

Haiti: Peacekeeping chief points to changes in mandate of UN mission

10 February 2017 – While the security situation in Haiti is not perfect, solid progress has been made over the past few years, the head of United Nations peacekeeping operations has said, stressing that the Organization is considering a change in the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in the island nation, known as MINUSTAH.

Wrapping up a week-long visit during which he attended the swearing in of the new Haitian President, Jovenel Moïse, and carried out an out an evaluation of Mission, Hervé Ladsous, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told reporters yesterday in Port-au-Prince: “The military component of MINUSTAH is likely to disappear in the relatively near future. We are looking at the modalities.”

At the heart of the Mission’s work is ensuring stability, he continued, noting that the recent elections had gone off with few incidents, thanks to MINUSTAH and particularly the Haitian National Police, and the Provision Electoral Council. “I think this is something to be noted,” he said.

He recalled that in October 2016, when the UN Security Council renewed MINUSTAH’s mandate, it had expressed its wish to examine the mandate of the Mission in mid-April. The Secretary-General is to make recommendations to the Security Council on 15 March.

“I think that when we look at the situation in this country compared to what it was a few years ago, we have made a lot of progress,” Ladsous said. “Security is not perfect, but I think it is much better.”

Mr. Ladsous went on to note that the regular strength of the Haitian National Police is set to reach 15,000 and that efforts will continue to strengthen the capacities of this police.

Somalia: UN Security Council urges sustained momentum towards democratic governance

10 February 2017 – Welcoming political and security progress in Somalia since 2012, including the recently concluded elections in the country, the United Nations Security Council today highlighted the need to maintain the

momentum towards democratic governance in the African nation.

In a Presidential Statement adopted today, the 15-member Council also hailed the increased representation of women in the Upper House and the House of the People and underscored the important contribution of women to Somalia's peacebuilding and State-building processes.

The UN body responsible for matters concerning international peace and security also congratulated President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' and paid tribute to former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for his service and commended the swift and gracious transfer of power in Somalia.

The new President, known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner on Wednesday after two rounds of voting by the Somali Parliament in the capital, Mogadishu. The runner-up, incumbent President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, chose to withdraw from a third and final round.

It also underscored the importance of timely and transparent appointment of ministers and the cabinet, in consultation with the Somali Parliament, and called on the Parliament and all federal and provincial leaders to cooperate fully with the Federal Government in driving forward reform and addressing immediate priorities without delay.

The Security Council further emphasized the need to accelerate agreement between the federal and regional authorities on a federal security sector architecture as well as the importance of good faith cooperation between the authorities to speed up the country's peacebuilding and State-building process.

It also called on the international community and Somalia's partners to step up their support to efforts to build and strengthen the country's national institutions, governance structures and socio-economic infrastructure.

The Council further urged the Federal Government to promote a comprehensive reconciliation process that brings about local, regional, and national cohesion and integration in a climate of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to establish an effective federal political system.

Also in the statement, the Council recognized that the coming months would be an important

period for Somalia, and said that it would follow progress closely, and reaffirmed its support for peace, stability and development in Somalia.

In Turkey, UN chief Guterres spotlights collective responsibility for refugee protection

10 February 2017 – Underscoring the enormity of the plight of refugees, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today appealed for effective burden-sharing in supporting those who have been forced to flee their homes, as well as to those providing them refuge.

"This is a moment to launch an appeal when we see so many borders being closed and when we see so many escaping their responsibilities [...] for effective burden-sharing and to make sure that the integrity of the international refugee protection regime is maintained," Mr. Guterres said at a press encounter in Istanbul alongside Binali Yildirim, the Turkish Prime Minister.

"One area is [supporting] the countries of first asylum, support to the host communities, support to projects that can help [...] both refugee populations and the host communities," he explained.

"The second area of burden-sharing is the resettlement of refugees [...] because the protection of refugees is not only the responsibility of neighbouring States of a crisis; it is a collective responsibility of the international community," added Mr. Guterres.

The UN chief, on his first official visit to the region, also thanked the Turkish Government and people for their large humanitarian support to Syrian people as well as to those from other parts of the world.

In particular, he expressed his appreciation for the role of Turkey in convening and orienting the Astana conference on Syria and that it would lead to the Geneva talks in which the political solution dimension will be at the centre of the discussions.

"The role that Turkey has played has been, in our opinion, extremely positive and we are very grateful and very appreciative for that fact," he said.

Mr. Guterres also thanked Turkey for its role in convening of the Astana Conference and said: "It is now very important to have in Geneva discussions that go to the substance of the issues and allow for a political solution to start [being] built."

Recalling the country's contributions to the international multilateral system, he noted that Turkey is one of the guarantor powers in the UN-supported Conference for Cyprus for the unity of Cyprus, and expressed hope that the efforts of the two communities that go on meeting at the highest level and the efforts of the guarantor powers will allow for a breakthrough

in the near future.

A breakthrough able to fully respect the concerns of the Turkish Cypriot community about its security but, at the same time, compatible with the concerns of the Greek Cypriot community, added the Secretary-General, pledging the support of the UN to the two communities and the guarantor powers to support the search for a solution that is acceptable for all.

The UN chief also noted the importance of political solutions in which people feel duly represented at the political level for successfully fighting terrorism.

Secretary-General Guterres also said there is no plan B but for the two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and underscored: It is absolutely essential to avoid unilateral actions that undermine the possibility of that two-state solution.

He also noted that his discussions in Istanbul included the situation in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan as well as the on importance of rule of law and protection of human rights.

[Yemen: As food crisis worsens, UN agencies call for urgent assistance to avert catastrophe](#)

10 February 2017 – The number of food insecure people in Yemen has risen by three million in seven months, with an estimated 17.1 million people more than two-thirds of the entire population of 27.4 million now struggling to feed themselves, according to a joint assessment by three United Nations agencies.

The speed at which the situation is deteriorating and the huge jump in food insecure people is extremely worrying, said the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Representative in Yemen, Salah Hajj Hassan, in a news release.

Bearing in mind that agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population, FAO is urgently calling for funds to scale up its agricultural livelihoods support to farmers, herders and fishing communities to improve their access to food in 2017 and prevent the dire food and livelihood security situation from deteriorating further, he added.

Of the 17.1 million food-insecure people, about 7.3 million are considered to be in need of emergency food assistance, according to the preliminary results

of the Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment, which attributed the rapid deterioration of the conditions to the ongoing conflict.

The UN and humanitarian partners has recently launched an international appeal for \$2.1 billion to provide life-saving assistance to 12 million people in Yemen in 2017 – the largest-ever humanitarian response plan for the war-torn country.

The joint assessment was conducted by FAO, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in cooperation with the authorities in Yemen. It is the first national, household-level survey conducted in the country since the escalation of the conflict in mid-March 2015.

Rates of acute malnutrition were found to have passed the critical threshold in four governorates, while agricultural production is falling across the country.

Even if they survive, these children risk not fulfilling their developmental potentials

“We are witnessing some of the highest numbers of malnutrition amongst children in Yemen in recent times,” said UNICEF’s Country Representative, Meritxell Relano.

She warned that children who are severely and acutely malnourished are 11 times more at risk of death as compared to their healthy peers, if not treated on time.

“Even if they survive, these children risk not fulfilling their developmental potentials, posing a serious threat to an entire generation in Yemen and keeping the country mired in the vicious cycle of poverty and under development,” she said.

Stephen Anderson, WFP Country Director, also sounded the alarm. “The current level of hunger in Yemen is unprecedented, which is translating into severe hardship and negative humanitarian consequences for millions of Yemenis, particularly affecting vulnerable groups.”

“Tragically, we see more and more families skipping meals or going to bed hungry, while children and mothers are slipping away with little to sustain themselves,” he said.

WFP is urgently calling for support to provide food for the seven million people who are severely food insecure and may not survive this situation for much longer, he added.



Source: OCHA 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen

Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

reported that fighting in the coastal districts of Al Mokha and Dhubab in the western governorate of Taizz is spreading to the inland districts of Al Wazi'iyah and Mawza.

The result is that more than 34,000 people have fled their homes, UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler told reporters in Geneva.

The UN refugee agency has mobilized assessment teams across displacement sites in Hudaydah, Ibb and the district of Maqbanah in Taizz, where recently displaced people are being hosted and began deliveries of emergency assistance, including basic relief items and emergency shelter.

As of 1 February 2017, UNHCR had received only \$738,303 of the \$99.6 million needed for the refugee agency's operational response in Yemen this year.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said that extremely worrying reports have emerged about the impact on civilians of the fighting over the past two weeks, in the southwestern port of Al Mokha in Taizz Governorate. Credible reports indicate that Houthi-affiliated snipers shot at families attempting to flee their homes in Houthi-controlled areas suggesting the use of civilians as human shields.

Civilians were trapped and targeted during the Al Mokha fighting. There are real fears that the situation will repeat itself in the port of Al Hudaidah, to the north of Al Mokha, where air strikes are already intensifying, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a news release.

[‘The world needs science and science needs women,’ UN says on International Day](#)

11 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today urged greater investments in teaching science, technology, engineering and math to all women and girls as well as equal access to these opportunities.

For too long, discriminatory stereotypes have prevented women and girls from having equal access to education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), said Mr. Guterres in his message for International Day of Women and Girls in Science, marked annually on 11 February.

As a trained engineer and former teacher, I know that these stereotypes are flat wrong, he said, explaining that they deny women and girls the chance to realize their potential and deprive the world of the ingenuity and innovation of half the population.

On this International Day, I urge commitment to end bias, greater investments in STEM education for all women and girls as well as opportunities for their careers and longer-term professional advancement so that all can benefit from their ground-breaking future contributions," he said.

Earlier this week, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization released its UNESCO Science Report: Towards 2030.

'Female engineers and computer programmers wanted,' is the main message of the report, which shows that women are increasingly graduating with life science degrees, but still rare in engineering and computer science, especially in developed economies.

An analysis of computer science shows a steady decrease in female graduates since 2000 that is particularly marked in high-income countries," it states.

The share of women graduates in computer science between 2000 and 2012 slipped in Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and the United States, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This should be a wake-up call," UNESCO said. "Female participation is falling in a field that is expanding globally as its importance for national economies grows, penetrating every aspect of daily life."

The share of women working as engineers is also higher in some developing countries, with increases observed in sub-Saharan and Arab countries. Women in the United Arab Emirates, for example, have benefited from national policies that promote training and employment of Emirati citizens, and in particular women.

In her message on the Day, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova called for empowering women and girls to learn and research.

"We must raise awareness about the work of women scientists by providing equal opportunities for their participation and leadership in a broad spectrum of high-level scientific bodies and events," Ms. Bokova said, calling also for mentoring opportunities for women.

In 2016, UNESCO and the L'Oréal Foundation launched the manifesto For Women in Science, to engage governments and stakeholders in promoting the full participation of girls and women in science.

For its part, UN Women noted that science and technology offer unique opportunities for women and girls to overcome a number of the barriers they typically face. For example: mobile money has empowered and transformed the lives of millions of women previously thought to be "unbankable" by enabling them to directly access financial products and services.

Women with skills in science and technological fields can help improve vital infrastructure such as water and power supply, and in doing so ease the

responsibilities that women and girls carry of providing unpaid care work for the household.

Similarly, Internet and mobile technology can help bridge barriers to education for the 32 million girls who are out of school at the primary level and the 29 million at the lower secondary level, explained the main UN entity on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates based on data from its database, July 2015

Encouraging women to do research

Women now account for 53 per cent of world's bachelor's and master's graduates in science and 43 per cent of PhDs, according to the UNESCO report. Since 2000, there has been a steady increase in female graduates in agricultural sciences, likely driven by an emphasis on national food security and the food industry.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, female graduates in agricultural science have been increasing steadily, with women comprising 40 per cent or more of graduates in Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

Medicine is also a field increasingly popular with women, with six out of 10 researchers being women in both medical and agricultural sciences in Belarus and New Zealand, for instance.

In research, however, women still lag men at 28 per cent. The figure fluctuates geographically with women in Southeast Europe are on par with men, and at 44 per cent in Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the report, the numbers are particularly low in the European Union, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

To encourage women and girls to study and work in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), the UN has organized a number of events around the world.

In New York, a high-level event is underway today tying gender, science and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event was organized with support from the Government of Malta, as the president of the Council of the European Union.

AUDIO: American astronaut Peggy Whitson is making history as the first woman ever to command two missions aboard the International Space Station.