

**In the headlines:**

- Leveraging ICTs critical to achieve Global Goals, UN highlights in new report
- UN envoy calls on Security Council to further support fight against terrorism in West Africa, Sahel
- Liberation of Mosul a 'milestone' in global fight against ISIL – UN Security Council
- Despite some humanitarian progress in Eritrea, UN relief official urges continued aid to tackle hunger
- UN's economic advice 'proven accurate' and applicable for sustainable development, review finds
- Security Council deplores ongoing violence, attacks on civilians in Central African Republic
- As Haiti struggles to stamp out cholera, UN urges further international support to combat disease
- World loses 'principled champion,' says UN rights chief on death of China's Liu Xiaobo
- Tourism key to foster trade for least developed countries – UN-backed report

Leveraging ICTs critical to achieve Global Goals, UN highlights in new report

Women learning to code at a technology centre in Herat, western Afghanistan. Photo: UNAMA/Fraidoon Poya

13 July – Underscoring the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) in today's world, the heads of over 20 United Nations agencies and offices have called for leveraging those technologies to “fast forward” implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In a new report, launched today, the senior officials also highlighted the critical link between information and communication technologies and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“The 2030 Agenda [...] recognizes the great potential of global connectivity to spur human progress,” noted UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his foreword to the publication, *Fast-forward progress: Leveraging tech to achieve the global goals*.

“This report presents evidence of how UN agencies are adopting – and adapting – ICTs to maximize their impact and help communities and people in need,” he added, highlighting efforts underway to extend telecommunication networks and ICTs into remote areas; train and equip workers with new digital skills; and ensure that schools, hospitals, clinics and whole cities are smarter, more energy efficient and safer.

The five key areas highlighted as the “take aways” in the publication include ensuring that no one is “left offline;”



recognizing the catalysing factor of ICTs for innovation and change; putting people first; importance of prompt action to leverage ICTs; and creating new innovative partnerships.

The report, coordinated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), was written as a collaborative effort between top officials from UN entities and international organizations, with each leader selecting one Goal and explaining why ICT is important for it, including drawing on their personal insights.

“As UN leaders have identified [...], ICTs must be leveraged to advance achievement of all 17 of the SDGs – and we at ITU look forward to partnering with other UN agencies to facilitate this,” said Houlin Zhao, the Secretary-General of ITU, said at the report's launch, in Geneva.

The report's release coincides with the ongoing 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the main UN platform dealing with sustainable and inclusive development.

UN envoy calls on Security Council to further support fight against terrorism in West Africa, Sahel



Women in the Koloma IDP camp in Goz Beida, Eastern Chad, break rocks to make gravel. Photo: UN Photo/ Pierre Peron

13 July – Amid rising terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the United Nations envoy for the region called on the Security Council to further support national and Regional efforts to combat this "serious threat", including strengthening the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

The efforts of the region's States towards broader development, increased investment, improved infrastructure and job creation are being undermined by factors of insecurity “both traditional and new,” warned Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the head of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWAS).

Terrorism and violent extremism, which aggravate humanitarian crises and erode the integrity of the region's States, have exacerbated traditional threats in West Africa and the Sahel region, which includes Mali, Mauritania, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria and Niger and Chad.

“These factors, combined with climate change, youth bulge and unemployment and unchecked urbanization constitute veritable push factors underpinning the surge in irregular migration and human trafficking,” he explained to the Council.

In the Sahel, the envoy continued, instability in Mali continues to spread into north-eastern Burkina Faso and western Niger, as evidenced by the recent deadly attacks in the border areas between these three countries. In the Liptako-Gourma region, which links Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the past month has been marked by an intensification of terrorist activities and violent extremism, including coordinated cross-border attacks on border crossings.

The leaders of those three countries met in Niamey on 24 January, and announced the formation of a multinational security force. The announcement came in the context of ongoing discussions on the operationalization of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S), an initiative that also includes, in addition to Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, Chad and Mauritania. He called on the Security Council to further support the national and regional initiatives of the Sahel States against violent extremism and terrorism.

Turning to the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, Mr. Chambas said that despite the remarkable efforts of the Multinational Joint Force against Boko Haram, recent attacks demonstrated that the terrorist group remains a “serious threat” to the region. The mode and sophistication of these attacks, he added, suggest that the terrorist group has benefited from reinforcements.

The attacks, the UNOWAS chief stressed, have “devastating humanitarian consequences” in the Lake Chad Basin, where 5.2 million people, many of whom are displaced, are in a vulnerable situation.

At the same time, the threats posed by extremists and terrorist groups should not obscure other traditional threats to security in the region, such as the rise of inter-communal tensions in several countries, including clashes between herders and farmers. Also of concern is the intensification of smuggling, cross-border crime and human trafficking in areas where State structures are scarce.

“This insecurity,” he said, “also extends to the Gulf of Guinea, where piracy is increasing.”

In view of these threats, he considered that the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel presents an effective multidimensional response to streamline efforts and reduce duplication between the various initiatives in the Sahel.

In that context, Mr. Chambas said he is ready to continue working with the States of the region to strengthen justice, the rule of law, security reform and national reconciliation.

Liberation of Mosul a 'milestone' in global fight against ISIL – UN Security Council



Al Salam Hospital in southeast Mosul in January 2017. Photo: OCHA/Themba Linden

13 July – The liberation of Mosul has marked an “important milestone” in the global fight against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), the United Nations Security Council today, welcoming the announcement by Iraqi authorities that the city has been freed of the terrorist group.

“As the Iraqi Security Forces liberate the remaining pockets of ISIL-controlled territory [...] all parties must comply with their obligations under international law, including, as applicable, human rights and international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to the protection of the civilian population,” the Security Council members said in a press statement today.

They also recognized the Iraqi Government's ongoing partnership with the UN to stabilize liberated areas across the country and called

on all Iraqis to continue to work towards that end, including through a redoubled focus on national reconciliation and the safe and voluntary return or reintegration of the millions displaced.

The members of the Council also called for ensuring accountability for all violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian laws.

Further to the statement, the Council members expressed their sympathies and condolences to all those who have suffered, and to the families of those who have perished in the fight against ISIL.

They also underscored the need to ensure justice for ISIL's victims and survivors of its crimes, in Iraq and across the region.

Despite some humanitarian progress in Eritrea, UN relief official urges continued aid to tackle hunger



John Ging, Director of the Operational Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, briefs the press at the United Nations in New York.

13 July – The humanitarian situation in Eritrea – which is quite isolated and off the media radars – is “on a positive trajectory” but international donors need to give malnourishment and food insecurity continued attention, a senior United Nations relief official today said.

Back from a three-day fact finding trip to the east African country, John Ging, Director of the Operational Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), told journalists in New York that food and security remains a key concern there.

“Eighty per cent of the population depends on subsistence agriculture. The country is susceptible to harsh climatic conditions, especially what we saw with El Nino,” he said.

He noted that half of all children under the age of five in Eritrea suffer from stunting, and 39 per cent are underweight.

“We have to work very actively in that particular area to make sure we are addressing those who are suffering,” said Mr. Ging, noting an extensive programme to aid children in the country run by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Among other concerns, he mentioned the need to lower infant mortality, to provide people with greater access to clean drinking water and to improve sanitation.

Eritrea, which has a population of roughly 3.5 million, sits at number 179 out of 188 countries on the UN’s Human Development Index, which measures indicators such as life expectancy and education.

The UN is assisting at nutritional feeding centres and health clinics, and has helped Eritrea achieve “a lot of progress” on the universal development goals.

“I don’t want to overstate the progress – it is significant because it is on a positive trajectory – but we have a long way to go,” Mr. Ging said.

He noted the “modest” appeal under way for \$328 million over the next five years to sustain and build on these programmes. The previous programme was 83 per cent funded.

“The momentum is there but there is a long way to go, so we have to give attention so it continues on that trajectory,” he reiterated.

UN's economic advice 'proven accurate' and applicable for sustainable development, review finds



The port at Tema, Ghana, June 16, 2006. Photo: Jonathan Ernst/World Bank

13 July – Economic analysis by the United Nations over the past 70 years has proven to be accurate and can help countries navigate through a difficult current world economic situation and implement the new global development goals, an in-depth review of the analysis has found.

First published in January 1948, in the direct aftermath of World War II, the *World Economic and Social Survey* is the oldest annual economic and social report of its kind and has promoted a broader understanding of development.

“This year’s Survey reviews 70 years of this flagship publication and draws lessons for the pursuit of sustainable development as we look ahead,” noted UN Secretary-General António Guterres in the report’s preface.

Individual countries have pursued widely different development paths during a period that has witnessed the fastest growth in global output and trade than any other period in the history of humanity. The nations have achieved varying results from the bleak to the miracle.

The review, released by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, finds that the free trade, development-friendly, country-specific advice of the Survey over the past 70 years has proven to be accurate and prescient and should continue to aid nations as they peruse implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Survey’s prescient analysis ‘a valuable tool’ for the SDGs

“Despite significant changes in global development over the years, many parallels can be drawn between the current challenges facing the international community and those that confronted the world in the past,” Mr. Guterres said, underscoring that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “is a moral and economic imperative – and an extraordinary opportunity.”

The review argues that in the early 1950s, the Survey was ahead of the curve in development thinking. It was an early proponent of development not just as the expansion of output, but also as a process of large-scale structural and institutional change for the promotion of high standards of living, full employment and social progress.

The Survey advocated the importance of international coordination, by saying that the action of the government of one country may constitute an element disrupting the equilibrium of other countries in the absence of effective coordination.

In other instances, the Survey in the 1960s contributed to the analytical basis for the establishment of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), providing a forum for developing countries to advance their insertion into global trade and support for industrialization.

The Survey also proved to be forward-looking in the 1980s. Before the debt crisis in developing countries erupted, it had raised concerns about large fiscal and trade deficits of developing countries and their implications for the long-term growth and social progress. Leading international financial institutions at the time concentrated on getting economies into balance with little consideration of the social consequences.

The Survey offered a critique of the “one-size-fits-all” approach adopted by adjustment programmes during the debt crisis, which significantly constrained national policy space and contributed to a “lost decade of development” in Latin America and Africa.

This critique supported countries in the design of country specific development strategies in the 1990s. The Survey prudently cautioned against factors leading to the financial crisis in the late 2000s.

This year's Survey also argues that development progress requires robust global economic growth, solid expansion of trade, and steady access to financial resources for development.

The Survey contends that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires greater and deeper international coordination in key policy areas including fiscal, monetary and trade, but such challenges are not insurmountable.

In the last 70 years, the world has witnessed episodes of economies experiencing remarkable economic development, including Germany and Japan in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by the rise of economies in Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. In recent decades, some Southeast Asian countries, Botswana, China and India, among others, have also experienced high and sustained economic growth and improved standards of living.

Security Council deplors ongoing violence, attacks on civilians in Central African Republic



Humanitarian support reaches the town of Bria, the capital of Haute-Kotto prefecture in the Central African Republic. Photo: OCHA CAR

13 July – The United Nations Security Council today expressed concern at the ongoing clashes between armed groups in the Central African Republic (CAR) and deplored that civilians from some communities, UN peacekeepers and aid workers continue to be targeted.

In a Presidential statement read out at a formal meeting, members of the Security Council said they believed this violence “continues to destabilize the country, cause many civilian casualties and cause large displacements of the population, even though the parties to the conflict have agreed to put an immediate end to hostilities.”

The Security Council deplored all attacks against civilians, human rights violations and violations of human rights and reiterated the urgent need to bring to justice all perpetrators of these violations or abuses, their status or political affiliation.

The Council reaffirmed that some of these acts may constitute crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and recalled that, at the request of the national authorities, the Prosecutor of the Court opened an inquiry in 2014 on crimes alleged committed since 2012.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, have plunged the country of about 4.5 million people into civil conflict since 2012. In addition to those displaced within the CAR, more than 484,000 people from the country have been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring nations.

In its Statement, the Council stressed the importance of combating impunity, and called for “the Special Criminal Court to be operational and for the judiciary, the penitentiary system and the criminal justice system to be restored throughout the country.”

The Council also expressed its deep concern about the humanitarian situation in CAR and once again called on “all parties to authorize and facilitate the safe and timely passage of humanitarian assistance for to those who need it.”

Reiterating support for the President of the CAR, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, the Council welcomed his efforts to advance dialogue with armed groups and extend the authority of the State throughout the country. It also encouraged the authorities “to carry out without delay an open political process.”

The Statement went on to strongly condemn the violence perpetrated by armed groups and called upon all leaders of these groups to make the provisions of the agreement – signed in Rome on 19 June 2017 under the auspices of the Sant-Egidio community – known to their members so that they immediately implement the cessation provisions “and to honour, without any restriction, their commitment to the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation.”

Finally, the Council called upon all partners in CAR, particularly the African Union and neighbouring States, to adopt as a matter of urgency the Joint Action Plan concluded on 21 June in Brussels on mediation with armed groups, and to support its implementation, with a view to achieving a lasting cessation of hostilities throughout the territory.

As Haiti struggles to stamp out cholera, UN urges further international support to combat disease



A young girl is helped to go to the toilet in a bucket at a Cholera treatment center. Photo: UN Photo/ Logan Abassi

13 July – Noting the challenges that continue to hamper sustained progress in combating cholera in Haiti, the United Nations General Assembly underscored the need to strengthen national health, sanitation and water systems on the island to promote the well-being of the population as well as contributing to Haiti’s sustainable development efforts.

In a resolution adopted today, the General Assembly recognized the efforts made by the Organization in alleviating the cholera epidemic in Haiti, in particular through the new UN approach to cholera in Haiti and the decrease in the number of suspected cases as a result of intensified response efforts under the approach.

In addition, the Assembly underscored that maintaining the intensified cholera response and control remained “critical” and invited UN Member States, donors, financial institutions and the private sector to provide voluntary funding and support for the new UN approach.

The 193-member General Assembly also called for greater international and regional cooperation and technical assistance, including through bilateral, North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

Further in the resolution, the Assembly welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to invite UN Member States to voluntarily direct their share of the unencumbered balance and other income for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH, to support the new approach.

MINUSTAH is drawing down its operations in Haiti and transitioning into a new, smaller follow-on presence to assist the Government in strengthening rule-of-law institutions, security sector and human rights monitoring.

The Assembly also called on the UN chief to “rigorously pursue and complete” the liquidation of the assets of MINUSTAH and when disposing of the assets, to consider their potential use by the UN country team and the Government in supporting the cholera response, as well as sustainable development of Haiti.

World loses 'principled champion,' says UN rights chief on death of China's Liu Xiaobo



Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
UN Photo/Pierre Albouy

13 July – The top United Nations human rights official today expressed his deep sorrow at the news that China's “iconic” peace and democracy figure, Liu Xiaobo, has died at the age of 61.

“The human rights movement in China and across the world has lost a principled champion who devoted his life to defending and promoting human rights, peacefully and consistently, and who was jailed for standing up for his beliefs,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in a statement.

Mr. Liu reportedly died at the hospital where he was receiving treatment for liver cancer.

Mr. Liu was jailed in 2009 after calling for political reforms in China. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 while in prison.

The High Commissioner described Mr. Liu as “the true embodiment of the democratic, non-violent ideals,” “the definition of civic courage and human dignity – a poet and intellectual who wanted, and strove for, a better future for his country,” and “a man who, despite all he suffered, continued to espouse the politics of peace.”

Extending heartfelt condolences and deepest respects to his wife, Liu Xia, his family and friends, Mr. Zeid said Mr. and Mrs. Liu were a courageous couple and absolutely devoted to one another.

“I urge the Chinese authorities to guarantee Liu Xia's freedom of movement, and allow her to travel abroad should she wish so,” he said.

Despite the imprisonment and separation from the wife he adored that could have fuelled anger and bitterness, Mr. Liu declared that he had no hatred for those who pursued and prosecuted him.

“He was and will continue to be an inspiration and an example for all human rights defenders,” Mr. Zeid said.

Tourism key to foster trade for least developed countries – UN-backed report



Meghri is located 400 kilometres from the capital Yerevan of landlocked Armenia, over narrow mountain roads which are impassable in winter. Photo: IFAD

13 July – A United Nations-backed report released today stressed the need for greater recognition of tourism as a key service export in order to attract technical assistance to the sector in least developed countries (LDCs).

Although tourism represents seven per cent of all international trade and 30 per cent of the world's services trade, it is often difficult to direct trade-related technical assistance towards the sector because tourism and trade tend to fall under different line ministries, the report points out.

Produced by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the report, titled Tourism for Sustainable Development in Least Developed Countries, was launched on the

occasion of the Aid for Trade Review held in Geneva.

In LDCs, tourism accounts for seven per cent of total exports of goods and services – a figure that stands at 10 per cent for non-oil LDC exporters.

The report says that tourism can make a strong contribution to the economies of LDCs, but successful interventions in tourism require strong collaboration across government agencies as well as across different actors at the regional or local level.

The report also aims to increase the commitment and investment in coordination and raise tourism's prominence in trade-related technical assistance as to ensure the sector delivers on its powerful capacity to create jobs and incomes where they are most needed and for those who are most vulnerable – including youth and women.

UNWTO, ITC and EIF are working to contribute to this process of increased co-ordination and collaboration by joining forces in the design and implementation of tailored tourism technical assistance and tourism export strategies, and leveraging resources.

The report's launch coincides with the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

The Year aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behavior towards a more sustainable tourism sector that can contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Goal 17 sets as one of the targets a “significant increase of exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020”, to which tourism as service export can contribute.