire remains elusive as military operations continued during the reporting period, mostly in Upper Nile.

In July, 136 access incidents were reported by the humanitarian community the highest number recorded in any one month since December 2013.

Incidents of looting also spiked during July, with 15 incidents reported across the country. Of particular concern were the six major looting incidents of warehouses and trucks in transit leading to the loss of 670 metric tons of food meant for vulnerable communities in Eastern Equatoria, Lakes, Upper Nile and Warrap.

In meetings between UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and South Sudan's key government officials earlier this month, President Salva Kiir and his cabinet members expressed reservations on the inclusion of some personalities such as Riek Machar in any dialogue process, Mr. Wane said.

But there was, however, an acknowledgement that sizeable communities cannot be left out of a process just because they were led by or that they supported a particular individual, he added.

While the National Dialogue has made some progress, it continues to be criticized for its lack of inclusivity.

Meanwhile, the Government and the AU Commission have agreed on the text of the legal instruments for the establishment of the South Sudan Hybrid Court. They will now submit the legal instruments for approval.

[Flow of refugees, migrants to Europe slows but sea journey remains deadly – UN](#)

24 August 2017 – Fewer [refugees and migrants](#) arrived in Europe in the first half of this year, but the likelihood of dying among people seeking to reach Europe is still alarmingly high, the United Nations refugee agency today reported, calling for renewed commitments to protect people.

According to the report, [Desperate Journeys](#), an estimated 2,253 people died or went missing at sea, and at least 40 died on land routes at or near European borders.

Taking measures to reduce the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, without at the same time stepping up peace-making, development, and safe pathways is morally unacceptable, [said](#) UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. We can't afford to ignore abuses clearly taking place simply because they happen out of our sight.

In terms of passage, the report shows that overall Mediterranean crossings fell sharply in the first half of this year compared with the same period in 2016, due mainly to a 94 per cent decline in people using the sea route from Turkey into Greece.

Meanwhile, crossings from North Africa to Italy have remained at around the same level as last year, The High Commissioner's Office ([UNHCR](#)) said, adding that violence and abuse along the journey is rife.

Many of the migrants and refugees who have reached Italy from Libya have survived dangerous desert crossings and abuses that include sexual violence, torture, and abductions for ransom, according to the report. At sea, the risk of dying en route to Italy is one in 39.

Some 11,400 of those who reached Italy in the first half of the year were children unaccompanied or separated from their families, according to the latest figures.

Many arrivals, amongst them children, were victims of sexual violence or trafficking. In all, over 40 per cent of asylum applicants in Italy between January and June qualified for protection of some kind, the UN agency noted.

The UNHCR report also shows a rise in arrivals to Spain, with 9,500 people reaching the country as compared with 4,936 in the first months of 2017 and 2016, respectively.

[UN agencies aid millions affected by flooding, landslides in South Asia](#)

24 August 2017 – United Nations humanitarian agencies are working with the Government and partners in Nepal to bring in clean water, food, shelter and medical aid for some of the 41 million people affected by flooding and landslides in South Asia.

Nearly a thousand people have been killed, and tens of thousands of homes, schools and hospitals have been destroyed in Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

There is the possibility that the situation could deteriorate further as rains continue in some flood-affected areas and flood waters move south, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

([OCHA](#)) today [said](#) in an updated note.

In Bangladesh, nearly 2,000 local medical teams have been deployed, even as one-third of the country is reportedly underwater. Aid workers are concerned about waterborne diseases, such as diarrhoea and malaria.

Their most urgent concern is to accessing safe water and sanitation facilities, OCHA said earlier this week, [citing national authorities](#).

It also warned of dangers to women and children, who are at increased risk for abuse, violence and sexual harassment.

In India, rescue operations are ongoing in many flood-affected areas, with those stranded being rescued by helicopter.

Flood relief camps have been established for those displaced by the disaster where they are being provided with food and shelter, OCHA said.

The Government recently announced additional funding for relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and flood mitigation.

In addition to people suffering, Indian authorities also reported large parts of a famous wildlife reserve park destroyed, with endangered animals killed.

[UN releases \\$2.5 million from pooled fund to tackle energy crisis in Gaza](#)

24 August 2017 – With Gaza entering its fourth month of a serious energy crisis, the United Nations today released a further \$2.5 million from a pooled humanitarian fund to cover urgent needs in the Palestinian enclave.

The [serious decline in living conditions in Gaza](#) continues, said UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), Robert Piper, in a press release.

The disbursement from the Humanitarian Fund for the oPt will bolster the UN's emergency fuel operation which primarily supplies fuel to generators to maintain operations in around 190 critical health, water and sanitation installations. Virtually all the two million Palestinians living in Gaza benefit from this fuel operation.

The funding will also provide essential life-saving medical equipment and supplies. Solar panels, cash assistance and agricultural supplies that are also included to improve food security and reduce food production costs for 2,200 small-scale farmers who irrigate by pumping from small wells.

Gaza has been experiencing a severe electricity crisis since mid-April, when

the Gaza Power Plant went offline due to a factional dispute between the Palestinian Authority and the rival Hamas group in Gaza over tax rates for the fuel needed at the plant.

Power supply to households and services has barely covered 25 per cent of needs over the last six weeks.

Hospitals and other facilities are operating almost 24/7 on generators that are not designed for continuous use in this way.

The last bulk shipment of essential drugs from the West Bank was in March 2017; an estimated 40 per cent of essential drugs are unavailable already, or will be totally depleted within four weeks. There is a large backlog of patients requiring urgent medical referral to hospitals outside the strip.

The Fund is operated from donations currently from the Governments of Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

In early July, humanitarian partners in the Occupied Palestinian Territory identified an urgent set of top-priority interventions to respond to the current crisis and appealed for \$25 million. To date, this urgent funding appeal is only 30 per cent funded.

“The humanitarian plight and the human rights of Gaza’s civilian population – over half of them children – appear to have disappeared from view,” Mr. Piper said.

[Emigration and food insecurity in Central American ‘dry corridor’ focus of new UN-backed study](#)

23 August 2017 – A new inter-agency study released today found a correlation between prolonged droughts in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras exacerbated by El Niño phenomenon from 2014 to 2016 and the increase in irregular migration from these countries to the United States, the United Nations food relief agency reported.

“The study provides an important insight into why people flee and the impact on the family members staying behind,” said World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Barreto.

“It is perhaps this second aspect which makes this study stand out from much of the analysis conducted on migration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to date,” he added.

[Food Security and Emigration](#) shows the need to invest in long-term programmes to discourage people in the Dry Corridor from emigrating, and to reduce the risks for emigrants and the impact on the families left behind.

The study indicates that a trend of younger and more vulnerable people are leaving food-insecure areas especially in the Dry Corridor, a drought-prone area that crosses these countries.

Family members left behind face the burden of paying the debts of those who have migrated. If the emigration is unsuccessful, the family faces the problem of growing debt and of how to meet their food needs, the report said.

The document also pointed out that 47 per cent of the families interviewed were food-insecure, noting that these levels have never been previously recorded in the region even in assessments carried out over the past three years in the Dry Corridor.

Source: FOOD SECURITY AND EMIGRATION – Why people flee and the impact on family members left behind in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

Additionally, some 72 per cent of the families interviewed said they were applying emergency coping strategies, such as selling their land, farm animals and tools to buy food.

Meanwhile, the study reveals that in the cases of successful emigration, 78 per cent of households in the home country receive monthly remittances, of which 42 per cent indicate that remittances are their only source of income.

Indeed, more than half of the money received from emigrants is used by family members to buy food, followed by agricultural investments like buying land and animals and investing in small businesses.

This study was funded and jointly produced by WFP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) with the collaboration of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

The research is a follow-up to the results and recommendations of the 2015 exploratory study on the links between migration, violence and food security, *Hunger without Borders*.