

Amid hate speech, negative media spin ‘real stories’ of refugees and migrants must be told – UN official

26 January 2017 – With hate speech and rhetoric against migrants and refugees on the rise in various parts of the world, and the increased role of media in shaping perceptions towards them, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) today co-sponsored with the European Union (EU) a symposium drawing attention to this growing challenge and explore efforts to combat it.

“2016 has been an elections year in many countries. Media, for better or for worse, was used as a tool shaping people’s perceptions around issues and swaying their votes accordingly,” Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the High Representative for the UNAOC, said in his remarks at the symposium.

Noting that the refugees and migrants crisis featured prominently in the campaigns and public discussions, he added: “[While] we noted solidarity towards refugees, we also witnessed a surge of xenophobic hate speech.”

Further, noting that mass exodus of refugees and migrants fleeing conflict and poverty in Syria, Iraq, Libya and other countries into Europe resulted in “fuelling fears, prejudices and even hatred against those who are perceived as ‘the other’ by local populations,” he expressed that such distorted perceptions have also led to violent reactions within host societies on some occasions.

With this in mind, he noted that the UN global campaign against racism and xenophobia, ‘Together: respect, safety and dignity for all,’ aims to change negative perceptions and attitudes towards refugees and migrants, and to strengthen the social contract between these populations and host communities.



Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Photo: UNAOC

Amid media distortion, ‘we will do our utmost to tell the real stories of refugees’

Speaking to *UN News* ahead of the symposium, Mr. Al-Nasser expressed concern that migrants and refugees are inaccurately portrayed as an economic drain or a strain on public benefits, even though UN Member States have recognized the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development, for example through the 2030 Agenda and the New York Declaration on refugees and migrants adopted at a UN summit last year.

He, however, added that “migrants’ positive contribution to societies is not

acknowledged and rarely understood by host communities.”

Underlining the importance of media, and in particular social media, which can influence perceptions either way, Mr. Al-Nasser said that despite progressive policies defended by some European leaders, refugees continue to be portrayed by some in the media as “potential terrorists” and “threats to national security”.

“Social media provides a wide and open platform for hate speech, facilitating the rapid spread of negative narratives and ideas online,” he added, noting that this environment has created a heightened sense of fear and mistrust in host communities towards migrants and refugees around the world, resulting in adverse impact on their rights and freedoms.

“But we will do our utmost to tell the real stories of refugees, in order to protect communities’ interests and safeguard the rights of each individual. I think a balance must be found that protects the freedom of expression as well as the rights of migrants as human beings with human rights,” the High Representative stated.

Turning to civil society, Mr. Al-Nasser called on the international community to acknowledge the role of civic actors and groups in formulating public policies aimed at curbing the spread of hate speech, and influencing public attitudes towards restricting the use of hate speech in media, including through policy recommendations.

The symposium was organized jointly by UNAOC and the EU in the Belgian capital, Brussels, under the UNAOC’s #SpreadNoHate initiative.

The Alliance was established in 2005 to work towards a more peaceful, more socially inclusive world, by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, and highlighting the will of the world’s majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity.

[Jeremy Corbyn statement on the passing of Tam Dalyell](#)

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party said:

“I’m so sad to hear of the death of my good friend and comrade Tam Dalyell. Our thoughts are with his family.

“Tam was a titan of parliamentary scrutiny, fearless in pursuit of the truth. From Iraq to the miners’ strike, he doggedly fought to expose official wrongdoing and cover ups.

“The title of his autobiography summed Tam up to a tee: ‘The Importance of Being Awkward.’

“But he was much more than that: Tam was an outstanding parliamentarian, a socialist and internationalist, and a champion of the underdog, here and abroad.”

[UN-backed measles vaccination campaign to reach 4.7 million children in north-east Nigeria](#)

26 January 2017 – A major vaccination campaign against a measles outbreak in northeast Nigeria is reaching 4.7 million children, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“Security has improved in some areas so we have acted quickly to access places we could not previously reach and protect children from the spread of a very dangerous disease,” said Mohamed Fall, UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, in a news release.

The campaign, concluding this week, is covering the three states most affected by the Boko Haram conflict – Adamawa, Borno and Yobe – where insecurity has limited vaccination efforts. “We are still extremely concerned about children living in large areas of Borno state that are not yet accessible,” said Mr. Fall.

In 2016, there were approximately 25,000 cases of measles among children in Nigeria; 97 per cent of the cases were in children under the age of ten and at least a hundred children died.

Measles infections tend to increase during the first half of the year because of higher temperatures. Measles vaccination coverage across Nigeria remains low, with a little over 50 per cent of children reached, but in areas affected by conflict, children are particularly vulnerable.

The risks for malnourished children who have weakened immunity are further heightened.

The vaccination campaign, conducted in partnership with the Nigerian Government, the World Health Organization (WHO), and several non-governmental organizations, also includes a vitamin A supplement for children under five to boost their immunity, as well as de-worming tablets.

The emergency in northeast Nigeria remains acute with more than 1.6 million people displaced because of the conflict.

Of the \$115 million called for in 2016, only \$51 million was received. In 2017, UNICEF is seeking \$150 million to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs in northeast Nigeria.

[News story: MOD partners with industry to promote UK prosperity](#)

The MOD and Boeing are working together to build UK prosperity, growth, and exports across the country. As part of their commitment to the UK, Boeing signed the UK aerospace industry's Supply Chain Competitiveness Charter, which is designed to strengthen relationships between companies and their suppliers, so that they work together more effectively to raise UK productivity and competitiveness.

Highlights of the joint initiative so far include:

- A new commercial airline hangar to be constructed at Gatwick airport, supporting more than 100 jobs
- Collaboration on a new £100m P-8A operational support and training base at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland, creating more than 100 new jobs
- Boeing facilitated a visit to Seattle for 37 UK suppliers to deepen their relationships with Boeing driving enhanced prosperity in the UK
- Training courses for UK suppliers on how to win additional business with the company, further enhancing the competitiveness of the UK supply chain
- Education partnerships with the Royal Academy of Engineering and the RAF Air Training Corps in Northern Ireland, which reached more than 5,000 young people in the UK last year

Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

Britain's defence industry plays a key role delivering an economy that works for everyone. Across the UK, Britain's defence companies provide highly skilled, well-paid jobs with world class manufacturing exports.

Boeing expects to increase their UK workforce by 50% by 2020. This joint initiative is a prime example of the cutting edge, high-skilled, job-creating investment that our industrial strategy seeks to harness to make Britain one of the most competitive places in the world to innovate, build businesses and deliver secure, long-term prosperity for all.

The government's Industrial Strategy will seek to make fresh choices about how the UK shapes its economy and presents an opportunity to deliver a bold, long term Industrial Strategy that builds on strengths and prepares for the years ahead. Following a period of consultation, the government intends to publish an Industrial Strategy white paper in 2017 that will set out the plan for full and long term delivery.

Marc Allen, president of Boeing International, said:

Boeing's partnership with the UK, which dates back to the 1930s, goes from strength to strength today. Boeing values the UK's aerospace and defence capabilities. In both 2015 and 2016 Boeing in the UK hired, on average, a new employee per day and our relationship with the UK supply chain today has more than doubled in value since 2011.

This growth continues in 2017 and beyond, with further significant announcements to follow in the future, building on our initiative's achievements already in place.

There is much more to come from the strategic prosperity initiative. During their meeting Minister Harriett Baldwin and Marc Allen looked ahead to the next six months of collaboration:

- Boeing will increase bid opportunities for UK suppliers and work with the government to enhance UK competitiveness. The aim is for UK companies to double their supply work with Boeing and win higher proportions of content on future Boeing aircraft.
 - Boeing will make the UK its European base for training, maintenance, repair and overhaul across its defence fixed-wing and rotary platforms.
 - Boeing will make the UK a base for defence exports to Europe and the Middle East, increasing UK employment and investment.
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