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Libya: UN envoy calls for end to fighting, beginning of political process



A resident of Tayuri stands against a bullet-riddled wall of his house, part of which was destroyed during clashes in Libya. Photo: IRIN/Zahra Moloo

10 September - The violence in Libya must stop, the United Nations envoy to that country today reiterated, calling for “meaningful, effective” dialogue to end what is among the worst fighting the country has seen since leader Muammar al-Qadhafi was ousted in 2011.

The Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Bernardino León, held a series of discussions today in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, with influential and political actors, according to the UN Support Mission (UNSMIL) which he heads.

“The use of force to achieve political objectives is rejected,” he said on his first trip to the country since taking up the UN post. “A cessation of all hostilities is an important confidence-building step that helps create an atmosphere conducive for dialogue.”

Addressing a group of parliamentarians, Mr. León stressed that the objective is to have one Parliament representative of all Libyans and a government representing all Libyans.

“We have discussed some ideas on holding a dialogue, but it has to be a Libyan initiative, with support from the international community. No one can replace Libyans and a Libyan solution,” he underscored.

The senior UN official added that progress must urgently be made in the coming weeks.

“Dialogue is not a solution if it does not produce soon an agreement,” he said, adding that what is needed is “meaningful, effective dialogue that can produce short-term solutions.”

Earlier in the week, Mr. León was in Tobruk, where he held talks with the leadership of the House of Representatives. He stressed strong UN support for the House as the sole legislative authority in the country.

On Tuesday, he visited al-Baida and met with the chairman of the Constitution-Drafting Assembly. He also addressed the Assembly, praising its role as an example of dialogue and consensus to be followed by the rest of the country.

Pledging the UN Mission's continued support, Mr. Leòn noted that he would go to the UN Security Council next week to talk to everyone in the interest of peace and stability in the country: "The Libyan street wants peace and democracy that works in order to solve the problems of the country."

The Council last week adopted resolution 2174 (2014), calling for an immediate ceasefire and inclusive political dialogue. The text also tightened the arms embargo and expanded the categories of people and entities to which sanctions may apply.

Iraq: UNESCO chief warns start of new school year in jeopardy for thousands of children



A group of internally displaced Iraqi girls queue for food at a community kitchen in a village in Iraqi Kurdistan's Dohuk governorate. Photo: UNHCR/B. Szandelszky

10 September - The head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) today called for urgent international action and mobilization to support Iraq's children and young people to get back to school.

"The future of thousands of Iraqi children and adolescents – be they internally displaced or from host communities – is at stake, as they may be deprived of their right to education. It is time to stand up and act now: education cannot wait" said UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova in a statement to the press.

While schools in Iraq are due to reopen this month, thousands of children and adolescents will not be able to enroll. More than one thousand existing schools are serving as shelters that accommodate internally displaced families. And an alarming number of schools – more than 60 – is being used for military purposes.

Meanwhile, Iraq is a young country – half of its population is under 20 years of age. The crisis directly affects more than 550,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) of school-going age.

"Education must be amongst the priorities. We must think of the future of the young generation in Iraq. Education has the power to protect, to heal and to give hope. It enables young people to shape their future and to cope with adversity. It lays the foundation for lasting stability," the Director-General said.

Many young students were unable to attend the public examinations last June and may not be able to enrol in the next academic year. In addition, many Kurdish students may not be able to go back to their schools because they are being used as shelters for IDPs.

As part of its response to the IDP crisis in Iraq, UNESCO is supporting adolescents and young adults' access to quality education. It provides accelerated learning and catch up classes for students, whose education was interrupted due to the crisis, and assists in providing alternative learning opportunities to ensure the fundamental right to education.

Ozone layer recovering but remains threatened – UN reports

10 September - The Earth's protective ozone layer is on track to recover by the middle of the century, the United Nations today reported, urging unified action to tackle climate change and curb continued fluctuations to the composition of the atmosphere.

That is according to the assessment of 300 scientists in the summary document of the *Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion 2014*, published by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

“International action on the ozone layer is a major environmental success story,” WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said in a news release. “This should encourage us to display the same level of urgency and unity to tackle the even greater challenge of climate change.”

The ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects the Earth from the harmful portion of the sun's ultraviolet rays, thus helping to preserve life on the planet.

Its recovery, according to the scientists, is attributed to the collective action through the Montreal Protocol, which since 1987, has led countries to carry out policies to reduce and then phase out their use of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Without the Montreal Protocol and associated agreements, atmospheric levels of ozone depleting substances could have increased tenfold by 2050, according to today's report.

“However, the challenges that we face are still huge. The success of the Montreal Protocol should encourage further action not only on the protection and recovery of the ozone layer but also on climate,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will host on 23 September at UN Headquarters in New York a summit in an effort to catalyze global action on climate change.

“The Montreal Protocol community, with its tangible achievements, is in a position to provide strong evidence that global cooperation and concerted action are the key ingredients to secure the protection of our global commons,” Mr. Steiner added.

Among the key findings of the report, the authors noted that what happens to the ozone layer in the second half of the 21st century will largely depend on concentrations of CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide – the three main long-lived greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The Scientific Assessment Panel is expected to present the key findings of the new report at the annual Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, to be held in Paris in November 2014. The report will be issued early next year.



The Earth's protective ozone layer is well on track to recovery in the next few decades. Photo: UNEP

Ebola: UN relief chief allocates \$4 million to bolster aid deliveries in West Africa



WFP is responding to the Ebola outbreak by delivering food to quarantined communities in Liberia. Photo: WFP/Frances Kennedy

10 September - To help offset disruptions in aid delivery caused by travel restrictions on Ebola-affected countries, the top United Nations relief official today approved an emergency allocation of nearly \$4 million for the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to support operations in West Africa.

Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, allocated \$3.8 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to bolster UNHAS, as reduced commercial travel in the region has hindered the urgent deployment of healthcare personnel and supplies.

This has severely affected the scale up of the urgent life-saving response to the Ebola outbreak in the region, says a press release from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which Ms. Amos heads.

The funding will assist the World Food Programme (WFP), which runs UNHAS, to move humanitarian personnel, medical supplies and equipment, and other essential humanitarian cargo rapidly and efficiently to multiple remote locations within Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

“UNHAS is a vital service to the Ebola response. Non-governmental organizations, UN personnel and other responders will be able to use the service to travel and deliver supplies to people in need. The pilots, crew and support staff are a vital part of the response,” said Dr. David Nabarro, the Senior UN System Coordinator for Ebola.

To date, humanitarian partners have received \$7.6 million from CERF in support of their initial response to the Ebola outbreak in four countries, including emergency health care and food assistance: Guinea (\$2.7 million), Liberia (\$1.9 million), Nigeria (\$1.5 million) and Sierra Leone (\$1.5 million).

The CERF was established in 2006 to help humanitarian agencies respond rapidly to new or deteriorating crises. UN Member States and observers, regional and local authorities, the private sector, foundations and individuals have contributed \$3.6 billion to CERF. The Fund has disbursed almost \$3.5 billion to help millions of people affected by crises in 88 countries, according to OCHA.

UN officials call for renewed global commitment to ending nuclear tests

10 September - United Nations officials today called for renewed commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and nuclear tests, noting that nearly 2,000 such tests have taken place since 1945.

“Our collective aspiration for a world free of nuclear weapons must be reflected in a firm and formal commitment to ban nuclear tests,” Charles Them bani Ntwaagae, Vice-President of the General Assembly, said in a message delivered on behalf of President John Ashe.

“To test such weapons is to play with proverbial fire, takes us further down the treacherous path we seek to avoid and damages both human health and the environment,” he told the informal meeting convened by the Assembly to mark the observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests.



Atmospheric nuclear test conducted by the United States on 18 April 1953 at the Nevada Test Site. Photo: US Government

Observed annually on 29 August, Day is meant to galvanize the UN, Member States, and non-governmental organizations to

inform and advocate the necessity of banning nuclear tests.

The General Assembly resolution declaring 29 August as the International Day was initiated by Kazakhstan, which had closed its nuclear test site near Semipalatinsk on this date in 2009. Moreover, on the same date in 1949, the then Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear test, followed by another 455 nuclear tests over succeeding decades, with a terrible effect on the local population and environment.

Since nuclear weapons testing began in the mid-twentieth century, with the first test on 16 July 1945, nearly 2,000 have taken place.

Mr. Ntwaagae said that everyone can agree that there is no place for nuclear weapons in the future that Member States aspire to and in the global development agenda that they are currently mapping out.

“With their massive powers for destruction, the use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic global consequences and would cause severe and long-lasting emergencies – humanitarian, global health, climate, social order, human development, and economic,” he stated.

“Development goals can only be achieved if we prevent such catastrophes on our planet; and accessing social goods and services is predicated on the existence of peace and security. This must be a collective effort, because we face the risks posed by these weapons collectively, as a human family, not as States with narrow national security interests.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recalled his visit to Semipalatinsk in April 2010, and added that the tests conducted there and hundreds more that occurred in other countries in the post-war period became hallmarks of a nuclear arms race.

“Our human destiny was suspended on a flimsy thread – a doctrine called mutually assured destruction, known by its fitting acronym, ‘MAD’,” he noted.

“The madness and horror of nuclear war had already been made appallingly evident in August 1945, when just two atomic bombs destroyed the entire cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan. They caused the deaths of approximately 213,000 people within five months and more than 300,000 people within five years.”

Mr. Ban said it is “regrettable” that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted by the Assembly 18 years ago, has still not entered into force.

“I wish to appeal particularly to those States that have not yet ratified the CTBT, especially the eight remaining Annex 2 States whose ratification is required for the Treaty’s entry into force. It has been already 18 years and the CTBT has not been able to be effective, while it has been contributing a great deal in practice, we need to make it legally effective.”

Despite price dip, uranium demand, production continues to rise – UN atomic watchdog



Uranium ore is processed into a concentrate known as yellowcake and packed in special, tightly sealed steel drums similar in size to oil barrels. Photo: IAEA

10 September - A new report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) published today found that demand for uranium, the raw material used to fuel nuclear power stations, will continue to rise, despite declining market prices since the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in Japan in March 2011 and lower electricity demand as a result of the global economic crisis.

The *Red Book*, as the report is known, is a recognized global reference on uranium jointly prepared by the IAEA and the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (NEA/OECD).

It found an increase in uranium supply, exploration and production. Some seven per cent more uranium resources have been identified since the last report was published in 2012, adding almost 10 years to the existing resource base.

Global uranium production continued to increase between 2010 and 2012, albeit at a lower rate than in the previous two-year period. The growth in the resource base is mainly due to a 23 per cent increase in uranium exploration and mine development, which totalled \$1.92 billion in 2012.

On the demand side, projections vary from region to region. While the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident resulted in a change of policies in many developed countries, nuclear capacity projections, notably in East Asia and non-European Union states on the European continent, continue to grow.

The *Red Book* projects that world nuclear electricity generating capacity by 2035 is expected to increase between 7 per cent on the low and 82 per cent on the high side. This is in line with the IAEA's most recent projections of between 8 and 88 per cent for the year 2030.

More than 20 countries around the globe produce uranium, with Kazakhstan, Canada and Australia as the largest producers, accounting for approximately 63 per cent of world production. The reported growth in production is mainly driven by Kazakhstan, with smaller additions in Australia, Brazil, China, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Ukraine and the United States.

The continued robust demand for the resource has led to future plans for mining operations in new countries including Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia. And to minimise the social and environmental impacts, efforts are being made to develop safe and well-regulated operations.

The new report provides analyses from 45 countries in order to address questions on global uranium exploration, resources, production and reactor-related requirements. It also offers updated information on uranium production centres and mine development plans, as well as projections of nuclear generating capacity and reactor-related requirements through 2035.

Disarmament for development is a 'win-win' for States, people – UN rights expert



Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order Alfred De Zayas. UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

10 September - An independent United Nations human rights expert today called for a meaningful reduction of military spending with funds reoriented towards development, and greater transparency in how Governments prioritize budgets.

Alfred de Zayas, the UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order calls for shifting some funds from military expenditures into education, health care, the creation of employment in peaceful industries, strengthening of the rule of law and administration of justice, among others.

He called disarming for development “a win-win strategy for States and Peoples,” according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It would also help to enable the realization of the right to development, and the post-2015 development agenda which the international community is currently discussing.

“It is time to reduce the spiral of military expenditures and to invest in research into the root causes of conflicts and in the development of strategies of conflict-prevention and resolution,” Mr. de Zayas said.

“The cost in human lives of every armed conflict is staggering, but the economic cost of wars can continue for generations,” he added in his third full-length report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Military expenditures can consume up to 40 per cent of national budgets, according to World Bank figures.

A key problem, according to Mr. de Zayas, is the consistent under-reporting of governmental expenditures, which are often media taboos or treated as national security secrets, and the international ramifications of militarization.

“Even a cursory review of the situation worldwide reveals that, in many countries, accurate and understandable information on military expenditures is not available. In some countries, military activities are concealed by placing them under different

rubrics such as energy, research or homeland security,” the Independent Expert said.

He called for public participation in decision-making, which requires full information, transparency and accountability, is essential to the democratic order.

“Parliaments have a special responsibility to oversee the adoption of national budgets and to monitor the actual use of appropriations so as to ferret out corruption,” he stressed.

The continued research into new weapons that may be used to deter, threaten, attack and occupy adversaries is particularly shocking, Mr. de Zayas said. These include lethal autonomous weapon systems, killer robots, radiological weapons, unmanned combat aerial weapons and cluster munitions.

“Excessive military expenditures have their own logic and their own dynamic. The profit-driven character of the armaments industry may well undermine the otherwise legitimate aim of protecting the population from outside threats,” he said.

Independent experts are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

UN rights expert welcomes new Assembly resolution on debt structuring



Photo: IRIN/Edgar Mwakaba

10 September - A new United Nations General Assembly resolution on debt restructuring that will set up a multilateral legal framework for debtor countries to emerge from debt safely was welcomed today by the UN rights expert on the issue as a way forward to “fill the current legal void and reduce uncertainty.”

“A multilateral legal framework would help to fill the current legal void and reduce uncertainty related to debt restructuring processes,” said Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, an independent expert charged by the UN Human Rights Council to monitor the effects of foreign debt on the enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights.

In a press statement from the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), Mr. Bohoslavsky highlighted in particular the disruptive impact of so-called “vulture funds”, which buy unserviceable debt at a huge discount.

According to the World Bank, vulture funds are buying commercial debts knowing that multilateral debt relief has put the Governments of heavily indebted poor countries in a better position to pay, and hoping that they will therefore be persuaded to settle with them. They frequently engage in litigation in the courts of rich nations to obtain judgments against the debtor and then attempt to attach the government’s assets abroad.

“Vulture fund litigation not only prevents indebted countries from using resources freed up by debt relief for social and economic rights, it also complicates debt restructuring processes,” Mr. Bohoslavsky said.

In a letter to the Group of 77 (“G-77”) developing countries sent before the UN General Assembly discussion on the resolution, he stressed that “financial markets need more prudence, not less.”

Financial business enterprises, including hedge funds or so-called ‘vulture funds’ have to respect human rights and should exercise human rights due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for adverse human rights impacts as outlined by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,” Mr. Bohoslavsky said.

He also said: “An international legal framework should be seen as complementary to existing UN Guiding Principles on Foreign Debt and Human Rights and on Business and Human Rights, to national legislation limiting vulture fund litigation and to collective action clauses in sovereign bonds.”

“It would promote more responsible financial behaviour and more orderly, timely and speedy debt restructuring processes,” Mr. Bohoslavsky said.

With 124 votes in favour, 11 votes against and 41 abstentions, the General Assembly adopted the resolution: “Towards the establishment of a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring processes” on Tuesday that would establish an intergovernmental negotiation process aimed at increasing the efficiency, stability and predictability of the international financial system.

Mr. Bohoslavsky was appointed as Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and human rights by the United Nations Human Rights Council on 8 May 2014. Independent experts are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

New UN reports calls for major changes in global economic governance, management

10 September - Six years after the start of the global economic and financial crisis, the world economy has still not found a sustainable growth path, argues a new United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report released today.

The study, subtitled *Global governance and policy space for development*, suggests that “getting back to business as usual has failed to address the root causes of the crisis.” The “new normal” has some worrying parallels with the conditions that initially led to the global financial crisis in 2008, namely rising inequalities and asset bubbles, said an UNCTAD statement to the press.

With expected growth of 2.5 to 3 per cent in 2014 keeping the global recovery weak, policies supporting it are not only inadequate but often inconsistent, the report argues. This means that simply relying on buoyant asset prices, trade competitiveness and declining wage shares to maintain growth cannot bring the world economy back to robust health.

Indeed, developing countries have managed to recover from the “great recession” after 2009 faster than developed countries, in part by supporting domestic demand with countercyclical policies. However, there have been limitations and the idea that emerging economies have decoupled from events in the advanced economies is no longer tenable.

The report also points out that growth in Japan and the United States is not expected to improve in 2014. Growth will exceed 5.5 per cent in Asian and sub-Saharan countries, but will remain subdued at around 1 per cent in North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Meanwhile, transition economies are expected to further dip to around 1 per cent, from an already weak performance in 2013.

Developing countries will continue to face the challenges of a persistent instability of the international financial system. Tackling this requires macroeconomic and regulatory policies. And mirroring economic activity, international trade remains lacklustre due to weak global demands.

Breaking from this protracted period of low economic growth requires strengthening aggregate demand through real wage growth and more equal income distribution rather than new “financial bubbles.”

Sluggish growth, weak employment conditions, high household indebtedness and persistently high levels of inequality are “neither new nor normal”. Rather, the main problems in the post-crisis era are insufficient aggregate demand and continuing financial instability, and that both of these issues reflect policy choice.

To offer a policy alternative, UNCTAD economists proposed a global model to consider the potential impact of a coordinated package of fiscal, monetary, industrial and trade policies described in this year’s report. The model divides up the world economy into 25 countries and groups and evaluates growth patterns, trade, employment and financial



Fishing is one of the main contributors to the Namibian economy and Walvis Bay on the Atlantic Ocean is the main port in the country. Photo: World Bank/John Hogg

performance in the public and private sectors and also allows a role for international financial flows.

The alternative scenario entails growth-enhancing fiscal policies, including public investment, income policies to support demand growth on a sustainable basis and industrial policies to promote investment. It also includes development-oriented trade agreements that would support these policies in developing countries, as well as regulation of finance and capital controls.

Making the alternative scenario a reality requires careful consideration of the policy space available to developed and developing countries alike. There will always be a “give and take” on policy space in an interdependent world economy made up of sovereign States of unequal economic and political strength, the report recognized.

At the same time, it is worth acknowledging that governance arrangements that have evolved under finance-led globalization have given too much leeway to private corporations and taken too much from the space for government action.

The global financial crisis was meant to give political motivation to correct the inequalities, but reforms have been foiled. In light of big policy challenges facing advanced and emerging economies, there is an increasing need for policy consistency and macroeconomic coherence.

UN mission in Afghanistan supports call for presidential candidates to resolve differences

10 September - The Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš, today endorsed a call made by the Ulema Council, a key religious advisory body, for the country’s two presidential candidates to come to an agreement on the formation of a unity government soon.

“The Ulema Council informed me of their position on the current stalemate between the candidates in relation to the formation of a government of national unity - and it is a position I wholeheartedly agree with,” said Mr. Kubiš in a statement to the press.



Special Representative Ján Kubiš. UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

The Special Representative met the Ulema Council members, including its head, Qeyamuddin Kashaf, on Tuesday, to consult with them and seek their advice on the current situation between the two presidential candidates as part of his ongoing engagement with diverse stakeholders in support of the electoral process.

Expressing the position of the Ulema Council, Mr. Kashaf said that the only solution to the current situation is a speedy agreement on the formation of a national unity government in order to prevent a crisis and in the best interests of the Afghan people.

“At this critical juncture, genuine partnership is necessary to meeting the country’s many challenges, and strengthening its stability and unity,” said Mr. Kubiš, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

“The UN supports the formation of a government of national unity led by the winner of the election - as the candidates committed to on 12 July and reiterated on 8 August,” he added.

The main audit was completed on 4 September and the announcement of updated results is expected shortly. Meanwhile, the United Nations expects both candidates, Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani to abide by their commitments to enable Afghanistan’s first ever peaceful transfer of power.

The United Nations-supervised audit, run by the Independent Election Commission (IEC), is unprecedented in scale and scope with more than 22,000 ballot boxes being individually opened and examined by electoral authorities and representatives of the candidates.

Along with UN advisors, 216 international observers are present from the European Union, the Asian Network for Free Elections, and organizations based in the United States, such as the National Democratic Institute, Democracy International,

and Creative Associates.

In addition, more than 100 personnel seconded from 17 diplomatic missions have also been engaged in the observation effort. There are also a sizeable number of experienced national observers from different respected Afghan organizations.