

# UN chief Guterres highlights importance of sustainable energy in message to EXPO 2017

10 June 2017 – Underlining the importance of energy, in particular for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called for urgent action to ensure that everyone has access to clean, affordable and efficient energy so that they can rise to their full potential.

“Energy is vital to our lives [...] Access to energy helps children to study at night, farmers to grow more crops and hospitals to provide better care,” said the Secretary-General in his message to EXPO 2017, which opened today in the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana.

In his remarks, the UN chief also noted that the theme of this year’s Astana EXPO, ‘Future Energy’, is all the more important given that energy in today’s world comes from many sources that contribute to climate change.

“It reminds us that the world must take urgent action to ensure that everyone has access to clean, efficient and affordable sources of energy [...] I hope this EXPO will help us resolve to contribute to more sustainable world,” added Mr. Guterres.

Being held from 10 June to 10 September, the World’s Fair EXPO 2017 explores the possibility of scaling up the world’s sustainable energy production, promoting energy security and efficiency, as well as encouraging the use of renewable energy around the globe.

**VIDEO:** UN Secretary-General’s message to EXPO 2017

The UN exhibit, a particular highlight at the EXPO, showcases technology and ideas that help the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development through sustainable energy.

“Given the urgency of the situation, the focus is going to be squarely on practical solutions,” said Cihan Sultanoğlu, the UN [Commissioner-General for the Organization’s participation in EXPO 2017](#), reminding participants of the simultaneous need to make sure every woman, every man, every girl, and every boy has access to affordable and clean energy by 2030, while keeping temperatures within 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Several UN entities, including the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) and UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) will host events, release findings and showcase their work on how to mobilize investments to

achieve breakthroughs on universal access to energy, renewable energy, and energy efficiency.

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## [All hands on deck: UN Ocean Conference wraps up with actions to preserve clean oceans, marine life](#)

9 June 2017 – The first-ever United Nations summit on oceans today wraps up with a global agreement to reverse the decline of the ocean's health, and more than 1,300 pledged actions for protecting the blue.

"The bar has been raised on global consciousness and awareness of the problem in the oceans," the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, told journalists in New York.

Mr. Thomson, whose native Fiji co-sponsored the event along with Sweden, said the organizers got what they wanted from the conference: "I'm 100 per cent satisfied with the results of this conference. Our aim was high. Our aim was to start the reversal of the cycle."

[The Ocean Conference](#) ends today with the adoption by consensus of a 14-point [Call for Action](#) where the participating Heads of State and Government and senior representatives "affirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."

Speaking alongside Mr. Thomson, the Secretary-General of The Ocean Conference, Wu Hongbo, said the negotiated document lists specific measures "to galvanize global commitment and partnerships for the oceans."

The main points from the political document and this week's discussions will be part of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)), the UN's central body for follow-up and review of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) adopted in September 2015. The HLPF is scheduled to meet next month in New York.

In addition to the political Call for Action, participants "who also included thousands of civil society representatives, academics, artists, financial institutions and other practitioners and activists" pledged actions to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. This is the goal of [SDG14](#).

By Friday afternoon, more than 1,300 [voluntary commitments](#) had already been registered.

Calling the figure *truly impressive*, Mr. Wu, who is also UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, underscored that the commitments were just for this conference and now comprise *an ocean solution registry*.

*'It's all of us or nothing'*

The week-long conference, where some 6,000 people participated, was the first time that the UN brought everyone together to discuss the challenges facing the world's oceans.

*When it comes to the ocean, it's the common heritage of humankind. There's no North-South, East-West when it comes to the ocean*, Mr. Thomson said. *If the ocean is dying, it's dying on all of us*.

The senior official underscored that by *getting the wheels turning* on SDG 14, the conference helped push forward action on all 17 [SDGs](#).

Topics that were discussed ranged from plastic pollution in the oceans and seas to ocean acidification and illegal fishing *which tie in with topics of alleviating poverty, ending hunger, promoting health, ensuring access to water and sanitation, and so on*.

Mr. Thomson attributed the success of the conference to the *wonderful way* in which all the different participants came together to discuss and work together.

He lauded the *openness to civil society, to the science sector, to private society* in breaking down the typical divisions between governments and other sectors. *There's no them and us. It's all of us or nothing*.

In addition to eight plenary meetings and seven partnership dialogues, The Ocean Conference included 150 side events, 4 exhibitions and interviews at [the SDG Media Zone](#).

These included events with New Oceans Advocate and globally-acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter [Cody Simpson](#), as well as Marine biologist [Douglas McCauley](#), Aboriginal artist [Sid Bruce Short Joe](#) and Spanish philanthropist [Álvaro de Marichalar](#), for example.

The mix of personalities and strong support for action brought *creativity and a sense of unity* to the action for oceans, said conference co-chairwoman, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden Isabelle Lovin.

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# Syria: UNICEF warns 40,000 children in the line of fire in Raqqa

9 June 2017 – An estimated 40,000 children are trapped in extremely dangerous conditions in Raqqa as fighting intensifies in and around the Syrian city, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) reported today, warning that many are caught in the crossfire.

Heavy violence in the city of Raqqa is threatening the lives of children, [said](#) Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director in the Middle East and North Africa Region, in a statement, which noted that at least 25 children were reportedly killed and scores injured in the city.

He explained that hospitals and schools have reportedly come under attack and that those attempting to flee are at danger of getting killed or injured. He emphasized that children are being deprived of the most basic and life-saving necessities and that little aid have reached Raqqa since 2013 due to violence and access restrictions.

He added that the conflict has resulted in massive displacements in and around the city, with some 80,000 children from Raqqa city now internally displaced and living in temporary shelters and camps.

RELATED: [As airstrikes hit Raqqa, UN sounds alarm over plight of civilians](#)

UNICEF called on all parties to protect children inside Raqqa, provide safe passage to those wishing to leave the city and grant a protected environment to civilians who fled the city.

## ***Vaccine-derived polio virus detected in children***

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reported that a vaccine-derived polio virus has been detected recently in two children in Syria, who have been paralyzed as a result.

Speaking at the regular briefing in Geneva, WHO spokesperson Oliver Rosenbauer said a third child was also detected with the virus, but has not been paralyzed.

He said these strains of polio detected in these children are rare but can arrive. The area affected is Deir-Ez-Zor Governorate in eastern Syria, which in 2013-2014 had been affected by a wild polio outbreak.

WHO is preparing an outbreak response to stop the virus’ spread.

In New York, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, told reporters that UN humanitarian workers are alarmed that no UN convoys have moved to besieged and hard-to-reach locations in Syria in over two weeks, with the last such convoy on 22 May.

He said that the UN continues its concern for the safety and well-being of some 4,000 people who have reportedly fled from the Tel Safuk area and surrounding villages along the Iraqi border to Markada town in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, due to ongoing fighting in the area.

Also, as fighting advances into Raqqa City, we have reports that over 95,000 people have already fled the city. We remind all parties to the fighting of their obligations to protect civilians under international humanitarian law, he said.

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## [Mali: Three UN peacekeepers killed in attack in Kidal](#)

9 June 2017 – Condemning yesterday's attacks against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) in the city of Kidal, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres reiterated the Organization's support to help implement the peace agreement in the West African country.

In a statement issued by his spokesman, the UN chief reiterated that [attacks targeting UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes](#) and called for the perpetrators to be swiftly brought to justice.

Mr. Guterres also expressed his condolences to the families of those the peacekeepers killed and a speedy recovery those injured.

According ([news release](#), in French) to MINUSMA, yesterday, its camp in Kidal was hit by intensive rocket and mortar fire. Initial information indicated that about a dozen shells of different calibres targeted the camp.

Shortly thereafter, peacekeepers situated outside the camp also came under attack.

The attacks follow a strengthening of patrols ([news release](#), in French) initiated by the Mission in Kidal in response to increased violence in the region as well as reported incidents of human rights abuses targeting specific communities.

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## [UN agencies explore nuclear](#)

# applications to combat food fraud and contamination

9 June 2017 – Through a joint project, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) and the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) are exploring mobile tools to combat food fraud and contamination, which result in global annual in the billions and pose a serious public health threat.

Traditional, professional laboratories have the ability to detect different types of fraud and contamination in food relatively quickly but such capacity is often limited in many countries and by their nature not very portable. The FAO-IAEA initiative is trying to fill this gap.

“The goal is [to make available low-cost devices and methods](#) for food authorities to use directly in the streets and markets, particularly in developing countries,” said Simon Kelly, a Food Safety Specialist at the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture, who leads the project.

The project seeks to build on the opportunities created by advances in field-deployable analytical equipment, such as adapting ion mobility spectrometry – a nuclear-based technology used by border police agencies to detect illicit drugs and explosives – to perform point-of-use screening tests to check for adulterants, contaminants and mould in food.

“The development of high performance hand-held computing devices, such as smart phones, has enabled a new generation of instruments that can be used outside the traditional laboratory environment,” added Iain Darby, head of the IAEA’s Nuclear Science and Instrumentation Laboratory.

**VIDEO:** Using Nuclear Science to Combat Food Fraud. *Source: IAEA*

The project will also develop methods to use such hand-held devices to test food authenticity given that labels and paperwork – which countries often depend on – can be easily forged.

“We need to rely on science to provide assurances,” said one of the project participants, Jose Almirall, Director of the International Forensic Research Institute at Florida International University, from the United States.

Syahidah Muhammad, Head of the Stable Isotope Laboratory at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, another participant pointed to the fact that many food fraud cases remain “hearsay” due to lack of proof.

Portable tools and standard operating procedures will allow authorities to respond faster at critical checkpoints, and protect the food supply chain

from being inundated with tainted products, she said.

The project will initially focus on devising methods to quickly analyse milk powder and vegetable oil, two commodities that are particularly vulnerable to adulteration. In many countries, gutter oil &#8211 the waste cooking vegetable oil recovered and recycled back into the food chain &#8211 has raised alarm.

The FAO-IAEA project &#8211 part of the two organizations' efforts to help their member states with nuclear and related techniques for science-based solutions to improve global food security and sustainable agricultural development &#8211 kicked with a meeting in the Austrian capital, Vienna, last month and the first results are expected with the next two years.

The countries participating in the endeavour include Austria, Belgium, China, India, Malaysia, Morocco, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uganda and the United States. The projected has been supported through contributions from Germany.