

[Russia, China block Security Council action on use of chemical weapons in Syria](#)

28 February 2017 – With ‘no’ votes from permanent members Russia and China, the United Nations Security Council today failed to adopt a resolution that would, according to press reports, have imposed sanctions against parties using chemical weapons in war-torn Syria.

While nine of the Council’s members voting in favour, Bolivia joined Russia and China in rejecting the text, as Egypt, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan abstained. A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council’s five permanent members means a resolution cannot be adopted.

Media reports suggest that the draft resolution would have established a sanctions regime, a committee and an expert panel to hold accountable those using and producing chemical weapons in Syria. The text would also have imposed sanctions on a number of individuals and entities linked to the use of chemical weapons in cases where responsibility was established by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

The Council came together on 19 December to unanimously adopt a resolution demanding that all parties to the Syrian conflict ensure immediate and unhindered access for the monitoring of evacuations from eastern Aleppo.

But today’s decision comes after the Council’s two most recent failed attempts to take action on Syria: on 8 October, Russia vetoed a resolution that would have called for an end to military flights over Aleppo; and on 5 December, a measure calling for a seven-day ceasefire in the beleaguered city failed to pass after negative votes by both China and Russia. In the past five years, Russia has vetoed seven Council texts on the Syrian conflict, while China has vetoed six of those seven.

[People fleeing war more likely to find shelter in poorer countries, says UN refugee agency](#)

28 February 2017 – Most of the 3.2 million people driven forcibly from their homes in early 2016 found shelter in low- and middle-income countries, according to a new study by the United Nations refugee agency.

“The biggest contributors providing a safe haven to the world’s uprooted people are poorer communities,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in a news release yesterday.

More than half the new refugees in the first half of 2016 fled Syria’s conflict, with most staying in the immediate region – Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, according to the UN Refugee Agency’s (UNHCR) Mid-Year Trends 2016 report.

Other sizable groups fled Iraq, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, the UN agency reported.

For example, relative to the sizes of their populations, Lebanon and Jordan host the largest number of refugees, while in terms of economic performance the biggest burdens are carried by South Sudan and Chad.

“Today we face not so much a crisis of numbers but of cooperation and solidarity,” Mr. Grandi said.

RELATED: Refugees fleeing danger are ‘not dangerous themselves’ – UN refugee agency chief

Of all countries, Turkey sheltered the greatest number of refugees, hosting 2.8 million by mid-2016. It was followed by Pakistan (1.6 million), Lebanon (one million), Iran (978,000), Ethiopia (742,700), Jordan (691,800), Kenya (523,500), Uganda (512,600), Germany (478,600) and Chad (386,100).

Speaking earlier this month, he criticized the politicizing of refugees in Europe, the United States, and other industrialized countries and regional blocks.

“These are people that flee from danger, they’re not dangerous themselves,” he had said.

[With virtual and augmented reality, UN ‘ideas forum’ to explore collaboration on Global Goals](#)

28 February 2017 – Policy makers, activists and private sector representatives from over 80 countries will join gaming experts and simulators tomorrow in Bonn, Germany, at the start of the first “playable” sustainable development conference organized by the United Nations and partners.

According to Mitchell Toomey, the Global Director at the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Action Campaign, the Global Festival of Ideas for Sustainable Development is designed to bring together diverse communities and come up with ideas on sustainability to let the “crowd” decide what happens next.

“The whole concept is taken from the great experience that the UN was able to participate in with the designing of the SDGs [...] ‘let’s ask everybody what should be in the next agenda’,” Mr. Toomey told *UN News*.

“By opening a lot of different channels, including the My World Survey and The World We Want [...] over 10 million people eventually became involved in that process,” he added.

Organized in Bonn, Germany, from 1-3 March, the Festival will see participants transform into “active players” to come up with new ideas on addressing global challenges.

Using the gaming app 2030 Hive Mind – a real-time policy simulation application – participants will explore collaboration to achieve the SDGs by 2030. They will also have to make tough choices and trade-offs along the way.

The idea to use the gaming app came from the need to “stay serious” in tackling development challenges and the importance of engaging and being approachable, explained Mr. Toomey.



Mitchell Toomey, the Global Director at the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Action Campaign. Photo: UN News/Cristina Silveiro

“[The app is] very interesting as it relies on people coming together, sharing what they know, trading policies and advice, collaborating, bringing good ideas to crescendo by getting enough people to think about them and support them at the same time,” he added.

“The goal is to provide a way to develop policies, but also to campaign around that, by walking around the event and making sure others are supporting the policies that you are, and those who do that the best will get the best scores.”

The introduction of the app also aims to engage with everyone on the topic of sustainable development and SDGs so that the goals don’t remain in the policy domain alone and to encourage everyone to take part in the issue.

The festival also features a virtual reality zone (VRZone) to showcase, in 360-degrees, content produced across the UN system and to tell stories that inspire and generate empathy, action and positive social change. The series provides a deeper understanding for those living in the most complex development challenges, catalysing urgency for those most in danger of being left behind if the SDGs are not met.

The Global Festival of Ideas, the first in a series of annual forums, is hosted by the UN SDG Action Campaign in partnership with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) with the support of the German Government.

[UN migration agency reports surge in displacement from Mosul as fighting intensifies](#)

28 February 2017 – The United Nations migration agency today reported thousands of new arrivals at Iraqi sites for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing Mosul's western sector where fighting is taking place between the Government forces and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorists.

"The stories of the survivors are heart-breaking," said Thomas Lothar Weiss, Iraq Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in a press release.

Since the start of Iraqi forces' efforts to retake the city's western section on 19 February, more than 10,000 people have been displaced in the zone, according to Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD).

"We are very worried about the fate of the tens of thousands of families still trapped inside of West Mosul," said Mr. Weiss.

IOM reported some 1,650 people arrived today at the Hamam al-Aleel facility, and nearly 2,800 arrived at Qayara air strip on Sunday night. Both these locations are in Nineweh Governorate southeast of Mosul.

MoMD estimates another 3,000 individuals are already moving towards the checkpoints and are expected to arrive tomorrow

. These numbers, among the largest in weeks, are just a fraction of the 250,000 or more people who could yet be displaced from western Mosul as fighting escalates, said IOM Iraq press officer Hala Jaber.

. "There is serious concern for the 750,000 trapped in the densely populated western sector, with conditions worsening daily, according to reports and testimonies from those who have managed to escape," she said.

RELATED: UN refugee agency focuses on sheltering displaced as Iraqi offensive moves to west Mosul

Those who arrived at the Qayara site yesterday, including children, spoke of seeing dead bodies on the streets as they escaped. Many corpses, they said,

were ISIL fighters; others civilians killed by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) laid by militants.

Families escaping with children are reportedly taping their mouths with duct tape to ensure they don't cry or make a sound that would alert ISIL. Other families are giving their children sleeping pills or Valium to keep them quiet during their escape.

IOM's Qayara site is currently providing shelter for 4,472 displaced families or 25,344 individuals, with a planned capacity to hold 10,000 families or 60,000 individuals. The Haj Ali emergency site is currently hosting 1,565 displaced families, or 6,994 individuals, with a planned capacity for 7,000 families, or 40,000 individuals.

[Migrating children and women, suffer 'sexual violence, exploitation, abuse and detention' – UN agency](#)

28 February 2017 – A senior United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) official is calling the routes from sub-Saharan Africa into Libya and across the sea to Europe one of the "world's deadliest and most dangerous for children and women," as the agency reported that nearly half of the women and children interviewed after making the voyage were raped.

"Refugee and migrant children and women are routinely suffering sexual violence, exploitation, abuse and detention along the Central Mediterranean migration route from North Africa to Italy," UNICEF warned in a new report, *A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migrant Route*.

At the time of the report, 256,000 migrants were recorded in Libya – of who about 54,000 included women and children. UNICEF estimates that this is a low count with actual numbers at least three times higher.

In addition, it is believed that at least 181,000 people – including more than 25,800 unaccompanied children – used smugglers in 2016 to try to reach Italy. At the most dangerous portion – from southern Libya to Sicily – one in every 40 people is killed, according to UNICEF.

"The Central Mediterranean from North Africa to Europe is among the world's deadliest and most dangerous migrant routes for children and women," said Afshan Khan, UNICEF Regional Director and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe.

"The route is mostly controlled by smugglers, traffickers and other people seeking to prey upon desperate children and women who are simply seeking

refuge or a better life,” Mr. Khan added.



In Libya, Addis, holding his 30-month-old son, Lato, sits in a cell at the Alguaiha detention centre, which houses illegal migrants apprehended while attempting the dangerous voyage across the Mediterranean Sea. Photo: UNICEF/UNI187398/Romenzi

The UNICEF report is based on a survey in the field of 122 people, including 82 women and 40 children from 11 nationalities. Among the children, 15 are girls between the ages of 10 and 17.

“Nearly half the women and children interviewed had experienced sexual abuse during migration – often multiple times and in multiple locations,” according to the report, with “widespread and systematic” sexual violence at crossings and checkpoints.

In addition, about three-quarters of all the children interviewed said that they had “experienced violence, harassment or aggression at the hands of adults” including beatings, verbal and emotional abuse.

At the mercy of smugglers, children and women were left in debt and often had to agree to “pay as you go” arrangements.

In western Libya, women were often held in detention centres where they reported “harsh conditions, such as poor nutrition and sanitation, significant overcrowding and a lack of access to health care and legal assistance,” according to UNICEF.

Included in the report is a six-point agenda calling for safe and legal pathways and safeguards to protect migrating children. The UN agency is urging Governments and the European Union to adopt this agenda.

Meanwhile, in Libya, the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and partners held a five-day training for managers and staff of Libyan detention centres to promote human rights and ensure that the detainees are treated in line with international standards.