

At Youth Forum, UN calls on young people to help realize a better future for all

30 January 2017 – Drawing attention challenges such as climate change, unemployment and inequality, confronting young people around the world, including in places where peace prevails, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today called for the youth to speak up and share their stories.

“Tell us how the United Nations can see the world from your perspective – and answer your concerns,” said Mr. Guterres in a video message to representatives gathered at UN Headquarters in New York for the sixth annual Youth Forum.

According to estimates, about 74 million young people around the world cannot find a job, many youth are driven from their homes due to conflicts, and, in places where there is peace, they suffer violence and discrimination.

The UN chief, however, emphasized that young people are also on the vanguard of progress – as entrepreneurs, activists and community leaders.

“You inspire change [...] you have the talent, energy and ideals to prevent conflicts, defend human rights, secure peace and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” he added, noting that their messages will help “create a safer and more stable world for all.”

You have the talent, energy and ideals to prevent conflicts, defend human rights, secure peace and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
UN Secretary-General António Guterres

The Youth Forum, is held annually by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2012, offers young people an opportunity to voice their opinions, share ideas, and think together about what they can do to achieve sustainable development.

Also speaking at the occasion, ECOSOC President Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava stressed that every day, a number of young people risk their lives, attempting treacherous journeys, seeking refuge from war and conflict. Furthermore, many are fleeing crises caused by financial dislocations and climate change.



ECOSOC President Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava addresses the 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Such unplanned movements combined with other processes associated with globalization, he added, “are seen as a path to lower wages, a weakening of cultural and religious identities and rising inequality.”

Underlining the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly for young people, he noted: “It is your future we are building in implementing the Agenda. This is why we need you to play a role in shaping the world you will be living in.”

Similarly, the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson also highlighted the importance of the SDGs and said that the 2030 Agenda together with Paris Agreement on climate change provides a universal masterplan to place humanity on a trajectory to a safe, secure and prosperous future for all.

VIDEO: Speaking at the ECOSOC Youth Forum, UN General Assembly President tells participants that youth should be ‘fully engaged’ in sustainable development processes.

“Implemented urgently, effectively and at scale, these agreements will transform our world, to one in which extreme poverty is eliminated and prosperity is increased and shared more equitably,” he said, and added that achieving a future envisioned in these documents would require new and bold ideas, innovative and strategic thinking, and urgent collaborative action.

“It will require fundamental changes in the way we produce goods and consume them if our world is to be sustainable,” he added, underscoring: “Youth will have to be at the forefront of this transformation.”

Also speaking at the Forum, Ahmad Alhendawi, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth called on young people not to lose hope but to become a source of hope to the world and called on all sectors of the society to work with the youth.

AUDIO: UN Youth Envoy Ahmad Alhendawi says young people are “ready and able to do the heavy lifting” to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.
Credit: UN News

The two-day Forum was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of the Youth Envoy of the Secretary-General and the UN Inter-agency Network on Youth Development.

As new drought hits Ethiopia, UN urges support for Government's 'remarkable' efforts

29 January 2017 – Commending the Ethiopian Government and humanitarian partners on the response to last year's El Niño drought that left 10.2 million people needing food assistance, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and UN aid chief Stephen O'Brien today said the international community must show "total solidarity" with country as it faces a new drought.

"This High-Level event must express our total solidarity with the Ethiopian people and the Ethiopian Government. And let's be clear: that solidarity is not a matter of generosity. It is a matter of justice and of self-interest," the Secretary-General told those gathered for the event, held earlier today in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, on the margins of the 28th Summit of the African Union.

It is a matter of justice in relation to the enormous generosity of the Ethiopian people themselves, he said, recalling that during his 10 years as UN High Commissioner for Refugees, he had witnessed the way Ethiopia became not only the largest African refugee-hosting country but the country with the most determined policy of keeping all its borders open, even in the most difficult security situations; "an example that, I would say, needs to be thought about in a world where unfortunately, so many borders are being closed."

Moreover, he said, the current crisis has not caught the Government and the people of Ethiopia unprepared, even if the magnitude of the crisis clearly is above the capacity of the Horn of Africa country to resolve. "Ethiopia has persistently applied a policy of building resilience in relation to the natural disasters that unfortunately with climate change have come to be more and more frequent and intense," explained Mr. Guterres.

Showing solidarity with Ethiopia is a matter of self-interest "because the link between humanitarian and development with peace and security is growing everywhere, and to invest in building resilience of populations and to invest in the best humanitarian needs in situations of stress like the one we are facing is also to contribute to strengthen peace and security," said Mr. Guterres, noting that a number of countries around Ethiopia are in the midst of deep crises "Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea.

In Ethiopia and beyond, development and peace and security must be tackled jointly UN chief

Describing Ethiopia as a "pillar of stability" in the region, he said the international community cannot allow the effect of drought to be a promoter of additional instability, social unrest, or conflict as this would

have dreadful consequences not only in relation to the conflicts in the area but in connection to displacements of populations, in a world that is so little inclined to receive more migrants, and to global terrorism that is now a threat everywhere.

With all this in mind, he urged the participants to transform this session of solidarity in a commitment to work together not only to address the pressing humanitarian needs of Ethiopia but to join efforts in addressing the huge challenges from a development perspective, a sustainable development perspective and from a peace and security perspective the world faces today.

Just back from a three-day visit to Ethiopia to see first-hand the impact of failed rains in the southern parts of the country, Mr. O'Brien, who is the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that in Warder zone in Ethiopia's Somali Region, he had witnessed the immense impact the drought is having on people's lives and livelihoods.

Below average rains in south and southeastern parts of the country caused by the negative Indian Ocean Dipole have led to a new lowland drought. Among the most affected areas are parts of Somali and Afar regions and a number of lowland areas of Oromia and SNNP regions. The new drought has led to severe shortages of water and pasture in the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. Deteriorating livestock body condition and loss of livestock are also being reported as well as high levels of acute and moderate malnutrition.

We have no time to lose UN Emergency Relief Coordinator

We need to act now before it is too late, said Mr. O'Brien, calling on the international partners to join the Ethiopian Government in funding the 2017 Humanitarian Requirements Document, which seeks \$948 million to assist 5.6 million people, whose lives, livelihoods and well-being depend on support from relief partners.

As effective as the humanitarian response to the 2016 El Niño drought has been, Ethiopian farmers and herders in affected areas are still living on the brink, unable to build back their livestock herds, or reinvigorate their small farms, and struggling to sustain themselves and their families, said Mr. O'Brien.

We have no time to lose. Livestock are already dying; pastoralists and farmers are already fleeing their homes in search of water and pasture; children more often girls are dropping out of school to support with household chores, and hunger and malnutrition levels will rise soon if assistance does not arrive on time, particularly among women who are more likely to suffer from health problems and malnutrition during droughts, he stressed.

South Sudan: UN and regional partners call for immediate cessation of hostilities

29 January 2017 – The United Nations, the African Union (AU) and regional partners today reiterated their call for an immediate cessation of hostilities in South Sudan and urged the parties to ensure an inclusive political process, both in the proposed National Dialogue and in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement.

Meeting in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, on the margins of the 28th African Union Summit, the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the UN, held a joint consultative meeting on South Sudan.

According to a joint press statement issued after the meeting, the participants expressed their deep concerns over the continuing spread of fighting, and risk of inter-communal violence escalating into mass atrocities, and the dire humanitarian situation in South Sudan. As such, they reaffirmed their continued and collective commitment in the search for lasting peace, security and stability in the country.

Stating that there can only be a political solution to the conflict, within the framework of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), the AU, IGAD and UN reiterated their call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urged the parties to ensure an inclusive political process, both in the proposed National Dialogue and in the implementation of the peace deal.

The AU, IGAD and the UN reaffirmed their commitment and determination to further enhance their cooperation in support of the South Sudan peace process

Further to the press statement, the participants commended the important work performed by the Chairperson of the Joint Ministering and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the Agreement and encouraged the AU High Representative for South Sudan to undertake active shuttle diplomacy towards ensuring the inclusivity of the National Dialogue and the implementation of the peace accord, in close consultation with the JMEC Chairperson, the UN and IGAD.

The AU, IGAD and the UN reaffirmed their commitment and determination to further enhance their cooperation in support of the South Sudan peace process, the statement added.

The meeting, chaired by Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Chairperson of IGAD, was also attended by Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson

of the AU Commission; and UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The AU High Representative for South Sudan, former President Alpha Oumar Konare, and the Chairperson of the JMEC, former President Festus Mogae briefed the meeting.

Also in attendance, were the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, and other senior officials of the three organizations.

South Sudan has faced ongoing challenges since a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar erupted into full blown conflict in December 2013. The crisis has produced one of the world's worst displacement situations with immense suffering for civilians.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement that formally ended the war, conflict and instability have also spread to previously unaffected areas in the Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr-El-Ghazal regions of South Sudan.

[UN agencies express hope US will continue long tradition of protecting those fleeing conflict, persecution](#)

28 January 2017 – The United Nations agencies dealing with global refugee and migration issues today expressed the hope that the United States will continue its strong leadership role and long tradition of protecting those who are fleeing conflict and persecution.

“The needs of refugees and migrants worldwide have never been greater, and the US resettlement programme is one of the most important in the world,” says a joint statement from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The agencies note that the longstanding US policy of welcoming refugees has created a ‘win-win’ situation: it has saved the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the world who have in turn enriched and strengthened their new societies.

“The contribution of refugees and migrants to their new homes worldwide has been overwhelmingly positive,” they add.

The statement from the agencies follows incoming President Donald Trump’s signing Friday of an Executive Order that, among things, reportedly suspends the US refugee programme for 120 days and, according to the media, bars entry of refugees from some countries, including Syria, until further notice.

Resettlement places provided by every country are vital. The UN refugee agency [and] the International Organization for Migration hope that the US will continue its strong leadership role and long tradition of protecting those who are fleeing conflict and persecution, the agencies state, adding that they remain committed to working with the US Administration towards the goal we share to ensure safe and secure resettlement and immigration programmes.

UNHCR and the IOM go on to express the strong belief that refugees should receive equal treatment for protection and assistance, and opportunities for resettlement, regardless of their religion, nationality or race.

We will continue to engage actively and constructively with the US Government, as we have done for decades, to protect those who need it most, and to offer our support on asylum and migration matters, the statement concludes.

[Stage ‘gradually being set’ for Somalia to move to a new phase in sustaining peace – UN envoy](#)

27 January 2017 – Briefing the Security Council on the situation in Somalia, the United Nations envoy for the country noted today that the recently concluded election was a “mirror” to Somalis, showing them the good and the bad regarding how power is exercised, relations between elders, clan power brokers, politicians, business, ordinary citizens, women and men.

“They do not like everything they have seen, least of all the levels of corruption, and the absence of institutions that can ensure legal and financial accountability,” said Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

Mr. Keating’s briefing follows an extended parliamentary electoral process and comes less than two weeks ahead of presidential polls. It also comes against the backdrop of increased Al-Shabaab militancy aiming to disrupt the elections, as evidenced by a series of recent attacks.

Stressing the importance that the last stage of the electoral process is conducted transparently and according to the agreed rules, designed to ensure free and fair elections, he noted: “The election of a President accepted as legitimate by the population and by the international community will set the stage for Somalia to tackle the serious challenges ahead.”

However, he added: “If voting [...] is seen as compromised by corruption, coercion or external interference, then the country could face a protracted

period of uncertainty.”

Despite problems, progress thus far ‘very encouraging’ – UN envoy

In his briefing, Mr. Keating, who also heads up the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), told Council members that despite the problems seen in the recently concluded elections, the process also had “very encouraging” outcomes, marking an important milestone in the country’s evolution and post-conflict transformation.



Special Representative and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) Michael Keating briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

For instance, the number of voters had increased significantly and the electorate was expanded from 2012’s 135 male elders to over 13,000 individuals (30 per cent of them female). It was also particularly notable that almost a quarter of the members of parliament are now female.

“A truly remarkable achievement, the result of effective political mobilization of women, supported by the UN and the international community and some Somali leaders,” noted the Special Representative.

“The new Parliament is younger, more diverse and is likely to be more responsive to the electorate than the previous one. In short, this Parliament is more legitimate and representative than any since the last elections were held in 1969,” he noted.

Humanitarian plight adding to human suffering

Turning to the humanitarian challenges facing the Horn of Africa country, he reported that about five million people are estimated to be in need around the country and an estimated 320,000 under-five-year-olds are acutely malnourished.

“Coping capacities have been eroded to the point of collapse,” he noted.

The week before last, the humanitarian community in Somalia had launched an \$864 million to reach 3.9 million people with urgent life-saving assistance in 2017, \$300 million of this amount is required in the first quarter of this year.

Further, noting the political and security implications of the drought, Mr. Keating said that a perceived inability of the federal and local governments to respond will damage their legitimacy – something that will be exploited by Al-Shabaab.

“In a nutshell, failure to support the drought response could halt and even undermine the pursuit of key state-building and peace-building objectives,” he cautioned.

'It is the Somalis who will determine their own fate'

Reiterating that progress is fragile and reversible, and fraught with complexity, he said the stage is nevertheless gradually being set for Somalia to move to a new phase in sustaining peace, preventing and resolving violent conflict, and in building a functional, federal State.

“Ultimately, it is the Somalis who will determine their own fate – but your support is central to their chances of success,” he concluded.