

[UN chief praises 'vision, tenacity' of the late Helmut Kohl, chancellor who reunited Germany](#)

16 June 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has lauded the vision and tenacity of the former Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl, who died today at the age of 87.

A statement issued by the Secretary-General's Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said Mr. Guterres [learned with great sadness](#) of Mr. Kohl's passing.

Noting that Mr. Kohl was "Germany's longest-serving chancellor," the statement said that he "played an instrumental role in the peaceful reunification of his country, within a year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and helped set a course for the historic process of Europe's political and economic integration."

"Today's Europe is a product of his vision and his tenacity, in the face of enormous obstacles," said the statement, which extended the UN Secretary-General's condolences to Mr. Kohl's family and to the Government and people of Germany.



Helmut Kohl (left) meets with former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. UN Photo/Evan Schneider



Helmut Kohl (left) meets with former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali. UN Photo



Helmut Kohl (left) meets with former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuella (center). UN Photo



Helmut Kohl (left) pays courtesy call on former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim. UN Photo

UN refugee agency urges sustained access as civilians flee Raqqa fighting

16 June 2017 – As fighting in and around the Syrian city of Raqqa continues to take a toll on civilians and displaces thousands every day, the United Nations refugee agency has called for greater and sustained access to that it can reach those in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) overland access to more than 430,000 estimated to be in need across the larger Raqqa governorate remains either cut off or extremely difficult, resulting in need airlift supplies – a costly and complex undertaking.

With partners [we continue to explore all possible supply routes](#) and are working with the authorities to secure greater access to those in need, Andrej Mahecic, a spokesperson for the UN agency said earlier this week.

However, the situation on the ground is complicated by the number of locations where those fleeing the fighting are taking shelter and the sheer number of new displacements. Last month alone, at least 100,000 people left their homes in search of safety.

Many have been displaced more than once, and tens of thousands are passing through camps or transit sites and quickly moving on to other areas or returning to their places of origin.

According to Mr. Mahecic, levels of humanitarian access vary for security and logistical reasons.

For example, UNCHR has been able to have regular access to the Mabrouka camp in Hassakeh, where approximately 1,700 people have taken shelter. But the situation at the Ein Issa camp is much worse.

Located to the north of Raqqa City and housing about 9,000 people, Ein Issa is over five hours by road from UNHCR's office in Qamishli – where the agency's Raqqa response is coordinated from and where the supplies are brought in by air – and access remains extremely challenging.

Needs in other areas where significant numbers of those displaced are residing is being assessed, noted the UNHCR spokesperson.

In the coming days and weeks, UNHCR along with our partners will continue to provide help for those in need and to step up our response where access and security conditions allow, he added.

A conflict zone with mines and unexploded ordnance common

On top of access challenges, humanitarian agencies also have to contend with

extremely hazardous conditions as a result of conflict and dangers such as mines and unexploded ordnance.

Resources are also badly-needed.

“Funding is not keeping up with needs on the ground,” said the UNHCR spokesperson, noting that the agency urgently requires \$37 million to continue to respond to fresh displacement.

The inter-agency Raqqa response plan which includes UNHCR and other UN agencies, also remains severely underfunded, having received only \$29 million (less than 20 per cent) of the \$153 million needed.

“It is vital to have access, resources and security to continue responding to this latest wave of displacement and suffering to hit already beleaguered and terrified civilians,” underscored Mr. Mahecic.

[Ukraine: 750,000 children at risk of losing access to safe drinking water, warns UN](#)

16 June 2017 – With the recent escalation of hostilities damaging vital water infrastructure in eastern Ukraine, at least 750,000 children are at imminent risk of being cut off from safe drinking water, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned today.

“Nearly three million people in eastern Ukraine rely on [water infrastructure that is now in the line of fire](#),” said Afshan Khan, UNICEF’s Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, noting that more families are expected to be cut off from safe drinking water, putting children at severe risk of disease and other dangers.

About 400,000 people, including 104,000 children, had their drinking water cut off for four days this week after two filtration stations for the South Donbass Water pipeline were destroyed by shelling. Urgent repairs were completed yesterday evening.

In Donetsk, power lines providing electricity to the city’s water filtration station were damaged earlier this month, threatening more than 1 million people’s access to safe water.

Children cut off from clean drinking water can quickly contract water-borne diseases such as diarrhea. Girls and boys having to fetch water from alternative sources, or who are forced to leave their homes due to disruptions to safe water supplies, face dangers from ongoing fighting and

other forms of abuse.

All sides of the conflict must allow urgent repairs when water sources are destroyed and immediately stop the indiscriminate shelling of vital civilian infrastructure," said Ms. Khan.

Read more on: [Conflict in Ukraine enters fourth year 'with no end in sight' UN report](#)

UNICEF has provided access to safe drinking water to more than 1.5 million people in Government and non-Government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

In 2017, UNICEF is appealing for \$31.3 million to provide health and nutrition support, education, clean water, hygiene and sanitation as well as protection for children and families affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The appeal has received about \$9.9 million, still \$21.4 million short of the target.

[Ahead of Father's Day, UNICEF cites critical role fathers play in early childhood learning](#)

16 June 2017 – A majority of children aged between three- and four-years-old in 74 countries, or about 40 million, have fathers who do not play or engage in early learning activities with them, according to a new study released today by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

What these numbers show us is that [father's are struggling to play an active role](#) in their children's early years," said Laurence Chandy, UNICEF Director of Data, Research and Policy, in a statement on the study, released as some 80 countries around the world are set to celebrate Father's Day this coming Sunday.

We must break down the barriers that prevent fathers from providing their babies and young children a conducive environment for them to thrive, including love, play, protection and nutritious food," he said.

The UNICEF analysis examined whether children aged three and four engaged in any play and early learning activities with their fathers, such as having their father read to the children, tell them stories or sing with them; taking them outside, playing with them; and naming, counting or drawing with them.

UNICEF urges governments and the private sector to increase spending and influence policies to support early childhood development programmes that

focus on providing parents with the resources and information they need to provide nurturing care to their children.

“We must ensure that all parents have the time, resources and knowledge they need to fully support their children’s early development,” Mr. Chandy said.

Advances in neuroscience have proven that when children spend their earliest years in a nurturing, stimulating environment, new neural connections can form at a once-in-a-lifetime speed of 1,000 per second. These connections help determine their health, ability to learn and deal with stress, and even influence their earning capacity as adults.

Research also suggests that exposure to violence and a lack of stimulation and care can prevent neural connections from occurring; and when children positively interact with their fathers, they have better psychological health, self-esteem and life-satisfaction in the long-term.

Read more: [Super Dads: New UNICEF campaign spotlights fathers’ critical role in children’s early development](#)

This month, UNICEF is inviting families to post photos and videos of what it takes to be ‘super dads,’ using the hashtag #EarlyMomentsMatter on their Instagram and Twitter accounts.

Photos and videos of UNICEF ambassadors and supporters who have got behind the campaign are being posted on UNICEF’s Instagram and Twitter, and featured on the campaign’s gallery, to inspire families across the world to share their ‘super dads’ moments.

[‘BRICS’ countries well place to help lead global hunger eradication charge – UN agency](#)

16 June 2017 – As the clock ticks towards the 2030 deadline for meeting global goals to eradicate hunger and poverty, the United Nations agriculture agency today asserted that five vitally important emerging economies, known collectively as the ‘BRICS’ countries, are well positioned to take a leading role in helping the world achieve these targets.

These five countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – form an economic block that accounts for more than 40 per cent of the world’s population and over 20 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Together, they produce more than one-third of global cereal production, with Russia becoming the largest wheat exporter in the world.

The BRICS countries play an important political role in the international arena. Developing countries around the world look to your successes in economic development over the past few decades as an example to follow, [said](#) Kundhavi Kadiresan, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, during a statement to the 7th Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture, in Nanjing, China.

Your experiences provide a path that can help us all meet our global collective commitments, namely those of the [2030 Agenda](#) its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the [Paris Agreement](#) [on climate change], added Ms. Kadiresan.

She pointed out that, despite trends towards urbanization, as poverty in the world today is primarily rural, accelerating rural development will be key to achieving the [SDGs](#).

The question is how can we do this? continued the regional representative. Our experiences in countries in different parts of the world have shown that it can best be done through a combination of agricultural growth and targeted social protection, but also through growth in the rural nonfarm economy.

She underscored that agriculture can be a driver of sustained and inclusive rural growth, saying "In low-income countries, growth originating from agriculture is twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth originating from other sectors of the economy."

All tools, approaches and technologies must also be accessible to poor farmers in developing countries for increased production and productivity.

An excellent example is South Africa's Fetsa Tlala, a government-led initiative to support subsistence and smallholder farmers expand cultivated land to food production.

Agricultural growth

Achieving agricultural growth would require research and development investments, in which BRICS countries could play a leading role as all five have strong agricultural research systems working on developing countries' challenges. Biotechnology and agro-ecological approaches would also be essential.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are becoming more widespread by the day, and they offer a promising approach to address many of the challenges small farmers face with regard to information on prices, weather forecasts, vaccines, financial services, and much more.

FAO is collaborating with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Food Policy Research Institute to make sure these technologies benefit smallholders.

Ms. Kadiresan also points out that social protection programmes also play a

key role in rural development – reducing poverty, benefitting health and strengthening family farmer confidence.