



In the headlines:

- ‘Inclusive, equitable and quality education’ at the heart of high-level UN event
- Harness ‘immense’ potential offered by migration, UN officials urge at global forum
- Civilians must not be sacrificed for military victories – UN rights chief, as thousands trapped in Raqqa
- Conference on Cyprus off to constructive start but hard work remains, says UN facilitator
- International cooperation key to keeping WMDs away from terrorists, Security Council told
- Investing in poor children saves more lives per dollar spent, UNICEF study finds
- ‘Disproportionate emphasis’ on security would undercut sustaining peace in Sahel – UN deputy chief

‘Inclusive, equitable and quality education’ at the heart of high-level UN event

28 June – Education leaders from around the world convened today at the United Nations to discuss ways to advance action on Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.”

“Inclusive, equitable and quality education goes to the heart of the 2030 Agenda as a key enabler of sustainable development,” said Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly, in his opening remarks at the High-level SDG Action Event on Education.

Mr. Thomson pointed out that education taps the Earth’s greatest asset, namely the inherent potential of the world’s people.

“Access to quality education is not only a goal in itself, but a fundamental building block to creating a better world of sustainable peace, prosperity and development,” he underscored.

He went on to explain that education holds the key to fuelling sustainable growth, building social cohesion and stability, and promoting human rights and equality – calling it “the golden thread that runs through all 17 SDGs.”

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed dubbed education as “the cornerstone of sustainable development.”

Ms. Mohammed maintained that the world can only be shaped by quality and relevant education, stressing the importance of investments to ensure a strong framework.

“We know when we deliver education to a young person, we’re not only delivering the knowledge and skills they will need to chart their own future — we’re preparing them to lend their hands, their mind, and their heart to shaping a more peaceful,



Students at a university library in Rabat, Morocco. Photo: Arne Hoel/World Bank

prosperous future for their society, and indeed, for the world,” she said.

The UN deputy chief focussed specifically on the five interrelated areas of finance, innovation, girls’ education, lifelong learning, and education in humanitarian contexts.

Noting that the wealthiest children enjoy up to 18 times more public education financing than the poorest, she exhorted, “This injustice must be reversed.”

“There is no better investment in the future peace and resilience of a society than in the education of its citizens,” she stated.

For her part, Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), emphasized education as a basic human right and the foundation for inclusive sustainable development.

“Education is a transformational force that cuts across all of the Sustainable Development Goals, making progress sustainable across the board,” said Ms. Bokova.

Citing UNESCO’s regular global monitoring reports, she noted that 264 million children, adolescents and youth were out of school – most of them girls.

“Girls and women face the steepest challenges. Two-thirds of the more than 750 million illiterate adults in the world are women,” stressed Ms. Bokova, adding that they are often discriminated against, prevented from enrolling or continuing their education, dropping out of secondary education and facing strong barriers.

“If we do not move these barriers away... we will not achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4,” she underscored.

“If all adults completed secondary education, 420 million people could be lifted from poverty, reducing the number of poor people by more than half globally, by almost two-thirds in Sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia... and yet, aid to education has fallen for the sixth consecutive year,” Ms. Bokova indicated. “This can simply not go on.”

As experts discussed how to advance SDG 4, the event also highlighted innovations in education through a panel discussion and a “marketplace” that showcased solutions to delivering low-cost or free learning resources to students and educators.

Today’s event, which also featured musical performances, was the last in a series of SDG action events convened by the Office of the President of the General Assembly. Others focussed on sustainable peace, climate action, financing and innovation.

Harness ‘immense’ potential offered by migration, UN officials urge at global forum



A family looks out the window and take pictures as they undertake their journey for resettling. Photo: IOM/Muse Mohammed

28 June – Speaking at a major international meeting on migration and development, senior United Nations officials have underlined the need for safe, orderly and regular migration options to ensure that people around the world are not forced to undertake arduous and dangerous pathways in their search for a better future.

Such efforts would also address a number of security, development and human rights concerns regarding migration, said Louise Arbour, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, in her keynote address to the plenary of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, currently underway in the German capital, Berlin.

“Failure, on the other hand, would leave us unequipped to harvest the immense potential of migration,” she said.

“Worse still, the negative impact of irregular migration – both human and societal – would develop roots which would become ever harder to eradicate.”

In her address, Ms. Arbour also emphasized that effective international cooperation and political leadership were vital for the success of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and called on all participants for strong leadership as well as the “willingness to compromise.”

She also highlighted that the UN Charter, the international human rights framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development already offered a framework for the global compact and urged everyone to “resist the temptation to reinvent the wheel.”

Also speaking today, William Lacy Swing, the Director-General of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), noted that it is a fact that migration will continue and called for safe and legal pathways to prevent migrants from being abused or risking their lives in perilous journeys.

In that context, he underlined that efforts to assist them should be centred on their rights, needs and capacities.

“We need to address the relationship of migration to critical adjoining policy domains, including development, humanitarian, climate change, and peace and security, in a truly comprehensive way,” he said, urging the international community to move away from “reactive, unidimensional approaches” to migration governance.

“I believe we all agree that we dare not miss this ‘rendezvous with history,’ as this opportunity may not present itself again,” he added.

In the same vein, Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO), stressed the importance of taking action that made “a real difference” in the lives of migrants arriving on foreign soil, with hopes for a better future.

“If we are to foster the benefits of these movements for all concerned, our policy choices matter greatly,” he said, while citing the need to remove what he called “the toxicity” from the public debate.

He also emphasized the contributions made by migrants and called for better recognition of their skills and experience to allow them to attain their full potential.

Also speaking at the Global Forum, Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, called for action to ensure better protection of migrants and refugees as well as their rights.

In particular, he urged all stakeholders for expanding legal pathways that benefit both these vulnerable groups.

The Global Forum on Migration and Development was set up by the UN in 2007 as an informal, non-binding, voluntary and government-led venue for high-level discussions on policies, challenges and opportunities presented by the “migration-development nexus.”

Outcomes of the tenth session will feed into the ongoing process of forging a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, a framework for effective migration governance. The current session also marks the culmination of more than a decade of international dialogue and cooperation on migration and development.

Civilians must not be sacrificed for military victories – UN rights chief, as thousands trapped in Raqqa

28 June – Voicing grave concern over the fate of as many as 100,000 civilians “effectively trapped” in Syria's Raqqa governorate amid the ongoing offensive against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) fighters, the top United Nations rights official urged all parties to the conflict to enact measures to allow civilians who wish to flee the fighting to do so in safety.

“The intense bombardment of Al-Raqqa over the past three weeks has reportedly left civilians terrified and confused about where they can seek refuge as they are caught between ISIL's monstrosities and the fierce battle to defeat it,” the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said today in a news release issued by his Office (OHCHR).

“Civilians must not be sacrificed for the sake of rapid military victories,” he underscored, calling on all forces battling ISIL in the city, including international forces, to review their operations to ensure full compliance with international law and taking all feasible precautions to save civilian lives.

High Commissioner Zeid also underscored the need to promptly and effectively investigate reports of civilian casualties.

According to OHCHR data, conservative estimates indicate that at least 173 civilians have been killed in air and ground strikes since 1 June. Furthermore, reports of civilian deaths continue to mount and escape routes are increasingly sealed off.

The news release also noted that while some did manage to leave after paying large sums of money to smugglers, including traffickers affiliated with ISIL, allegations continue to emerge of ISIL preventing civilians from fleeing.

There are also worrying reports of violations and abuses by the armed group, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in areas under its control, such as Tabqa city – located west of Raqqa city – including of looting, abductions, arbitrary detentions during screening processes as well as the recruitment of children, the release added.

Conference on Cyprus off to constructive start but hard work remains, says UN facilitator

28 June – On the opening day of the Conference on Cyprus, a senior United Nations official expressed hope that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders as well as the guarantors – Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom – have the determination to overcome the challenges and resolve the issues before them.

“This is an historic opportunity to solve a problem that has been there for decades,” Jeffrey Feltman, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, told reporters after the opening of the Conference, which is being held in the Swiss town of Crans-Montana.

Mr. Feltman is representing Secretary-General António Guterres at the Conference, which the UN chief is expected to attend later in the week.

Speaking alongside Mr. Feltman, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, told the media that the Conference had gotten off to a constructive and good start.



A person walks amid destroyed buildings and rubble in Tabqa city, Raqqa governorate, Syria. Photo: UNICEF/Souleiman



Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, speaks to reporters following the opening of the conference. Photo: UNDP

“I am encouraged with what I heard so far,” he said, adding that the “hard work will remain” and that everyone was prepared to hold discussions in larger as well as smaller groups and to “do what is possible” to facilitate an outcome.

“But at the end of the day, of course, it is the responsibility of the Conference participants to go that final mile, to think outside the box, to try out some new ideas so that we finally [leave with] a plan.”

Earlier this month, the Secretary-General held a meeting with the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akinci, at UN Headquarters in New York, after which he announced the reconvening of the Conference on Cyprus.

In addition to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders and the guarantor powers, the European Union also participated, as an observer, in the Conference.

International cooperation key to keeping WMDs away from terrorists, Security Council told

28 June – The United Nations disarmament chief today called for stronger international cooperation to prevent terrorists from accessing and using weapons of mass destruction, warning that technological advances – such as unmanned aerial vehicles, 3-D printers and the Dark Web – make it easier for terrorist groups to effectively use such weapons.

“The possibility of non-State actors, including terrorists, acquiring weapons of mass destruction remains a significant threat to global security, and the international community must step up its efforts to ensure that the disastrous scenario of WMD terrorism is avoided,” Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, told the Security Council in an open date on the topic.

She cautioned that while globalization fosters new opportunities for economic growth and development, it also allows for greater mobility of materials and technologies, as well as scientific discoveries and personnel with “relevant expertise to use and exploit them with malicious intent.”

Ms. Nakamitsu also underlined the importance of both international dialogue, between governments and industry, as well as greater coordination and information-sharing among security agencies within each country.

When weapons are used, the senior UN official urged the international community to seek accountability.

“The international community must uphold the norms that have been established in this area, and to prosecute those responsible for committing or supporting such acts,” she said.

In addition to dozens of representatives from UN Member States, the Security Council also heard today from Joseph Ballard, Senior Officer from the Office of Strategy and Policy at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The OPCW – which is an independent, autonomous international organization with a membership of 192 member States – has a working relationship with the UN. Its main function is to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force in 1997.

Mr. Ballard echoed Ms. Nakamitsu’s concerns about the dual-use of materials and technologies, and underlined the need for greater collaboration and transparency in ensuring that toxic chemicals do not fall in the wrong hands.



Izumi Nakamitsu, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, addresses the Security Council debate on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

The use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, Mr. Ballard said, “is no longer a threat but a chilling reality.”

Today’s debate in the Security Council focused on practical measures that the 15-member body, Member States and international organisations can adopt to prevent non-State actors from acquiring or using nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

According to a note from the Security Council ahead of the debate, discussions are anchored by resolution 1540 (2004), which is considered the overarching legal instrument on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Representatives are also discussing aspects of resolution 2325 (2016), which notes the need for more attention to “enforcement measures; measures relating to biological, chemical and nuclear weapons; proliferation finance measures; accounting for and securing related materials; and national export and transshipment controls.”

Investing in poor children saves more lives per dollar spent, UNICEF study finds



A two-year-old girl is held by her mother as she is prescribed a course of medication to treat malaria at a community clinic in rural Kasungu district, Malawi. Photo: UNICEF/Hubbard

28 June – Investing in the health and survival of the most deprived children and communities provides more value for money than investing in less deprived groups, saving almost twice as many lives for every \$1 million spent, according to a new study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

“The evidence is compelling: Investing in the poorest children is not only right in principle, it is also right in practice – saving more lives for every dollar spent,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in a press release on the study, titled *Narrowing the Gaps*.

The study backs up an unconventional prediction UNICEF made in 2010: the higher cost of reaching the poorest children would be outweighed by greater results.

“This is critical news for governments working to end all preventable child deaths at a time when every dollar counts,” Mr. Lake said, noting that investing equitably in children's health also helps break intergenerational cycles of poverty and gives them a better chance of learning more in school and earning more as an adult.

The study analysed new data from the 51 countries where around 80 per cent of all newborn and under-five deaths occur. It assessed access to six high-impact maternal, newborn and child health interventions: the use of insecticide-treated bed nets, early initiation of breastfeeding, antenatal care, full vaccination, the presence of a skilled birth attendant during delivery, and seeking care for children with diarrhea, fever or pneumonia.

Findings show that improvements in coverage of life-saving interventions among poor groups helped decrease child mortality in these countries nearly three times faster than among non-poor groups. Also, interventions in poor groups proved 1.8 times more cost-effective in terms of lives saved.

The study also found that since birth rates were higher among the poor than the non-poor, the reduction in the under-five mortality rate in poor communities translated into 4.2 times more lives saved for every million people.

Further, it found that of the 1.1 million lives saved across the 51 countries during the final year studied for each country, nearly 85 per cent were among the poor.

Focus on poor children made a difference in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Malawi

The study lists Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Malawi as some of the countries with high rates of under-five mortality where focus on the most deprived has made a difference for children. Between 1990 and 2015, under-five mortality decreased by

half in Afghanistan and by 74 per cent in Bangladesh and Malawi.

The findings come at a critical time, as governments continue their work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set a target of ending all preventable deaths among newborns and children under the age of five by 2030. Unless progress on reducing child mortality accelerates, by 2030 almost 70 million children will die before reaching their fifth birthday.

The study calls on countries to take practical steps to reduce inequities, including: disaggregating data to identify the children being left behind; investing more in proven interventions to prevent and treat the biggest killers of children; strengthening health systems to make quality care more widely available; innovating to find new ways of reaching the unreached; and monitoring equity gaps using household surveys and national information systems.

‘Disproportionate emphasis’ on security would undercut sustaining peace in Sahel – UN deputy chief



Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed addresses the Economic and Social Council and Peacebuilding Commission meeting on the Sahel. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

28 June – The United Nations deputy chief today stressed the need to “avoid a disproportionate emphasis on security” when carrying out a strategy to help Africa’s Sahel region achieve sustained peace and development.

“Given the trans-border and multidimensional nature of instability in the Sahel region, there can be no purely military solution,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed in her remarks to the meeting on the situation in the Sahel, jointly organized by the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

She described how transnational organized crime, violent extremism and terrorism have become growing threats to stability in the Sahel region, and how the scarcity of food and challenging living conditions have spurred a steady flow of migrants on dangerous, sometimes

deadly, journeys through the desert towards the Mediterranean and beyond.

“The continuing deterioration of security in the Sahel is the result of several unresolved underlying causes of instability, including a lack of development, good governance and respect for human rights,” she said, adding that the region has also chronically suffered from harsh climatic conditions, exacerbated by climate change.

Gap between humanitarian and development work must be closed

In that regard, she stressed the need for renewed efforts to close the gap between humanitarian and development work through an integrated approach to development, governance, security and human rights.

Ms. Mohammed said that the UN remains deeply committed to supporting governments in the Sahel, including those of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, in navigating “this balance” through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Way of Working between humanitarian and development actors, and other relevant mechanisms.

For his part, ECOSOC President Frederick Makamure Shava recalled that last year’s joint meeting highlighted complementarity between the UN’s peace and security efforts and its development, human rights and humanitarian work.

One of the recommendations from that meeting included “forging closer collaboration between ECOSOC and the PBC” to achieve the 2030 Agenda and to sustain peace, he said.

“It is widely acknowledged that if we want to make the SDGs a reality for all, we need to make sustaining peace an integral part of a coordinated and coherent approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” he said.

Also addressing the meeting was the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Cho Tae-yul, who briefed the participants, including high-level representatives of UN Member States, civil society and the UN system, on the Commission’s recent activities.

He said that since the adoption of the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture by the Security Council and General Assembly in April last year, the Commission has been making greater efforts to play a bridging role among the principal bodies of the UN, by making use of its convening role and recognizing that peace, development, and human rights are closely interlinked.

In particular, he explained how the Commission has been using its convening role to assist the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in implementing the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.