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## Haiti has chance to solidify stability before UN mission's drawdown, Security Council told



Security Council meeting on The situation concerning Haiti. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

**18 July** – With three months left before the current United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti transitions to a smaller one, a UN envoy stressed today that the Caribbean country faces the “window of opportunity” to solidify stability, following recent elections.

“Haiti has remained on the path of stabilization and democratic consolidation,” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sandra Honoré, told the UN Security Council today.

“Looking ahead, for the country to make full use of the window of opportunity that emerged following the electoral process, additional measures will be needed to consolidate the security and stabilization gains of the past few years, create greater social and political cohesion and truly reinforce State institutions so that they can meet the needs of the Haitian people,” the Special Representative added.

Ms. Honoré noted that political space has opened up for the new Government to start addressing the many challenges facing the country, using this unique opportunity to tackle the root causes of instability, poverty, exclusion and impunity.

“Since then, initial steps aimed at overcoming longstanding problems in the areas of governance, rule of law and socio-economic development have been taken,” she said.



Those steps include a flagship development programme, the “caravan of change” in five of Haiti’s 10 departments, and the launch of legislative review to improve the investment climate, reinforce governance structures and restore State institutions.

However, it is “troubling” that the third branch of power – the judiciary – has not been brought to full functioning, she said, urging that key positions must be filled without further delay.

The senior UN official also repeated her calls to modernize the penal system: “Without a properly functioning justice system, the Haitian National Police cannot effectively deliver security for all Haitian citizens and the domestic and international investments in the national police force will not develop to their full potential.”

She underscored the vital importance of inclusive national dialogue to forge a common vision for progress and articulate an institutional reform agenda.

“Ultimately, Haiti’s security, political, social and development agenda can only be shaped by the national authorities and the Haitian people themselves; and the responsibility for the further consolidation of the stabilization gains rests with the Haitian people,” Ms. Honoré said, adding that donor support can complement Haitian-led efforts where needed.

In April, the Council decided in resolution 2350 (2017) that the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) would close on 15 October, transitioning to a smaller follow-up peacekeeping mission known by its acronym MINUJUSTH.

The new mission back Government efforts to strengthen rule-of-law institutions, further develop and support the Haitian National Police and engage in human rights monitoring, reporting and analysis.

## On Nelson Mandela Day, UN celebrates South African leader’s service to humanity



Nelson Mandela in February 2005. Photo: Nelson Mandela Foundation/Matthew Willman

**18 July** – Marking what would have been Nelson Mandela’s 99th birthday, the United Nations today honoured his lifetime of service and dedication to justice and equality.

“The best tribute we can pay this great man is not words or in ceremonies, but actions that improve our world,” Secretary-General António Guterres told a meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of Nelson Mandela International Day.

Observed annually on 18 July, the Day is meant to inspire people all over the world to make a positive difference in their communities by volunteering at least 67 minutes of their time in recognition of Mr. Mandela’s 67 years of public service.

“Each of us can make a difference in promoting peace, human rights, sustainable development, and lives of dignity for all,” Mr. Guterres said.

The UN chief said that he had met Mr. Mandela, also known as “Madiba”, and was struck by his wisdom, compassion, and humility.

Known as prisoner 46664 for 18 years on Robben Island, Mr. Mandela did not succumb to bitterness or personal animosity, but rose above it all to lead his country, Mr. Guterres said.

“One of the most important lessons we can learn from Nelson Mandela is that to make progress, we must look forward, however difficult that may be,” he said.

Also addressing the General Assembly, the UN body’s current president, Peter Thomson, noted that Mr. Mandela’s fight for



a world that is just and fair “remains as relevant today as it was during his lifetime.”

With conflicts raging, human rights and democratic values eroded, widening inequality and over-exploitation of the environment, “today’s world is one in desperate need of President Mandela’s values of empathy, kindness, and respect for our common humanity.”

His values, Mr. Thomson continued, urge the international community to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which envisions the world that Mr. Mandela wanted.

Delivering his keynote address, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Danny Glover called Mr. Mandela a “beacon of humanity triumphing over inhumanity through the force of his love for all people.”

Mr. Glover invited everyone to look to his legacy not as admirers, but rather in the spirit of “ubuntu” or humanity towards others, which Mr. Mandela embodied.

“Mandela led us on a path of justice, democracy and equity... in the process he showed the world that non-violence resistance, when combined with sustained activism, is the key to transforming a potential dead-end into a new beginning,” he said.

As part of the commemoration, the UN is today partnering with the New York City Mayor's office on projects, including a clean-up of a public section of New York City.

## **Libya: UN rights arm sounds alarm for safety of prisoners at imminent risk of torture**



The city of Benghazi, Libya, in the early morning sunlight. Photo: UNSMIL/Iason Athanasiadis

**18 July** – The United Nations human rights arm today voiced deep concern for the safety of individuals taken prisoner by members of the Libyan army after recent fighting in Benghazi, noting that they may be at imminent risk of torture and even summary execution.

“Our concern is based on reports suggesting the involvement of the Special Forces, a unit aligned with the LNA [Libyan National Army], and in particular their field commander, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, in torturing detainees and summarily executing at least 10 captured men,” Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told journalists at a media briefing in Geneva today.

“We urge the LNA to ensure there is a full, impartial investigation into these allegations and also call on the group to suspend Mr. al-Werfalli from his duties as a Special Forces field commander pending the conclusion of such an investigation,” she added.

According to OHCHR, on multiple occasions, there have been videos circulating on social media which allegedly show Mr. al-Werfalli executing kneeling men, or ordering them shot.

The latest video, which was posted on social media this month, seems to show LNA fighters kicking and taunting prisoners, while Mr. al-Werfalli is apparently heard accusing two men who have their hands tied behind their backs of belonging to terrorist groups, added the OHCHR spokesperson.

“The fight against terrorism cannot be used to justify summary executions or other grave violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” she stressed.

Also at the briefing, Ms. Throssell stated that, in March, the LNA announced investigations into alleged rights abuses but

added that it has not shared any information regarding the status of the inquiries.

## UN rights expert warns torture routinely used against Sri Lankan security suspects



Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism Ben Emmerson. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**18 July** – Concluding a five-day visit to Sri Lanka, a United Nations independent human right expert today noted “routine and endemic” use of torture against people detained on national security grounds.

“The Tamil community has borne the brunt of the State’s well-oiled torture apparatus,” said Ben Emmerson, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism, adding that the law is used disproportionately against the minority group.

During his visit between 10 and 14 July to assess the progress Sri Lanka has achieved in its law, policies and practice in the fight against terrorism since the end of its internal armed conflict, Mr. Emmerson heard first-hand accounts of brutal torture.

insertion of needles beneath the fingernails, various forms of water torture, suspension for several hours by the thumbs, and mutilation of the genitals.”

“These included beatings with sticks, stress positions, asphyxiation using plastic bags drenched in kerosene, pulling out of fingernails,

Mr. Emmerson said 80 per cent of all suspects arrested under the anti-terror legislation in late 2016 had reported torture and other physical ill-treatment.

The expert specifically pointed to the situation of a dozen prisoners who have been detained without trial for more than 10 years under the anti-terror act, and 70 others for more than five years.

“These staggering figures are a stain on Sri Lanka’s reputation,” the expert noted, urging immediate release of the 81 suspects and announcing a dialogue with the government on the shape of proposed draft legislation which is due to replace the act.

Although recognizing that Sri Lanka had faced “tremendous security challenges” in recent years, the expert emphasized that progress towards reform, justice and human rights was at a “virtual standstill” despite Government promises.

The Special Rapporteur did welcome small signs of progress, but said failing to deliver justice and reform risked prolonging grievances and even reigniting the conflict.

“The Government has committed itself to ending the culture of impunity, ensuring accountability, peace and justice, achieving lasting reconciliation and preventing further human rights abuses” he said, pointing to the steps set out in a Human Rights Council resolution.

A comprehensive report with his findings and recommendations based on the experts visit will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based 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 agency seeks \$421 to support alternatives for refugees, migrants crossing to Europe



A group of Gambian boys survey the ocean from the beach during an outing from a government hot spot—a reception center that doubles as a lodging station for unaccompanied minors in Pozzallo, Sicily, on May 17, 2016. Photo: UNICEF/ Gilbertson VII Photo

**18 July** – The United Nations refugee agency today appealed for about \$421.2 million to help improve protection of refugees and migrants crossing the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea, and to back European countries working to assist asylum seekers.

“We need to provide meaningful and viable alternatives to these movements or the deaths and the suffering will continue to mount,” said the Special Envoy to the Central Mediterranean Situation at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR), Vincent Cochetel.

In the first six months of this year, at least 2,171 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the Central Mediterranean.

The funds would be used to raise awareness of the risks of irregular migration, support law enforcement mechanisms, address human trafficking, and ensure humanitarian assistance to those rescued at sea, among others.

The latest appeal incorporates earlier requests, and complements activities of other organizations, UNHCR said.

### *Concerns about Italy’s save and rescue operational changes*

With thousands of refugees and migrants being pulled from the Mediterranean Sea each week, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today warned that Italy’s proposed code of conduct for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) carrying out search and rescue operations could put many lives at risk, especially those of children.

The code would limit the movement and operations of NGO rescue vessels in the Central Mediterranean, giving priority to law enforcement and security objectives, and inadvertently prevent lifesaving work to save children from drowning, the UN agency said.

UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Justin Forsyth said while Italy should be applauded for its efforts to save refugees and migrants, restrictions on sea rescues is not a solution

“The rest of the EU and international community more broadly must step up to help Italy, by supporting rescue missions, allowing boats to disembark and doing the right thing for children uprooted,” he said.

## Children increasingly targeted for murder, rape in Central

## African Republic – UNICEF



A commander of the anti-Balaka militia collects weapons handed in by children released by the group during a release ceremony in Bambari in the Central African Republic. Photo: UNICEF/ Le Du

**18 July** – Renewed fighting in the Central African Republic (CAR) is increasingly targeting children, while there are concerns that the humanitarian needs in the country could escalate to levels not seen since the crisis four years ago, United Nations humanitarian officials today said.

Months of renewed fighting have led to an “increasing number of violent acts” targeting the youngest population, including murders, abductions, rape and recruitment into armed groups, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said.

Christine Muhigana, UNICEF Representative in CAR warned that “armed groups and parties to the conflict must cease these flagrant violations of children’s rights and make every effort to keep children safe.”

The exact numbers of attacks on children is unknown because fighting prevents humanitarian access to many areas, the UN agency said, but “is almost certain to be much higher than officially reported figures.”

In addition to brutal crimes, the intensified violence is preventing children from going to school or even getting basic vaccines.

In the southern areas of CAR, the fighting is driving people to flee into remote areas of northern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where they are nearly out of reach of the humanitarian community.

As of the end of June, some 103,000 CAR refugees were registered in the DRC, said William Spindler, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“Refugees are staying everywhere they can – in churches, in buildings used as schools, in the only health centre, or sleeping in the open. People desperately need more healthcare, food and shelter,” Mr. Spindler told journalists in Geneva about the situation in Ndu, which is barely more than a village.

Also today, the UN’s top humanitarian official expressed extreme concern about the upsurge in fighting since the start of the year, and warned that it puts at risk the gains made since 2015.

“If we do not act now and keep the faith, we will see increasing need and even greater vulnerability of already weakened people. We risk seeing even greater stress on the capacities of humanitarian actors and funding mechanisms,” said the UN Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien.

Speaking to reporters in Bangui on the last of his three-day visit, Mr. O’Brien urged the international community to sustain its efforts for the sake of CAR’s people and the future of the country.

The continued deterioration has led the humanitarian community to revise its Humanitarian Response Plan, which now requires \$497 million, but is only 24 per cent funded, he said.

## Despite some improvements, food security remains dire in Syria

## – UN agencies



A mother, displaced with her family, feeds her 18-month-old daughter at a shelter in a village rural Damascus. (file) Photo: WFP/Abeer Etefa

**18 July** – In spite of improvements in wheat production in war-torn Syria – about 12 per cent more than last year's record low – the overall food security situation remains far worse than before the conflict, the United Nations food security and emergency food relief agencies have said.

According to UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), total wheat production estimates for 2017 stand at 1.8 million tonnes, in part due to an improved security situation. The estimate is, however, less than half of the pre-conflict ten-year average.

“The small improvement in the availability of food for Syrians is promising, but the needs remain high and more must be done to provide food for families affected by the crisis,” said Jakob Kern, WFP Country Director in Syria, said in a joint news release from the

two UN agencies.

“With the evolving security situation, more farmers are expected to have access to cultivate their land again. Now is the time to step up our support, as agriculture is more important than ever for the livelihoods of many,” added Adam Yao, Acting FAO Representative in the country.

The improvements are also in part due to better rains which have increased water flows and water levels in many reservoirs, benefiting crops like wheat and barley, however high cost or unavailability of inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer, and the destruction of irrigation and storage infrastructure have added to the already complicated challenges before food growers.

Furthermore, opening of some supply routes have allowed trade to slowly recover but in many parts such as in eastern Aleppo, where the entire infrastructure and markets were devastated, the recovery has been at a very slow pace.

In the news release, the two UN agencies also noted that humanitarian access to some besieged areas has improved compared to last year but access to some places such as Deir-ez-Zor and Raqqa remain severely constrained.

Across the country, food prices continue to remain at record highs and an estimated 6.9 million Syrians are still food insecure and an additional 5.6 million people are likely to become food insecure without the regular food assistance they receive every month, they added.

The information provided by the UN agencies was gathered during their latest [Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission \(CFSAM\)](#), which visited Syria in May, this year. This is the fourth food security mission to the country since the onset of the crisis and each mission provides an impartial and balanced assessment of the agricultural and food security situation.

## Japanese YouTube star Piko Taro makes first UN appearance,

## promotes Global Goals



Piko Taro shows his 17 (Goals) sign in front of ‘Spotlight on SDGs’ photo exhibition on 17 July 2017 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

**18 July** – Japanese entertainer Piko Taro, famous for his “Pen-Pineapple-Apple-Pen” (PPAP) viral music video, has joined the ranks of celebrities who promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on behalf of Governments, the United Nations, civil society and other actors in the global development community.

“I knew SD Gundam, but I had no idea what the SDGs stand for,” the comedian said jokingly referring to the Japanese anime television series, while visiting the UN Headquarters on Monday. He noted that he had been surprised when the Japanese Government asked him to assume this promotional role and perform at the UN.

Piko Taro’s PPAP dance music video has gone worldwide, having scored more than 100 million views since its release in August 2016.

At a reception the Japanese Government hosted on the sidelines of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, Piko Taro presented both the original song and the rearranged version, whose lyrics stand for “Public-Private Action for Partnership” on SDGs.

Schoolchildren from the UN International School joined him on stage, singing and dancing along the revised version. The event was also attended by Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

Earlier that day, he swung by “Spotlight on SDGs” exhibition featuring prize-winning photos taken by students around the world. He said he was convinced of the power of visuals to convey the key concepts of the SDGs.

Likewise, he hopes that his rejiggered PPAP song can help people around the world better understand the SDGs, which were adopted by UN Member States in 2015, with 2030 as a target year to eradicate poverty, address climate change and build peaceful, inclusive societies for all.

“The Sustainable Development Goals, if people remember these words, they may get curious. What are the SDGs? They learn - oh, 17 Goals,” he said.

## UN and partners call for nearly \$24 million in emergency aid for the Congo's Pool region



Homeless people in Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, seek shade under makeshift shelters in Nkombo market. Photo: UNHCR/C.Schmitt

**18 July** – United Nations, the Republic of Congo's Government and humanitarian partners today appealed for \$23.7 million to aid Congolese in the area of southern Brazzaville known as “the Pool”, where fighting and insecurity has displaced one out of every three people.

“The most pressing humanitarian needs are related to food security, nutrition, living conditions, and access to basic health services,” the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in the announcement.

People in the Pool are also vulnerable to attacks, threats, sexual violence, loss or family separation, OCHA said, stressing the need for protection.

The requested funding – which was made by national authorities, the

UN and 16 aid partners – would provide emergency humanitarian aid to 138,000 people for the next six months.

Since the time that the violence began in April of last year, more than half of the families in the Pool are hungry, with up to 20 per cent of children under five acutely malnourished.

Access to health care, education and any market products is limited, OCHA said. Facilities for people who are displaced are “virtually non-existent.”