

OSCE seeks to defuse conflicts, combat radicalization and build trust, UN Security Council told

22 February 2017 – Multilateral cooperation is the only way to achieve peace, security and stability, and there is no alternative to it, Austria's Foreign Minister told the United Nations Security Council today, underscoring the work of his country in its role as the Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

"As you can imagine, chairing OSCE is not an easy task," said Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, citing the difficulty in finding consensus among the regional body's 57 States.

"Austria has taken over the OSCE chairmanship at a critical moment. Everywhere we look, there are grave threats to peace and security," he added.

He said that the Austrian chairmanship will seek to contribute to defusing existing conflicts, create a platform to assist States in their efforts to combat radicalization and violent extremism, and help rebuild trust between the OSCE States.

On the crisis in and around Ukraine, he said the OSCE has demonstrated its crucial role in brokering a ceasefire and its special monitoring mission has helped prevent a worsening of the situation. However, support is needed to increase the number of monitors on the ground, improve the technical equipment for monitoring and extend the operating hours along the contact line between Government and non-Government armed forces, he said.

Austria will also support all efforts to achieve progress on other conflict situations, including those in Transnistria, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turning to radicalization and terrorism, he said more than 10,000 people from the OSCE area have joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). The most vulnerable group to be radicalized is youth, Mr. Kurz said, adding that he has appointed Peter Neumann, an expert on terrorism, as his special representative on radicalisation.

The Austrian chairmanship will also try to resume discussions on conventional arms control in Europe, and seek to launch a structured dialogue on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area.

Cyber security and social and economic cooperation – two issues discussed in Vienna recently – are areas where everybody stands to gain from more cooperation, and success in these areas will lead to more trust, he stressed.

"The same is true for human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Together we can strengthen the cohesiveness and resilience of our societies to better

counter threats to our security,” he said.

In closing, he welcomed the establishment of a UN liaison office in Vienna that would enable even stronger cooperation between the OSCE and the UN.

[Tackling hunger crises in South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen requires \\$4.4 billion – UN](#)

22 February 2017 – Sounding the alarm on behalf of more than 20 million people in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and north-east Nigeria facing devastating levels of food insecurity, Secretary-General António Guterres joined other top United Nations officials today calling for “strong and urgent” action from the international community to help the already-fragile countries avert catastrophe.

“Famine is already a reality in parts of South Sudan. Unless we act now, it is only a matter of time until it affects other areas and other countries. We are already facing a tragedy; we must avoid it becoming a catastrophe,” said the Secretary-General, stressing: “This is preventable if the international community takes decisive action.”

Briefing the press at UN Headquarters in New York alongside the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, Helen Clark, and by video conference, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Ertharin Cousin, Mr. Guterres said the UN needs at least \$4.4 billion by the end of March to avert a catastrophe.

“Despite some generous pledges, just \$90 million has actually been received so far – around two cents for every dollar needed. We are at the beginning of the year, but these numbers are very worrying,” he said: “The lives of millions of people depend on our collective ability to act. In our world of plenty, there is no excuse for inaction or indifference.”

In South Sudan, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners aim to assist 5.8 million people this year; in Somalia, 5.5 million people and in Yemen 8.3 million. In north-east Nigeria, humanitarians are reaching more than two million people with food assistance.

These four crises are very different, but are all preventable. “They all stem from conflict, which we must do much more to prevent and resolve,” he said, urging all members of the international community to step up and do whatever is in their power, whether that is mobilizing support, exerting political pressure on parties to conflict, or funding humanitarian operations.

“Saving lives is the first priority, but we are also looking to build longer-term resilience to shocks,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that UNDP Administrator and the Emergency Relief Coordinator will set up a steering committee to link the UN Development Group and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for humanitarian assistance to ensure a coordinated long-term approach.

VIDEO: Speaking at a joint press conference on humanitarian crises in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, United Nations Secretary-General chief António Guterres today urged the international community to ‘step up’ and take ‘decisive action’ to prevent devastating food insecurity levels from becoming a catastrophe.

Speaking next, Mr. O’Brien, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, reemphasized the ongoing effort to ensure that development and humanitarian partners will work together to tackle these crises. “We want to help people survive,” he said, “but we also want to help them build more durable solutions so they will not be left in vulnerable situations.”

He went on to stress that almost 1.4 million children are at imminent risk of death from severe acute malnutrition this year, as famine looms in the four countries, an issue spotlighted yesterday by UNICEF. He said that catastrophe can be averted if action is taken now. The funding noted by the Secretary-General must be made available by the end of March to make a difference. “We are ready to scale up [...] with brave and committed aid workers already in place.”

Miss Clark noted that the way forward on the four crises would very much reflect the “new way of working” among relief and development agencies agreed by the 2016 UN World Humanitarian Summit, which stressed that “the priority is saving lives and part of saving lives is building resilience for the future.”

For her part, Ms. Cousin said that in each of these four countries, “the plans are in place and the people are prepared to perform the work that is necessary. What we need is the resources and the access.”

“Acting now, before we reach the height of the lean season in these countries will ensure our ability to provide the support that is necessary to avoid what we all see on the horizon, which is a famine in each one of these countries if we fail to act,” she stated.

Carla Mucavi, the Director of UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office in New York, and Justin Forsyth, the Deputy Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), also attended the briefing.

Haiti: New grant to help UNICEF strengthen efforts to tackle cholera

22 February 2017 – A new grant from the Government of Japan will allow the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to help reduce cholera-related morbidity and mortality in Haiti in 2017 and 2018, the UN agency said in a news release.

“With this gift from the Japanese people, we will strengthen the axes of the fight against cholera in the protection of the Haitian population, especially children,” said Marc Vincent, UNICEF Representative in Haiti, welcoming the contribution.

“Japan is a key partner and we thank the Japanese people for their continued support,” he added.

Haiti has been dealing with a cholera outbreak since October 2010, some nine months after it suffered a devastating earthquake. The outbreak has affected an estimated 788,000 people and claimed the lives of more than 9,000. Concerted national and international efforts, backed by the United Nations, have resulted in a 90 per cent reduction in the number of suspected cases.

The \$2.6 million grant (nearly 300 million Japanese yen) will help strengthen the island nation’s epidemiological coordination and surveillance; and support conducting timely surveys, rapid response teams and case management, as well as improving and increasing awareness of cholera-related hygiene.

According to UNICEF, the cholera epidemic in Haiti continues to be the largest in the western hemisphere. More than 41,000 suspected cases of cholera have been reported throughout Haiti in 2016.

With the new funds, interventions will be implemented across the island nation with an emphasis on the cholera-prone departments of Center, North, West, Grand’Anse, Sud (South), and Artibonite.

Two of these departments – Grand’Anse and Sud – were where Hurricane Matthew made landfall in early October, inflicting much devastation as it cut a path of destruction through country.

In the news release, the Ambassador of Japan to Haiti, Yoshiaki Hatta, said that the grant had been decided upon a resurgence in suspected cholera cases resulting from the deterioration of the sanitary and hygiene situation caused by rainy seasons or natural disasters.

Japan considers that this issue should be addressed in collaboration with the Government of Haiti and the international community, the Ambassador added, expressing appreciation for UNICEF, and calling on all stakeholders to strengthen their collaboration in the fight against cholera.

Meanwhile, a Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) for the UN Haiti Cholera

Response has been set up to enable Member States, other partners and individuals (including UN staff) to contribute. To date, it has received funds from five Member States: Chile (\$250,000); France (\$638,000); India (\$100,000); Republic of Korea (\$1 million); and Liechtenstein (\$50,000).

As for other resources provided outside of the Trust Fund, Canada has made a \$4,600,000 parallel contribution in support of the UN Haiti Cholera Response – with some of the funds going to UNICEF & PAHO.

Business-as-usual not an option with future global food security in jeopardy, cautions UN agency

22 February 2017 – Warning that diminishing natural resources and a changing climate have put humankind's future ability to feed itself "in jeopardy," the United Nations underlined today that while the planet still has the potential to produce enough food, "major transformations" are needed to make production sustainable and to ensure that all of humanity benefits.

In The Future of Food and Agriculture: Trends and Challenges report, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) highlights that while "very real and significant" progress in reducing hunger has been achieved over the past 30 years, these have often come at a heavy cost to nature.

"Almost half of the forests that once covered the Earth are now gone. Groundwater sources are being depleted rapidly. Biodiversity has been deeply eroded," noted the report.

"[As a result,] planetary boundaries may well be surpassed, if current trends continue," added FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva, underlining the gravity of the situation.

With global population estimated to reach 10 billion by 2050, world-wide demand for agricultural products could be pushed by as much as 50 per cent above current levels, intensifying pressures on already-strained natural resources.

At the same time, the report argues, greater numbers of people will be eating fewer cereals and larger amounts of meat, fruits, vegetables and processed food – a result of an ongoing global dietary transition that will further add to those pressures, driving more deforestation, land degradation and greenhouse gas emissions.

According to FAO, without a push to invest in and reorganizing food systems, far too many people will remain hungry in 2030 – the year by which the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to eradicate chronic food insecurity and malnutrition.

“Without additional efforts to promote pro-poor development, reduce inequalities and protect vulnerable people, more than 600 million people would still be undernourished in 2030,” the report noted.

In fact, the current rate of progress would not even be enough to eradicate hunger by 2050, it added.

Climate change will affect every aspect of food production

On top of these challenges, climate change adds a new level of complexity. Its increasing impacts are leading to greater variability of precipitation and increasing the frequency of droughts and floods.

RELATED: Drought drives food price spike in East Africa, UN warns

In the midst of this multifaceted issue, the UN agency is advocating for a shift to more sustainable food systems that make more efficient use of land, water and other inputs, and for sharply reducing the use of fossil fuels in agriculture.



Empowering small-scale farmers and providing them better access to information, markets and technologies is key to ensuring future food security. Photo: FAO

Reducing fossil fuel dependency will also help cut agricultural green-house gas emissions, conserve biodiversity, and reduce waste, it added.

Furthermore, investments in agriculture and agri-food systems, as well as in research and development, are needed to sustainably boost food production and help producers better cope with water scarcity and other climate change impacts.

The social dimension to food security

Also in the report, FAO has called for preserving and enhancing livelihoods of small-scale and family farmers, and ensuring access to food for the most vulnerable.

Amid the core challenge of having to produce more with less, it has underlined that the twin-track approach is needed to immediately tackle undernourishment, and that pro-poor investments in productive activities – especially agriculture and in rural economies – could sustainably increase income-earning opportunities of the poor.

RELATED: UN agency urges support for small farmers to help them not just get by, but thrive and feed others

In addition to boosting production and resilience, it is equally important to

create food supply chains that better connect farmers in low- and middle-income countries to urban markets.

“Major transformations in agricultural systems, rural economies and natural resource management will be needed if we are to meet the multiple challenges before us and realize the full potential of food and agriculture to ensure a secure and healthy future for all people and the entire planet,” read the report.

“Business-as-usual” is not an option.

Humanitarian agencies seek \$1 billion to provide life-saving aid to millions in northeast Nigeria – UN

22 February 2017 – As relief organizations increase response to the humanitarian emergency in the north-east of Nigeria, timely donor support amounting to a little over \$1 billion is required to sustain life-saving assistance to millions people devastated by Boko Haram-linked violence, the United Nations relief aid wing has said.

“If the resources do not arrive in time, one in five children suffering severe acute malnutrition could die,” said Peter Lundberg, the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria in a press release issued yesterday by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“The likelihood of a child with severe acute malnutrition surviving is nine times less than a properly nourished child,” he added.

According to OCHA, the eight-year-long conflict has left some 8.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the worst-affected states of Nigeria’s north-east. In the coming months, around 5.1 million people will face severe food insecurity in the region, where some 1.8 million people have been displaced and millions are exposed to violence and abuse.

“Food assistance alone will cost \$1 million a day to avoid famine in a region where 450,000 children under five will suffer from severe acute malnutrition this year,” said Mr. Lundberg. “Sustained and timely financial support is needed to maintain the scale-up in operations desperately needed in the north-east of Nigeria.”

RELATED: UN food relief agency chief welcomes progress on anti-hunger programmes in north-east Nigeria

During a recent visit by representatives of 12 donor countries and agencies

to Borno state, in the run up to the 24 February Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and Lake Chad region, they lauded the scale-up of humanitarian operations in the north-east and emphasized the need for more funding, a stance the humanitarian community in Nigeria concurs with.

“We are grateful to our donors who have enabled us scale up the response and appreciate their continued commitment. We look forward to receiving the needed resources to implement the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Nigeria,” Mr. Lundberg said.