



## In the headlines:

- Mobile broadband subscriptions on track to hit 4.3 billion in 2017 – UN report
- Venezuela: UN rights office urges all parties to refrain from violence amid protests over Sunday's elections
- DRC's Kasai region one of world's 'largest displacement crises' for children – UNICEF
- In Central African Republic, UN peacekeeping chief underscores political solution to end violence
- UN joins international community to salute park rangers' dedication and commitment
- Afghanistan: UN Mission condemns suicide attack against Iraqi embassy in Kabul
- Philippines: UN experts urge Government to address spiralling rights violations
- UN rights experts say fight against racism must be 'unremitting to be successful'
- 'Act now' to help and protect trafficking victims, UN urges on World Day against the scourge

## Mobile broadband subscriptions on track to hit 4.3 billion in 2017 – UN report

**31 July** – Mobile broadband subscriptions are expected to reach 4.3 billion globally by the end of 2017, according to a new report released by the United Nations telecommunications agency.

New data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) also show that 48 per cent of the world's population now uses the Internet. The proportion is 71 per cent for the group of young people aged 15-24.

“ITU's ICT Facts and Figures 2017 shows that great strides are being made in expanding Internet access through the increased availability of broadband networks,” said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao in a press release.

“Digital connectivity plays a critical role in bettering lives, as it opens the door to unprecedented knowledge, employment and financial opportunities for billions of people worldwide,” he added.

Of the 830 million young people online worldwide, 320 million, or 39 per cent, are in China and India, the report finds.

### *Youth at forefront of Internet adoption*

In the least developed countries (LDCs), 35 per cent of the individuals using the Internet are young people aged 15-24, compared with 13 per cent in developed countries and 23 per cent globally.

In developed countries, 94 per cent of the youth population uses the Internet, while the proportion is 67 per cent in



Boys and girls from a youth-centre in Nairobi, Kenya, expressing their thoughts about their future through Facebook during a UNFPA visit to the Horn of Africa region. UNFPA/Roar Bakke Sorensen (file)

developing countries and only 30 per cent in LCDs.

The report also reveals that mobile broadband subscriptions have grown more than 20 per cent globally in each of the last five years.

Between 2012 and 2017, the LDCs saw the highest growth-rate of mobile broadband subscriptions. However, the number of mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in these countries remained the lowest, at 23 per cent.

The number of fixed-broadband subscriptions has increased by nine per cent annually in the last five years.

There has been an increase in high-speed fixed broadband subscriptions parallel to the growth in the number of fibre connections. Most of the increase in high-speed fixed broadband subscriptions in developing countries can be attributed to China, which accounts for 80 per cent of all fixed-broadband subscriptions at 10 Mbit/s or above in the developing world.

Mobile broadband prices, as a percentage of gross national income per capita, dropped by half between 2013 and 2016.

Mobile broadband is more affordable than fixed broadband in most developing countries.

### *Digital gender divide*

While the Internet user gender gap has narrowed in most regions since 2013, the proportion of men using the Internet remains slightly higher than the proportion of women using the Internet in two-thirds of countries worldwide.

In 2017, the global Internet penetration rate for men stands at 50.9 per cent compared to 44.9 percent for women.

In the Americas, the number of women using the Internet is higher than that of men.

### *ICTs for sustainable development*

The report demonstrates that ICTs continue to play an increasingly critical role in achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“ICTs continue to be a key enabler of economic and social development, bridging the digital divide and fostering an inclusive digital economy,” ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau Director Brahim Sanou.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017 will take place 9 to 20 October in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the theme 'ICT for Sustainable Development Goals.'

## **Venezuela: UN rights office urges all parties to refrain from violence amid protests over Sunday's elections**



Protesters in La Castellana, a neighborhood in eastern Caracas.  
Photo: Helena Carpio/ IRIN News

**31 July** – The United Nations human rights office has expressed regret that at least 10 people died in Venezuela over the weekend amid clashes between security forces and protestors opposing the Constituent Assembly elections, a spokesman for the Secretary-General said today.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) “calls for the investigations into the deaths to be prompt, effective and independent, and urges the Government to cooperate fully with such investigations,” UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told reporters at the daily Headquarters briefing in New York.

According to media reports, President Nicolás Maduro declared victory in elections for a Constituent Assembly convened by him. The new body could replace the current legislative body, the National

Assembly.

“The Office also expressed concern that the Venezuelan authorities continue to violate the right of peaceful assembly by violently dispersing demonstrators,” Mr. Dujarric said.

OHCHR calls on the authorities to cease the use of excessive force to repress demonstrations, and to ensure the right of peaceful assembly is respected, and it calls on all parties to refrain from the use of violence, he added.

Ahead of Sunday's elections, OHCHR spokesperson Elisabeth Throssell told reporters in Geneva Friday that the Office urged the authorities to manage any protests against the Constituent Assembly vote in line with international human rights norms and standards while calling on those opposing the election and the Assembly to do so peacefully.

With regard to the legitimacy of the vote itself, the spokesperson noted that it is “a hugely controversial issue” amplified by the fact that there had been an unofficial consultation by the opposition on the constituent assembly.

“[Our] Office is concerned about the environment in which the elections are to take place and believes that a constitutional process can only be successful if based on a broad consensus and the participation of all sectors of society,” Ms. Throssell said.

## DRC's Kasai region one of world's 'largest displacement crises' for children – UNICEF

**31 July** – Waves of violent conflict in the Greater Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have forced more than one million people, including hundreds of thousands of children from their homes, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has reported.

“The lives of hundreds of thousands of children and their families in Greater Kasai have been turned upside down by this brutal violence,” said Tajudeen Oyewale, UNICEF Acting Representative in the DRC in a press statement issued late last week, calling the situation in the restive region of the DRC one of the largest displacement crises for children in the world.

“A total of 1.4 million people, including 850,000 children, have been displaced, with at least 60,000 uprooted in the month of June alone,” he added.

Most of the displaced, who have lost or left behind all their essential goods and personal belongings, live now with foster families and relatives in communities that are among the poorest in the country.

A smaller number of displaced families have fled to improvised huts in the bush near their villages. These families are the most vulnerable and least accessible to humanitarian workers. They suffer from lack of adequate food, shelter, healthcare, water and sanitation.

“This is a rapidly growing humanitarian crisis, and with our partners, we are working amid great insecurity to try to help these highly vulnerable families,” said Mr. Oyewale.

UNICEF and its partners have implemented a cash assistance programme for displaced people that provides households with \$100 cash support, which can be used for basic necessities. To date, UNICEF has supported 11,225 households through this programme.



On May 19th, 2017, a child suffering from malnutrition is awaiting treatment in a health center in the province of Kasai Orientale in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a region plagued by conflict between the militia of the traditional leader Kamuina Nsapu and the Government Armed Forces. © UNICEF/UN064921

In addition to the cash programme, a flexible multi-sectoral programme called Rapid Response Mechanism pre-positions materials and aid partners to rapidly respond to the needs of displaced populations. The assistance includes healthcare, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and essential non-food items – such as shelter materials, kitchen utensils, buckets of water, blankets. Some 50,000 households are expected to benefit from this programme over the coming months.

Thanks to donor support, UNICEF and its partners have so far this year, assisted 157,490 people in urgent humanitarian need.

## In Central African Republic, UN peacekeeping chief underscores political solution to end violence



Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, (right) visits the UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), here picture with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Mission chief, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. Photo: MINUSCA

**31 July** – The top United Nations peacekeeping official is in the Central African Republic where he today discussed the security situation and the political process, while paying homage to three UN 'blue helmets' killed in the line of duty in recent days.

“The security dimension is important but it is only part of the solution,” Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix said at a press conference in Bangui, stressing the importance of the political process in the country.

During his 48-hour visit, Mr. Lacroix met with President Faustin Touadéra, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and engaged with the President of the National Assembly.

He also met with representatives of religious groups and civil society, as well as the diplomatic corps.

“We need Central African leadership so that these processes can continue and progress,” he said, stressing the importance of national ownership.

According to the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the country, known by its French acronym MINUSCA, he also urged prioritizing implementation of the ceasefire that was agreed upon in Rome on 20 June.

Speaking to the press, he warned against messages of hatred and division that advocate polarization on ethnic or religious grounds within Central African society: “It is a poison and it is a duty to condemn these messages and stress that those who sow hatred will answer for their actions.”

During the visit, Mr. Lacroix also met with the staff of the UN Mission and paid tribute to the three peacekeepers killed during attacks by alleged anti-Balaka fighters in Bangassou last week.

He also met with new troops from Tanzania and Zambia who recently joined MINUSCA.

Their arrival provides “more force and greater flexibility” for redeployment, and will make it possible to more effectively protect the population, the senior UN official said.

“UNMISCA is implementing its robust mandate and is reorganizing to implement it further,” he said.

Mr. Lacroix is expected to leave the CAR today and proceed next to South Sudan.

## UN joins international community to salute park rangers' dedication and commitment



Members of the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit, a South African and majority-women ranger group. Photo: Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit

**31 July** – Park rangers across the world face increasing challenges and risks due to a surge in poaching and illicit trafficking in wildlife, the head of the United Nations entity on protection of endangered species today said, honouring the work of park rangers in protecting wild animals, plants and culture.

“Honest and hardworking park rangers devote their lives to protecting our natural resources and cultural heritage and, in some areas, these brave men and women regularly encounter well-resourced groups of poachers, equipped with high caliber weapons, who do not hesitate to use violence or threats of violence against them,” said John Scanlon, Secretary-General of the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

In recent years, rangers have increasingly been targeted by criminals seeking some of the world's most iconic animal species, such as elephants and rhinos, and plants, such as rosewood.

Mr. Scanlon added that the “illegal trade in wild animals and plants is occurring at a scale that threatens wildlife, people and their livelihoods” and is being driven by transnational organized crime groups and rebel militia groups, as well as rogue elements of regular military forces.

“The dedication and commitment shown by these honest hard working park rangers on a daily basis is worthy of much greater public recognition,” Mr. Scanlon said, welcoming World Ranger Day which is marked by the international community but not by the UN specifically.

World Ranger Day takes place annually on 31 July to recognize the park rangers around the world who have been injured or killed in the line of duty.

In the past year, at least 105 rangers were killed doing their job, according to the International Ranger Federation.

The UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Wild For Life programme added its voice today to celebrate rangers' work.

Praising park rangers for facing an array of challenges, including natural disasters like avalanches and floods, Wild For Life called rangers “hands-on heroes.”

“Fighting crime, educating the public, and protecting our heritage... all in a day's work for the rangers that safeguard the earth's most treasured locations,” the campaign said.

It noted that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least 140 rangers were killed in the past 15 years in the Virunga National Park.

## Afghanistan: UN Mission condemns suicide attack against Iraqi embassy in Kabul



Traffic in the Afghan capital Kabul. Photo: UNAMA/Nasim Fekrat

**31 July** – The United Nations political mission in Afghanistan today denounced an attack on the embassy of Iraq saying it is another attack aimed at the international community but where Afghan civilians bear the brunt of the violence.

“This attack shows complete contempt for human life, as well as the international law designed to protect diplomats,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan.

The attack, which occurred in a residential area of central Kabul, lasted around five hours.

Several armed men killed two Afghan civilian employees inside the embassy and injured a police officer before being killed by Afghan security forces.

“I commend the Afghan security forces for their swift action that saved many lives,” said Mr. Yamamoto, who heads the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, or UNAMA.

He noted that the attack is yet another which “appears to have targeted the international community but in which Afghan civilians bore the brunt of the violence.”

Diplomatic missions are civilian objects protected under international humanitarian law, and attacks directed at them are serious violations that may amount to war crimes.

The Islamic State in the Khorasan Province has claimed responsibility.

## Philippines: UN experts urge Government to address spiralling rights violations



Agnes Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial summary or arbitrary Executions. UN Photo/Loey Felipe

**31 July** – A group of United Nations experts has urged the Government of the Philippines to immediately address reported human rights violations, including murder, threats against indigenous peoples and the summary execution of children.

“Attacks are spiralling against many groups in society and we are making an urgent appeal for Government action,” said a joint statement issued by Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

They said attacks target indigenous peoples and human rights defenders, including children.

The experts noted that a number of villagers, farmers and human rights defenders seeking to protect the ancestral land of Lumad indigenous peoples against businesses have been reportedly killed, or executed outside the ordinary legal proceedings.

Last week, President Rodrigo Duterte, speaking in a televised news conference on 24 July, threatened to bomb Lumad schools on Mindanao.

“We urge the Government to ensure effective protection of individuals and groups who may be subject to extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions, or those who received death threats,” the experts said.

“The Government must also prevent incitement to violence or killings against indigenous communities, human rights defenders and farmers,” they concluded.

The group of UN human rights experts has been in contact with the Government of the Philippines regarding these concerns.

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 rights experts say fight against racism must be 'unremitting to be successful'



Wide view of the Human Rights Council. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**31 July** – The fight against racism must be unremitting to be successful, according to the oldest of the United Nations treaty-monitoring bodies, which opened its latest session in Geneva today.

“Many people face institutional and systemic forms of racism in areas such as access to justice, education, health, employment, or housing. Many people are the target of racist hate speech and hate crimes, whereas the community is now viewed more as a threat than as a force,” said Adam Abdemoula, Director of the Division of the Council and the Treaty Mechanisms of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) opening the ninety-third session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) at the UN Headquarters in Geneva.

“We are living in an alarming period in which racism is rehabilitated and legitimized in the name of security and nationalism,” Mr. Abdemoula explained.

The 178 States Parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which marked its fiftieth anniversary last year, commit themselves to ending all forms of racial discrimination – defined by the Convention as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. The Committee monitors implementation of the treaty.

Mr. Abdemoula pointed out that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recalled that although the ratification of a treaty is primarily a commitment to their people, many States do not respect their reporting obligations, adding that in this case, “a very large number of outstanding reports remain.”

The Director of the Division of Counsel and Treaty Mechanisms encouraged the Committee to work with States Parties to reduce the number of overdue reports. Mr. Abdemoula recalled that the Program for Strengthening and Improving the Functioning of the Organization, which supports States parties in strengthening their capacity to fulfill their treaty obligations, has produced concrete results to improve the reporting rate.

Noting that it was not necessary to yield to the hierarchy of oppression, Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson of the Committee, expressed regret that there had been no significant improvements in the racial discrimination suffered by many around the world.

“On the one hand there is little room left for hope, but on the other hand there is a bit of light at the end of the tunnel for people who help each other and for those who believe that it is possible to arrive at a fair and equitable world,” she explained.

Ms. Crickley denounced “the global toxic discourse” of justification of the processes of strengthening security, including the profiling against Muslims globally, and that the legacy of the slavery of people of African descent continues. She also rejected the hierarchy of oppression.

The Committee, an 18-person expert body, monitors compliance with the Convention, assessing to what extent each State party is meeting its obligations, and making recommendations for Convention implementation.

The current session is set to review the implementation of the Convention by Kuwait, Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Djibouti, Tajikistan, Canada and New Zealand.

## 'Act now' to help and protect trafficking victims, UN urges on World Day against the scourge



Young women in Colombia forced into sexual exploitation. Photo: UNICEF/Donna DeCesare

**30 July** – Criminal groups feed off the instability created by conflicts, and as links between wars, trafficking and migrant smuggling become more widely known, the United Nations is calling on the international community to act now to help and protect trafficking victims and to end this crime forever.

“Conflict is a breeding ground for criminal activity,” said Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). “People forced from their homes are falling prey to human traffickers as they try desperately to escape the violence.”

In Syria, for example, women and children there were less likely to be trafficked before 2011, according to the latest UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons.

“Since the start of the Syrian crisis, however, an increasing number of countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East have detected trafficking victims from this country,” Mr. Fedotov said.

“As evidence grows of conflict’s ability to nourish crime, the international community is increasingly recognizing the need to confront people’s vulnerability to trafficking during conflicts,” Mr. Fedotov said, recalling that in 2016, UN Security Council passed its first-ever resolution on this issue, and last year’s New York Declaration calls for the need to vigorously combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as provide support and assistance under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

His comments come on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, which is being held this year under the theme of “Let’s act now to protect and assist trafficking victims.”

In line with this year’s theme, the UN is promoting the Trust Fund for trafficking victims, as well as the Blue Heart Campaign, which is being adopted across the world.

“Resources, well-supported advocacy, cooperation under international law, and action on the ground are the starting points for tackling this dehumanizing crime that shames everyone,” said Mr. Fedotov.

The Trust Fund facilitates effective, on-the-ground assistance and protection to victims of trafficking, through grants to specialized NGOs. Victims coming from areas of armed conflict and those identified among large refugee and migration flows are being prioritized.

Human trafficking is the acquisition of people by force, fraud or deception to exploit them, including for sex and forced labour. Smuggling of migrants is considered part of human trafficking.

Victims of trafficking have been targeted for sexual exploitation and pornography, organ removal, forced begging, forced criminality and other crimes.

### *Children among main targets of human traffickers*

Every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims, UNODC has said.

Children make up almost one-third of all human trafficking victims worldwide, according to the UN agency's latest report on trafficking. In addition, women and girls comprise 71 per cent of human trafficking victims.

Two UN human rights experts are also taking the opportunity provided by the World Day to warn that current systems designed to protect migrant children are failing, leaving many at risk of trafficking, sale and other forms of exploitation.

“So many children have died in conflict zones and along their perilous journey,” said Special Rapporteurs Maria Grazia Giammarinaro and Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, in a statement issued ahead of the Day.

The experts warned that all children fleeing conflict, especially those traveling alone, are vulnerable to abuse of different kinds: sexual and labour exploitation including as a consequence of trafficking, being sold and being coerced into marriage, in their homes, communities, society or in places where migrants and/or refugees reside – including reception centres, refugee camps or informal settlements at source, transit and destination countries.

The UN General Assembly will discuss trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in a special session in Vienna, Austria – where the UNODC is headquartered – in early September.

The event is part of preparations for a global compact on migration that is expected to be completed and adopted in 2018.

The World Day was established by the UN General Assembly in 2013 to “raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights.”

The UN International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 21 million people are victims of forced labour globally. This estimate also includes victims of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation.

While it is not known how many of these victims were trafficked, the estimate implies that currently, there are millions of trafficking in persons victims in the world.