

Some smart phones are neither smart nor good phones

I have usually been an early and enthusiastic adopter of new technology. I liked the arrival of the mobile phone, thought the internet amazing and welcomed the sat nav. I automated business processes where this could take drudge work out and improve the quality of the product and the quality of work people were asked to do.

I don't have the same enthusiasm for my so called smart phone. I'm not talking about a particular model or make. The faults of mine are likely to be faults of others.

My main need from a mobile phone is to be able to make and receive phone calls when on the move. I have good internet connections at home and in the office, with a large screen computer, good keyboard for typing, and landline phones that work. I have no wish to use a small screen mobile with variable reception in these circumstances. I need my phone travelling by car (hands free using when parked), walking or on public transport. I take an ipad for computing at my destination or on a train if travelling to a temporary location away from home and work.

The mobile phone has several disadvantages. Because it operates by means of a small screen if there is bright sunlight you cannot read it at all. Even not so bright daylight makes it difficult to read. Because you need to instruct it by touch it becomes finger printed, and often your touch is taken as a different instruction from the one you intended. Trying to type a message is difficult at speed because the letter pad is so small for any given letter. In addition, when the phone rings I need first to scroll the page, and then hit the receive bar on the second frame to appear. All this can take too long so the caller rings off. Quite often my touch does not register in time with the phone. It means a lot of lost calls when out and about. It does not have a long battery life, so on a busy day you have to remember to take a recharger with you and plug it in somewhere.

It is not that reliable on a train and of course cuts out on the tube. Bluetooth links to the car do not always work, unlike the old mobiles which you plugged into the car system by cable which always worked.

It is true it can receive messages, offer me a moving map, provides a modest quality camera and doubtless other things I have not asked it to do. What I can't accept is that is a smart phone. The truth is its a dumb phone, a not very good one. I just lose more calls with it. The old phones just required you to press one button to receive a call, and plugged into the car which also recharged them.

In Chad and Cameroon, Security Council hears of Boko Haram terror and survivors' needs

4 March 2017 – The United Nations Security Council is today in Chad, as part of a four-country visit to shine a spotlight on the ongoing humanitarian challenges in the Lake Chad Basin region and draw international attention to the plight of about 11 million people.

In the Chadian capital of N'Djamena, the Council met with Prime Minister Albert Pahimi Padacké and visited the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which includes troops from the four affected regional countries – Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, plus Benin – in the fight against Boko Haram.

The Security Council welcomed the efforts to fight Boko Haram and encouraged more regional cooperation, according to a Tweet by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the UN which has the Security Council's rotating presidency for the month of March and is leading the visit.

Discussions with the Prime Minister also focused on the economic situation in Chad and the importance of women participating in the economy and politics.

Also today, the Council members met with representatives of the UN agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations working in the country.

They are working to aid the millions of people who, in addition to the security threat from Boko Haram and the fight against the terror group, also face a major food and nutrition crises. Some 2.4 million people are currently displaced in the area, according to UN figures, and more than 7.1 million are severely hungry.

In his conversations with the Council, Stephen Tool, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator in Chad, detailed the severe challenges in the countries, which include malnutrition, disease and health, sanitation. He noted, however, that you cannot deal with humanitarian issues without looking at the root causes which include insecurity, development gaps, lack of education, poor agriculture, and so on.

'That's who we're fighting for'

The Security Council delegation, led by Ambassador Matthew Rycroft of the United Kingdom, had yesterday visited Cameroon, where members met with President Paul Biya and other senior Government officials.

The Council also met with refugees and people displaced by Boko Haram and the

forces tracking them.

In a blog post, Mr. Rycroft detailed meeting two young survivors of Boko Haram's violence. The first, a boy who was 13 years old when the terrorist group stormed his village and killed his friends and family. The other boy was about 10 years when he was kidnapped, escaped, and has since 2014 lived in a camp for internally displaced persons.

"They are heroic beyond measures," Mr. Rycroft said. "That's who we're fighting for."

Speaking earlier in the day, Mr. Rycroft outlined his vision for the visit.

"First of all, we came here in order to shine a spotlight on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

"We came to hear the individual stories of people involved, whether they are refugees or displaced people or other victims of Boko Haram.

"We stand with the government and the people of Cameroon, and the wider region, in tackling the scourge of terrorism, and in encouraging them to look broadly and deeply at the root causes of the set of crises going on here."

The delegation heads to Niger later today, and is scheduled to continue on to Nigeria tomorrow.

[UN aid chief calls for access, funds to prevent spread of South Sudan's famine](#)

4 March 2017 – Hundreds of thousands of people in South Sudan will starve unless relief workers gain access to needy populations and more funding is raised, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator today warned after meeting malnourished children who fled the raging conflict in the country.

Stephen O'Brien, who is also the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, travelled to Ganyiel, Southern Unity state, considered one of the most violent areas in the fight for political control of the country.

Among the people he met was a starving boy whose grandmother carried him through waist-high swamp to get away from the fighting. His parents are apparently missing.

"1000s similar. Horrendous," Mr. O'Brien wrote on social media, posting a number of photos of people who had fled the fighting and sexual violence.

Humanitarian partners, such as the International Red Cross, are setting up clinics directly in the swamps to reach more people, he noted. Some people with nothing to eat survived by chewing on water lilies.

“Millions of people prevented from receiving aid by parties to conflict. Immoral, unlawful and unacceptable. We need access now,” Mr. O’Brien has said.

He is in South Sudan to see first-hand the critical humanitarian situation and the response which his agency, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is assisting.

RELATED: Famine declared in region of South Sudan – UN

The UN declared a famine in parts of South Sudan on 20 February, increasingly blaming the lack of food and the collapsing economy on the rival forces of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA in Opposition backing Riek Machar.

A formal declaration of famine means that people have already started dying of hunger.

About 100,000 people are facing starvation, and an additional one million are on the brink of a famine, according to the UN. The total number of food insecure people is expected to rise to 5.5 million at the height of the lean season in July if nothing is done to curb the severity and spread of the food crisis.

The situation is worsened for the 3.4 million Sudanese, some of whom Mr. O’Brien met today, who have been displaced and separated from their families.

Humanitarian organizations have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to some 5.8 million people across South Sudan in 2017.

Mr. O’Brien came to South Sudan from Kenya and previously, from Yemen. He is next scheduled to visit Somalia.

[China to raise 2017 defense budget by around 7 pct: spokesperson](#)



Fu Ying, spokesperson for the fifth session of China's 12th National People's Congress (NPC), speaks during a press conference on the session at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 4, 2017. The fifth session of the 12th NPC is scheduled to open in Beijing on March 5.

China's 2017 defense budget will expand by around 7 percent, a spokesperson for the annual session of the country's top legislature said Saturday.

Fu Ying, spokesperson for the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) annual session, said the increase is in line with China's economic development and defense needs.

The country's defense budget rose by 7.6 percent in 2016.

The fresh raise could be the country's slowest defense budget rise in more than a decade, and mark the second time that defense budget dip to single-digit increase since 2010. In 2009, the figure was about 15 percent.

U.S. President Donald Trump last month pledged to further strengthen his country's armed forces.

In his first address to Congress after taking office, Trump proposed a huge 54-billion-U.S.-dollar surge in the country's military spending, up 10 percent from the previous year.

Fu, meanwhile, noted that China's defense spending accounts for about only 1.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product, as compared with NATO members' pledge to dedicate at least 2 percent of GDP to defense.

"You should ask them what their intentions are," Fu told reporters.

China's top legislature to open annual session Sunday



Fu Ying, spokesperson for the fifth session of China's 12th National People's Congress (NPC), speaks during a press conference on the session at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 4, 2017.

The annual session of China's top legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), is scheduled to open Sunday morning in Beijing, a spokesperson told a press conference Saturday.

The fifth session of the 12th NPC will conclude on March 15, said Fu Ying, spokeswoman for the session.

A 169-member presidium for the session has been elected at a preparatory meeting. The presidium convened its first meeting Saturday morning and adopted the session's agenda, she said.

National lawmakers will deliberate six reports including the government work report, draft general provisions of civil law, and three bills concerning the election of deputies to the 13th NPC, according to Fu.