



## **In the headlines:**

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## **Rising youth unemployment and high number of 'working poor' threaten Global Goal to end poverty**

**24 August** – With global youth unemployment expected to rise in 2016 for the first time in three years and the equally disturbing high levels of young people who work but still live in poverty, the United Nations labour agency today called for greater efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth and decent work.

Releasing its *World Employment and Social Outlook 2016: Trends for Youth*, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that the global youth unemployment rate is expected to reach 13.1 per cent in 2016 and remain at that level through to 2017 (up from 12.9 per cent in 2015). As a result, the number of unemployed youth is set to rise by half a million this year to reach 71 million – the first such increase in three years.

Of greater concern, says ILO, is the share and number of young people, often in emerging and developing countries, who live in extreme or moderate poverty despite having a job. In fact, 156 million or 37.7 per cent of working youth are in extreme or moderate poverty (compared to 26 per cent of working adults).

“The alarming rise in youth unemployment and the equally disturbing high levels of young people who work but still live in poverty show how difficult it will be to reach the global goal to end poverty by 2030,” said Deborah Greenfield, ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy in a press release on report.

Calling for redoubled efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth and decent work, she also noted that the report highlights wide disparities between young women and men in the labour market that need to be addressed by ILO member



Young factory workers producing shirts in Accra, Ghana. Photo: World Bank/Dominic Chavez

States and the social partners urgently.

The ILO goes on to point out that Global economic growth in 2016 is estimated to stand at 3.2 per cent, 0.4 percentage points lower than the figure predicted in late 2015. “This is driven by a deeper than expected recession in some key emerging commodity-exporting countries and stagnating growth in some developed countries,” said ILO Senior Economist and lead author of the report Steven Tobin.

“The rise in youth unemployment rates is particularly marked in emerging countries” he adds as the report notes that in such countries, the rate is predicted to rise from 13.3 per cent in 2015 to 13.7 per cent in 2017 – a figure ILO says corresponds to 53.5 million unemployed in 2017 compared to 52.9 million in 2015.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, the unemployment rate is expected to increase from 15.7 per cent in 2015 to 17.1 per cent in 2017; in Central and Western Asia, from 16.6 to 17.5 per cent; in South Eastern Asia and the Pacific, from 12.4 to 13.6 per cent.

The report also finds that globally, the share of young people between 15 and 29 years old who are willing to move permanently to another country stood at 20 per cent in 2015. The highest inclination to move abroad, at 38 per cent, is found in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, followed closely by Eastern Europe at 37 per cent.

### *The working poor*

The poor quality of employment continues to disproportionately affect youth, albeit with considerable regional differences. For example, sub-Saharan Africa continues to suffer the highest youth working poverty rates globally, at almost 70 per cent. Working poverty rates among young people are also elevated in Arab States (39 per cent) and Southern Asia (49 per cent).

At the same time, in developed economies, there is growing evidence of a shift in the age distribution of poverty, with youth taking the place of the elderly as the group at highest risk of poverty, defined for developed economies as earning less than 60 per cent of the median income.

For instance, in 2014, the share of young workers in the European Union-28 categorized as being at a high risk of poverty was 12.9 per cent compared to 9.6 per cent of prime-age workers (aged 25–54). The challenge is particularly acute in some countries where the at-risk-of-poverty for young workers exceeds 20 per cent.

## **Increasingly complex armed conflicts have dire impact on children – UN envoy**



On 5 August 2016 in Aleppo, Syria, a child with spinal muscular atrophy who needs special medical care, now lives on the streets, after fleeing with her family from attacks and intense fighting in the 1070 neighbourhood. Photo: UNICEF/Khuder Al-Issa

**24 August** – The impact on children of the collective failure to prevent and end conflict is severe, with regions in turmoil and violations against children intensifying in a number of conflicts, the senior United Nations envoy on the subject said today, stressing that this situation stems directly from an erosion of respect for international humanitarian and human rights law by conflict parties.

In her annual report to the UN General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, highlighted the devastating impact on children of increasingly complex conflicts, despite concerted efforts and significant progress achieved over the past year.

The report, which covers the period from August 2015 to July 2016, notes that the proliferation of actors involved in armed conflict and cross-border aerial operations created highly complex environments

for the protection of boys and girls.

A news release on the report explains that in 2015, and again in the first half of 2016, Afghanistan recorded the highest number of child deaths and injuries since the UN started systematically documenting civilian casualties in 2009. In addition, in Syria and Iraq, violence continued unabated.

And in South Sudan, following a year during which children were victims of brutal violations, hopes for improvement “all but evaporated” with the resumption of conflict last month. In Yemen, the escalation of conflict continued with alarming levels of child recruitment, killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals.

The current report also marks the twentieth anniversary of ‘children in armed conflict’ mandate, and takes stock of the achievements accomplished since the publication of Graça Machel’s A ground-breaking report, “Impact of armed conflict on children,” which led to the creation of the mandate of the Special Representative by the General Assembly.

Since 2000, over 115,000 children have been released as a result of action plans and advocacy. Engagement with non-State armed groups is growing and recently contributed to a historic agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP to release all children in the ranks of the FARC-EP.

The advocacy generated by this mandate, and reinforced by the campaign Children, not Soldiers, has led to a global consensus among UN Member States that children do not belong in security forces in conflict. This progress in addressing recruitment and use over the last 20 years has been built upon and utilized in work to reduce other grave violations, notably sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals.

Yet, the report cites complex and emerging issues needing particular attention, including protection challenges posed by violent extremism, attacks on health care and protected persons, and displacement, specifically noting that armed conflict has resulted not only in human casualties, but also in an ever growing number of displaced children.

Indeed, according to the UN refugee agency, an unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced away from their homes among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are children. As such, Ms. Zerrougui encourages Member States and other partners to support initiatives to help displaced children rebuild their lives, particularly through ensuring that education is prioritised in emergency settings.

Among the key recommendations to the General Assembly and Member States that warp up the report are:

- To ensure that Member States engagement in hostilities, including in efforts to counter violent extremism, are conducted in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law;
- To highlight the rights of children displaced by conflict and the obligations of States of origin, transit and destination;
- To treat children allegedly associated with non-State armed groups as victims entitled to the full protection of their human rights;
- Encouraging Member States concerned by the “Children, not Soldiers” campaign to redouble their efforts to fully implement their Action Plan;
- To take appropriate measures to reintegrate children, giving special attention to the needs of girls; and
- To ensure that special attention is paid to children affected by armed conflict in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Ban releases follow-up to report on the death of former UN chief Dag Hammarskjöld



Portrait of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. UN Photo/JO (file)

**24 August** – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today released a follow-up note to the 2015 report of an Independent Panel of Experts that was established to examine and assess new information regarding the death of former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

The panel was appointed by Mr. Ban at the request of the UN General Assembly, which also requested its Member States to release any relevant records in their possession as well as to provide the UN chief any relevant information related to the death of the former Secretary-General and of the members of his party.

Mr. Hammarskjöld served as the top UN official from April 1953 until his death at the age of 56 in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, along with 15 others in September 1961.

According to a statement issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson, the follow-up note includes responses from Belgium, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States to the requests made by Mr. Ban, following up on the pending questions of the Panel to the countries and as mandated by the 193-member General Assembly.

“I would again urge all Member States to continue their search for relevant documents and information, and to review for potential disclosure information which remains classified or undisclosed for other reasons,” said Mr. Ban in the follow-up note.

“I have declassified those archives of the UN for which I am responsible under the relevant rules and regulations, some of which were, at the time of the report of the Panel, still classified at a confidential or strictly confidential level,” he added.

The General Assembly also requested that the Secretary-General explore the feasibility of establishing a central archival holding or other arrangement that would enable access to relevant records with a view to ensuring their preservation and access.

According to the statement issued today, the UN chief reached out to individuals and institutions that may hold relevant information to request that they provide an inventory of such information. It noted that responses continue to be received.

Both the Mr. Ban and the General Assembly have previously stated that a further inquiry or investigation would be necessary to finally establish the facts of the matter.

The statement adds that any further inquiry or investigation would benefit from an assessment of potential new information, including from South Africa or other sources.

Additionally, Mr. Ban has recommended that the General Assembly appoint an eminent person or persons to review new information which may exist. Such person or persons would then be able to determine the scope that any further inquiry or investigation should take.

Recalling that Mr. Ban has said previously that the most likely source of any additional material would be the files and records of Member States, the statement noted: “To this end [the Secretary-General] has again urged all Member States to continue to search for and disclose relevant documents and information.”

“Ultimately, it is for the General Assembly to decide on any further action,” it concluded.

## UN relief arm monitoring situations in Italy and Myanmar after strong earthquakes



Aftermath of an earthquake. Photo: UNICEF/Willy Castellano (file)

**24 August** – In the wake of powerful earthquakes today in Italy and Myanmar, the United Nations relief wing is monitoring the situations, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson said the UN and its partners stand ready to support both countries and local actors should any humanitarian support be needed.

“The Secretary-General is saddened by the reports of lives lost and damage caused by earthquakes today in Italy and Myanmar,” Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told the regular daily briefing at UN Headquarters, adding that Mr. Ban expressed his condolences to the peoples and governments of both countries.

According to news reports, a magnitude-6.2 earthquake and a series of aftershocks struck Umbria, Lazio and Le Marche, three regions some 80 to 100 miles north-east of Rome. At least 120 people are feared dead and dozens more could be missing.

As for Myanmar, reports suggest that a 6.8 magnitude quake there left at least three people dead and damaged ancient temples and cultural sites in the centre of the country.

Mr. Dujarric said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is in contact with the national authorities and continues to closely monitor both situations.

“Along with our partners, we stand ready to support the national authorities and local organizations should any humanitarian support be needed,” he said.

## UN chief submits report related to use of chemical weapons in Syria to the Security Council

**24 August** – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today submitted a joint UN-Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) report to the Security Council outlining in-depth investigation into, as well as the findings, assessments and conclusions of, nine selected cases related to incidents involving the use of chemicals weapons in Syria.

According to a statement issued today by Mr. Ban's spokesperson, the UN chief is looking forward to the Council's consideration of the report.

The report will be available publicly shortly thereafter, the statement added.



A wide view of the Security Council. UN Photo/JC McIlwaine (file)

The methods of work and the investigation of the specific cases are described in the report's annexes.

According to the statement, the UN chief also expressed appreciation to the Joint Investigative Mechanism's Leadership Panel and its staff, as well as to the OPCW and the Office for Disarmament Affairs for their continued support to the Mechanism.

He further thanked the Member States of the UN for their assistance to the Mechanism, including financial support.

The joint body, established by the Security Council in August 2015 for a period of one year with a possibility of future extension, is tasked with identifying "individuals, entities, groups, or governments involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical," in Syria, according to the Council, which reiterated that those responsible must be held accountable.

That body differs from the OPCW-UN Joint Mission on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons, and which was formally established in August 2013. It completed its mandate and wrapped up operations on 30 September 2014. From now on, the OPCW mission in Syria will continue to deal with the destruction of chemical weapon production facilities and clarification of certain aspects of the Syrian initial declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

## UN rights experts call on Bangladesh to annul death sentence against opposition member



Wide view of the Human Rights Council at its 30th regular session in Geneva on 15 September 2015. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**24 August** – Amid reports that the trial of Mir Quasem Ali, a senior opposition member, and its appeal processes were marred with irregularities and failed to meet international fair trial and due process standards, a group of United Nations human rights experts have urged the Government of Bangladesh to annul the death sentence imposed upon him, and to re-try him in compliance with international standards.

“International law, accepted as binding by Bangladesh, provides that capital punishment may only be imposed following trials that comply with the most stringent requirements of fair trial and due process, or could otherwise be considered an arbitrary execution,” they said in a news release issued yesterday by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The experts' request comes as the Supreme Court prepares to review Mr. Ali's case on 24 August.

He was sentenced to death in 2014 by the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) for crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Bangladesh Independence War. The decision was confirmed by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on 8 March 2016.

“The death penalty is the most severe form of punishment,” they stressed. “In light of its irreversibility, every measure must be taken to ensure that all the defendants before the International Crimes Tribunal, including the Appellate Division, have received a fair trial.”

In the news release, the experts recalled that the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found in 2012 that Mr. Ali's deprivation of liberty was arbitrary and in breach of articles 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

“We regret the Government's non-compliance with the expert group's recommendations to remedy the situation of Mr. Ali, and call upon the Bangladeshi authorities to respect their international obligations,” they added.

The UN human rights experts also expressed alarm at reports that Mr. Ali's son and part of his legal defence team, Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem, was abducted from his home on 9 August by Bangladeshi security forces, two weeks before his father's

review hearing.

“We understand that no information has been given on where he is being held, by whom or under what suspicion or charge. We urge the authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Mr. Quasem,” they said.

The news release further added that the UN human rights experts have on several occasions expressed alarm regarding serious violations of fair trial and due process guarantees in the judicial proceedings before the ICT that were reported to them.

The ICT is a special domestic court with the jurisdiction to try and punish any person accused of committing atrocities, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country. It has sentenced 17 individuals to death for crimes committed during the Independence war.

In the past three years, five of those convicted by the ICT have been executed.

The experts voicing their concern include:

- Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions
- Mónica Pinto, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers
- Juan E. Méndez, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Sètondji Roland Adjovi, current chairperson of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
- Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

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.

## UN envoy encouraged by preparations for upcoming Palestinian local elections



Street scene and market in Gaza City. Photo: World Bank/Arne Hoel

**24 August** – United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Piper today said he is encouraged by preparations for the early October poll across the occupied West Bank and Gaza – the first such elections in a decade – and appealed to all Palestinian parties to stick to the agreed code of conduct and to refrain from actions that could undermine the process.

According to a statement from the Office of the Special Coordinator (UNSCO), Mr. Piper met today with the Chairman of the Central Elections Commission (CEC), Hanna Nasir to discuss the latest preparations for the upcoming local council elections scheduled to take place on 8 October.

"I am encouraged by the efforts of the CEC and the dedication of its staff in preparing for this important election which is to be carried out across the State of Palestine. It will be the first concurrent poll in the occupied West Bank and Gaza since 2006," he said.

He went on to welcome last month's signing of the electoral code of conduct by the various Palestinian political parties, and he encouraged all concerned to adhere to it. Conducting the local elections in line with established international standards can contribute to advancing Palestinian reconciliation based on Palestine Liberation organization (PLO) principles, he added.

“This would be vital for establishing a democratic, unified Palestinian state as part of a negotiated two-state solution. However, the lack of party unity or any attempt to influence the outcome of the elections, including through intimidation, threats, violence or coercion during the election campaign, risks widening divisions and undermining the Palestinian national cause,” he said, stressing: “I urge all parties to refrain from actions that could undermine the integrity of the process.”