

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES PARTICIPATES  
IN “SEBASI” TV SHOW  
Republic of Korea

As I reflect on the work of the Organization since I took office almost two years ago, I have seen yet again that one of the most valuable assets of the United Nations is its capacity to operate as a convener of people, a proponent of ideas, a catalyst for action and a driver of solutions. As today's problems grow ever more global, multilateralism is more important than ever.

The Charter of the United Nations provides a moral compass to promote peace, advance human dignity and prosperity and uphold human rights and the rule of law.

The narrative of each section of this report highlights key developments and trends as the Organization worked to advance those objectives over the past year.

## A frank, realistic appraisal is essential

I started my tenure calling for 2017 to be a year of peace, yet peace remains elusive. Conflicts have deepened, with grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law; inequality has risen, intolerance has spread, discrimination against women remains entrenched and the impacts of climate change continue to accelerate. To address these issues, we need unity and courage in setting the world on track towards a better future. One of my goals as Secretary-General is to ease and end suffering while laying the foundation for stability. I have worked to exercise my good offices, bolster our capacity for mediation and emphasize prevention. We have also embarked on wide-ranging reform efforts to make the Organization fit for the twenty-first century.

## Confronting global challenges

Upon taking office, I identified a number of challenges we must address in order to fulfil the vision of the Charter. In some areas we have made progress, but elsewhere complex crises continue to elude solution.

**Globalization** has taken root, generating remarkable gains, yet too many people are unable to share in these benefits, and millions continue to live in extreme poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — an integrated and universal framework — is our contribution to a fair globalization that leaves no one behind. The launch of the Sustainable Development

Goals has generated coordinated efforts by Member States and civil society to alleviate poverty and build peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies. Reform of the United Nations development system — the most comprehensive effort in decades — aims to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to support Member States in pursuit of the Goals.

Multilateralism is more important than ever.

Gender equality is central to leaving no one behind, but progress is generally slow and some parts of the world are moving backwards on legal protections and rights. The global gender pay gap is 23 per cent — underscoring persistent inequalities. Women make up more than half the world's population and all of us lose when this vast wealth of skills is underutilized or ignored.

The United Nations must be at the forefront of efforts to empower the world's women and girls. This year we reached two historic firsts: gender parity in both my Senior Management Group and among resident coordinators, our top leaders for sustainable development on the ground. All reform efforts are designed to advance gender equality for a simple reason: empowering women empowers us all.

I continue to prioritize the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse, and

appointed a Victims' Rights Advocate to place rights and dignity at the centre of our prevention and response efforts. We are also taking unprecedented action to prevent sexual harassment and ensure zero tolerance.

In the Secretariat, I have created a specialized team within the Office of Internal Oversight Services — adding six new dedicated posts — which will take charge of all sexual harassment investigations. We have fast-tracked and streamlined procedures to receive, process and address complaints on sexual harassment with a three-month target for completion.

A new 24-hour Secretariat hotline allows staff to confidentially report situations of sexual harassment and to seek advice. A Secretariat staff survey will be undertaken to enhance understanding of the scale and nature of the problem.

System-wide, we have launched a screening database to ensure that confirmed perpetrators cannot be rehired by another entity of the United Nations. We are also harmonizing policies and principles and sharing best practices.

New **frontiers of technology** are expanding. Artificial intelligence, genetic engineering and advances in cyberspace continue to transform the way we live and work. Our challenge is to reap the benefits of these rapidly developing technologies while protecting against unintended consequences and the dark side of technological advances. I have established a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation that will focus on this effort

The impacts of **climate change** are being felt throughout the world and remain an existential threat. Scientists have long confirmed that human influence on the climate ecosystem is beyond doubt — and its effects are worsening. Rising sea levels threaten coastal cities, low-lying island nations and vulnerable deltas. In the Arctic, summer could well become

ice-free, with devastating repercussions for indigenous peoples and sea life. We must increase ambition to bend the emission curve by 2020. Currently, however, climate change is moving faster than we are.

The Paris Agreement on climate change is an important expression of collective commitment to limit the rise in global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees. As at 20 July 2018, 179 parties, representing some 90 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, have ratified the Agreement. Countries need to turn

small arms to nerve agents and new technology weapons. In May 2018 I launched a disarmament agenda aimed at saving lives and ensuring a safer world for future generations. Our toolbox contains many instruments: arms control, non-proliferation, prohibitions, restrictions, confidence-building measures and even elimination when called for. Upholding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is paramount, along with the renewal of talks to reduce and eliminate these dangerous weapons. Disarmament is pivotal to preserving human security

to contribute to society and strengthens development in every aspect, thereby reinforcing sovereignty.

**Multiple, interconnected flashpoints** exist in a number of places where unresolved conflicts and tensions threaten security and human well-being. Across the broader Middle East: the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, which urgently calls for an agreement on a two-State solution; conflicts in Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, where devastating human suffering abounds; upheaval in Libya; and the continuing threat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) all need urgent attention. In Africa, protracted conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan challenge stability. In Europe, cold war rivalries are re-emerging and the continent faces a rising, dangerous tide of nationalism.

**Terrorism** is a worldwide scourge and requires a globally coordinated response. I convened the first-ever United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States to advance multilateral cooperation, and established within the Secretariat an Office of Counter-Terrorism to enhance our focus on this challenge.

## Climate change continues to move faster than we do.

pledges into national climate action, however. Cities, regions, territories and private entities are contributing by setting their own ambitious targets. To build on this momentum, I plan to hold a summit in 2019.

**Human mobility** has reached record levels, leading to political tensions, human tragedies and an increase in xenophobia. The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees will be crucial to promoting greater international cooperation to ensure the dignity and security of people on the move.

The **threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction** has re-emerged. While nuclear tensions may have lessened with respect to the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the continuing existence of nuclear weapons remains a concern, as does the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We need to reinvigorate disarmament — from

through the prevention of conflict and the reduction of violence.

**United Nations peacekeeping missions** are increasingly deployed in volatile situations where there is no semblance of peace and our troops are being targeted and killed. While peacekeeping operations have a long history of securing peace and protecting civilians, the situation is unsustainable. This is why I have launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative to renew and upgrade our collective support for peacekeeping. Across the areas of politics, peacebuilding, performance and partnerships, the initiative aims to define and implement a set of concrete mutual commitments for the Secretariat and Member States that will enable peacekeeping to build on the gains made over 70 years and ensure their capacity to meet today's increasingly complex challenges.

**Upholding human rights** remains a global imperative and human rights and national sovereignty should not be seen as competing ideas. Observance of human rights enables every person



UN Photo/Rick Bajornas, #637483, 08/07/2015

*Floating ice – effects of climate change in High Norwegian Arctic.*



UN Photo/Eskinder Desebe, #739677, 24/10/2007

*Secretary-General visits IDP camp in Central African Republic.*

## Global challenges require global strategies

Global strategies include building partnerships among Member States, regional and international organizations, and civil society. United Nations partnerships not only create space for dialogue to share ideas and actions, but also promote burden-sharing where no country can go it alone. This includes strengthening our partnerships with Africa and I am a firm believer in an effective, well-funded African-led peace architecture.

Prevention must remain a high priority. This requires not only understanding the dynamics that lead to crises, but the will to act early even in the face of uncertainty. To assist peace efforts and prevention, a High-level Advisory Board on Mediation is in place to enlarge the

Prevention must remain a high priority

pool of skilled envoys and mediators.

I have initiated a broad set of reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization and ensure cross-pillar communication as well as join up what have often been isolated silos. Reform of the peace and security architecture is aimed at ensuring that we are stronger in prevention, more agile in mediation, and more effective and cost-effective in peacekeeping operations. Development system reform is about becoming much more effective, well-coordinated,

transparent and accountable to better assist countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sweeping management reforms underpin all these efforts.

The United Nations will need to continue to innovate and adapt to changing challenges. The operational strategies and initiatives I have set in motion during this first phase of my tenure aim to set the stage for a more effective Organization in the months ahead and the longer term, even as we continue to carry out essential daily life-saving humanitarian assistance. I remain committed to working with Member States to achieve the comprehensive aspirations laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals and to uphold the values embedded in the Charter.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MAIN INITIATIVES, 2017-2018



Enhanced **preventive diplomacy** through the use of good offices and mediation capacity



Established **High-Level Advisory Board** for Mediation



Created an integrated prevention platform for **early detection of and action on crises**



Repositioned the **United Nations development** system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda



Introduced a **gender parity strategy** for the United Nations system; reached gender parity in the 44-member Senior Management Group and among country resident coordinators



Reviewed the **peace and security architecture** to address fragmentation, funding and institutional challenges



Streamlined **work and budget for peacekeeping operations** and began independent, strategic reviews of all peacekeeping operations



Established the **Office of Counter-Terrorism** to enhance implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy



Introduced concrete steps to **end sexual exploitation and abuse** and sexual harassment and establish a mechanism to protect victims



Established a **finance strategy** to ensure objectives of the 2030 Agenda, including by accelerating implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda



Mobilized **political support** among Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders in preparation for a **climate summit** in 2019



Recalibrated the **United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel** and developed a support plan to improve coordination of initiatives in the region



Established the **Joint Steering Committee** to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration



Committed to coherent, integrated **core partnerships**, including the United Nations-World Bank Group Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda, the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, and the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security



Adopted an integrated **transition strategy for Haiti**, working with the Government of Haiti and partners based on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the new approach to cholera



Established the **Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda** to support country-level implementation, advocacy, and communication by Sustainable Development Goal advocates



Provided political support to negotiations on the Global Compact for Migration



Created a **global health engagement strategy** to advance universal health coverage, the response to emergency health crises, antimicrobial resistance, maternal, child and mental health



Formed a **youth strategy** to enhance system-wide efforts



Launched **management reforms** to enhance the Organization's work and make it more effective, responsive, transparent and accountable



Improved **ability to plan and budget activities** by moving from a biennial to an annual programme budget



Launched the **transition of Headquarters management and support structures** into two new departments to be fully operational by January 2019: one providing guidance on strategic, policy and compliance matters and another providing operational and transactional support for the entire Secretariat



Established the **High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation**



Developed an internal **strategy** on new technologies



Worked with the World Bank to create the **World Bank-United Nations study Pathways for Peace**