



In the headlines:

- UN envoy maps out 'ideal trajectory' to next round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva
- UN welcomes major partnership initiative with tech giants to counter terrorism online
- Upcoming Cyprus Conference 'a unique opportunity,' says UN negotiator
- Colombia: UN mission collects nearly all remaining weapons from FARC-EP
- Despite progress, challenges remain for Liberia to consolidate peace gains, UN Security Council told
- UN recognizes young entrepreneurs on Day for micro-, small, medium-sized enterprises
- UN agency saves 600 stranded migrants in Sahara Desert, but 52 dead in Niger
- On International Day Against Drug Abuse, UN urges collective action to realize global commitments
- Experts head to Vienna to discuss advances in monitoring, verification under UN nuclear test-ban treaty
- Secretary-General extends condolences to victims in oil tanker truck explosion in Pakistan
- With hidden lives vital to our own, 'seafarers matter,' says UN on International Day
- UN chief 'saddened' by loss of life and devastation caused by landslide in China

More stories inside

UN envoy maps out 'ideal trajectory' to next round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva



Security Council meeting on Middle East (Syria). UN Photo/ Kim Haughton

27 June – The United Nations mediator for the conflict in Syria today mapped out what needs to happen in the next two weeks before the next round of intra-Syrian peace talks begins on 10 July in Geneva, Switzerland.

“We are at a time of testing whether the political will exists for real de-escalation and more meaningful political talks and move beyond preparatory talks,” Staffan de Mistura, UN Special Envoy for Syria, told the Security Council via videoconference from Geneva.

His briefing focused on the latest developments and some of the possible future steps ahead to create a conducive environment to bring the six-year war to an end.

He said that “the ideal trajectory” over the coming two weeks would be progress in the next round of the Astana talks on 4 and 5 July.

The process taking place in the Kazakh capital is led by Russia, Turkey and Iran and produced agreement on a ceasefire between warring parties in Syria in late December 2016. Five months later, a deal was struck to set up “de-escalation zones”



in Syria to prevent incidents and military confrontation between the warring parties. These zones are expected to also give greater humanitarian access to the 6.3 million people still living the country today.

“Let's give de-escalation efforts a fair chance to succeed because that is what people are asking in order to bringing the violence further down and enabling confidence-building,” Mr. de Mistura said.

Since the three guarantor States signed the de-escalation memorandum on 4 May in Astana, violence is clearly down, he said, noting that hundreds of Syrian lives continue to be spared every week, and many towns have returned to some degree of normalcy. But in some areas, the fight and violence has been continuing and in fact intensified.

And the overall improvement of the security situation has regrettably not yielded equally significant progress on humanitarian access to areas where the needs are the greatest, he added.

“With every week that passes, we know it, without a final arrangement for the de-escalation zones being indeed finalized, the fragility of the ceasefire regime and the risk posed by the fragility increases,” warned Mr. de Mistura.

Next, Astana talks would be followed by a further set of joint technical expert meetings with the opposition groups in the same week, and then a continued discussion and dialogue among international stakeholders, including at the G20 Summit in Hamburg on 7 and 8 July, in which Syria cannot be avoided as a subject, he said.

“I hope that a combination of these elements would help shape an environment conducive for the next round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva in the months to come,” the UN envoy said, noting that it “would bring us one step forward on the journey towards our shared goal” of implementing the resolutions of this Council, in particular resolution 2254 (2015), which laid out the pathway to peace.

UN welcomes major partnership initiative with tech giants to counter terrorism online



A person browsing through social media on their laptop computer (content blurred to protect privacy). File Photo: World Bank

27 June – A senior United Nations official has called for sustained joint efforts to combat terrorism and welcomed a partnership initiative with tech giants Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube to counter terrorism and violent extremism online.

“I welcome this major initiative, which elevates our existing private-public partnership with these and other companies,” said Jean-Paul Laborde, UN Assistant Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

“The UN remains committed to addressing the scourge of terrorism, and we look forward to remaining a key partner to the private sector,” he added.

The four tech giants have already developed and have put in place policies and removal practices to take a hard line against terrorist or violent extremist content on their hosted consumer services.

The *Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism* partnership will help further strengthen these “counter-speech” protections through research- and evidence-based efforts and technical and policy decisions around the removal of terrorist content, noted a news release issued by the Executive Directorate.

By working together, and through the sharing of the best technological and operational elements of their individual efforts, they believe they can have a greater impact on the threat of terrorist content online, it added.

The new forum builds on initiatives, such as the European Union (EU) Internet Forum and the Shared Industry Hash Database as well as discussions with governments and the outcomes of recent G7 and European Council meetings.

It will also help strengthen existing and build future areas of collaboration between these companies, including with smaller tech enterprises, civil society groups and academics, as well as with governments, and intergovernmental bodies like the EU and the UN.

The companies will also be hosting a series of learning workshops in partnership with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the ICT4Peace Foundation in Silicon Valley (which is home to many of the world's largest high-tech corporations) and around the world to drive these areas of collaboration.

Within the UN system, the Security Council continues to closely follow efforts to combat terrorism as well as other issues that represent serious threats to international peace and security.

Last month, it unanimously adopted a resolution which, among others, provides a comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives and amplifies positive and credible alternatives to audiences vulnerable to extremist messages, especially those on social media.

Upcoming Cyprus Conference 'a unique opportunity,' says UN negotiator

27 June – A fresh round of talks on Cyprus will last “as long as it takes,” but there are no guarantees of success, the United Nations negotiator facilitating the process said today.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Espen Barth Eide, the UN Special Adviser on Cyprus, said that the reconvening of the Conference is “not the last chance” but the “the best chance” of reaching an agreement between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots.

“It is a unique opportunity, and it would be extremely sad if it was wasted [...] and I think frankly that's recognized by all participants.”

He highlighted however that sticking points remain between the delegations as they prepared to meet tomorrow in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland.

“Make no mistake; it's not going to be easy,” he said, explaining that the he and Secretary-General and will “do our utmost” to help. So would the Security Council which has remained “very united” throughout the process, so would the [European Union], which is lending extremely important and productive support, and so would the international financial institutions which are directly involved.

“But none of us can do it for the participants, they have to take the responsibility and try to make the best out of what I see is a unique opportunity,” Mr. Eide underscored.

After decades of division in Cyprus dating back to 1974, the UN envoy said that this was the “best chance” for successful talks and not the last chance, despite the “risks” and the “tense situation” on the Mediterranean island.

There are six main topics up for discussion; they include new territorial boundaries, power-sharing and the economy. Agreement has been found on most of these so-called 'chapters,' broadly, and concrete progress achieved, Mr Eide said.

The Turkish-Cypriot delegation had assented to what he called a “significant return of territory” to the Greek-Cypriots, and both sides had also exchanged maps in Geneva in January – an historic first, the UN negotiator told journalists.



Esen Barth Eide, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Cyprus during press conference ahead of the Cyprus talks in Geneva. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

Nonetheless, Mr. Eide said that the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot positions still diverge on the issue of security and guarantees.

“What I’m saying is that on these five chapters, we have made substantive process, on the issue which is most complicated right now and very much in focus now and by the guarantors – Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom – and others who will be present, is the security and guarantees chapter; that’s where the sides are so far opposed,” he said.

“But they have also told each other and the world many times that are trying to seek a common vision also on that chapter, and that is what we are trying to do,” said Mr. Eide, insisting that this shared viewpoint is something only the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots could do by talking together.

The UN would be there to help both sides find common ground, he said, so that an agreement owned by the people of Cyprus could prevail.

In a statement issued in New York, the Secretary-General picked up that thread saying that welcomed the reconvening of the Cyprus Conference and that the “the opportunity for the reunification of Cyprus is now finally before us.”

Calling on all concerned players to seize this opportunity, “for Cyprus first and foremost, but also for the wider Eastern Mediterranean region,” Mr. Guterres reiterated his steadfast commitment to supporting this effort.

“I urge all participants to demonstrate the will and leadership required to conclude a comprehensive settlement,” he concluded.

Colombia: UN mission collects nearly all remaining weapons from FARC-EP



Observers from the United Nations mission in Colombia registering weapons from the FARC-EP. Photo: UN Mission in Colombia

27 June – The peace effort in Colombia today reached a milestone, with nearly all of the remaining number of weapons held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) turned over to the United Nations for registering and storing.

The UN political mission in the country today confirmed that “on 20 June the third phase of the laying down of individual weapons of the FARC-EP combatants was initiated.”

The Mission has now stored 7,132 arms, which constitutes all the weapons that were registered from FARC-EP. The only exclusions from the list are the weapons used to provide security in the 26 FARC-EP camps until 1 August 2017.

“To date, the Mission has verified 77 arms caches from which weapons have been extracted and munitions, explosives and unstable armaments destroyed,” the UN political mission said.

The lay down is in compliance with the timeline agreed to between the Government and FARC-EP on 29 May, part of the historic deal that ended the half-century long conflict.

The arms laydown process – a major component in the peace agreement – includes five distinct steps including: registration and identification of weapons, monitoring and verification of the holding of weapons, reception and storage of arms, neutralization of arms (to ensure that they will never again be used as firearms), and extraction of arms from camps.

Despite progress, challenges remain for Liberia to consolidate peace gains, UN Security Council told



Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). UN Photo/Kim Haughton

27 June – In spite of “remarkable” progress in Liberia since the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement in 2003, the presence of challenges that risk a reversal of the gains made warrant continued international support and attention, the United Nations envoy for the country has cautioned.

“I would appeal to all concerned to increase and consolidate investment in Liberia and support the country at this crucial time, through its transition to a new government and beyond,” Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia, told the Security Council today.

Pointing to challenges which could hinder sustaining peace and advancing national reconciliation, Mr. Zarif said that legislative reforms, widely accepted as critical to address the underlying causes of conflict as well as on women's rights and protection, were yet to be

enacted.

“I continue to engage vigorously with the Government, particularly the Legislature, to help advance these transformational reforms,” he added.

Mr. Zarif, also the head of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), noted that as UNMIL prepares for transitioning its residual mandated activities to the Government, the UN Country Team and partners, it remains engaged in all aspects of its assignment with a particular emphasis on good offices and political facilitation, including in view of elections scheduled in October.

“As the elections draw nearer, [we have] further intensified [our] engagement with the National Elections Commission, political party leaders, presidential candidates, the Government and civil society to prevent and diffuse tensions, help resolve disputes, and advocate for inclusive, transparent, credible, and peaceful elections,” he said.

“The country's future as a stable democracy will hinge on the successful conduct of the elections and the broad acceptance that they were free and fair, followed by a smooth transfer of power from the current government to a new administration.”

The Special Representative also added that Liberia's law enforcement agencies being adequately prepared to respond to potential low-level civil unrest and mob violence during the upcoming period was critical.

In that context, he elaborated that UNMIL is supporting the Liberia National Police to set up an integrated elections security plan to ensure the most effective utilization of available resources to protect civilians.

Further, noting the gradual strengthening of the country's human rights capacity, Mr. Zarif urged the Liberian human rights commission to intensify its efforts to address serious human rights challenges, including sexual and gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices and challenges with respect to freedom of speech, which continue to plague the African nation.

He also called on the Government to urgently implement the recommendations of the a 2016 joint Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)-UNMIL report on ensuring accountability for rape.

Liberia at critical juncture, several historic transitions underway

Also, speaking today at the Security Council, Olof Skoog, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Liberia Configuration welcomed the steps taken by Government and the UN to develop a Peacebuilding Plan but highlighted that the need for continued engagement with and

support to the country.

“As we have noted in the past couple of months, Liberia is at critical juncture. Several historic transitions are underway,” said Mr. Skoog, adding: “While no one I met indicated to me that there exists a clear and imminent risk of relapse into conflict [but] there are real hurdles ahead as [UNMIL] is closing down and as the new government takes the reins.”

As for the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, he said that it stood ready to continue its political accompaniment, ensuring continued international attention after the Mission leaves, and assisting by drawing attention to gaps.

“We will undertake continued advocacy on the importance of pursuing reforms that are central for sustaining peace in Liberia,” he added.

UN recognizes young entrepreneurs on Day for micro-, small, medium-sized enterprises



Portrait of clothing designer Lara Khoury in her studio in Beirut. UN Women/Joe Saade

27 June – United Nations agencies today launched a new campaign to make it easier for the 70 million unemployed youth to get financing and learn new skills to start a business.

The global campaign – launched by the the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – will run through August of this year.

It will aim to “effectively enable young entrepreneurs to success and improve the sustainability and quality of self-employment opportunities for youth,” according to ILO.

The UN agency added that the main challenges to be addressed include “the lack of enabling policy and ecosystems, the limited access to capital, the insufficient tools to enhance skills development and knowledge transfer.”

The campaign will focus on strategies to promote “an enabling regulatory environment” for young people, make use of technology and networks, aim to allow greater access to finance, and provide greater support for young people.

The UN estimates that while 70 million youth are unemployed, an additional 150 million work yet live in moderate to extreme poverty.

Today's launch comes on the first observance of the International Day for Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, which seeks to raise public awareness of these business which generally employ fewer than 250 people. This year's theme is “youth entrepreneurship and self-employment.”

The Day was created in April to observe the Day and raise public awareness of their contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to alleviate poverty and preserve the people and the planet.

According to the data provided by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), formal and informal Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) make up over 90 per cent of all firms and account on average for up to 70 per cent of total employment and 50 per cent of GDP.

UN agency saves 600 stranded migrants in Sahara Desert, but 52 dead in Niger



Walking through desert. Photo: World Bank

27 June – The United Nations migration agency in Niger has saved more than 600 lives since April 2017 through a new search and rescue operation that targets migrants stranded in Sahara Desert, but 52 did not survive.

“We are enhancing our capacity to assist vulnerable migrants stranded in Northern Agadez, towards the Niger-Libya border,” said Giuseppe Loprete, Niger Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in press release issued today.

“Saving lives in the desert is becoming more urgent than ever. Since the beginning of the year we have been receiving frequent calls to rescue victims who embark on this route,” Loprete added.

A 22-year-old woman was the only female among the survivors of a rescue mission on 28 May. She left Nigeria in early April hoping for a better future in Europe. There were 50 migrants on the pick-up truck when it left Agadez for Libya, but only six are still alive today.

“We were in the desert for ten days. After five days, the driver abandoned us. He left with all of our belongings, saying he was going to pick us up in a couple of hours, but he never did,” she recalled.

During the next two days, 44 of the migrants died which persuaded the six left to start walking to look for help. “We had to drink our own pee to survive,” she said.

On 9 June, another 92 migrants were also rescued through an IOM search and rescue operation; among them were 30 women and children.

More recently, 24 migrants were taken to Seguedine, where one died on arrival. Among the 23 survivors are migrants from Gambia, Nigeria, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire. It was not clear for how long they had been walking in the deserts of central Niger. They had been in a group of 75 migrants in three different cars, eventually abandoned by smugglers during the journey north.

IOM has recorded 52 deaths since it launched a new project “Migrants Rescue and Assistance in Agadez Region” (MIRAA) in April. The project will last for 12 months, and aims to ensure the protection of migrants in hard-to-reach areas while also strengthening the management of migration by the Government of Niger.

MIRAA is complementary to the larger initiative “Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism” (MRRM), which aims to bring together in one mechanism a wide range of services and assistance for migrants, including assisted voluntary return to their countries of origin and reintegration once they return.

On International Day Against Drug Abuse, UN urges collective action to realize global commitments



A staff member of the Liberia National Police Anti-Drug Squad reviews the municipal dump outside Monrovia, Liberia. UN Photo/Staton Winter

26 June – To mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the United Nations is calling on all countries to honour their commitments to address the scourge and to ensure that steps to do so are consistent with human rights and promote equality, peace, security and sustainable development.

“Despite the risks and challenges inherent in tackling this global problem, I hope and believe we are on the right path, and that together we can implement a coordinated, balanced and comprehensive approach that leads to sustainable solutions,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres .

In his message on the International Day, the UN chief also recalled the special session on the World Drug Problem, convened by the UN General Assembly, where Governments agreed upon a series of steps which are more effective and humane, and leaves no one behind.

“I know from personal experience how an approach based on prevention and treatment can yield positive results,” noted Mr. Guterres, referring to steps he took as the Prime Minister of Portugal, including introduction of non-criminal responses to the possession of drugs for personal use – a flexibility afforded by the three international drug control conventions – and greater resources for prevention, treatment, and social reintegration programmes.

The steps helped the country achieve one of the lowest death rates for drug use in Europe, as well reduce the prevalence of HIV amongst injecting drug users.

“I am proud of these results and hope this experience will contribute to the discussion and encourage [UN] Member States to continue exploring comprehensive and evidence-based solutions,” added the Secretary General, noting that the follow-up process to the 2016 special session includes an institutional framework to share best practices.

“This would be the best possible way to implement the UNGASS recommendations and to have a positive impact on the lives of millions of people around the world,” he said.

Similarly, in his own message on the Day, Yury Fedotov, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), also recalled the commitments expressed at last year’s General Assembly special session and underscored the challenges that drug abuse and illicit trafficking pose to sustainable development.

“Once viewed as a marginal actor on the development stage, drugs and crime are now viewed as a disturbing obstruction to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly [Sustainable Development] Goal 3 on health and Goal 16 on peaceful societies,” he said, underscoring the importance of implementing the commitments made by UN Member States last year.

The theme for the 2017 edition of the Day, *Listen First – Listening to children and youth is the first step to help them grow healthy and safe*, builds on the theme for the commemoration last year, as an initiative to increase support for prevention of drug use that is based on science and is thus an effective investment in the well-being of children and youth, their families and their communities.

Experts head to Vienna to discuss advances in monitoring, verification under UN nuclear test-ban treaty



Primary Seismic Station PS21. Photo: CTBTO Preparatory Commission

26 June – Scientists and technical experts from all over the world are gathering this week in Vienna, Austria, for a meeting convened by the United Nations partner organization working to establish a verification regime to monitor global compliance with the comprehensive ban on nuclear testing.

The Science and Technology 2017 Conference, which opens today and runs through Friday, 30 June in the Austrian capital, is the sixth in a series of meetings aimed at strengthening the relationship between the scientific community and authorities for compliance with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Conference was convened by the Preparatory Commission for the Treaty, widely known as the CTBTO.<P.

The Conference is seeking to enlarge the engagement of the scientific and technological community in test-ban monitoring. In addition to monitoring such tests, scientists apply CTBTO data for other useful purposes, such as the observation of volcanoes and icebergs. It is also used to study marine mammals, and forecast the weather months in advance, to improve the mitigation of disasters.

The advances of these technologies also help towards the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to eliminate poverty and hunger, as well as put in practice measures to combat climate change.

The high-level opening of the 2017 Conference will be tomorrow, 27 June, and will include welcoming remarks by the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, Lassina Zerbo, and Michael Linhart, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Ministry for Europe of Austria.

Keynote Addresses are expected to be delivered by Princess Sumaya of Jordan, President of the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan; Maria Candida Pereira Teixeira, Minister for Science and Technology, Angola; and Pascale Ultré Guérard, National Centre for Space Studies, France.

Spotlight on young scientists; role of youth in rallying for nuclear weapon-free world

For the first time, the 2017 Conference will include a special focus on youth and young scientists. Close to 100 members of the CTBTO Youth Group from more than 50 countries are contributing actively to the substance and the coverage of the Conference and adding their voices and impressions.

Mr. Zerbo considers youth “essential” to the this year's Conference, and, more broadly, the work of the CTBTO, telling *UN News* in an interview that through their activism, they can convince their leaders of the importance of a world free of nuclear weapons.

“Young people can make a difference to mobilize support for the [CTBT] and attract ratification from the remaining countries to facilitate its entry into force,” he stated. “Young people are key to spreading the message and reaching those who need to understand it,” using social networks and other tools at their disposal.

Indeed, Mr. Zerbo continued, such advocacy could help policymakers to understand the science behind the Treaty. “And [it could] help scientists understand how the technology they are developing and using can help push for the agenda, which is the entry into force of the CTBT,” he explained.

Nuclear test-ban treaty and the role of the CTBTO

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1996, The CTBT is a multilateral treaty that bans all nuclear explosions, by everyone, everywhere: on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground. It makes it very difficult for countries to develop nuclear bombs for the first time, or for countries that already have them, to make more powerful bombs.

More than 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out worldwide between 1945 and 1996 when the Treaty was opened for signature. The United States conducted the majority – 1,032 in total – followed by the Soviet Union, France, the United Kingdom and China. Since 1996, three countries have broken the *de facto* moratorium on nuclear testing: India and Pakistan in 1998, and the Democratic Republic of Korea in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016.

The CTBT has not yet become law. A total of 183 nations have signed on, of which, 166 have ratified it, including three nuclear weapons States: France, Russia and the United Kingdom.

But 44 others who have these specific technologies must sign and ratify the Treaty in order for it to come into force. Of these, the CTBTO says, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Pakistan and the United States. The last country to ratify this treaty was Indonesia, on 6 February, 2012.

Since the Treaty is not yet in force, the CTBTO is officially called the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. In line with its main task to make preparations for effective implementation of the Treaty, the CTBTO is establishing and provisionally operating the 337-facility International Monitoring System (IMS) to monitor the planet for signs of nuclear explosions, and including its International Data Centre (IDC) and Global Communications Infrastructure (GCI).

Secretary-General extends condolences to victims in oil tanker truck explosion in Pakistan

25 June – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres “is saddened” to learn of the large number of deaths and injured following today's explosion of an oil tanker truck in eastern Pakistan, his spokesperson has said.

“The Secretary-General extends his condolences to the people and Government of Pakistan on this tragic event and wishes those injured a speedy recovery,” Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said in a statement.

According to media reports, the tanker flipped over on a highway near the Pakistani city of Ahmedpur East in Punjab's Bahawalpur district. Villagers in the area rushed to the site with buckets and containers to collect fuel. Then the truck exploded, engulfing the people on the road.

“The United Nations stands ready to endeavor to support the authorities with any support they may require,” the spokesperson added.



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré (file)

With hidden lives vital to our own, 'seafarers matter,' says UN on International Day



Felixstowe, the busiest container port in the United Kingdom, where the IMO kicked off its 2017 World Maritime Day theme 'Connecting ships, ports and people.' Photo: International Maritime Organization (IMO)

25 June – Highlighting the challenges faced by seafarers – women and men sailing and working aboard ships – the United Nations International Maritime Organization has called on everyone around the world to show appreciation for their vital contributions.

“Even though seafaring can provide the basis for a fulfilling and life-long career, it is still a very difficult and demanding job,” Kitack Lim, the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), said in his message on Day of the Seafarer.

In addition to personal issues, conditions onboard ships and in ports, unpaid wages, and even abandonment, mariners have to contend with long periods away from family and friends and the pressure to perform in a challenging economic environment, which multiply the anguish.

“It is easy for seafarers to feel lonely and isolated. To imagine that they do not matter. This year, we want to show [everyone] that seafarers do matter,” stressed Mr. Lim, which is also the theme for this year's commemoration.

In particular, he praised the role of seafarer's centres at port cities, where sailors and crew of ships visit for a “small taste of home” – a sanctuary where they can rest, recuperate, connect with loved ones back home, especially through social media, and if necessary avail of support to help them adjust and cope.

“We want to create a platform to give ports and seafarer centres the opportunity to demonstrate how much seafarer matter,” noted the IMO chief, at the Duckdalben Seafarer's Centre in Hamburg, Germany, one of Europe's biggest ports.

He also spoke of events organized at ports and seafarer's centres around the world to connect the general public to seafarers and celebrate their contributions.

“As in previous years, the campaign will be centred on social media [to] spread the word as far as possible,” he added, calling on everyone to contribute and tag their messages, photos and videos to IMO's social media channels (on Twitter and on Facebook).

“We ask all of you to join us and say *Seafarers matter!*”

The Day of the Seafarer, marked annually on 25 June, was established in a resolution adopted by the 2010 Diplomatic Conference in Manila, the capital of Philippines, to recognize the unique contribution made by seafarers from all over the world to international seaborne trade, the world economy and civil society as a whole.

UN chief 'saddened' by loss of life and devastation caused by landslide in China

24 June – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres “is saddened” to learn of the loss of life and devastation caused by the landslide in China's southwestern province of Sichuan, his spokesperson said today.

According to media reports, more than 100 people are missing following the landslide in Xinmo village in Maoxin county early Saturday. Rescue operation is ongoing, with bodies being recovered from the rubble.

“The Secretary-General salutes the efforts of the national relief and recovery teams. The United Nations stands ready to support the authorities in any way it can if needed,” Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said in a statement.

“The Secretary-General extends his condolences to the people and Government of the People's Republic of China and wishes those injured a speedy recovery,” he added.



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (file). Photo: TASS/ UN DPI

In Haiti, Security Council spotlights opportunities for country's reform towards stability and development

24 June – Wrapping up a three-day visit to Haiti, a Security Council delegation today stressed that it has accomplished the objectives of the mission, including a first-hand look into how best the United Nations could contribute to the country's lasting stability and development.

“I am glad to report that the objectives of the visit were met,” Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz, Bolivia's Permanent Representative to the UN, who led the Council delegation, told a press conference in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

“With this visit, we have reaffirmed the Security Council's commitment towards the government and the people of Haiti and towards its institutional strengthening in order to contribute to its stability and development,” he added.

Bolivia holds the Council's presidency for the month of June.

In resolution 2350 of 13 April, the 15-member Council extended the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for a final six months, deciding to replace it with a smaller follow-up peacekeeping mission that would help the Government of Haiti strengthen rule-of-law institutions, further develop and support the Haitian National Police and engage in human rights monitoring, reporting and analysis.

“Haiti has fortunately entered a new period of stability, providing an important window of opportunity for the government and other state institutions to be able to bring forward a programme of reform so needed to allow Haiti to join the path of sustainable development,” Mr. Llorentty said.

The delegation also sought to review how to implement MINUSTAH's transition to the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), and identify the necessary requirements for the successful implementation of the follow-up mission's mandate.



The UN Mission in Haiti Community Violence Reduction section (CVR) undertakes a joint pilot project with the Direction Nationale de l'Eau Potable et de l'Assainissement (DINEPA) to install water filter systems and provide hygiene training in Cité Soleil, Port au Prince. Photo: UN/MINUSTAH/Nektarios Markogiannis

During the visit, the Council delegation met with President Jovenel Moïse, member of his Cabinet, parliamentarians, national police, judicial officials, and civil society and private-sector representatives.

“The encounters with these interlocutors allow us to come to better understanding of the challenges the government and people in Haiti face in this new political context,” Mr. Llorentty said.

“We felt particularly encouraged by the government and legislature's clear commitment to resolutely address the country's challenges in the field of rule of law and governance, and place an emphasis on strengthen judiciary oversight and accountability. We are equally encouraged by the authorities' commitment to further strengthen Haitian national police,” he added.

He said the Council believes the new mission to be part of the strategy to ensure Haiti's progressive transition to development.

The implementation of the new mission is a demonstration of the UN's long-term commitment to Haiti, he said, stressing that a stronger level of national ownership and leadership from the Government is also expected.

On cholera, the Security Council delegation reaffirmed its support for the new efforts undertaken by the UN.

“We are reminded that peace and security are intrinsically intertwined with the basic needs of the population. If the basic needs, such as health, education, water and sanitation services are not met, the road to lasting stability and development will be difficult if not impossible to achieve,” Mr. Llorentty said.

Last December, then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put forward a **New Approach to Cholera in Haiti** to demonstrate the Organization's commitment to the elimination of the disease. He also apologized to the Haitian people on behalf of the United Nations stating that the Organization simply had not done enough with regard to the 2010 cholera outbreak and its subsequent spread in Haiti.

Earlier this week, Ban's successor António Guterres appointed Josette Sheeran of the United States as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Haiti. She will guide full implementation of the Organization's new approach.

The new approach on cholera involves two tracks: the first to intensify efforts to reduce and ultimately end the transmission of the disease, improve access to care and treatment, and address the longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health systems. Track 2 involves developing a package of material assistance and support for those Haitians most directly affected by cholera.

Yemen hit by world's worst cholera outbreak as cases reach 200,000 – UN

24 June – Yemen is now facing the worst cholera outbreak in the world, with suspected cases exceeding 200,000 and the number increasing at an average of 5,000 a day, the United Nations warned today.

In a joint statement, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Anthony Lake and World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Margaret Chan said that in just two months, cholera has spread to almost every governorate of this war-torn country.

Already more than 1,300 people have died – one quarter of them children – and the death toll is expected to rise.

“UNICEF, WHO and our partners are racing to stop the acceleration of this deadly outbreak,” they said, also calling on authorities in Yemen to strengthen their internal efforts to stop the



A child with severe diarrhoea or cholera receives treatment at the Sab'een Hospital in Sana'a, Yemen, on 12 May 2017. © UNICEF/UN065873/Alzekri

outbreak from spreading further.

“This deadly cholera outbreak is the direct consequence of two years of heavy conflict,” the UN officials said, noting that collapsing health, water and sanitation systems have cut off 14.5 million people from regular access to clean water and sanitation, increasing the ability of the disease to spread.

The UN officials also said that rising rates of malnutrition have weakened children's health and made them more vulnerable to disease.

An estimated 30,000 dedicated local health workers who play the largest role in ending this outbreak have not been paid their salaries for nearly 10 months.

“We urge all authorities inside the country to pay these salaries and, above all, we call on all parties to end this devastating conflict,” they said.