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Youth can play 'critical role' in creating a peaceful world for generations to come – UN chief

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“I'm truly happy to address you on International Youth Day,” the Secretary-General said a video message. “As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am committed to the empowerment and inclusion of every young person around the world,” he added.

“In this spirit, I have appointed an impressive new Youth Envoy,” he said, introducing 26-year-old Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka as the youngest and “one of the most important” members of his team.

“Governments must work with young people to successfully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Empowered young men and women can play a critical role in preventing conflicts and ensuring sustainable peace,” continued Mr. Guterres.

After the Youth Envoy invited everyone to join in mobilizing young people, the Secretary-General said, “Together, we can create a peaceful world for generations to come.”
Against the backdrop that many of the world’s 1.2 billion young people are affected by the hardship of conflict and war, the 2017 edition of the International Day will be celebrated under the theme ‘Youth Building Peace.’

Considering matters of youth, peace and security from a social developmental perspective, this year, the Day recognizes that more and more societies around the world are recognizing the role of youth as agents of change and critical actors in preventing conflict and building peace.

Organized by the UN Division for Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Inter-agency Network on Youth Development, today’s event draws together experts from youth civil society, government and the United Nations to explore the various ways in which young people are contributing to building and sustaining peace.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, on her first official trip, the Secretary-General’s new Youth Envoy is conducting dialogues with young people and meeting with UN officials.

In December 1999, the UN General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth that 12 August be declared International Youth Day.

**UN agency sounds alarm as drought-stricken herders in Ethiopia face massive livestock losses**

11 August – Drought has devastated herders' livelihoods as it exhausted pastures and water sources, the United Nations agriculture agency said today, stressing that supporting them to get back on their feet and prevent further livestock losses are crucial in the Horn of Africa country, where hunger has been on the rise this year.

The drought has led to a significant number of animals dying or falling ill, particularly in the southern and south-eastern regions of the country, as other areas recover from previous seasons' El Niño-induced drought,” warned the Food and Agriculture Organization of the (FAO).

FAO pointed out that drought-hit pastoralists face reduced milk production, rising malnutrition, and have limited income-earning capacity and severely constrained access to food.

“Some 8.5 million people – one in 12 people – are now suffering from hunger; of these, 3.3 million people live in Somali Region,” said the UN agriculture agency.

The current food and nutrition crisis is significantly aggravated by the severe blow to pastoral livelihoods. For livestock-dependent families, the animals can literally mean the difference between life and death – especially for children, pregnant and nursing mothers, for whom milk is a crucial source of nutrition.

With up to two million animals lost so far, FAO is focusing on providing emergency livestock support to the most vulnerable pastoralist communities through animal vaccination and treatment, supplementary feed and water, rehabilitating water points, and supporting fodder and feed production.

“It is crucial to provide this support between now and October – when rains are due – to begin the recovery process and prevent further losses of animals. If we don’t act now, hunger and malnutrition will only get worse among pastoral communities,” said Abdoul Karim Bah, FAO Deputy Representative in Ethiopia.

By providing supplementary feed and water for livestock, while simultaneously supporting fodder production, FAO seeks to protect core breeding animals and enable drought-hit families to rebuild their livelihoods.
In addition to FAO-supported destocking and cash-for-work programmes to provide cash for families, animal health campaigns will be reinforced to protect animals, particularly before the rain sets in – when they are at their weakest and more susceptible to parasites or infectious diseases.

**Funding appeal**

FAO urgently requires $20 million between August and December to come to the aid of Ethiopia's farmers and herders.

FAO has already assisted almost 500,000 drought-hit people in 2017 through a mix of livestock feed provision, destocking and animal health interventions, thanks to the support of the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden through FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, as well as FAO's own Early Warning Early Action fund and Technical Cooperation Programme.

**UN rights office 'deeply concerned' about deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Gaza**

**11 August** – The United Nations human rights office today expressed deep concern about the steadily deteriorating humanitarian and human rights conditions in Gaza, especially the restrictions on the enclave's power supply.

“At the height of summer, with soaring temperatures, electricity provision has not risen above six hours per day since the beginning of the current crisis in April, and has often been under four hours,” Ravina Shamdasani, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told the regular media briefing in Geneva.

“This has a grave impact on the provision of essential health, water and sanitation services,” she added, noting that power outages threaten the life and well-being of vulnerable groups, particularly those needing urgent medical care.

The lack of transparency in the use of resources, and the continuing suppression of freedom of speech and assembly by the authorities raise further concerns for the protection of fundamental rights of the population in the occupied Palestinian enclave, the spokesperson noted.

“Israel, the State of Palestine and the authorities in Gaza are not meeting their obligations to promote and protect the rights of the residents of Gaza,” she said, urging them to uphold their human rights.
After four years of conflict, uncertainty lingers for displaced Ukrainians – UN refugee agency

11 August – As the conflict in Ukraine enters its fourth year, nearly 1.6 million internally displaced people are struggling to find safety, adequate housing and access to employment, according to the United Nations refugee agency.

“Sporadic exchanges of fire in areas near the line of contact continue to damage civilian infrastructure, leading to new humanitarian needs and creating risks of displacement,” said Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, at today's regular press briefing in Geneva.

“Safety and security remain major concerns for nearly 800,000 people living near the Line of Contact in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the country's east,” he added.

In June, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine recorded more than 1.1 million crossings of the dividing line in eastern Ukraine – sparking UNHCR's concern about difficulties over civilians' freedom of movement, particularly while crossing the conflict line.

“There are frequently long queues and subsequent delays at checkpoints. Those waiting to cross have limited access to basic services, such as drinking water, latrines, weather shelters and medical care,” the spokesperson noted.

Mr. Mahecic pointed out that this creates additional hardships for those with limited mobility and specific needs, especially older people and mothers with children making the journey.

“Since the beginning of 2016, nearly 586,000 retired and elderly people residing in the conflict zone lost access to their pensions as a result of verification procedures introduced by the Government of Ukraine. This has affected the most vulnerable groups, as many of them depend on pensions and social payments as their sole source of income,” he stated.

“Those living in non-Government controlled areas are required to register as internally displaced persons with the Ukrainian authorities in order to have access to their rightful pensions and social payments,” he continued.

UNHCR and partners advocate for displaced people to have full access to Government services and payments, and de-linking pensions and social benefits from residences.

The agency also maintains that at least 40 communities near the dividing line have limited access to medical services – with some 150 healthcare facilities damaged since the start of the conflict – and medical personnel have left the area.

Noting that in 2017, UNHCR helped to repair 89 schools, Mr. Mahecic stressed that “children in affected zones have limited access to education due to the security situation and damaged school buildings” with at least 700 damaged since the conflict began, including 55 schools this year alone.

Earlier this year UNHCR received first-hand testimonies of displaced people while conducting focus groups with conflict-affected population – including women; orphaned children; persons with disabilities and medical conditions; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and intersex people throughout 10 regions of Ukraine.

Along with problems of security, access to basic services, and livelihoods, residents of frontline communities told of civilian houses being used for military purposes.
“The stationing of combatants and weapons in residential areas places civilian populations at risk during fighting,” Mr. Mahecic underscored.

In conclusion, the spokesperson stressed that UNHCR continues to call on all conflict parties to protect civilians and their communities from fighting and shelling, and to restrict the use of civilian homes for military purposes.

**Iraq: UN refugee agency steps up humanitarian support for families returning to Mosul**

11 August – The United Nations refugee agency has been stepping up its assistance for people, including thousands of returnees, in the Iraqi city of Mosul, which had until recently been the scene of a fierce battle for control between terrorist fighters and the Government forces.

“Our field assessments show that the returning population of Mosul needs assistance of every kind, but the shelter needs are the most pressing, particularly in the western part of the city,” said Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the press regular briefing in Geneva.

“Many neighbourhoods in the west have been extensively damaged or totally destroyed during months of fighting,” he added.

Mosul was liberated from control by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorist organization in July.

UN partners say that of the 54 residential districts in west Mosul, 15 suffered destruction or heavy damage, another 23 areas are moderately damaged, while further 16 neighbourhoods sustained light damage.

Mr. Mahecic said that mines, unexploded ordnance and related devices pose massive risks for the city's residents, especially children, welcoming the ongoing mine clearing efforts by the authorities and the UN Mine Action Service.

Returning families also face challenges in accessing basic services and utilities – accessing water, electricity or fuel in parts of Mosul can be difficult and very expensive, he added.

So far, according to government figures, some 79,000 people returned to battered west Mosul – one out of every ten people who were forced to flee from this part of the city. Also, the government says, more than 165,000 people have now returned to the considerably less damaged east Mosul, where day-to-day life is gradually resuming.

However, managers in the camps for internally displaced persons in east Mosul estimate that at least 200 families have moved back to the camps after finding living conditions difficult in Mosul.

Reasons cited for their return include lack of shelter; high rental prices; a lack of livelihood opportunities and limited basic services such as electricity and water.

Since the end of the military campaign to retake the city, UNHCR has distributed shelter kits to more than 3,200 families in east and west Mosul while also providing cash assistance to some of the most vulnerable displaced Iraqi families.

Large numbers of IDPs and returnees are also missing key civil documents. UNHCR and partners are providing legal assistance and supporting local authorities to reissue civil and identity documents to displaced families in the camps, including birth and marriage certificates.

“Given the scale of the destruction in Mosul, particularly in the western sector, humanitarian needs will remain high,” the
spokesperson said.

**Over 600,000 displaced Syrians returned home so far this year – UN agency**

**11 August** – More than 600,000 displaced Syrians returned home in the first seven months of 2017, the United Nations migration agency and partners have found.

Findings by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and partners indicate that 84 per cent of the people returning had been displaced within Syria, and the rest returned from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Refugees returning from Turkey and Jordan reportedly returned mainly to Aleppo and Al Hasakeh Governorates.

An estimated 27 per cent of the returnees stated that they did so to protect their assets or properties and 25 per cent referred to the improved economic situation in their area of origin.

Other factors included the worsening economic situation in the place where they were seeking refuge, at 14 per cent; social or cultural issues such as tribal links, political affiliations or any obstacle preventing integration in their area of displacement, at 11 per cent; and the improvement of the security situation in their area of return, at 11 per cent.

Half of all returns in 2016 were to Aleppo Governorate. The report shows that similar trends have been observed in 2017. Consequently, an estimated 67 per cent of the returnees, or 405,420 individuals, returned to Aleppo Governorate, with 27,620 returning to Idleb Governorate, and 75,209 to Hama Governorate, 45,300 to Ar-Raqqa Governorate, 21,346 to Rural Damascus and 27,861 to other governorates.

Aleppo city received the most returnees.

Reports also find that 97 per cent returned to their own house, 1.8 per cent are living with hosts, 1.4 per cent in abandoned houses, 0.14 per cent in informal settlements and 0.03 per cent in rented accommodation.

About 83 per cent and 80 per cent of returnees said they have access to food and household items, respectively. But only 41 per cent have access to water and 39 per cent to health services – a dangerously low level – as the country's infrastructure has been extremely damaged by the conflict.

While trends of returns increase, Syria continues to witness high rates of displacement. From January to July 2017, an estimated 808,661 people were displaced, many for the second or third time, and over 6 million in total currently remain displaced within the country.

Returns have mainly been spontaneous but not necessarily voluntary, safe or sustainable. As such, they cannot, at present, be considered a durable solution.
UN rights expert urges restraint in security operation in Myanmar's Rakhine state

11 August – A United Nations human rights expert has expressed alarm over reports that an army battalion has flown into Rakhine state in western Myanmar to help local authorities boost security in the region.

“This development, which reportedly took place yesterday, is a cause for major concern,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, in a press release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

“The Government must ensure that security forces exercise restraint in all circumstances and respect human rights in addressing the security situation in Rakhine state,” she added.

In Kachin and Rakhine states, some 100,000 and 120,000 people, respectively, have remained displaced for more than five years following the eruption of inter-communal conflict between Buddhists and minority Muslim Rohingya.

The Special Rapporteur acknowledged the State's responsibility to provide security and protect people from attacks by extremists, but said this responsibility had to cover all residents, and the authorities could not afford more security to some than others.

Ms. Lee recalled the allegations of serious human rights violations which followed security force operations in the aftermath of attacks against three border guard police facilities in Maungdaw and Rathedaung in October and further clashes in November.

“There have been increasing reports of incidents affecting the local population, including the killings of six Mro villagers on 3 August,” she said. “I share the concern of the Myanmar Government and its people regarding the safety and security of those living in Rakhine state in the light of these incidents.”

The expert stressed that the use of force must always be in line with the principles of necessity and proportionality to ensure full respect for human lives.

The expert's call has been endorsed by the UN the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard.

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