

UN Broadband Commission urges public-private partnerships to reach 'the unconnected'

17 March 2017 – New public-private partnerships are essential if broadband is to reach everyone and help accelerate the achievement of global sustainable development goals, members of the United Nations broadband commission said today.

"ICT [information and communications technology] and broadband are linking everyone and everything for the betterment of economies and societies," said Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Co-Chair of the UN Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, during its spring meeting in Hong Kong.

"We are motivated by wanting to have the global community connected, especially the billions of unconnected. We will succeed when we work together: government, industry and civil society leaders," he added.

The Broadband Commission was established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in May 2010 with the aim of boosting the importance of broadband on the international policy agenda, and expanding broadband access in every country as key to accelerating progress towards national and international development targets.

Following adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, the Commission was re-launched as the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development to showcase and document the power of ICT and broadband-based technologies for sustainable development.

According to a press release on the meeting, some 5 billion people are currently without mobile broadband access, meaning that the paths to access digital services and applications are blocked for much of the world's population – holding back progress on sustainable development.

RELATED: UN Internet Governance Forum closes with call to close 'digital divide'

The release also said that at the spring meeting, the need for a new deal between all players was roundly debated, with renewed commitment to work towards concrete actions that will effectively connect the unconnected with broadband – especially to support least developed countries.

In particular, emphasis was placed on remote and rural areas which represent the biggest challenge and where barriers to access need to be also viewed through the prism of affordability and content, notably local and multi-lingual content.

Houlin Zhao, ITU Secretary-General and Commission Co-Vice Chair, stated, "ICTs underpin vital achievements and modern services in many sectors, and governments and industry must increasingly work together to create the conditions so badly needed to facilitate the growth of broadband for sustainable development," he stressed.

Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General and Commission Co-Vice Chair, noted, "We must ensure the digital revolution is a revolution for human rights, in order to promote technological breakthroughs as development breakthroughs."

[South Sudan now world's fastest growing refugee crisis – UN refugee](#)

17 March 2017 – The number of South Sudanese fleeing their homes is "alarming," the United Nations refugee agency today said, announcing that 1.6 million people have either been displaced or fled to neighbouring countries in the past eight months ago.

"A famine produced by the vicious combination of fighting and drought is now driving the world's fastest growing refugee crisis," the spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Babar Baloch, told journalists at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

He added that "the rate of new displacement is alarming, representing an impossible burden on a region that is significantly poorer and which is fast running short of resources to cope."

Refugees from South Sudan are crossing the borders to the neighbouring countries. The majority of them go to Uganda where new arrivals spiked from 2,000 per day to 6,000 per day in February, and currently average more than 2,800 people per day.

"The situation is now critical," said Mr. Baloch, warning that recent rains are making the humanitarian situation more difficult.

The UN agency is reiterating its calls for financial support. Aid for South Sudanese refugees is only eight per cent funded at \$781.8 million, and UNHCR's funding appeal for Uganda urgently needs \$267 million.

The situation in Uganda is a "first and major test" of the commitments made at the Summit for Refugees and Migrants last September, the spokesperson said.

RELATED: World leaders at UN summit adopt 'bold' plan to enhance protections for refugees and migrants

One of the main achievements of the Summit was to create a refugee response framework that integrates humanitarian and development efforts. This translates into giving refugees land and allowing them to access job markets, for example.

The situation of refugees in Uganda could impact how the UN and humanitarian partners are working to support national authorities in the other neighbouring countries – the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan.

“No neighbouring country is immune,” said Mr. Baloch.

[Employers must address all aspects of gender-based violence in workplace – UN Women chief](#)

16 March 2017 – Tolerating violence against women in the workplace will have a huge cost to employers, including lost productivity, legal expenses, high turnover, sick leaves and harm to corporate reputation, panellists today told a United Nations-hosted discussion, urging Governments and institutions alike to take responsibility for putting in place adequate standards and measures to prevent such practices.

“Violence against women has long-term consequences,” UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said, explaining that children who watched their mothers and sisters beaten up at home could become perpetrators themselves or unhappy persons when they grow up.

She also said that women could die from violence and experience various forms of suffering, including physical and emotional damage, trauma, stigma, and limited access to the labour market. Employers will also have to pay the heavy price in the form of lost productivity, legal cost, high turnover, sick leaves and damaged reputation.

To prevent violence against women, institutions must take responsibility for addressing the issue at the macro-level by setting standards and putting in place preventive measures, she stressed.

The panel discussion, titled ‘Ending Violence against Women: Prevention and response in the world of work,’ was sponsored by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women, formally known as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

VIDEO: During the 61st Commission on the Status of Women, ILO expert Manuela

Tomei, at a panel discussion on violence against women at work, highlights the importance of prevention, protection, and assistance to the victims, adding that the issue requires interventions and commitment from employers and workers.

The event was held on the sidelines of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women, known as the largest inter-governmental forum on women's rights and gender equality. The theme this year is on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Manuela Tomei, Director of ILO's Working Conditions and Equality Department, said that violence against women is a violation of human rights, a threat to women's security and health, and a threat to women's empowerment.

She said that a survey conducted by ILO and Gallop found that one of the top three challenges women find in workplace is "abuse and harassment."

The world of work goes beyond the physical workplace to include commutes, social events and home, she said, stressing the importance of addressing the issue through an integrated approach that includes prevention, protection and assistance to victims.

She said ILO is leading efforts to set a new global standard by 2019 or 2020 against violence and harassment in workplace.

Relief operations in western Mosul reaching 'breaking point' as civilians flee hunger, fighting – UN

16 March 2017 – The United Nations and its humanitarian partners in Iraq are scrambling to get emergency sites ready amidst a mass exodus from West Mosul, with nearly 700,000 civilians still living in the city where Iraqi forces are fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), according to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the country.

"The number of people is higher than expected," Lise Grande told journalist in New York via videoconference from Iraq. "If the pace accelerates further, it's going to stretch us to the breaking point."

She added that if 50,000 civilians flee in a single day, the current system would not work properly. The UN and its partners have already started to set up large warehouse size structures which will house the families as they await "the dignified support they deserve," said Ms. Grande.

According to the latest figures she disclosed, there are still an estimated 650,000 to 680,000 civilians in Mosul's Old City.

"We fear the civilians there might be trapped in an extremely difficult situation. Families that chose to stay are at risk, families that leave are also at risk," said Ms. Grande, noting that ISIL is targeting people who try to flee what is expected to be a prolonged siege.

Meanwhile, people who stay are without food and water. No steady supplies have been able to reach the city since mid-November, Ms. Grande said.



Iraqi women and children displaced from the Mosul corridor line up to receive food in Debaga Displacement Camp in Erbil Governorate. Photo: UNICEF/Anmar

Families with resources are trying to trade what they can to eat even one meal a day, according to stories from people who were able to flee, while some people go for days without meals.

"Whether you stay or whether you go there are significant risks to the civilians," Ms. Grande noted. "The greatest problem is water."

When the military operation to oust terrorists from the area began on 17 October 2016, some 1.5 million civilians were living in Mosul. In the eastern part of the city, some 345,000 were displaced – of whom about 70,000 returned home because "conditions are ready and safe to do so," journalists were told today.

The western part of Mosul is more densely populated, however. There is hope that civilian casualties will be limited because the Iraqi forces adopted a so-called "humanitarian concept of operations" which prohibits artillery strikes, requires civilians to remain in their homes, and provides humanitarian exit corridors wherever necessary.

Those who do flee are screened at the Hammam al Alil site, with the men separated from the women and children. Once interrogated and cleared, the families are reunited.

The senior UN official said the Organization and its humanitarian partners are working "around the clock" in support of the Iraqi Government to quickly get sites ready for the displaced civilians. Aid workers receive the site, set up tents and mattresses, clear and construct sanitation areas, and then transfer the areas to Iraqi military, who move in civilians on civilian buses.

Ms. Grande said that there are concerns about water and sanitation at the screening sites, and that the Government has asked for additional support to help it correct those conditions.

The UN and its partners are supplying food, water and other services to the sites, with more than 1.4 million people reached.

Coordination between the UN, its partners and the Government is good, but “complicated,” Ms. Grande acknowledged, noting that the UN is part of 19 daily coordination forums, which include a range from local to national officials.

Speech: “We have to take action whenever a weapon of mass destruction is used.”

Let me begin by welcoming you Sacha to the Council for the first time in your role as Chair of the Committee and thank you for your briefing.

I’d also like to thank Council members for their remarks today. Today you have all shown this Council’s unity and determination to prevent biological, chemical and nuclear material falling into the hands of terrorists and other non-state actors.

Sadly, on this Council we know only too well that that is no longer a hypothetical threat. The nightmare scenario has been seen in too many places. In Iraq, where we have seen worrying, persistent reports of terrorists using chemical weapons. In Syria, where the UN mandated investigation has proven that chemical weapons have been used both by Daesh and by the Asad regime. And now in Malaysia, where we were all shocked by reports that VX was used to kill Kim Jong Nam.

As these events prove, proliferation threats do not stand still, they are constantly evolving, and we must remain alert to new trends. We will have to be adaptable and nimble to keep our citizens safe.

Ensuring that states have the means and resources at their disposal to deal with these threats is the foundation of Resolution 1540. It sets out how we can make ourselves more secure; by ensuring that our legislation limits the ability to develop such weapons; by having the right controls in place to safeguard potentially hazardous material and by hardening our borders to stop their spread.

This is collective security. One state’s resilience can prevent the spread of a threat to others. But just as one state can help our collective security, so too can one state undermine it.

The current implementation rate of 1540 measures worldwide is 48%. We must continue to work towards full, universal fulfilment of these obligations.

In 2017 we should maintain the momentum and energy from the Comprehensive Review, and ensure that we effectively implement the taskings from Resolution

2325.

We should stay abreast of advances in science and technology that may increase the proliferation risk, but may also present us with opportunities to tackle the threats better. For instance, through advances in cyber, 3D printing and drones.

This Council broke new ground last year by calling on the States to adopt effective national control lists for sensitive materials – a vital step in an effective non-proliferation regime. We should work collaboratively with those who have already developed effective national control lists, and support those who are just starting out.

We should continue to offer assistance and technical support to those who need it to implement 1540 fully. Better matching of requests for assistance to those who require it should follow a more regional approach, as agreed by the Council last year.

But in truth, such preventative measures will count for little if there is continued impunity for those who use biological, chemical or nuclear material as weapons. It isn't enough just to condemn. We have to take action whenever a weapon of mass destruction is used, and we would make sure that there are meaningful consequences for the state actors and non-state actors alike.

Last month, in response to the findings of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, I regret that a minority of Council members blocked a resolution which would have imposed measures responding to atrocities committed in Syria. We must draw on the unity we show on 1540 to find the consensus needed to act against the use of such weapons.

In conclusion, it's clear that the 1540 Committee has a huge task ahead. And Sacha, you have the full support of the United Kingdom in making as much progress as you can.

Thank you.