

At Munich Security Conference, UN chief Guterres highlights need for ‘a surge in diplomacy for peace’

18 February 2017 – Highlighting the complex and interlinked challenges confronting the global community that also compound the suffering of the most vulnerable, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for a boost in preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts, as well as for a strategy to address root causes of such conflicts in the world.

“There are things that are obvious: the alignment of the sustainable and inclusive development with the sustaining peace agenda,” said Mr. Guterres in his remarks to the Munich Security Conference, noting also their importance in preventing conflicts.

He also drew attention to the need to address the fragility of states and to support states, institutions and civil societies to become stronger and more resilient to diminish the tendency for states to be involved in conflict situations.

Noting the centrality of climate change and strain on resources in increasing the probability of conflicts and dramatic humanitarian crises, Secretary-General Guterres called on the international community to rally behind the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as to focus attention on population growth, especially in Africa.

“And for me, a key condition to address it is the combination of education and the empowerment of women and girls,” he said, noting: “This is probably the best way to be able to address the problems of excessive population growth that is impacting dramatically in some parts of the world.”

Further in his remarks, the UN chief noted the need for strengthened global multilateralism and the need for responsive reform to enhance confidence and capacity of multilateral institutions to better respond to global challenges and to meet the expectations of the world’s peoples.

In the case of the UN, the Secretary-General noted that the organization has been engaged in reforms to its peace and security strategy, operational setup and architecture; its development system; and its management.

RELATED: UN chief Guterres announces steps towards reforming Organization’s peace and security architecture

Also in his address, Mr. Guterres noted that while the world prepares for responding to the crises it faces today, it is equally important to consider that the problems of peace and security in the future will have new dimensions for which we need to be prepared.

Noting the already existing challenges related to cyberspace and lack of instruments to address those, Mr. Guterres highlighted that developing a capacity of analysis, discussion, and to be able to think about models of governance for new areas of scientific and technological development, such as artificial and intelligence genetic engineering will be crucial in the near future.

"I believe that when people will meet herein 10 or 20 years' time in Munich, we will probably be discussing other things in relation to the priorities of today, but I hope we don't get to those discussions too late and [having done] too little," he said.

[Iraq: UN aid agencies preparing for 'all scenarios' as western Mosul military operations set to begin](#)

18 February 2017 – With military operations to retake western Mosul starting, United Nations humanitarian agencies in Iraq are rushing to prepare for the humanitarian impact of the fighting amid grave concerns that tens of thousands of families are at extreme risks.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the country, food and fuel supplies are dwindling, markets and shops have closed, running water is scarce and electricity in many neighborhoods is either intermittent or cut off.

"The situation is distressing. People, right now, are in trouble. We are hearing reports of parents struggling to feed their children and to heat their homes," said Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

According to estimates, between 750,000 and 800,000 civilians reside in the western section of Mosul.

However, few if any commercial supplies have reached the city in the past three months since the main road to Syria was cut-off.

Sources in the city also reported that nearly half of all food shops have closed and bakeries throughout the area have run out of fuel and many can no longer afford to purchase costly flour.

RELATED: UN fears new wave of displacement as fighting escalates in Mosul and Hawiga

Prices of fuel such as kerosene and cooking gas have skyrocketed and many of the most destitute families are burning wood, furniture, plastic or garbage

for cooking and heating.

Families, children face critical shortage of drinking water, do not have enough to eat

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) there are critical shortages of food and safe drinking water.

Three out of five people now depend on untreated water
UNICEF Representative in Iraq Peter Hawkins

"Three out of five people now depend on untreated water from wells for cooking and drinking as water systems and treatment plants have been damaged by fighting or run out of chlorine," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

"Food prices in western Mosul are almost double than in eastern Mosul," added Sally Haydock, the WFP Representative in the country, noting that many families do not have enough to eat.

Preparing to aid as many as 400,000 fleeing civilians

According to OCHA, UN and humanitarian partners are rushing to prepare for the humanitarian impact of the military operation.

"We don't know what will happen during the military campaign but we have to be ready for all scenarios. Tens of thousands of people may flee or be forced to leave the city. Hundreds of thousands of civilians might be trapped – maybe for weeks, maybe for months," said Ms. Grande.

Emergency sites are being constructed south of the city and stocks of life-saving supplies are being pre-positioned for the 250,000-400,000 civilians who may flee.

"Protecting civilians is the highest priority in a situation like this – nothing is more important [...] The battle hasn't started but already there is a humanitarian crisis," the UN humanitarian official added.

[Woman detained for spreading bird flu rumors](#)

A woman in central China's Hubei Province was detained for spreading rumors of a deadly bird flu outbreak, police said Saturday.

A post went viral on China's biggest social network, WeChat, Thursday saying an outbreak of H7N9 human infection had attacked eight medical workers and

some family members after a villager in the suburbs of Xiantao City came down with the epidemic.

The post caused widespread panic and police launched an investigation, only to find it was sheer fabrication.

A woman surnamed Chen surrendered herself to police Thursday night, saying she had fabricated the rumor and spread it on WeChat.

She was put in detention for five days starting Friday.

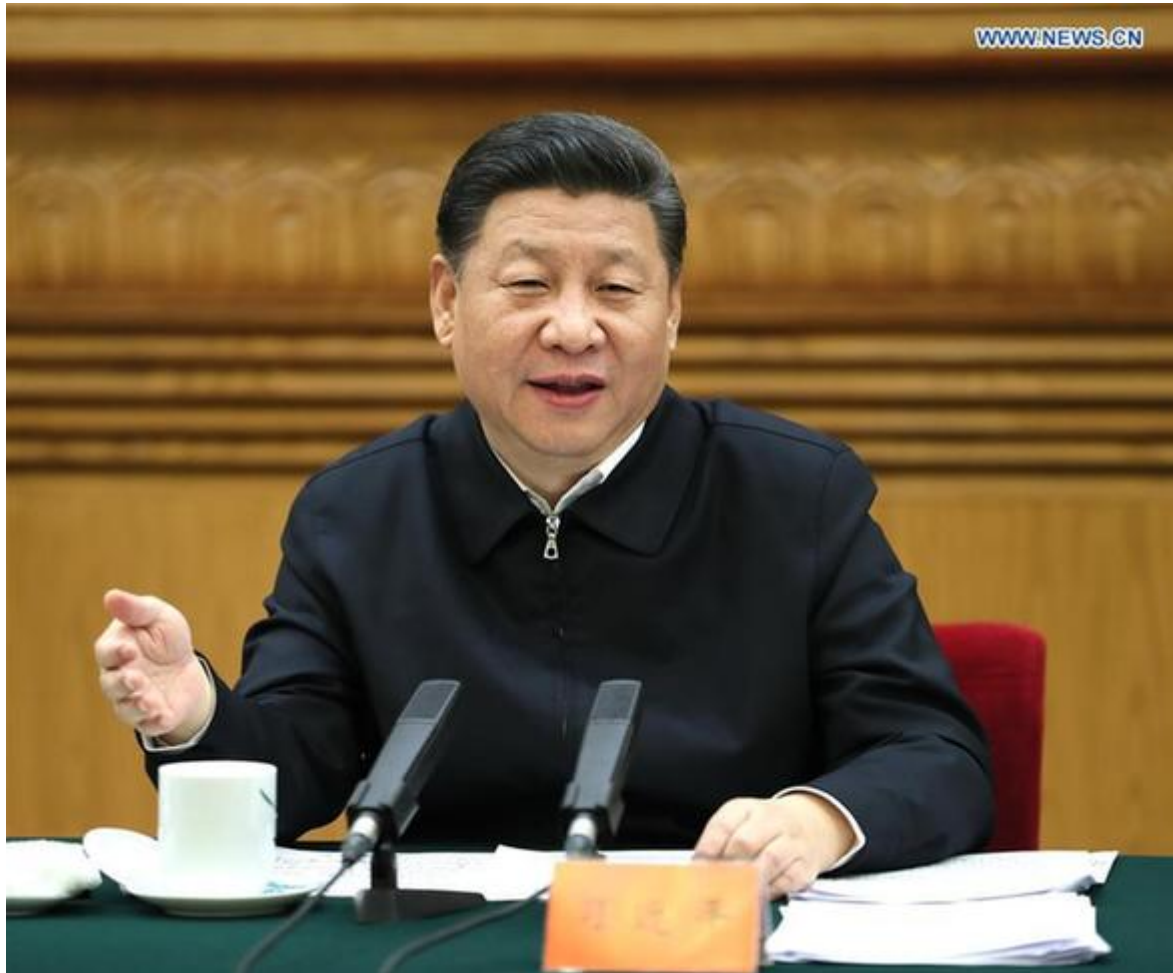
China has stepped up prevention of human H7N9 avian flu which has led to 87 deaths at least nationwide since January. In addition, 269 H7N9 human infections have been reported in China this year.

The latest case was reported in southwest China's Guizhou Province on Friday. The patient, 45, was from Danzhai County in the Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture of Qiandongnan.

All close contacts were under clinical observation and no signs of infection had been detected so far, the provincial health and family planning commission said Saturday.

Xi calls for overall national security outlook

President Xi Jinping on Friday called for an overall national security outlook at a seminar in Beijing, emphasizing the importance of political, economic, territorial, social and cyber security.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, who heads the National Security Commission (NSC), presides over a seminar on national security in Beijing, capital of China, Feb. 17, 2017. (Xinhua/Lan Hongguang)

Xi, who heads the National Security Commission (NSC), presided over the seminar on national security on Friday. Premier Li Keqiang and top legislator Zhang Dejiang, the two deputy heads of the NSC, were present at the seminar.

After listening to reports by Public Security Minister Guo Shengkun, Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui, Hubei Province Party chief Jiang Chaoliang, and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Party Chief Chen Quanguo, Xi said national security has become more and more important in the work of the Party and the state, adding that national security work is all about the people's interests.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, stressed that safeguarding national security requires the grasp of rules in the context of the great changes in the international order, and that the planning work must give priority to the prevention of risks.

National security planning must consider the general background that China is in a period of important strategic opportunity for development, Xi said.

"The overall direction of multipolarization of the world, the globalization of the economy and the democratization of international relations has not changed," said Xi.

“No matter how the international situation changes, we must maintain our strategic steadiness, strategic confidence and strategic patience,” the president said.

He called for global vision in national security work, coordinating development and security, combining principles with tactics, and taking the strategic initiative in China’s own hand.

Xi called for enhancing a prevention and control system for public security, improving overall capability in social management, and solving problems and disputes at their roots.

Xi stressed efforts should be made to enhance security in fields including transport and production of hazardous chemicals and improve fire prevention and control so that major accidents do not occur.

A firm fence of cyber security should be consolidated, and efforts should be made to better safeguard cyber security and key information infrastructure, Xi said.

Xi said the development of core technologies should be facilitated and early warning and monitoring of cyber security should be strengthened, in addition to ensuring the security of big data.

Xi stressed the need to proactively shape China’s external security environment, adding the country must strengthen cooperation in security field and guide the international community to jointly safeguard international security.

Xi called for enhanced capacity building in terms of materials, technology, equipment, talent, law and mechanism to safeguard national security.

He underscored that it was a fundamental principle for national security work to adhere to the leadership of the Party, adding local Party leaderships must fulfill their national security obligations.

New diplomatic vehicle regulation increases oversight

China is beefing up efforts to better manage diplomatic vehicles with the recent release of a new regulation.

The regulation, jointly promulgated last month by the Foreign Ministry and other several ministries, will for the first time control the total number of such vehicles, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a news briefing on Friday.

Applications for these vehicles will be approved individually and the owners are required to buy third-party liability insurance for an insured amount of at least 1 million yuan (\$147,000), the regulation says.

The number of diplomatic vehicles has surged amid China's opening-up, which has drawn a growing number of diplomats and larger staffs at international organizations, Geng said.

Under the regulation, new license plates will replace the old by May 1, Geng said. On Monday, the Laotian embassy received the first new plates. Previously, diplomatic license plates had the Chinese character for ambassador followed by numbers. Now the order is reversed, and the character is white instead of the former red.

The regulation allows ambassadors to register two such vehicles for private use. Other diplomats may register only one. Administrative and technical staff at diplomatic missions can register only one vehicle per household within the first six months of their terms of office in China.

Seven situations are listed in the regulation that would deprive the vehicle of diplomatic status. For example, a diplomatic vehicle loaned to someone who is not a diplomat forfeits its immunity privileges.

In addition, traffic violations will no longer be condoned as the ministries will closely oversee the purchase, use and traffic law compliance of these vehicles, Geng said.

The new regulation comes against the background of the long struggle to ease traffic jams in Beijing, where one-fifth of the more than 4 million vehicles in the city are restricted from the roads between rush hours on work days, said Sun Lijun, a professor of transportation at Tongji University in Shanghai.

Moreover, the recurrent smog in northern China has government promoting policies that limit emissions and help to improve air quality, he added.