

# On World Refugee Day, UN urges support, solidarity for record number of displaced people

20 June 2017 – With a record 65.6 million people last year forcibly uprooted from their homes by violence and persecution, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today called on the international community to provide support and solidarity.

“We reflect on the courage of those who fled and the compassion of those who welcome them,” the Secretary-General said in his video message for [World Refugee Day](#), marked annually on 20 June.

He noted that more people than ever in our lifetimes are fleeing war, disasters and persecution.

“Hardship, separation, death,” Mr. Guterres said, recalling nightmare stories heard from refugees and displaced persons, whose number rose 300,000 since the end of 2015.

Conflicts have displaced 12 million Syrians, 7.7 million Colombians, 4.7 million Afghans and 4.2 million Iraqis, according to a [report](#) released yesterday by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

Despite the hardships of fleeing with nothing, “they never lose their dreams for their children or their desire to better our world,” Mr. Guterres said. “They ask for little – only our support in their time of greatest need and our solidarity.”

The UN chief said it is “so inspiring to see countries with the least doing the most for refugees.”

According to the report, about 84 per cent of the people were in low- or middle-income countries as of end 2016. Of that figure, one in every three people, roughly 4.9 million people, were hosted by the least developed countries.

To mark the Day, Mr. Guterres, will hold a press conference in New York later today.

***When we stand #WithRefugees, we also stand for respect and diversity for all***

In his remarks, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said the Day is also a moment to [recognize those communities and people](#) around the world who receive refugees and the internally displaced in their midst, offering them a safe place, and welcoming them in their societies.

In a world in which uncertainty often abounds; economic instability, political upheaval and violence close to home “can make us want to shut

our eyes or close our doors. But fear and exclusion will not lead us to a better place – they can only lead to barriers, alienation and despair,” he stressed.

“It’s time to change this trajectory. And for the better,” he stated, noting that in countless communities, including in the poorest countries that host the vast majority of the world’s refugees, business people, faith communities, teachers, journalists and many more are joining together to provide refuge to the displaced and foster their inclusion in their societies.

“Inclusion requires opening our minds, hearts and communities to refugees. It requires a whole of society approach,” Mr. Grandi underscored.

World Refugee Day is a moment to ask what each of us can do to overcome indifference or fear and embrace the idea of inclusion, “to welcome refugees to our own communities, and to counter narratives that would seek to exclude and marginalize refugees and other uprooted people,” he emphasized.

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## [Disarming and reintegrating fighters into society key to sustaining peace – UN officials](#)

19 June 2017 – Celebrating the tenth anniversary of the development of United Nations standards for having former combatants lay down weapons and reintegrate into society, senior UN officials today highlighted how crucial the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes are to sustaining peace.

“Over the past three decades, [DDR](#) has become an integral part of peace operations across the globe. DDR has played a key role in violence prevention, stabilization and support to political processes,” High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu told a high-level roundtable, titled ‘Tenth anniversary of the Integrated DDR Standards and the experience of Côte d’Ivoire.’

The UN peacekeeping mission in Côte d’Ivoire, known by its French acronym, UNOCI, which was set up in April 2004, will [close at the end of this month](#).

“This crucial contribution to sustaining peace is manifested in successful DDR programmes, as witnessed in Central America, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia and – of course – Côte d’Ivoire,” Ms. Nakamitsu said, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The heightened political and security challenges in recent times have made peacekeeping, and more specifically DDR, more challenging. These include contexts in which there is no peace agreement or inclusive political process, a rising number of armed groups with regional agendas and links to transnational criminal networks as well as a large number of illicit arms within communities exacerbating the threat of violent extremism.

The past decade of implementing the Integrated DDR Standards has taught us that as complex as DDR appears, it is a tool that can adapt to realities on the ground. UN disarmament chief Izumi Nakamitsu

Community Violence Reduction (CVR), including community security measures, are examples that can complement classic DDR programmes to create the space for stability, recovery and sustainable peace, she noted.

The 2017 revision of the [Integrated DDR Standards](#) and development of new guidance including on disarmament and arms control will help ensure that DDR remains relevant to contemporary and future peace operation contexts, and that Integrated DDR Standards continue to be the living and dynamic tool it was meant to be.

Standardizing guidance on DDR operations in 2006 was a major step towards improving the 'One UN' approach to carrying out its DDR mandate, she said, adding that it is now crucial that we use the revision to take UN DDR to the next level.

Echoing Ms. Nakamitsu's key points, Fabrizio Hochschild, Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, stressed that 10 years after the publication of the Integrated DDR standards, its revision is an excellent opportunity to reflect the wider reform efforts by the Secretary-General.

Statistically speaking, there has never been a moment in history where more people have enjoyed as much prosperity and security. Nevertheless, there is truth to the common perception that the multilateral system has not dealt with the current transnational challenges effectively in light of new signs of fragility and unpredictability, he said.

This is what has brought the Secretary-General to start his term with a strong emphasis on prevention and reform, he added.

***Primacy of national ownership is essential for a successful DDR process***

Also speaking at the roundtable was Alexandre Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, who highlighted four key points.

He said that first, reintegration needs to ensure that the political, social and economic grievances of former combatants are properly addressed. Second, DDR initiatives cannot be sustained if they are not supported by well-funded, long-term reintegration programmes for ex-combatants. Third, there is a need

to re-think partnerships more strategically.

Lastly, the primacy of national ownership is essential for a successful DDR process, he said, and in that regard, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had been exemplary through its strong commitment to complete the DDR process, which had been fully led by the personal vision of President Ouattara and effectively implemented by the national *Autorité pour le DDR* headed by Fidèle Sarassoro. "This was critical in mobilizing funding and partners had confidence in the Government's visible commitment," he said.

Other speakers included Ambassador Claude Stanislas Bouah-Kamon; Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations; El Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; David Clay, Deputy Political Coordinator, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations; and Jean-Paul Laborde, Assistant Secretary-General & Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate.

The meeting was moderated by Dmitry Titov, outgoing Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions and Kelvin Ong, Chief of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch.

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## 'Sexual violence is a threat to every individual's right to a life of dignity' – UN chief

19 June 2017 – Marking the [International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#), United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today paid tribute to the women, girls, men and boys who have suffered the atrocity of sexual violence in conflict, and reaffirmed "our global commitment to eliminate this scourge."

"Rape and sexual violence in conflict are [tactics of terrorism and war](#), used strategically to humiliate, degrade and destroy, and often to pursue a campaign of ethnic cleansing," the Secretary-General said in his message for the International Day.

"They should never be downplayed as war's inevitable by-product," he continued. "Sexual violence is a threat to every individual's right to a life of dignity, and to humanity's collective peace and security."

This year, the Day is being observed this year under the theme 'Preventing Sexual Violence Crimes through Justice and Deterrence.'

Mr. Guterres underscored that the UN "is making every effort to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence by using preventive

diplomacy, fostering peacebuilding and development, encouraging national action, and ending gender discrimination.&#8221

&#8220We will continue to monitor, report, provide care for survivors and spare no effort in pressing for perpetrators to be held accountable,&#8221 he continued.

The Secretary-General stressed, &#8220The United Nations is constantly striving to enhance the capacity of our peacekeeping personnel to protect vulnerable civilians and to pursue justice in the case of all abuses. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to help put a stop to these crimes.&#8221

Mr. Guterres concluded by urging that everyone &#8220use this Day to rededicate ourselves, on behalf of every survivor, to ending sexual violence in conflict and providing peace and justice for all.&#8221

A [panel discussion](#) to commemorate the second annual International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict will be held at UN Headquarters in New York tomorrow.

In June 2015, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 19 June as the International Day to highlight the need to end conflict-related sexual violence, to honour the victims and survivors of sexual violence around the world and to pay tribute to all those who have courageously devoted their lives to and lost their lives in standing up for the eradication of these crimes.

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## [UN urges 'reboot' of drought responses to focus more on preparedness](#)

19 June 2017 – Investing in preparedness and building the resilience of farmers is fundamental to cope with extreme drought, because responding to such situations when they hit might be too late, the head of the United Nations agricultural agency said today.

&#8220People die because they are [not prepared to face the impacts](#) of the drought &#8211 because their livelihoods are not resilient enough,&#8221 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director-General José Graziano da Silva told an international seminar in Rome, Italy, recalling that more than 250,000 people perished from hunger in the 2011 drought in Somalia.

&#8220Saving livelihoods means saving lives &#8211 this is what building resilience is all about,&#8221 he added, noting that for years, the focus has been responding to droughts when they happen, rushing to provide emergency assistance and to keep people alive.

While these emergency responses are important, investing in preparedness and resilience puts countries on a footing to act quickly before it is too late, meaning that farmers and rural communities are better positioned to cope with extreme weather when it does hit.

The need for a global drought re-boot is pressing. The many impacts of drought drive not only hunger and instability but cause economic losses up to \$8 billion each annually.

As the planet's climate changes, severe dry-spells are becoming more and more frequent. Since the 1970s, the land area in the world affected by situations of drought has doubled.

People die because they are not prepared to face the impacts of the drought  
FAO Director General

The burden is especially high in developing countries, where agriculture remains an economic mainstay. Over 80 percent of damage and losses caused by drought are born by agriculture in the developing world, FAO studies have shown.

And Africa in particular has borne the brunt. Between 2005 and 2016, 84 droughts affected 34 different African nations.

At today's event, FAO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen their cooperation. They will cooperate in improving agro-meteorological data, tools and methods as well as enhancing access by small farmers to products and services to help them anticipate and proactively prepare for droughts.

WMO provides guidance and scientific information to strengthen national services responsible for addressing drought risks to agriculture," said WMO Secretary General Petteri Taalas. "We encourage countries to take early action against drought and to move towards a more proactive approach."

International Fund for Agriculture Development ([IFAD](#)) President Gilbert F. Houngbo in his remarks emphasized the need break the cycle of crisis, disaster and relief, calling on the international community to be proactive and to think not just of today's emergencies, but also of how to prevent tomorrow's.

"This means investing in smallholder farmers to help them address productivity challenges, give them access to markets and finance and most importantly encourage climate-smart agriculture so that when the drought inevitably comes, they have the tools they need to survive and thrive," said Mr. Houngbo.

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# Violence and persecution uprooted record 65.6 million people in 2016, UN reports

19 June 2017 – Nearly 66 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes last year, the United Nations refugee agency today reported, stressing the “very high” pace at which conflict and persecution is forcing people to flee their homes.

The figure equates to “one person [displaced every three seconds](#)” less than the time it takes to read this sentence.

The report [Global Trends](#), released by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), marks a jump of 300,000 since the end of 2015.

“By any measure this is an unacceptable number,” said UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, urging “solidarity and a common purpose in preventing and resolving crisis.”

He also called for properly protecting and caring for the world’s refugees, internally displaced and asylum-seekers who currently number 22.5 million, 40.3 million, and 2.8 million, respectively.

According to the report, Syria remains “the world’s biggest producer of refugees” with 12 million people living in neighbouring countries and away from the region. There are 7.7 million displaced Colombians, 4.7 million Afghans and 4.2 million Iraqis.

However, in 2016, South Sudan became “the biggest new factor” when peace efforts broke down in July resulting in some 737,400 people fleeing by the end of the year.

Nyawet Tut, a South Sudanese mother of five in her 30s, described how soldiers set fire to her village and she had to run for her life with her own five children and five others of relatives killed in the conflict.

“My husband was killed in the war which, in addition to the shortage of food, made me decide to leave my home, everything, behind,” she told UNHCR staff during an interview at a temporary way station in Ethiopia.

In total, about 3.3 million South Sudanese had fled their homes by the end of the year, in what is known as the fastest-growing displacement of people in the world.

## ***Youngest faces of war***

About half of the refugee population last year were children younger than 18 years of age, according to the report.

This is in contrast to the fact that children make up only about 31 per cent of the total world population.

Among its findings, the report noted that some 75,000 asylum claims were received from children travelling alone or separated from their parents. These include youngsters like Tareq, 16, who dodged armed combatants to walk out of Syria into neighbouring Turkey.

“There was no future where we lived,” he told UNHCR. “There was no university and no work. There were troops grabbing young children like me, and they send them to war, and they get killed. I wanted to study.”

### *Seeking refuge in poor countries*

Developing countries are hosting the majority of the world’s refugees, UNHCR reported.

About 84 per cent of the people were in low- or middle-income countries as of end 2016. Of that figure, one in every three people, roughly 4.9 million people, were hosted by the least developed countries.

“This huge imbalance reflects several things including the continuing lack of consensus internationally when it comes to refugee hosting and the proximity of many poor countries to regions of conflict,” the UN agency said.

In addition, the figure illustrates the need for countries and communities supporting refugees and other displaced people to be robustly resourced and supported,” UNHCR said, warning that the absence can create instability in the host countries.

Today’s report is being released on the eve of World Refugee Day, marked annually on 20 June.