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Adapting UN peace operations to changing world a 'shared responsibility,' Guterres tells Security Council

6 April – United Nations peacekeepers face a raft of challenges – terrorism, hostile host governments, floods of illicit weapons, and sometimes being deployed to places where peace itself is at stake – Secretary-General António Guterres said today, underscoring that all parts of the UN have a role to play in making sure 'blue helmets' can deliver on the mandates assigned to them.

“Peace operations are at a crossroads. Our task is to keep them relevant with clear and achievable mandates, and the right strategies and support,” the Secretary-General said, opening the Security Council's peacekeeping operations review.

He underscored that UN peace operations are diverse, and their operating environments are highly complex “[and] we share a responsibility to adapt them to our changing world.”

In his remarks, he called on the 193-member General Assembly for political support and in on the troop- and police-contributing countries for professional and committed personnel. He also urged the countries that border conflict zones for their support and underlined that having the backing of the host countries themselves is vital.

“And above all, we look to the [Security] Council for unity, and for clear, achievable mandates,” added the UN chief, noting the needing for a strategy that can support the diverse range of peace missions and takes into account the “entire peace
continuum: from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and long-term development.”

In terms of initiatives to enhance the Organization’s peace and security architecture, Mr. Guterres highlighted that the number of troop- and police-contributing countries have been increased and modern technologies are being used to improve situational awareness and analysis.

Also, key functions have been decentralized and performance management and accountability are being strengthened. Such efforts have reduced the cost per capita of uniformed peacekeepers by 18 per cent since 2008.

In the longer term, Mr. Guterres outlined specific areas of improvement, including the need for clear, realistic and up-to-date mandates for peace operations from the Security Council; greater and more active role for women in peace operations; and stepping up troop contributions.

He said that 54 missions have completed their mandates and closed; two more will do so in the months ahead. “That is our objective for every peacekeeping mission: to do the job entrusted to it. To save lives. To prevent mass atrocities. To set the stage for stability and sustainable peace. And to close. And, from start to finish, to be cost-effective.”

In particular, he emphasized the need for solid and predictable funding so that missions that are backed by a Security Council resolution are supported either with assessed contributions, or by other predictable financing mechanisms.

“Today's peacekeeping budget is less than one half of one percent of global military spending,” said the Secretary-General.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Guterres note that peace operations were currently at a crossroads: and that they have to be kept relevant with clear and achievable mandates, and the right strategies and support.

“Success depends on our collective efforts. You can count on my full commitment,” he said, “But I also count on the unity and support of [the Security] Council, to fulfil its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security in this changing world.”

Cost of renewables fell in 2016, lowering global investment in clean energy – UN

6 April – The world added record levels of renewable energy capacity in 2016, even as investment in clean energy fell, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) today reported.

“Ever-cheaper clean tech provides a real opportunity for investors to get more for less,” said UNEP executive Director Erik Solheim. “This is exactly the kind of situation, where the needs of profit and people meet, that will drive the shift to a better world for all.”

The report, Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2017, found that wind, solar, biomass and waste-to-energy, geothermal, small hydro and marine sources added 138.5 gigawatts to global power capacity in 2016, up from 127.5 gigawatts added the year before. According to the press release, this difference is roughly equals to the energy created from the world’s 16 largest existing power producing facilities combined.

Another key finding is the decreasing cost of clean energy, as compared with traditional fuels. For example, the average dollar capital expenditure per megawatt for solar photovoltaics and wind dropped by over 10 per cent.

This meant that investors got “more bang for their buck,” according to UN Environment, which published today's report.
along with the Frankfurt School-UNEP Collaborating Centre and the Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

“Investment in renewables capacity was roughly double that in fossil fuel generation,” the UN programme said.

While the capacity from renewables was equivalent to 55 per cent of all new power, the highest to date, total investment was $241.6 billion, the lowest since 2013.

The authors noted drops in investment among developing countries, including in China where investment had been rising the past 11 years. Investment in offshore windmills in China, however, peaked at $4.1 billion.

Meanwhile, in Europe, investment rose, led by the United Kingdom and Germany. The continent's investment in renewables overall rose three per cent to $59.8 billion.

The most hopeful sign last year for the future greening of the global electricity system was a succession of winning bids for solar and wind, in auctions around the world, according to the report. Records were set for solar power in Chile and onshore wind in Morocco.

**Zika could end up costing Latin America and the Caribbean up to $18 billion, UN reports finds**

6 April – In addition to the impact on public health, the tangible impact of the Zika outbreak, such as on gross domestic product (GDP), could cost the Latin American and the Caribbean region as much as $18 billion between 2015 and 2017, a new United Nations report has revealed.

The report *Socio-economic impact assessment of Zika virus in Latin America and the Caribbean*, prepared by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has a particular focus on Brazil, Colombia and Suriname – countries that first reported the outbreak in October-November 2015.

Highlighting the far-reaching impact of Zika virus would go beyond tangible losses such as to the GDP and could potentially impact the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Jessica Faieta, the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of its Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, said:

“The consequences of the virus can undermine decades of social development, hard-earned health gains and slow progress towards [achieving] the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

The assessment also clearly showed that the impact of the virus was felt the most in poorer countries.

While larger economies such as Brazil could bear the greatest “absolute” burden, but the most “severe” impacts are likely be felt in the poorest countries such as Haiti.

“Zika reminds us that all countries and peoples remain vulnerable to emerging infectious diseases, and that a disease that primarily affects poorer populations has wide-ranging social and economic implications for entire communities,” added Magdy Martínez-Solimán, the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of its Bureau for Policy and Programme Support.

The impact assessment also highlighted the need to strengthen regional and national preparedness and response strategies which also involve communities and have particular focus on the needs of vulnerable group such as girls, women and
persons with disabilities.

“The Zika virus has highlighted, once again, the critical role that communities and local health workers play during health emergencies,” said IFRC Regional Director for the Americas Walter Cotte highlighting that community engagement strengthens local partnerships, resilience and reduces stigma.

“We must continue to promote coordination at all levels and strengthen the Red Cross' role as an auxiliary to public authorities.”

At Security Council, new UN peacekeeping chief urges faster implementation of Mali peace deal

6 April – The new United Nations peacekeeping chief today stressed the need for the parties to the conflict in Mali to redouble their efforts to accelerate the implementation of their 2015 peace agreement while expressing a concern about the volatile security situation in the landlocked West African country.

“In recent months, there has been positive progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreement,” Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix told the Security Council in his first briefing since succeeding Hervé Ladsous, earlier this month.

The briefing followed a joint visit to Mali about two weeks ago by Mr. Lacroix and Mr. Ladsous. They met with authorities, including President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who has been seeking to unify the country after a rebellion, a coup and an insurgency.

The installation of the interim authorities in Taoudenni and Timbuktu by 13 April was announced yesterday.

“These developments illustrate the gradual return of State authority to northern Mali under the interim arrangements,” the new peacekeeping chief said, noting that the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) is making every effort to assist the achievement of concrete results on the ground.

On the security front, the situation remains worrying, he said, citing the creation of a new alliance that brings together the most active terrorist groups in Mali, including Al Qaeda. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) slowly made its appearance in the Sahelian band.

“This convergence of threats is particularly worrying in a context where often the presence of the State is weak or sometimes non-existent and where the implementation of the Peace Agreement still has to translate into tangible results on the ground,” he said.

Mr. Lacroix also underscored the need to address the scourge of transnational organised crime and its impact on the peace efforts. On this particular aspect, he added, the Security Council has already expressed its intention to consider targeted sanctions against spoilers of peace.

“We believe it is time to consider establishing such a sanctions regime,” he said.

Given these political and security circumstances, MINUSMA continues to adjust its priorities and posture to provide the best support within its current mandate, he said, adding that his department will revert to the Council, before the Mission's mandate expires on 30 June 2017, if any mandate adjustments are required.
Sport is force of social empowerment and an engine for equality – UNESCO

6 April – There is no more powerful platform for promoting shared values than sport, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova, said in a message marking the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

“Sport is a passion shared by women and men across the world. It is a force for physical well-being and social empowerment. It is an engine for equality, especially gender equality, for including everyone, especially the most disadvantaged,” Ms Bokova said in her message on the Day.

Sport also promotes solidarity, respect, teamwork, responsibility, honesty, self-esteem and motivation, she said. However, despite the positive benefits, 3.2 million deaths are attributed to physical inactivity every year.

“This is why UNESCO has joined forces with the World Health Organization (WHO) to combat sedentary lifestyles, starting with inclusive and equitable quality physical education at school,” Ms Bokova said.

The Director-General also called for new commitment from all actors to ensuring public policies in fields of education, health, transport and urban planning work also with the private sector to develop legislation and national plans for sport.

“As the world takes forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must do everything to support sport to leave no one behind,” she said, while commending the work of volunteers dedicated to supporting sport for peace and development around the world.

In November 2015, the UNESCO member States adopted the new International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, the spirit of which was ensuring respect for the fundamental right to sport for all men and women without discrimination, Ms Bokova said.

“Sport is a way to include everyone, including refugees and migrants, to fight against stereotypes, to strengthen the foundations for peace in healthy society,” she added.

In August 2013, the sixty-seventh session of the UN General Assembly decided to proclaim 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.
UN General Assembly creates International Day for small, medium-sized enterprises

6 April – Recognizing the importance of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in achieving the new global development goals, the United Nations General Assembly today designated 27 June as International Day for those actors.

In a resolution adopted without a vote, the 193-member body also invited all stakeholders, including Member States, UN entities and civil society organizations, to observe the Day and raise public awareness of their contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the Assembly adopted in September 2015.

The resolution was introduced by the delegation of Argentina, with its representative stating that more than 95 per cent of enterprises in the world are micro-, small- and medium-sized and they account for about 60 per cent of private sector employment.

“These enterprises can in fact become the engines that sustain growth for long-term development in developing countries,” the representative said, thanking the contribution made by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) to the creation of the Day.

ICSB held its 61st Annual World Conference here at United Nations last year, in which authorities from over 55 countries participated. In that occasion, ICSB made a declaration about the urgent need to have a day to recognize the important role of micro, small, and medium enterprises in the development of economies as a whole.

CLASSIC PODCAST: The man who defined genocide

6 April – Raphael Lemkin is hardly a household name now, but before the Second World War, he became the driving force behind what would become, in 1948, the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

UN News has reached into the audio programme archives, to revive a highly-produced 1958 profile on Mr. Lemkin, and his work at the United Nations and beyond, as part of our podcast series, The Lid is On.

An American of Polish-Jewish descent, Mr. Lemkin coined the term genocide, after dedicating his life at an early age, to pursuing the international legal means to end the mass extermination of peoples.

He narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Nazis in 1939 before managing to flee to safety, but lost 49 relatives during the genocide of the Holocaust.

As early as 1933, he was working to introduce an international law recognizing the “crime of barbarity,” in a presentation to the Legal Council of the UN's forerunner, the League of Nations.

He drafted the resolution that would eventually become the Genocide Convention in the early years of the UN, after 1945, and with the support of the United States, it went to the UN General Assembly for consideration, and finally, adoption.
Genocide has not of course, been consigned to the history books, and on April 7, the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda, is marked each year, which was the day that the killings – which would eventually result in the deaths of more than 800,000 in the small African nation – first began, in 1994.

In his message to mark the day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said that “the world must always be alert to the warning signs of genocide and act quickly and early against the threat.”

“Even today, minorities and other groups suffer attacks and exploitation based on who they are,” he adds.

**Strengthening the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**


Almost a year later, on 6 January 2017, the current Secretary-General, António Guterres, asked Ms. Lute to lead a high-level task force to improve United Nations approach for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.

“The Secretary-General – even before formally taking office – made it very clear that he intends to be associated personally and continuously with all efforts to rid this Organization of this scourge,” said Ms. Lute, in an interview with UN News a few days before the publication of the Secretary-General’s report, Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach.

In the interview, Ms. Lute, echoes Secretary-General Guterres’ concern that “deep gender inequality is at the heart of what sexual exploitation and abuse is.”

**A new UN strategy**

"We have to do better and we have to do more”, stresses Ms. Lute, as she describes a new, four-fold UN strategy to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse.

**Four-fold UN strategy:**

- Focusing on the rights and dignity of victims
- Ending impunity for those guilty of crimes and abuses
- Reaching broadly to external experts and those affected
- Raising awareness and sharing best practices

In an effort to put victims first, Secretary-General Guterres announced that he intends to appoint a victims’ rights advocate at UN Headquarters, while calling on each of the four UN field missions that account for the highest numbers of incidents to appoint one on the ground as well.

The four peacekeeping missions are located in the Central African Republic, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan.
‘Protectors should not become predators’ – Atul Khare, Head of UN Field Support

Atul Khare, head of the UN Department of Field Support – which deals with tackling sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peace operations – explains in a separate interview that measures are being taken in close cooperation with Member States to address this scourge in the field and provide essential assistance to victims. For example, immediate and urgent needs are covered by each mission’s budget, while the Department is working closely with Member States to conduct DNA tests to establish paternity and ensure recognition of the rights of mother and child.

Also, a trust fund to assist victims has been established in which Member States voluntarily contribute to improve the medical and psychosocial assistance provided to victims in coordination with UN humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Preventive measures include mandatory training, sensitization, risk management and enhanced screening of all incoming personnel – be it military, police or civilian – for prior misconduct while serving with the UN. Response measures include deployment of immediate response teams to gather and preserve evidence, rapid investigations, immediate disciplinary measures such as repatriation of uniformed personnel when the perpetrator is known and suspension of payments, and pursuing criminal accountability with Member States, including imprisonment.

For Mr. Khare, the wrongdoings of some people should not tarnish the sacrifice of the more than 100,000 peacekeeping personnel, and their respective countries. “Protectors cannot be predators. Protectors cannot be somebody who is exploiting the people,” he says.

While greater collaboration has been provided by Member States, collective work is also undertaken in the sensitization of communities living close to UN bases, including through messages broadcast by UN radio stations on the ground.

More data on victims, allegations, investigations and accountability measures is also being provided through the recently redesigned Conduct and Discipline website.

As a part of educational efforts, No Excuse Cards have been produced for UN system-wide use, which are to be carried by all UN personnel, including humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel, in the field.

An issue to be addressed across the Organization

Relating to the methodology of the response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Ms. Lute underlines the system-wide approach of the UN: “This is a problem that all of us have to address, system-wide. And we need to begin by thinking through: how can we become a global example of a standards-based organisation of best practice?” she notes. Related to this, she adds that the Secretary-General has revised the policy protecting whistle-blowers.

“The Secretary-General intends to re-connect each of us to the values and principles of this Organization: [to understand] why we signed up to begin with; what it means to work under a blue helmet or the blue flag or in association with the United Nations perhaps under a UN mandate, in every dimension,” Ms. Lute concludes.

It is a response that the Secretary-General wishes to consolidate with all stakeholders, including Member States, civil society, and international NGOs. Notably, he has called for a high-level meeting on the subject this fall, on the margins of the next General Assembly.
Post latest missile test, Security Council condemns DPRK's 'highly destabilizing behaviour'

6 April – The United Nations Security Council today strongly condemned the latest ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), calling it “in grave violation” of the country's international obligations under six of the body's resolutions passed between 2006 and 2016.

In a press statement, the 15 members said that they were concerned about DPRK's highly destabilizing behaviour and “flagrant and provocative defiance of the Security Council” following the 4 April launch.

“The members of the Security Council demanded that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea shall immediately refrain from further actions in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and comply fully with its obligations under these resolutions,” according to the statement.

The latest launch comes less than three weeks after the previous launch on 21 March, and two additional rounds of launches and an engine test in February and March 2017.

Such activities contribute to the development of nuclear weapons delivery systems and “are significantly increasing tension in the region and beyond,” the members cautioned.

They further regretted that the country is diverting resources to the pursuit of ballistic missiles while the country's citizens have “great unmet needs.”

Also in the statement, the Council called on all UN Member States to redouble their efforts to implement fully the measures imposed on the DPRK by the Council.

These include, for example, limiting the number of bank accounts held by diplomatic missions and consular posts within their respective territories, and suspending scientific and technical cooperation with persons or groups officially sponsored by or representing DPRK.

The Council also emphasized the vital importance of DPRK showing “sincere commitment” to denuclearization, and expressed its own commitment to “a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution” to the situation.
Global food prices fall in March as sugar and vegetable oils slide – UN

6 April – The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) today reported that global food prices fell in March amid large available supplies and expectations of strong harvests, and also projected “robust cereal harvests” in 2017.

The FAO Food Price Index, which measures the monthly change in international prices for cereals, vegetable oils, dairy, meat and sugar, averaged nearly 171 points in March, marking a 2.8 per cent drop from the previous month while remaining 13.4 per cent above its level a year earlier, according to the agency.

Cereal prices declined 1.8 per cent from February, led down by wheat and maize. It is now roughly par with its March 2016 level.

Vegetable oil prices fell 6.2 per cent on the month. Palm oil and soy oil quotations were both lower in March on the back of improving production forecasts, while those of rape and sunflower seed oils also declined due to higher-than-expected availabilities.

Sugar prices plummeted 10.9 per cent to its lowest level since May 2016 amid weak import demand and expectations of robust Brazilian supplies entering world markets as a result of strong harvests and slower domestic uptake for bio-ethanol production.

Dairy prices dropped 2.3 per cent due to buoyant milk supplies, but remained well above its year-ago level.

Meat prices rose 0.7 per cent, led by firm import demand from Asia for bovine meat and pigmeat.

FAO's first forecasts for cereal markets in 2017/2018

FAO also released its first world cereal supply and demand outlook for the year ahead, expecting it to be “another season of relative market tranquility” with grain inventories remaining at near-record levels.

Worldwide cereal production in 2017 is projected at 2,597 million tonnes, just nine million tonnes short of the record set in 2016, according to the latest Cereal Supply and Demand report.

Global wheat production is expected to fall 2.7 per cent in 2017 to 740 million tonnes mostly on price-induced planting cuts in Australia, Canada and the United States.

By contrast, total production of coarse grains in 2017 is provisionally expected to rise to a new record level of 1,353 million tonnes, substantially thanks to a surge in production in Brazil and Argentina along with a rebound in South Africa after last year's drought.