

[Afghanistan: After attack on funeral in Kabul, UN envoy calls for urgent measures to halt cycle of violence](#)

3 June 2017 – Denouncing today's deadly attack on a peaceful funeral procession in Kabul as "morally reprehensible and bereft of humanity," the top United Nations official in Afghanistan said that after a week of violence across the long-troubled country, "now is the time to seek unity and solidarity."

"I urge everyone [not to respond to violence with more violence](#), said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, expressing heartfelt condolences to family and friends of the victims, all civilians, "who once again suffered indescribable loss today."

He noted that today's attack, which reportedly killed at least seven people and wounded dozens of others attending a funeral in the Afghan capital, was "conducted by those opportunistically seeking to use these very fragile moments to destabilize Afghanistan."

Mr. Yamamoto underscored that the incident "follows so much violence this week across the country, in Khost, in Kabul and in other provinces," referring to a [truck explosion](#) on Wednesday that reportedly killed nearly 100 people and wounded hundreds of others near the presidential palace and foreign embassies. Just yesterday, he urged restraint amid [ongoing protests](#) that broke out in the capital in the wake of that attack.

"In the context of so much suffering, now is the time to seek unity and solidarity," underscored Mr. Yamamoto, who is also the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). He added that he has spoken with a broad spectrum of the country's political leaders, highlighting the importance of unity. They agreed that working together is essential to stop the cycle of violence, he said.

"Calm is now called for. Ensuring security in Kabul is an urgent priority, as this city continues to experience the highest number of civilian casualties," he continued, reiterating that the ultimate objective in Afghanistan must be a negotiated peace.

"Meaningful steps must take place now to obtain an immediate, nationwide halt to violence. I encourage all parties to enter discussions toward that end. The United Nations stands ready to help," said the envoy.

He also urged all members of the international community to help put an end the cycle of violence and support the foundations of a lasting peace. The upcoming Kabul meeting on regional peace and security provides an immediate opportunity in that regard.

I am in constant contact with members of the diplomatic community to work together to ensure coherent support," Mr. Yamamoto concluded.

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru, Poland elected to UN Security Council

2 June 2017 – In a single round of voting today, the United Nations General Assembly elected Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru and Poland as non-permanent members of the Security Council for the next two years.

They will fill seats to be vacated by Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay on 31 December. Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Sweden will continue as elected Council members, completing the second year of their respective terms in 2018. All new Council members will take their seats on 1 January 2018.

The five non-permanent members were elected according to the following pattern: three seats for the Group of African States and the Group of Asia-Pacific States, one for the Group of Eastern European States, and one for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. All the new members met the required two-thirds majority and were elected in the first and only round of voting. In a separate [by-election](#), the Assembly voted in favour of the Netherlands assuming the Council seat that Italy was due to vacate on 31 December. The two Member States [had earlier agreed](#) to share the two-year term, beginning on 1 January 2017, after a winner failed to emerge after multiple rounds of voting to select a candidate from among the Western European and Other States.

FEATURE: UN Ocean Conference 'dream come true' for Caribbean nations such as Trinidad and Tobago

2 June 2017 – Protecting the oceans is among the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), the blueprint for a more just and equitable world adopted by the 193 Member States of the United Nations in September 2015.

[SDG 14](#) on conserving and sustainably using marine resources is the springboard for the [Ocean Conference](#), taking place at UN Headquarters in New York from 5 to 9 June.

The meeting is especially relevant to Caribbean countries, according to Juan Miguel Diez, Director of the UN Information Centre ([UNIC](#)) for the region.

“The Ocean Conference is a dream come true for us in the Caribbean,” he said. “It brings together [SDG 14](#), but also the rest of the [SDGs](#), and provides us with an amazing opportunity to continue to do our work to raise awareness about this particular goal, but also to bring stakeholders together.”

The UNIC is based in Trinidad and Tobago, home to nearly 1.4 million people whose existence is tied to the sea, as Neila Bobb Prescott of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s ([FAO](#)) field office in the capital, Port of Spain, explained.

“Trinidad and Tobago is blessed with a particular phenomenon in that in our authority or geographic area, the ocean is 15 times greater than the land. We have so many livelihoods impacted by the health of the marine system, so hence we need to pay attention to it,” she said.

“We may not be the conventional sun, sea and sand people, but the marine resource is where you will find our oil and gas fields as well where you will find the endangered and threatened species around the island.”



Trinidad and Tobago is the largest oil and natural gas producer in the Caribbean, with exploration taking place both on land and at sea. The country’s Government says the energy sector is integral to long-term economic growth and development. Photo: UN News/Lulu Gao

Although the twin island nation moves to the beat of calypso, soca and other pulsating rhythms, it is oil and natural gas exports which power the economy. The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) estimates they account for as much as 60 per cent of gross domestic product.

The country’s Director of Maritime Services, Ronald Alfred, pointed out that the sector is closely aligned with shipping.

“Trinidad and Tobago is a member of the [International Maritime Organization](#) and we do abide by all the conventions they have put forward; for example, the [International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships \(MARPOL\)](#). It is actually in our national legislation, and we do have our personnel that go to ships that come to our shores and check to make sure that the vessels are compliant with these legislations, thereby doing our small part to preserve the oceans for a long time.”



Shipping is another important sector for the Caribbean island nation. Ronald

Alfred, Director of Maritime Services, explained that while in the past vessels carried sugar from Trinidad and Tobago, today they transport oil and gas. Seen here are ships in the capital, Port of Spain. Photo: UN News/Lulu Gao

However, sometimes the ship steering the economy collides with another important industry: fishing.

For the past 20 years, the group Fishermen and Friends of the Sea has locked horns with the Government over “everything that has to do with the sea and all the negative aspects,” according to its president, Terrance Beddoe, a former agronomist with [FAO](#).

“Two Sundays ago, there was a tank which held 150,000 barrels of oil. It sprung a leak at the bottom,” he told *UN News* in late May. “The policy makers or the people concerned said it’s only 300 barrels, but we have seen this oil stretch a mile long and five miles wide in the gulf (*Gulf of Paria, on Trinidad’s west coast*). It must have an effect on the fish.”

Navigating future maritime conflicts like this will partly be up to the young people currently studying marine sciences at the UTT campus in Chaguaramas.

VIDEO: In Trinidad and Tobago, UN agencies promote a co-management approach to marine resources conservation which aims to drive the participation of those living in protected areas, with the goal of creating sustainable livelihoods for the local community.

Dr. Reia Guppy, assistant professor of marine sciences at the University, believes that all major activity in the country – whether in the energy sector, or fisheries and agriculture – is linked to the marine and coastal environments.

“Shipping across the globe is the largest growing industry in the world, and with the recent opening of the Panama Canal there’s even more efforts for Trinidad and Tobago to be part of that hub, which means, of course, that besides user conflict with fishermen, there is also the potential for invasive species coming into our waters,” she said. “So there’s a host of research and interest from our Department and other environmental units within the University of Trinidad and Tobago to study the marine environment to ensure sustainable development for the country.”

At times, those stakeholder conflicts can be personal or internal.

Welldon Mapp works for the Environmental Research Institute Charlotteville (ERIC), a UN-supported NGO which fosters natural resource awareness among the residents of his fishing village in north-east Tobago.

He has wrestled with the dichotomy of being a fisherman and an advocate for the sustainable management of marine resources.

“The entire thing about conservation is that when you’ve grown up in a family of hunters and you now realize that you have to protect what you used to use as a livelihood source, whether for food or income, and you realize that you’re creating harm to it and still you depend on it,” he said.

“I think it was the right time in my life for me to take a stand: to really understand what I’m taking from the natural environment, understand how it could be protected, and to fall in place where I could create a balance for myself to make me feel comfortable as a person within my community and not really creating harm but doing what I’m doing every day but creating a better benefit in the long run.”

When world leaders signed off on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, they agreed to implement a plan of action for people, prosperity and the planet, that supports the needs of both present and future generations.



Businessman Gary Aboud is secretary of the group Fishermen and Friends of the Sea, established in the mid-1990s. A recreational fisher who was always close to nature, he was sensitized to the need for ocean conservation by veteran fishermen who were complaining about shrimp trawlers destroying the marine habitat. He said the problem still exists today. Photo: UN News/Lulu Gao

Businessman Gary Aboud is another Trinidadian who is looking at the long term.

The secretary of Fishermen and Friends of the Sea is not one to mince words, whether railing against the industry, or local politicians, or the UN.

But when asked to reflect on the ocean’s importance, the firebrand turns philosophical.

“The sea is part of the planet, and I don’t think the sea is more important than the land or the air. All of the eco-systems—the marine and the terrestrial—correlate and implicate each other in a homogenous mix,” he stated.

“So, I think the sea is as important as the blood that beats in your mother’s heart. The sea is as important as the air that we require to breathe. We think that the sea is an abstract thing because it’s ‘over there.’ But I think maybe a planetary consciousness needs to shift and we need to start thinking that the things that are not apparently within our realm of influence are in fact in our realm of influence.”

UN agencies urge aid for cyclone-hit communities in Bangladesh, Myanmar

2 June 2017 – United Nations agencies are calling for urgent aid to help hundreds of thousands of people affected by Cyclone Mora, which swept across the Bay of Bengal earlier this week.

“There is an [urgent need](#) for shelter materials,” the spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), Andrej Mahecic, told journalists in Geneva.

“Food rations, drinking water and latrines are some of the other needs identified so far in the cyclone-affected areas,” Mr. Mahecic said, adding that more needs are likely to be identified as governments in Bangladesh and Myanmar complete their ongoing assessments of the damage.

The Rohingya community displaced in Myanmar and living in settlements in Bangladesh has been particularly hard hit. In Bangladesh, there are more than 33,000 Rohingya refugees registered in the official camps of Kutupalong and Nayapara. Outside the camps, more than 200,000 undocumented Rohingya are living in makeshift sites and local villages in the south-eastern part of the country.

In Myanmar, some 120,500 internally displaced people have been living in central Rakhine since 2012, when inter-communal violence forced them to flee, according to UNHCR.

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) today launched an appeal for \$3.7 million to help the Rohingya in Bangladesh. The funds aim to help up to 80,000 people between now and the end of the year, and “will target health, water, sanitation, shelter and protection.”

The cyclone, which pounded Bangladesh with 117 km/hour winds and heavy rain, tore through the settlement houses which offered little resistance to the storm’s strength.

“The [storm destroyed](#) 25 per cent of shelters and left as many as 80 per cent damaged,” IOM said. “Food and fuel supplies were destroyed, electricity lines were cut, and health and sanitation infrastructure was also badly damaged.”

Some 1.3 million children are estimated to be in urgent need of aid as a result of the storm.

The Director of Emergency Programmes at the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), Manuel Fontaine, warned that children from the Rohingya community, who were already displaced and living in precarious conditions before the Cyclone, is now “hit by double humanitarian crisis.”

[Over 40 migrants die of thirst in the Sahara, signalling 'broadening death trap,' warns UN agency](#)

2 June 2017 – Warning that smugglers may now be “broadening” a death trap for migrants and refugees that could stretch from the Mediterranean to the vast Sahara Desert, the United Nations refugee agency has reiterated its call for safe pathways so that those in desperate need of international protection do not lose their lives.

The alarm has been raised by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) as some 44 migrants and refugees – including women and children – are [reported to have succumbed to extreme dehydration](#) when the truck they were travelling in (to Libya) broke down in the desert in northern Niger, exposing them to extreme heat and lack of drinking water.

Only six could be saved.

“It is quite clear that human smugglers will go to any extent to exploit desperate [refugees and migrants](#),” said the UN agency in a news release today.

“These shocking deaths are part of the bigger picture of exploitation as smugglers broaden the death trap from the Mediterranean to the Sahara Desert.”

Further, according to the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), [the Niger to Libya route is the one most sub-Saharan African migrants take](#) when trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea.

Each week, thousands of desperate migrants are crammed into pick-up trucks for the days-long ride, often with only enough room for a few litres of water attempting to cross one of most inhospitable and deadliest places on the planet.

SEE ALSO: [Recent tragedies at sea highlight urgency for safe pathways to Europe](#)

“The migrants are often lied to and cheated on their way [and] smugglers usually run away with their money, [leaving them] in the middle of nowhere, in a country they don’t know, trying to gain enough money to either continue the route or go back home,” said Guiseeppe Loprete, the head of IOM operations in Niger.

Both IOM and UNHCR have been working to support refugees and migrants in the region, as well as warning them of the perils of the desert and sea journeys but operations remain constrained in the want of additional resources.

The UN refugee agency is currently in need of \$75.5 million to meet the increased humanitarian and protection needs of people in Libya – including those internally displaced, host communities, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

The appeal includes protection monitoring and interventions, as well as advocacy on issues related to respect for human rights, access to basic services, asylum procedures and freedom of movement.

Additional resources are also required in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad to help prevent and respond to risks associated with such deadly journeys.

According to estimates, so far this year, the perilous Mediterranean crossing has claimed more than 1,700 lives.

“This latest tragedy was a grim reminder that probably more migrants die in the Sahara desert than in the Mediterranean, but due to the inhospitable nature of the region, it was virtually impossible to know the exact number,” said Mr. Loprete.