

Uganda and UN to convene 'solidarity summit' amid fast-growing refugee emergency

21 June 2017 – Facing a fast-growing refugee crisis, Uganda is set to host in its capital, Kampala, a 'Solidarity Summit' with the support of the United Nations, to rally international support for refugees and host communities in the form of donations, investments and innovative programmes.

The two-day Summit, which opens Thursday, 22 June, comes as the UN [estimates](#) that in just one year, largely due to an influx of people fleeing violence and instability in South Sudan, the refugee population in Uganda has more than doubled – from 500,000 to more than 1.25 million – making the country host to the world's fastest growing refugee emergency.

Hosted by President Yoweri Museveni and UN [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres, the event, which is expecting 30 Heads of State and international donors, looks to raise \$2 billion to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and to support the hosting communities over the next four years.

Nearly 86 per cent of all South Sudanese refugees in Uganda are women and children

For many South Sudanese refugees, the first stop once they cross the border is Imvepi camp in northern Uganda's Arua district. A tent run by UN partner organization Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym, MSF, is where they receive vaccinations, malnutrition screenings and primary healthcare.

Mary Opangi, a young woman from crisis-torn Yei town in South Sudan, was nine months pregnant when she fled, and gave birth just after arriving at the Ugandan border. "Just as we came there, my stomach started to feel pain, that's why they took me to the hospital," she said.

She is one among a seemingly endless stream of daily arrivals that are putting a huge strain on Uganda's already meagre available resources.

VIDEO: Hundreds of South Sudanese flee to Uganda every day due to violence. With 1.3 million refugees, Uganda is now the world's third largest host country. The East African nation is set to host at 'Solidarity Summit' to rally international support to assist in tackling the fast-growing crisis.

Imvepi camp, which opened in February this year and is already filling up, is hosting 120,000 refugees, U Aye Maung, Field Officer for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) told *UN News*, which is on the ground in Uganda ahead of the Summit.

Water is scarce, he explained, and providing adequate shelter is another

challenge the UN refugee agency is facing.

"I think the biggest challenge is, if you see the terrains, one is the scarcity of water, we need a huge [amount] of water supplies every day. If you see 100,000 people [in the camp] ... shelter will be another priority for the next."

Furthermore, the newly arriving refugees depend entirely on food assistance.

The current funding does not cover the vast needs, the UN Office in Uganda underscored, and there is a risk that food rations might get cut.

Uganda has also opened its doors to refugees from Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. With an average of 2,000 new arrivals each day, the country needs urgent and robust support to deal with the refugee crisis.

'Uganda's magnificent response has been met by meagre support' UN refugee agency chief

In an opinion piece, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said the South Sudan refugee crisis and the question of Uganda's capability and resilience is proving to be an early test of the commitments of the [New York Declaration](#), adopted at a UN Summit last year with the aim of helping States plan a just, coordinated approach for global governance of both [refugees and migrants](#) within two years.

"So far, Uganda's magnificent response has been met by meagre support, but [...] there's a chance to turn the page, he said, stressing international indifference undermines Uganda's often-praised model for welcoming, supporting and integrating refugees. Yet, the Solidarity Summit is a chance for the world to step up so Uganda can continue to show us the way."

[UN spotlights health benefits of yoga, ancient practice that can ease stress of our modern 'laptop' lives](#)

21 June 2017 – Recognizing the universal appeal of yoga, the United Nations marked the 2017 edition of the [International Day of Yoga](#), which aims to integrate the benefits of healthy lives and wellbeing essential aspects of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

"Yoga is a practice that can be relevant to all ages, relevant to all cultures, irrespective of what socio-economic status people represent. It can be used to unite our complex and difficult world to promote not only healthy

lifestyles but to promote peace and security in the world,” [said](#) Dr. Nata Menabde, Executive Director of the New York Office of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), at an event entitled *Conversation: Yoga for Health*.

The theme for this year's celebration, organized by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, is 'Yoga for Health.'

WHO defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. While affordable health care services are vital, it is also important to spread awareness about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in promoting good health.

Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India, with the Sanskrit word *yoga* meaning 'to unite' – symbolizing the union of body and consciousness.

Today, it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity – promoting the practice of achieving sustainable lifestyles that are in harmony with nature. In this way, yoga contributes to wider societal wellbeing.

“Yoga is about our ability to feel yoga in our souls, to connect it to our minds and to integrate [...] with nature and the planet,” underscored Ms. Menabde.



Prior to the Day, the North Lawn of UN Headquarters was converted into a temporary yoga studio. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi



Swami Sivadasananda of Sivananda Yoga Retreat House in Austria led an abbreviated yoga class. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi



The men and women were taken through asanas, or yoga postures, as an introduction to the practice. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi



A special event on 'Conversation on Yoga for Health' was organized by the Indian Mission in association with WHO and the Department of Public Information. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



At the event, Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, Dr. Bruce Lipton, Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswatiji and Keith Mitchell share their experiences and knowledge to enrich the collective understanding of the unique features of Yoga. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



UN stamps illustrate Organizational aims, with recent issues covering the environment, world peace and the promise of a better world. Today, the UN Postal Administration issued a new special event sheet to commemorate the International Day of Yoga. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi

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Swami Sivadasananda of Sivananda Yoga Retreat House in Austria, who led an outdoor yoga class on the North Lawn of UN Headquarters, explained: “We are all caught up in our laptop jobs, our shoulders are stooped and we don’t breathe properly. Yoga fits like a glove” to alleviate these everyday stresses.

The United Nations endorsed the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, by adopting General Assembly resolution 69/131 that proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga.

The Day, which aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga, was also immortalized with the unveiling of a UN Postal Administration’s special Yoga Day commemorative stamp.

[The people of South Sudan are ‘desperate for peace,’ though political crisis persists – UN peacekeeping chief](#)

21 June 2017 – Deliberate actions by the Government and opposition armed forces as well as other actors to advance their political goals continue to severely undermine efforts to get the country back on the path to peace and development, the top United Nations peacekeeping official has warned.

“We must not lose sight of the fact that this tragedy is man-made,” Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told the Security Council today.

He added that the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA)-in Government, the SPLA-in Opposition, and various other entities, took decisions that have fed the conflict, creating “ever deeper divisions between the people of South Sudan.”

In his briefing to the 15-member Council, Mr. Lacroix emphasized that while the Organization continues to make every effort to implement its commitment

to the country, “only a truly inclusive political process and the genuine political will” of the key protagonists to end the conflict and implement agreements they reached will bring peace to the war-torn country.

Continued violence and insecurity has left more than half of South Sudan's population in need of food aid. Furthermore, a third of its population is displaced and half of those displaced have sought refuge in neighbouring Uganda, Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia.

Of particular concern, Mr. Lacroix said, are persisting hostilities in many parts of the country, even after a ceasefire commitment made by President Salva Kiir.

He also informed Council members that in the midst of the fighting, the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)) is “doing its utmost” to protect civilians.

“Our peacekeepers are persistent in getting through checkpoints to reach vulnerable populations, even when the patrols are threatened and, at times, shot at [...], giving the populations confidence that we are there to protect them enables us to report human rights abuses, and helps us to support our humanitarian partners in ensuring that assistance goes to those who need it most.”

He also updated members on progress towards the deployment of the Rapid Protection Force (RPF), mandated by the Council last year to provide a secure environment in and around capital Juba, and noted some issues concerning the plot of land provided by the Government to the RPF to establish its northern basing site.

Further in his briefing, with regard to a pledge made by President Kiir to release political prisoners, the UN peacekeeping chief told the Council that while one UN staff member was released recently, two others have been held for two years without charge, and another has recently been detained in Rumbek.

“We must judge the President's commitments by his actions, not his words,” said Mr. Lacroix, also calling for full freedom of movement for the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) to monitor and verify ceasefire violations as well as UNMISS, “which have faced far too many obstructions to their movements, making their work extremely challenging, and in some cases, impossible.”

[Warring parties in Yemen 'must take](#)

all feasible precautions' to minimize harm to civilians – UN envoy

21 June 2017 – Civilians in Yemen continue to be killed and injured during Ramadan, despite calls for the conflict parties to respect their obligations under international law, the senior United Nations aid official in the country warned today.

Targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Yemen continues during the holy month of Ramadan despite my repeated calls and the calls from the international community, including the UN Security Council, to all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights laws, [said](#) Jamie McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, in a press statement.

On 17 June, at least 22 civilians, including six children, were reported killed and injured in a series of air attacks on a market in Sa'ada Governorate, near the border with Saudi Arabia.

There were no reported military targets in the proximity of the market at the time of the attack, and no warning was issued to civilians in the area," said Mr. McGoldrick.

On 19 June, the power lines to the main water supply system in Dhamar City were damaged as a result of military activity, affecting one million people who rely on this water source and putting them at greater risk of death, given the current fast-spreading cholera outbreak in Yemen.

Following the attacks on the market in Sa'ada, the European Union and others in the international community have expressed concern over the reported deaths of civilians, noting that this is a stark reminder that Yemeni civilians are the ones bearing the brunt of a war that has devastated their country.

The disregard for the loss of civilian lives and damage to civilian infrastructure at a time of great need, due to the combined effects of the cholera outbreak and the looming famine, continues to shock me and must end," underscored the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Wars have laws and I implore that all parties to the conflict uphold their responsibilities to comply with international humanitarian and human rights laws," he continued. "The warring parties must distinguish between the civilian population and combatants at all times and between civilian objects and military objectives; and must take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects."

Mr. McGoldrick urged those influencing and arming the parties to use their position to end the conflict and to stop fuelling the violence.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is entirely man-made and it is immoral

to allow hardship and deprivation to continue. We must give hope to millions of Yemenis by showing that the world is not indifferent to their suffering,” he concluded.

Afghan Government must work to build trust in an ‘increasingly fragile environment’ – UN envoy

21 June 2017 – Warning that the recent surge of violent attacks in Afghanistan could signal a much worse and more fragile period ahead, the United Nations envoy for the country today called for urgent action to strengthen stability, including through improving the Government’s credibility, and urged all parties to exercise restraint and avoid violence.

“The months since my last briefing [have been unusually tense in Afghanistan](#),” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, briefing the UN Security Council today.

“Without enhanced efforts by the National Unity Government to increase political inclusiveness, strengthen accountability, and improve the Government’s credibility, particularly in the security sector, we are likely to face more crises in an increasingly fragile environment.”

In his briefing, the senior UN official spoke of the emerging difference following the 31 May [terrorist attack in Kabul](#) and warned that violent extremist groups could try to exasperate the divisions, especially along sectarian lines.

Urging all sides to exercise restraint and avoid violence, Mr. Yamamoto underscored the need to address the root cause of the issues and reminded national actors that efforts to build consensus and political stability are critical.

He also noted steps by the Government towards consolidating peace, such as a recent outreach on regional and security as well as implementation of the political agreement with a former insurgent group.

In the current context, Mr. Yamamoto – also the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) – said that there are two areas for immediate attention: elections and peace.

“We understand that the Independent Elections Commission will make an announcement as early as tomorrow regarding the date for parliamentary elections,” he said. “I believe that this announcement will contribute to allaying the political tensions I have referred to.”

Turning to the second priority, peace, the Special Representative of the Secretary General encouraged the people of Afghanistan to begin an internal dialogue on the meaning of peace and reconciliation and added that the Government and the Taliban needed to engage directly with each other to define a political solution.

Also, recalling [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres' [visit to Afghanistan last week](#), Mr. Yamamoto stated that the visit clearly demonstrated his and the [UN system's] commitment to Afghanistan, solidarity with its people, and perseverance in the pursuit of peace.