

# UN aid official warns of 'disastrous consequences' of power cut in Gaza

14 June 2017 – A senior United Nations humanitarian official in the occupied Palestinian Territory warned today about the disastrous consequences of a further reduction in electricity supply to the Gaza Strip on the living conditions of two million Palestinians.

A further increase in the length of blackouts is likely to lead to a total collapse of basic services, including critical functions in the health, water and sanitation sectors, said UN Humanitarian Coordinator Robert Piper in a statement.

The people in Gaza should not be held hostage to this longstanding internal Palestinian dispute, he added, calling on the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and Israel to put the welfare of Gaza's residents first.

This year marks 50 years since the start of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory.

RELATED: [After 50 years of Israeli occupation, 'now is the time' to create Palestinian state UN chief](#)

Early this week, the Israeli cabinet agreed to a reduction in the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip, following a decision by the Palestinian Authority to reduce its monthly payments for that supply by 30 per cent.

The reduction will bring most households and service-providers down to 2 hours or so of power per day, he said.

Hospitals, water supply, waste water treatment and sanitation services have already been dramatically curtailed since mid-April and depend almost exclusively on a UN emergency fuel operation.

An additional reduction in electricity will require the delivery of one million litres of fuel monthly, under the UN operation, to keep minimum functions operating at 186 essential facilities across the Strip.

The UN has already appealed to the international community to support its limited humanitarian efforts to prevent the collapse of vital life-saving, health, water, sanitation and municipal services, Mr. Piper said.

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## 'Security vacuum' in Central Africa may be exploited by armed groups – UN envoy

13 June 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Central Africa today expressed his concern that the withdrawal of troops from the regional force by some contributing countries would create a security vacuum that may be exploited by an armed group.

The continued threat by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to regional stability should not be underestimated, in particular as the Ugandan and the South Sudanese forces have now disengaged from the African Union Regional Task Force (RTF), along with the United States special forces, François Loucény Fall, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa ([UNOCA](#)), told the Security Council.

He explained that the Central African Republic national security forces, which could in the long run fill the gap left by the exit of the Ugandan forces, still require training and structural reforms. And the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the country, known by its French acronym MINUSCA, is not mandated to conduct anti-LRA military operations.

Any training efforts would need to be in line with the overall security sector reform process and coordinated with other partners supporting the Central African armed forces, he added.

Collectively, there is a need to remain focused on efforts aimed at the total eradication of the LRA, he said, stressing that UNOCA will remain engaged, including by reviewing the UN regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the LRA, and ensuring coordination among the various stakeholders working on the issue.

His semi-annual briefing also touched on political tensions that have persisted in some Central African countries, mostly related to recent or future electoral processes, including Gabon and the Republic of the Congo.

As for Lake Chad Basin, he said that the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group have undermined development and exacerbated economic hardship in the region. Boko Haram remains a serious threat to regional stability despite the military progress achieved by the Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against the terrorist group.

In conclusion, he called for a strong commitment of the Security Council to the promotion of peace and security in Central Africa.

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## Experts urge support for most marginalized persons with disabilities, as UN forum begins

13 June 2017 – As the largest and most diverse international disability meeting in the world kicks off at the United Nations in New York, leading experts in the field are calling for greater recognition of a range of human rights and fundamental freedoms for persons with disabilities while focusing on helping the most vulnerable among them.

“This conference needs to achieve a clear understanding on how to reach the most vulnerable among disabled persons, those who are affected by humanitarian crises and natural disasters and military conflicts,” says Theresia Degener, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“Most often [the most vulnerable among disabled persons] are disabled women and disabled girls. And if we do not tackle multiple discrimination, we don’t reach these most vulnerable groups of persons with disabilities,” she added in an interview with UN News ahead of the 10th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Conference of States Parties is held each year to exchange experience and ideas for implementation of the Convention, which was adopted in December 2006 with the aim of promoting full equality and participation of persons with disabilities in society. There are currently 174 States Parties to the Convention, making it one of the most widely ratified international human rights instruments.

Over one billion people in the world live with some form of disability. Persons with disabilities continue to be subject to stereotypes, prejudices, harmful practices and stigma.

“It is important to acknowledge that since the adoption of the Convention, 11 years ago, a lot of things are changing around the world,” Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, told UN News.

“We are seeing more accessibility, so it is easier for persons that use wheelchairs to move around. It is easier to have access to services, and that is fantastic.”



Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities, is in New York to attend the tenth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UN Photo/ Alban Mendes de Leon

Referring to her own day-to-day life, she defines the city in which she is based – Geneva, Switzerland – as fully accessible. Public transportation provides her with access to any place she wants to go, enabling her to benefit from all services that are available in her community. “I did not have that kind of access when I was little growing up in Costa Rica,” she says, recalling her childhood.

Ms. Degener also noted the progress made in recent years. “We can see that many countries have changed their laws, especially in respect to guardianship laws, mental health laws and voting laws.”

As a result, she added, “persons with disabilities have achieved more access to the election process and have achieved more freedom.”

Both women acknowledged that while progress has been made in a number of areas, several challenges still remain.

#### **Support for women and girls with disabilities**

One of the areas that requiring greater attention is creating the conditions that would enable women to work, given that the employment rate for women with disabilities is much lower than that for men. In this regard, Ms. Devandas called on all parties to step up efforts in this area, saying that “urgent action is needed.”

“There is very little attention [paid] to the dramatic situation that women with disabilities as well as girls with disabilities face in their daily lives. Not only in regards to employment, in regards to violence and in regards to education. You can add and add, because multiple layers of discrimination apply to women with disabilities.”

We cannot forget that to talk about inclusion, we need to be inclusive ourselves

“To change that, we need to increase the awareness and put more effort into recognizing the support that women with disabilities need to exercise their rights,” she stated.

She went on to say: “When we are talking about the rights of persons with disabilities, we are not talking a man in a wheelchair. We are talking about a very diverse group of people. And we need very diverse solutions. We cannot forget that to talk about inclusion, we need to be inclusive ourselves.”



Theresia Degener, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities. UN Photo/ Kim Haughton

### **The Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals**

In 2015, States adopted the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), the universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Ms. Degener noted that there is much in common between the Convention and the 17 Goals.

“Most of the rights enshrined in the Convention are also found in the Sustainable Development Goals. Whereas the Millennium Development Goals did not include disabled people, the [SDGs](#) do that now. Disability is mainstreamed.

“So, by trying to implement the SDGs, States Parties try to implement the purpose of the CRPD.”

She continued: “Also, we need to remember that a fifth of very poor populations in the world, those who live on less than a dollar a day, are made up of disabled people and their families. So when States Parties work towards eradication of poverty of disabled people they also implement the Convention by ensuring that disabled people can live a life which that has an adequate standard of living.”

### **Inclusive social protection**

With the start of the second decade of the Convention, Ms. Devandas cited two areas where advancement would be particularly beneficial. “The first one is if social protection policies are fully inclusive of persons with disabilities. The second one is to guarantee that support networks will be available for persons with disabilities.

We live in a world that is designed to support able-bodied people, but persons with disabilities as part of diversity also need support, and their support is different

“This means that persons with disabilities will be covered by universal health coverage, that we will have access to pensions, will have access to a specific benefit to support income, but also to recognize that we have additional costs for participation.

“At the same time, there should be this acknowledgement that support needs to be provided,” stressed Ms. Devandas. “In our societies everyone is supported. We do not notice anymore. We live in a world that is designed to support able-bodied people, but persons with disabilities as part of diversity also need support, and their support is different.

“We need to make sure that personal assistant devices and technology is provided to persons with disabilities so that we can fully participate on an equal basis with others. I think that if we have those things, it will make a

dramatic difference in the lives of persons living with disabilities.”

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## [Mine action vital to success of UN peace mandates, Security Council told](#)

13 June 2017 – The mitigation of the threats posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war is vital to the success of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, as well as to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the return of displaced persons, and sustainable development, a senior UN official told the Security Council.

“As an integrated component of peacekeeping and special political missions, mine action is critical to the safety, security and mobility of mission personnel and to effective and efficient mandate implementation along with its critical importance for protection of civilian populations, especially children and women,” said Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, during a thematic debate.

The debate, titled ‘Comprehensive Approach to Mine Action and Explosive Hazards Mitigation,’ was proposed by Bolivia, which holds the Council’s presidency for the month. Explosive hazards have been a key concern, especially for troop contributing countries. Nathalie Ochoa Nina, of the UN Mine Action Service in Colombia also addressed the meeting.

Explaining how mine action contributes to UN activities on the ground, Mr. Zuev said that, for example, in Iraq, risk education campaigns and humanitarian clearance of improvised explosive devices allows the safe return of displaced populations and delivery of humanitarian assistance. In South Sudan, the use of explosive detection dogs ensures that the sites sheltering civilians are free from explosive hazards, he added.

He went on to explain how the destruction of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices is vital to conflict prevention because those explosive materials could be “recycled” to construct new improvised explosive devices.

He also said that employing former soldiers in the field of mine clearance could help create conditions conducive to peace.

UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is also coordinating development of standards for the disposal of improvised explosive devices. These standards, expected to be completed by the 72nd session of the General Assembly, will ensure conformity in training, equipment and operations, Mr. Zuev said.

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## Protection of migrant and refugee children must be at core of new global compacts – UN agency

13 June 2017 – Amid [ongoing discussions towards](#) the first-ever global compacts on refugees and migration, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) joined other United Nations agencies meeting in Berlin today stressing that all parties involved in these talks must work together to address the needs of migrant children, consistent with their human rights.

“Every day at [IOM], we work with migrant children. Some have been compelled to move accompanied by relatives or guardians or on their own due to conflict, disasters, fear and despair,” [said](#) William Lacy Swing, IOM Director General, when discussing preparations for the Global Conference on Children on the Move.

He explained that other children migrate in search of better socio-educational opportunities and ultimately to pursue their own development and that of the society they live in.

With more than 250 participants from States, civil society, academia, UN agencies, private sector and individual experts, the conference takes into account children’s priorities and concerns, with the aim of assuring separate [global compacts](#) covering migrants and refugees.

“We want to ensure that child migration is always in the best interests of the child and that when it is not, sustainable solutions are found for children and their families both at home or in a new home elsewhere. These solutions should ensure that children are not left behind and that they are not exploited or even worse: trafficked. All migrant children are entitled to care and protection regardless of their migratory status,” concluded Mr. Swing.

In the [New York Declaration](#) Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016, the UN General Assembly decided to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The process to develop this global compact for migration started in April 2017. The Assembly will then hold an intergovernmental conference on international migration in 2018 with a view to adopting the global compact.

Different factors contribute to migrant children’s situations of vulnerability, including their age, risk factors at individual, household, community and structural levels, the reasons why they have migrated, and the conditions they face during travel, transit, and at destination.

IOM underscores that it will continue to strive for migrant children’s

wellbeing and best interests across the wide spectrum of activities the Organization is pursuing in support to all Governments, who are ultimately responsible for their protection.

The UN migration agency values this inclusive partnership and its goals, especially as the consultations progress for the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration &#8211 a major global process, to which IOM is extending technical and policy expertise as requested by UN Member States.