

# Funding shortfall threatens education for children in conflict, disaster zones – UNICEF

7 July 2017 – Some 9.2 million children living in emergency countries will miss out on schooling unless the international community contributes an additional \$820 million, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned at the start of today’s G20 summit.

“Without education, children grow up without the knowledge and skills they need to contribute to the peace and the development of their countries and economies, [aggravating an already desperate situation for millions of children](#),” said Muzoon Almellehan, UNICEF’s latest and youngest Goodwill Ambassador, speaking from Hamburg, Germany, where she is representing UNICEF at the summit.

“For the millions of children growing up in war zones, the threats are even more daunting: not going to school leaves children vulnerable to early marriage, child labour and recruitment by armed forces,” Ms. Almellehan said.

The UN agency has requested \$932 million for its education programmes in conflict and disaster zones, but has received less than \$115 million.

The greatest needs are in the Central African Republic and Yemen, where the funding gaps are above 70 per cent.

Students are missing out on opportunities to learn in Iraq and Syria, as well. According to a survey cited by UNICEF, pursuing educational opportunities was mentioned as one of the factors leading families and children to flee their homes.

A survey of refugee and migrant children in Italy revealed that 38 per cent of them headed to Europe to gain access to learning opportunities. In Greece, one in three parents or caretakers said that seeking education for their children was the main reason they left their countries for Europe.

UNICEF said that for children who have experienced the trauma of war and displacement, education can be life-saving.

“When I fled Syria in 2013, I was terrified I would never be able to return to school. But when I arrived in Jordan and realized there was a school in the camp, I was relieved and hopeful,” said Muzoon. “School gives children like me a lifeline and the chance of a peaceful and positive future.”

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres is also participating in the two-day summit of the G20, which includes leaders from 19 countries and the European Union.

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# UN Member States set to adopt 'historic' treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons

6 July 2017 – In what is set to be a “historic” moment at the United Nations, Member States will adopt on Friday a legally-binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

“After our final review of the text yesterday, I am convinced that we have achieved a general consensus on a robust and comprehensive prohibition,” said Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica, who serves as the President of [the conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons](#).

“This will be a historic moment and it is the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty to be concluded in more than 20 years,” she told a news conference at UN Headquarters.

According to the draft text, the treaty covers the full range of nuclear-weapons-related activities, prohibiting undertaking by any State party to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The prohibitions also include any undertaking to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The treaty will be open for signature to all States at UN Headquarters in New York on 19 September 2017, and enter into force 90 days after the 50th instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession has been deposited.

To date, however, a number of countries have stayed out of the negotiations, including the United States, Russia and other nuclear-weapon States, as well as many of their allies. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has not joined the talks either.

In a recent interview, the newly appointed High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, told UN News that “nuclear-weapon States and some of their allies are not able to join the negotiations at the moment, but hopefully a treaty will be something they will be able to join eventually.”

She said that “the door must be open to all States, and this inclusiveness will have to be built into the treaty.”

The draft treaty does include various pathways for nuclear-armed States to

join. For instance, a State must first eliminate its nuclear weapons programme prior to joining. That State would then need to cooperate with the UN International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) in verifying the correctness and completeness of its nuclear inventory, thus following the same path as South Africa in the 1990s.

“Since this is a negotiation, no delegation can leave having gained everything they asked for from their national perspective,” noted Ms. Gómez, while adding that she was confident that “the final draft has captured the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of those participating in the conference, including civil society, whose enthusiasm, knowledge and collective experience have been a key driver of this process.”

In response to questions, Ms. Gómez stressed the importance of putting an international legal norm in place as a first step towards achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world, explaining that when conditions later become ripe for those nuclear-armed States to join, an architecture by which to do so exists.

All humanity expects that nuclear-armed States join the treaty “sooner than later,” but “I have no dates,” she said.

Asked about the impact on the negotiations of the current tensions over the DPRK’s nuclear programme and ballistic missiles activities, she said that having a norm in place does influence the behaviors of a State. It also plays a fundamental role in shaping a new security paradigm for the 21st century, she added.

“The treaty, no doubt, will compliment and strengthen the global architecture on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. This is a historic event for humanity.”

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## [UN mission in Mali condemns ceasefire breaches by peace accord signatories](#)



Representatives of of the signatory groups (Plateforme and CMA), pictured here in the foreground, meet with the head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix (center) and Mahamat Saleh Annadif (left), head of MINUSMA, in May 2017. Photo: UN Photo/ Sylvain Liechti

6 July 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali today condemned continuing ceasefire violations by two signatories of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

The accord was signed in June 2015 by the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) armed group, following its signature in May 2015 by the Government and a third party, the Plateforme coalition of armed groups.

"These violations [by CMA and Plateforme] include movements of armed convoys, provocations and even armed clashes, like the ones ongoing south of Aguelhok," UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric [told](#) reporters in New York.

Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)), urged the leadership of both groups to put an end to these violations immediately.

"If violations persist, they risk undermining their credibility as partners in Mali's quest for a lasting peace," said Mr. Annadif.

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## [In Myanmar, UN refugee chief calls for solutions to displacement and exclusion](#)

6 July 2017 – Concluding his first visit to Myanmar, the United Nations refugee chief today appealed for inclusive and sustainable solutions to protracted displacement and [statelessness](#).

"These are complex issues but they are not intractable," [said](#) High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in a press release issued by his office ([UNHCR](#)).

In Kachin and Rakhine states, some 100,000 and 120,000 people, respectively, have remained displaced for more than five years following the eruption of inter-communal conflict between Buddhists and minority Muslim Rohingya.

In Rakhine state, Mr. Grandi met with displaced Muslims in Sittwe's Dar Paing camp who expressed their strong desire to return home. He also reached out to Rakhine and Muslim communities north of Maungdaw and listened to their safety and livelihood concerns.

He also met with high-ranking officials in the South-east Asian nation to discuss humanitarian access in Kachin and Rakhine states.

"A crucial first step is to pursue freedom of movement and access to services and livelihoods for all. Accelerated pathways to citizenship are also part of the solution, as are efforts to tackle exclusion and poverty," Mr. Grandi said, alluding to the country's denial of citizenship for the Rohingya.

Among the officials he met with were State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi; the

Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Min Myat Aye; the Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population, U Thein Swe; and the Minister of Border Affairs, Lt. Gen Ye Aung.

“I was very happy to hear the State Counsellor saying that refugees are welcome back from Thailand,” said Mr. Grandi. “We agreed that returns must be voluntary and sustainable. Refugees should not come back to a situation of dependency but of self-reliance.”

He highlighted that the recommendations of the Advisory Commission of Rakhine State provide an important roadmap for the way forward.

The High Commissioner will next visit Thailand before concluding his regional trip in Bangladesh next week.

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## [At UN, panel probing chemical weapons use in Syria urges independence](#)

6 July 2017 – Noting that its members are working in a highly politicized environment, the panel investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria today appealed to the international community to allow it to complete its work in an independent, impartial and objective manner.

“We receive direct and indirect messages from many sides on how to do our work; my message again, please let us do our work,” said Edmond Mulet, the head of the three-member panel leading the Joint Investigative Mechanism on Chemical Weapon Use in Syria.

“We have a highly professional team,” Mr. Mulet told reporters at United Nations Headquarters, speaking alongside the two other members of the panel, Judy Cheng-Hopkins and Stefan Mogl. “We will present our findings based on fact and science.”

The Joint Investigative Mechanism, comprising the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons ([OPCW](#)) and the UN, is currently investigating the [4 April 2017 attack on the town of Khan Shaykhun](#). Images of that incident showed children struggling to breathe as a result of the possible use of sarin gas. Also being examined are the incidents in Umm Hawsh on 16 September 2016, where sulphur mustard may have been used.

Addressing the press following a closed-door briefing to the Security Council on the Mechanism’s [sixth progress report](#), the panel said that the starting point of the Mechanism’s investigation is the determination by an earlier fact-finding mission that a specific incident in Syria involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons.

The Mechanism is now gathering all relevant information concerning the two reported incidents, and stressed the importance of feedback from the Syrian Government on flight logs, notes on movements and lists of people interviewed.

“We’re working with the Syrian Government on this, and hopefully we’ll be given the necessary tools to do our work,” Mr. Mulet said, encouraging any other government, organization or entity to share information about these incidents with the Mechanism.

He added that the three-member panel “absolutely condemns” the use of chemical weapons and is working to identify the purported perpetrators.

Findings are expected to be presented to the Security Council in mid-October, said Mr. Mulet.

### *‘Progress’ in Astana, ahead of Geneva talks*

Also today, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, said “progress” had been achieved in the latest round of international talks in the Kazakh capital of Astana which will contribute to supporting the [intra-Syrian talks](#) due to resume in Geneva on Monday.

The discussions in Astana – being held between the Syrian conflict parties and led by Russia, Turkey and Iran – have focused on de-escalating the violence and strengthening a ceasefire in Syria.

“We have tried already three times you know with the ceasefire in Syria in the last period of the last three years, so we really want to give a chance to what is being done here and we believe that [efforts have been producing progress](#),” Mr. de Mistura told the press.

There are also discussion about confidence-building measures, including humanitarian demining and the issue of detainees, abductees and people who disappeared during the conflict.

The UN envoy confirmed that a new round of the intra-Syrian talks would begin in Geneva on 10 July, and that the progress in Astana could lead “to some progress on the political side” during the talks.

There have been technical discussions and meetings, said Mr. de Mistura, bringing “some clarity” and “some form of unity” among the opposition.

He noted the G20 meeting in Hamburg, Germany, due to start tomorrow, would be “a good occasion” for world leaders to address the Syrian conflict.

Mr. de Mistura’s work is guided by UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which endorsed a roadmap for a peace process in Syria, including issues of governance, constitution and elections.