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UN and partners aiding 'unprecedented' flow of refugees from Myanmar

People arriving are in urgent need of life-saving assistance, including food, water and sanitation, health and protection. Photo: Saikat Biswas/UN Migration Agency

12 September – The flow of desperate Rohingya fleeing across the border from Myanmar into Bangladesh is unprecedented in terms of volume and speed, United Nations humanitarian agencies said today, amid calls for international support for the emergency response.

About 370,000 people have crossed the Bangladeshi border in the last two and a half weeks, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM).

"UN agencies and the Government were expecting the possibility that as many as 100,000 more people could come across when there were already 600,000 Rohingyas in Bangladesh. But I don't think anyone expected a mass exodus like this, unprecedented in terms of value and speed," said IOM Asia-Pacific Spokesperson Chris Lom, speaking with *UN News* from Cox's Bazar, a thin stretch of beach in south-eastern Bangladesh.

Mr. Lom, who is one of the UN aid workers on the ground, said the people he spoke with are "very vulnerable, traumatized."

There are "hundreds of people virtually camped out anywhere there is space. Any spare muddy piece of land or on hillside," he said, calling for a coordinated, emergency response that is fully funded by the international community to avert a



humanitarian crisis.

About 60 per cent of the Rohingya refugees – some 200,000 – are children, according to Jean Lieby, Chief of Child Protection at the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Bangladesh, who is also in Cox’s Bazar.

“The first thing you see here in the different Rohingya camps is the large number of children. You see children who have not slept for days, they are weak and hungry,” she told journalists in Geneva by phone.

Meanwhile, emergency relief supplies are being airlifted to Bangladesh today, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

“A UNHCR-chartered Boeing 777 flew in with 91 metric tonnes of aid,” spokesperson Adrian Edwards told the press, detailing a list that includes shelter material, jerry cans, blankets, sleeping mats and other essential items for 25,000 refugees.

A second flight is scheduled to land later today with some 1,700 family tents, with more aid to be delivered shortly.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has already provided some 68,800 people with high-energy biscuits, including to women-friendly spaces supported by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and some 77,600 people with warm meals, working through a local partner.

UN and aid partners have launched an emergency appeal for Rohingya refugees, calling for \$77 million to cover the next three months.

Abuse, exploitation and trafficking 'stark reality' for migrant children trying to reach Europe – UN report

12 September – More than 75 per cent of migrant and refugee children trying to reach Europe via the Central Mediterranean route face appalling levels of abuse, exploitation and trafficking, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, calling on the continent to establish safe and regular pathways for migration.

“The stark reality is that it is now standard practice that children moving through the Mediterranean are abused, trafficked, beaten and discriminated against,” said Afshan Khan, the UNICEF Regional Director and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe.

The grim picture is revealed in *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation*, a joint UNICEF-IOM report, which notes that children from sub-Saharan Africa are targeted more than any other group, pointing to impact of discrimination and racism.



Walking along the train tracks connecting Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a woman carries a young boy as a young girl holds on to the back of her jacket. Photo: UNICEF/UN012803/Georgiev

Based on testimonies of some 22,000 migrants and refugees, including some 11,000 children and youth, the report also shows that while all migrants and refugees are at high risk, children and youth are far more likely to experience exploitation and trafficking than adults aged 25 years and above.

Furthermore, children and youth traveling alone or over longer periods, along with those possessing lower levels of education, were also found to be highly vulnerable to exploitation at the hands of traffickers and criminal groups over the course of their journeys.

On top of these perils, young people reaching Europe often arrive heavily laden with debt, exposing them to further risks. On average, they have to pay between \$1,000-\$5,000 for the journey.

“For people who leave their countries to escape violence, instability or poverty, the factors pushing them to migrate are severe and they make perilous journeys knowing that they may be forced to pay with their dignity, their wellbeing or even their lives,” said Eugenio Ambrosi, the IOM Regional Director for the European Union (EU), Norway and Switzerland.

“We must re-invigorate a rights-based approach to migration, improving mechanisms to identify and protect the most vulnerable throughout the migration process, regardless of their legal status,” he noted.

“EU leaders should put in place lasting solutions that include safe and legal migration pathways, establishing protection corridors and finding alternatives to the detention of migrant children,” added UNICEF Regional Director Afshan Khan.

In addition to safe and regular pathways for children on the move, the UNICEF-IOM report also urges all concerned parties – countries of origin, transit and destination, the African Union, the EU, international and national organizations with support from the donor community – to prioritize strengthening of services to protect migrant and refugee children, finding alternatives to the detention of children on the move, working across borders to combat trafficking and exploitation, and combatting xenophobia, racism and discrimination against all migrants and refugees.

General Assembly opens 72nd session with focus on the world’s people



Miroslav Lajčák (centre), President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly, gaveling open the session's first meeting. He is flanked by Secretary-General António Guterres (left) and Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. Photo: UN Photo/Kim Haughton

12 September – The United Nations General Assembly today opened its 72nd session, with an emphasis on striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.

“The UN was created for people,” Miroslav Lajčák said in his first address as President of the General Assembly. “The people who need the UN the most are not sitting in this hall today. They are not involved in the negotiation of resolutions. They do not take the floor at high-level events. It is one of the tasks of the General Assembly to make sure that their voices can still be heard.”

Ahead of today’s opening, the career diplomat from Slovakia spoke to *UN News* about his hopes for his one-year tenure, and said that conflict prevention and migration would top his agenda. [Check out the full interview.](#)

In today’s address, he noted that while it was “impossible” to select one priority for the UN to focus on this year, his aim will be to strive for balance, so that all points of view are represented.

He also stressed quality and transparency in his future work.

Mr. Lajčák takes the reins one week before the start of the high-level General Assembly debate, and said he hoped the 193 UN Member States participating would treat each other with diplomacy and mutual respect.

Speaking to reporters later in the day, Mr. Lajčák reiterated the importance of using the world body to assist people around the world.

Addressing the opening of the General Assembly, Secretary-General António Guterres also emphasized the importance of focusing on people in the UN’s work and underscored his proposed reforms to streamline the Organization.

“People around the world are rightly demanding change and looking for governments and institutions to deliver,” he said. “We all agree that the United Nations must do even more to adapt and deliver. That is the aim of the reform proposals that this Assembly will consider.”

He added that one key change within and beyond the UN must be the empowerment of women and girls around the world, and highlighted his own roadmap for achieving gender parity.

Ongoing tensions pose continued dangers for civilians in eastern Ukraine, notes UN report



On 13 February 2017, first-grade students in eastern Ukraine, including 6-year-old Sasha (in red sweater), participate in a drill to practice their response to a shelling. Photo: © UNICEF/UN053119/Zmey

12 September – Last month saw a decrease in the number of civilian casualties due to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, according to a new report issued today by the United Nations human rights office, which added that the sudden flaring and easing of tensions continues to make daily life dangerous for civilians living close to the so-called “contact line.”

A press release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that the “harvest ceasefire,” which began at the end of June, may have contributed to the decrease in civilian casualties in August.

“However, the ceasefire never fully took hold, with hostilities suddenly flaring and then easing,” it added, noting that this unpredictability made daily life particularly dangerous for civilians living close to the contact line on both sides.

From 16 May to 15 August 2017, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine recorded 26 conflict-related civilian deaths and 135 injuries. At least 2,803 civilians have been killed, and between 7,000 and 9,000 civilians injured during the conflict overall.

OHCHR is concerned that there is no mechanism for victims to seek reparation and compensation, especially for those who have been injured and the families of people who have been killed. The report also highlights the need to develop a mechanism for compensation or restitution for property destroyed or damaged due to the conflict.

Calling on all parties to immediately adhere to the ceasefire, the report describes incidents of shelling which damaged residential neighbourhoods, schools, hospitals, and water and power facilities. It also raises concerns about unlawful detentions, continued killings and enforced disappearances in the conflict zone.

Among other things, the report also contains new allegations of the use of torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, to extract confessions from conflict-related detainees on both sides of the contact line.

The report also points to a new development, namely business people being detained by law enforcement in government-controlled territory on charges of financing terrorism after they paid “taxes” in territory controlled by armed groups.

More than 1.7 million people have been displaced in Ukraine since the start of the conflict four years ago. During a visit to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, in June, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called on all sides to fully respect the ceasefire and underscored the world body’s support to the country and its people.

In addition to today’s report, OHCHR will later this month issue a report on the human rights situation in Crimea, as mandated by the General Assembly.

UN envoy stresses urgency of adequate, predictable resources for AU Mission in Somalia

12 September – A senior United Nations official today called for greater support for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and warned that lack of funding could endanger hard-won progress in the country.

“We have continued to hear passionate appeals from the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council and the AU Commission that the issue of predictable, flexible and adequate funding for AMISOM needs to be addressed urgently,” said Haile Menkerios, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the AU, briefing the Security Council on the cooperation between the Organization and regional entities, including the AU.

“It would be tragic, not least for the long-suffering Somali people, if the gains and sacrifices of the last decade were reversed because the international community was unable to provide adequate and predictable funding for [the Mission],” he warned.

The senior UN official also noted the continued commitment of the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council to consider financial burden-sharing for AU Peace Support Operations authorized by the Security Council.

Further in his briefing, Mr. Menkerios, also the head of the UN Office to the AU (UNAOU), highlighted the continuous engagement at different levels between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission, and that UN envoys work with and complement the efforts of AU Special Envoys in a number of critical situations across the continent.

He also spoke on collaborative engagements between the UN and the AU, and the Security Council’s recognition that its deliberations and decisions on peace and security issues in Africa can be enriched by briefings by senior AU officials, alongside their UN counterparts.

“As many Council members stated during the deliberations, there is a wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding which Special Representatives of the AU, as well as those of its Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, could place at the disposal of this Council,” he said, adding: “The UN Secretariat stands ready to work with the AU Commission [...] in this regard.”



Ethiopian soldiers serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on foot patrol in Halgan village, Hiran region, on 10 June 2016, a day after a battle with Al-Shabaab militants. Photo: AMISOM/Ilyas Ahmed

Over 3.5 million refugee children missing out on education, UN report finds

12 September – Over 3.5 million refugee children did not have the chance to attend school in the last academic year, according to a report published today by the United Nations refugee agency, which is calling for education to be a vital component of humanitarian response.

“*Left Behind: Refugee Education in Crisis*” found that there are 6.4 million refugees of school age – between five and 17 – among the 17.2 million refugees under the mandate of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“The education of these young people is crucial to the peaceful and sustainable development of the countries that have welcomed them, and to their homes when they are able to return,” High Commissioner Filippo Grandi said in a news release

“Yet compared to other children and adolescents around the world, the gap in opportunity for refugees is growing ever wider.”

Globally, 91 per cent of children attend primary school, according to UNHCR. For refugees, that figure is far lower at only 61 per cent – and in low-income countries it is less than 50 per cent.

As refugee children get older, the obstacles only increase: just 23 per cent of refugee adolescents are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 84 per cent globally. In low-income countries, which host 28 per cent of the world’s refugees, the number in secondary education is disturbingly low, at a mere 9 per cent.

As for tertiary education, UNHCR noted that the picture is just as grim. Across the world, enrolment in tertiary education stands at 36 per cent, up 2 percentage points from the previous year. For refugees, despite big improvements in overall numbers thanks to investment in scholarships and other programmes, the percentage remains stuck at 1 per cent.

Refugee girls remain particularly disadvantaged. For every ten refugee boys in primary school, there are fewer than eight refugee girls. At secondary school the figure is worse, with fewer than seven refugee girls for every ten refugee boys.

“Ensuring that refugees have equitable access to quality education is a shared responsibility,” Mr. Grandi stated. “It is time for all of us to put words into actions.”



In Kolula, South Kivu, DR of Congo, returnee children stand in line before the start of classes. Armed conflict in their village forced the whole population to flee and hide in the forest for several weeks (May 2014). Photo: OCHA/Naomi Frerotte

PODCAST: How the UN's cybercrime unit is helping to track paedophiles and protect children



A psychologist talks to a young woman victim of rape at the UNICEF supported 'Rodnik' shelter for child trafficking victims in the city of Almaty, Kazakhstan. Photo: UNICEF/UN045589/Pirozzi

12 September – Not everyone online is who they say they are. That is the message from the latest *UN News* podcast, *The Lid is On*.

Adults posing as young people are using chat apps and social networks to befriend children with the goal of sexually exploiting them – a concept known as grooming – but such abuse can be limited by educating children and their caregivers about the threats online, said Neil Walsh, the head of the global cybercrime programme at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

“You don’t give out your real name, you don’t give out your date of birth, you don’t give out where you live, who you go to school with,” Mr. Walsh advises in the podcast.

“If you have your own social media, maybe your own Facebook, maybe your own Twitter, proactively, objectively, have a look at what information are you giving out there. Is your photo on the profile? Is your location? Is your date of birth? Do you have pictures of your family? Of your friends? Of your kids? If there is someone who wanted to do anything against you, what could they learn about you by looking at that profile?”

Mr. Walsh, a former police officer who has fought paedophilia for decades, said criminals are increasingly using newer technologies to evade police, so children need to be empowered to understand the risks.

“Cybercrime, cyber-enabled crime, but especially online child abuse, it’s one of the most preventable bits of crime, if we do it properly,” he said. “It’s about education. It’s about understanding what that risk is and being conscious in our decisions.”

In the video below, Mr. Walsh gives advice to caregivers on what they can do to keep children online safe.

A paedophile – before he or she is detected and arrested – is active an average of 13 years, Mr. Walsh said, citing figures from the United States Department of Justice. When arrested, an average offender is in the process of grooming or abusing up to 70 children.

Sonya Ryan, whose 15-year-old daughter was killed by a man who groomed her for 18 months, said parents need to know what their children are doing online and understand the media they are using.

“Connection, communication and discussion,” she said in the podcast. “And being up to date with what kids are doing, who they’re talking to, and getting the kids to understand that what motivates this is love and care for them, it’s never about being nosy. It’s getting them to understand that not everyone online is who they say they are.”

Since her murder in 2007, Ms. Ryan set up The Carly Ryan Foundation in her daughter’s name, and pushed through a new law in Australia that makes it a crime for people, like the killer, to use the internet to prepare to hurt a child.

Passing tough legislation is part of what Mr. Walsh does, along with a team of colleagues spanning the globe. As one of the UN agencies working to protect children from online abuse, UNODC is putting in place education systems in schools, and helping governments to build up national efforts to fight these crimes.

“[There are] governments who say, this doesn’t exist for us. This doesn’t happen in our communities. This doesn’t happen in our country,” Mr. Walsh said. “Our role is to help governments understand that that risk is there and to help them carefully, diplomatically to grow their ability to address this threat. Because this threat exists in every country.”

We have seen where images, where written material child abusers use is hosted. It happens in every country. And if a

specific country says this doesn't happen here, actually you create a jurisdiction of risk where if I was a child abuser, I would think about where I would want to host my material. Well let's do it in the country where there's no law. Let's do it where there's no policy, where the government says this doesn't exist because maybe culturally or politically, it's uncomfortable."

The full interview with Mr. Walsh and Ms. Ryan is available on soundcloud.

Much of the planet's land severely degraded owing to increased consumption, UN warns



In Somaliland and Puntland, close to two million people are affected by the drought amid the El Niño phenomenon. WFP/Petterik Wiggers

12 September – A new United Nations report warns that a third of the planet's land is now severely degraded thanks to a doubling in the consumption of natural resources over the past 30 years.

Some 15 billion trees and 24 billion tonnes of fertile soil are lost each year, according to the *Global Land Outlook* (GLO), launched today by the secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), at the meeting of States parties taking place in Ordos, China.

The GLO takes a critical look at financial and socio-economic values of land, and its impact on the poor. It marks the first in-depth analysis of land functions viewed from multiple lenses such economic growth and global trade patterns, highlighting the inextricable links between land, these sectors, and the people that can work to save it.

"Smallholder farmers, women and indigenous communities are the most vulnerable, given their reliance on land-based resources, compounded by their exclusion from wider infrastructure and economic development," stated a news release issued by UNCCD.

Monique Barbut, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, said at the launch that land degradation and drought are global challenges and intimately linked to most, if not all aspects of human security and well-being, particularly food security, employment and migration.

"As the ready supply of healthy and productive land dries up and the population grows, competition is intensifying, for land within countries and globally," she pointed out.

More than 60 countries have established national land degradation baselines and set neutrality targets.

In an effort to slow land degradation and maintain productive soil, over 110 countries have joined a global campaign to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target of reaching land degradation neutrality by 2030 a national target for action.

Brazil, China, India, Nigeria, Russia and South Africa are among those that have committed to the national targets during the meeting in Ordos, a significant move for some of the world's largest and most populous nations that could mean regaining resources, job security and resilience to climate change.

Ms. Barbut noted that with the human population growing an extra 200,000 people daily, and 20 countries declaring drought emergencies over the last 18 months, there are unforeseeable challenges.

"We were clearly not sufficiently prepared for these challenges," she said. "Hundreds of millions of people go to bed desperate, hungry and thirsty as a result. Under business-as-usual scenarios, there is no future relief."

UN trade report highlights impact of loss of land and resources to Palestinian economy

12 September – Agricultural output in the Occupied Palestinian Territory decreased by 11 per cent and the sector’s gross domestic product (GDP) share fell 0.5 per cent between 2015 and 2016 on the back of sparse utilization of cultivatable land, lack of irrigation and a ban on the import of suitable fertilizers by Israel, according to a report released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

“The fact that, today, real GDP per capita in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is at the same level as in 1999 is a clear indication of the human cost and lost economic potential resulting from occupation,” UNCTAD said in a news release on the report on *Assistance to the Palestinian People: Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory*.



Palestinian farmers harvest olives with an Israeli settlement in the background. Photo: UNRWA Archives/Alaa Ghosheh

According to the UN agency, economic growth in all sectors is constrained by the loss of land and resources to Israeli settlements and the annexation of land in the West Bank. The situation is further exacerbated by restrictions on the import of essential inputs, driving up production costs, depressing investment, and leading to high unemployment and widespread poverty.

“This looks set to continue in 2017,” it added.

In the news release, UNCTAD also noted that reconstruction activities have been slow, with only half of the \$3.5 billion pledged at the 2014 Cairo Conference on Palestine – Reconstructing Gaza, disbursed. Additionally, 84 per cent of total recovery needs remain unmet.

Furthermore, about 80 per cent of Gaza’s population receive food assistance and other forms of social transfers, half of the population is food insecure and only 10 per cent have access to an improved water supply, noted UNCTAD, highlighting that the region’s electricity crisis has left people without power for up to 20 hours per day in early 2017.

“This cripples all economic activities and the delivery of vital services, especially health services, water supply and sewage treatment,” it noted.

UNCTAD also reported that the Palestinian economy saw a 38 per cent drop in donor support between 2014 and 2016, due in part to the occupation preventing previous aid flows from translating into tangible development gains.

INTERVIEW: UN Assembly President aims to achieve ‘results for people’



Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly, briefs journalists following his election in May 2017. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

12 September – Miroslav Lajčák hopes that under his presidency the United Nations General Assembly will overcome narrow national interests and produce tangible benefits for people.

“My hope is that the 72nd session of the General Assembly will be a good one, a productive one that will result in many concrete solutions to the world’s problems,” Mr. Lajčák told *UN News* ahead of the session’s opening today.

The career diplomat from Slovakia, who was elected by the 193-member Assembly as its President, highlighted two of the world’s most pressing issues – conflict and migration – as his priorities.

“I wish to pay attention to what we can do better to prevent conflict. Because by avoiding conflict, we save human lives and we also save money,” he said, while noting that Member States will also be

devoting time and energy to the drafting of a global compact on migration, which is expected to be adopted in 2018.

Having been through difficult missions, particularly in the Balkans, Mr. Lajčák said he understands what it takes to succeed in multilateralism.

“If we disagree, this is not the reason to punish each other. It’s the reason to sit down and try to find a consensus or compromise. This is what I understand as the essence of diplomacy,” he said.

UN News: How do you view the role of the General Assembly in the 21st century?

Miroslav Lajčák: The General Assembly is a unique organ. It’s the most representative organ of the United Nations, where all 193 Member States are present. Each has one vote regardless of its size, power or wealth. That gives the body a huge authority. Plus, according to the [UN] Charter, the General Assembly can discuss any matter. So, therefore, I wish to see the General Assembly being a body where the most important issues are being discussed and where we are able to generate answers to the questions that our people are expecting from us.

UN News: What are your hopes for the new session? What do you see as the biggest challenges?

Miroslav Lajčák: My hope is that the 72nd session of the General Assembly will be a good one, a productive one that will result in many concrete solutions to the world’s problems. Most pertinent being probably the two of them. First is the prevention of conflict, because I don’t think we can say that we are in control of what’s happening around us. There are too many conflicts, and too few solutions. So, I wish to pay attention to what can we do better to prevent conflict. Because by avoiding conflict, we save human lives and we also save money.

And the second hope is linked to the issue of migration. It’s a global phenomenon. It’s an issue that we are all confronted with, one way or another. We have a task or mandate to prepare the Global Compact on Migration. This will take a lot of time during the 72nd session. But I really hope that we will be able to present a document that is rich in substance, that is credible, and that will be well received by our citizens.

UN News: In your acceptance speech, you spoke about wanting to focus on six priorities [people; peace and prevention; migration; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate action; human rights; and quality]. Given the situation in international affairs now, do you envisage difficulty in keeping your focus on these six priorities?

Miroslav Lajčák: We have to have priorities. At the same time, we have to be flexible and to be able to deal with the issues



that we were not foreseeing at the time when we were preparing priorities. So, my six priorities cover all three pillars of the UN work, namely peace and security, development and human rights, and also the ongoing activities. I mentioned already peace and prevention, I mentioned migration. Of course, there is a sustainable development agenda, and the climate agenda where we have to stay focused. There is an agenda of human rights and human dignity. And there is an agenda of a modern UN, which means to support the reforms and also to adopt a budget that will allow us to work also for the future. But as I said, we must not be rigid in sticking to these priorities. Whenever there is a need to address an issue that has emerged and the UN is expected to deal with, we should be ready to do so.

UN News: Your predecessor made oceans and SDGs a key part of his term in office. What topics or themes do you hope to focus on? And why?

Miroslav Lajčák: I'm not bringing into this job an agenda that will be my agenda. My agenda is the UN agenda. The programme is so full. There are so many events that are already mandated and are expected to take place during my mandate, that we can't easily cover all the priorities. And also out of respect for smaller delegations that have problems to cope with a huge number of meetings, I said, I'm not going to announce additional topics, I would focus on the quality of the meetings that are already mandated, and they are there. I'm comfortable that through those meetings, and those agendas, we will be able to address all the priorities.

UN News: You also spoke about making the General Assembly more effective. How will you do this?

Miroslav Lajčák: The most important thing for me is to understand that what we do here is meant to improve the lives of people on this planet. We are not here because of ourselves and we are not here because of fighting over the text of resolutions. But these resolutions serve concrete purposes. So, let us not forget for a minute that we have to focus on people, on their lives and on their concerns. Second, to be representative, as we are or wish to be, we have to be open, we have to communicate with our partners, with the young generations, with media, with civic activists, and NGOs, and with the business community, so that we are really reflecting the hopes, needs and expectations of the world's public.

UN News: What made you want to seek this position as the President of the General Assembly?

Miroslav Lajčák: This is a very important position. I've always believed in the United Nations. I'm a career diplomat. I spent 30 years as a diplomat, out of which, seven years as foreign minister. I've always believed in the United Nations as a centre of multilateralism and multilateral diplomacy. So, I want to use this position to promote further the United Nations, the role of the United Nations, and increase the relevance of the United Nations.

UN News: You've served your country, the European Union and the international community. How do you expect that your past experiences will facilitate your work here?

Miroslav Lajčák: I do hope that I've learned something and understood something over those 30 years. That's what I am bringing with me into this job. I believe in respect. We might be different, we might have different views, different interests, but we have to respect each other and dialogue. Unfortunately, there is less and less dialogue, and less and less willingness to engage in a dialogue. We are rather exchanging monologues. So, I really want to promote the ability to listen to each other and to hear what we say. And if we disagree, this is not the reason to punish each other, it's the reason to sit down and try to find a consensus or compromise. This is what I understand as the essence of diplomacy.

I've been through difficult missions, particularly in the Balkans. I always tried to listen to the views of the local people, or the views of the region. I never try to impose a solution that I brought with me, but I rather created a solution which was based on the understanding of the local mentality, history, psychology and situation there. And it usually worked. I will try to promote this principle – respect, understanding and dialogue – also into my work here.

UN News: In a year's time, when you sit here for an exit interview, what do you hope to be able to say as the outgoing President of the General Assembly?

Miroslav Lajčák: I do hope to be able to say that it was a good session of the General Assembly – good because we delivered concrete results for people, and that we were able to overcome our narrow national views and positions in the

interest of compromise, which is good for all of us.

Egypt: UN chief condemns terrorist attack in northern Sinai

12 September – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the terrorist attack that took place on Monday on a police convoy near el-Arish in northern Sinai in Egypt.

The attack reportedly killed at least 18 policemen and injured 3 others.

“The Secretary-General hopes those responsible for this act will be quickly brought to justice,” his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, said in a statement.

“He conveys his condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Egypt. He also wishes a swift recovery to the injured.”



Secretary-General António Guterres. UN Photo/Manuel Elias (file)

South-South cooperation key to overcoming inequalities, says UN deputy chief



Mongolian farmers harvest carrots as part of an FAO South-South Cooperation Programme between China and Mongolia. Photo: FAO

12 September – Underscoring the importance of South-South cooperation, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed today urged sustained commitment to mutually beneficial approaches that will ensure shared prosperity and make sustainable development a reality.

“Solutions and strategies created in the South are delivering lasting results around the world,” she said at an event marking the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation, held at the UN Headquarters in New York.

“Nearly every country in the global South is engaged in South-South cooperation,” she added, noting China’s Belt and Road Initiative, India’s concessional line of credit to Africa, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Strategic Association Agreement by Mexico

and Chile as few examples.

The deputy UN chief, however, also cautioned that progress has been uneven and extreme poverty, deep inequality, unemployment, malnutrition and vulnerability to climate and weather-related shocks persist, and underscored the potential of South-South cooperation to tackle these challenges.

South-South cooperation not a substitute for North-South cooperation

Also in her remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that the support of the North is crucial to advance sustainable development.

“South-South cooperation should not be seen as a substitute for North-South cooperation but as complementary, and we invite all countries and organizations to engage in supporting triangular cooperation initiatives,” she said, urging all developed nations to fulfil their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments.

She also urged strengthened collaboration to support the increasing momentum of South-South cooperation as the world

implements the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Further, noting the importance of the upcoming high-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation, to be hosted by Argentina on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, she said:

“It will enable us to coordinate our South-South efforts, build bridges, cement partnerships, and establish sustainable strategies for scaling up impact together.”

To mark the importance of South-South cooperation, the UN General Assembly decided to observe this Day on 12 September annually, commemorating the adoption in 1978 of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. Ahead of the upcoming UN conference, more than 120 high-level experts from government, academia, civil society, the private sector and multilateral organizations gathered in Buenos Aires recently for a three-day Development Cooperation Symposium, convened by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Government of Argentina, to discuss challenges and opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.

“There are new challenges to all States: among them, the real threat to multilateralism. South-South and triangular cooperation can contribute to a new multilateralism and drive the revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development,” Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin said at the gathering.