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Global unemployment passes 200 million in 2017, UN labour agency reports

9 October – More than 200 million people are out of work around the world – an increase of 3.4 million since last year, the United Nations labour agency said Monday, calling for policies that can recharge “sluggish” growth of small and medium-sized businesses.

In the new addition of its flagship report, World Employment and Social Outlook 2017: Sustainable Enterprises and Jobs, the International Labour Organization (ILO) warned that small and medium sized enterprises has “stagnated,” the impact of which is worst in developing economies, where more than one in two workers are employed in small and medium-sized firms.

According to the report, private sector enterprises accounted for the bulk of global employment in 2016; they employed 2.8 billion individuals, representing 87 per cent of total employment. The sector, which also covers medium-sized firms, accounts for up to 70 per cent of all jobs in some Arab States, and well over 50 per cent in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

But ILO research revealed these companies are struggling to grow. The latest data from more than 130 countries shows that small and medium business had faster job growth than larger firms before the global financial slump in 2008.

From 2009 however, job creation in the small and medium sector was simply “absent”, according to the ILO report, which calls for government intervention to reverse the trend.



Factory workers producing shirts for overseas clients, in Accra, Ghana. Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank

“To reverse the trend of employment stagnation in [small and medium enterprises], we need policies to better promote SMEs and a better business environment for all firms, including access to finance for the younger ones,” said Deborah Greenfield, ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy.

The ILO research shows that full-time female permanent employees in the formal sector are more likely to be found in small and medium enterprises than in large firms. On average, and across all regions, around 30 per cent of full-time permanent employees in these businesses are women, compared with 27 per cent in large enterprises.

As such, greater numbers of women in enterprises may therefore have a positive impact on growth and development, because micro-enterprises and small businesses often offer women an entry point into the formal labour market.

Another aspect of the ILO’s World Employment and Social Outlook report is on how people’s working conditions can play a role in sustainable development. It says that providing training for staff can lead to 14 per cent higher wages and almost 20 per cent higher productivity.

Conversely, relying on short-term contractors tends to be associated with lower wages and lower productivity.

UN emergency response fund reaches annual goal of \$450 million, but more needed



A young boy suffering from malnutrition is held by his mother at a UNICEF-supported Outpatient Therapeutic Program (OTP) in Baidoa, Somalia. Photo: UNICEF/Mackenzie Knowles-Coursin

9 October – The United Nations global emergency response fund has reached its 2017 funding target of \$450 million, but much more is required given that the number of people in need of assistance is at a record high.

“Given the many challenges we face today with 145 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, achieving the target set for 2017 provides a much-needed boost in fulfilling our mission to reach the world’s most vulnerable people with timely assistance,” UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said Monday in a press release, acknowledging the generosity of donors.

“But given the increase in needs brought on by ongoing conflict and natural disasters this year, it is more important than ever that donors enable CERF [Central Emergency Response Fund] to reach its 2018 funding target of \$1 billion,” Mr. Lowcock, who is also Under-

Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

CERF has been at the forefront in responding quickly when crises emerged in 2017, enabling partners to deliver critical health care, food, clean water, sanitation and much more to people who need it the most, especially women and girls caught up in crises.

The Fund was among the first to provide resources when more than 20 million people this year were in or imminently close to famine in north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, helping to stave off the worst.

It allocated \$145 million to help critically underfunded responses for 14 neglected emergencies around the world, and provided \$13 million to enable humanitarians to help tens of thousands of people needing assistance following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean, as well as \$19 million for urgent help to refugees fleeing violence in Myanmar.

Recognizing that a larger and more robust fund is critical, the UN General Assembly last year endorsed the expansion of CERF’s annual funding target from the current \$450 million to \$1 billion in 2018.

CERF's annual high-level pledging event in December 2017 can be an important milestone towards achieving the new funding target.

“For the sake of millions of people who are suffering, I ask all countries to further stretch their generosity,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who added; “A strong United Nations needs a strong, reliable CERF to reach people trapped in crises and to meet the needs of those still left furthest behind.”

Rural areas have potential to feed and employ 'younger, more crowded planet' – UN report

9 October – Long seen as poverty traps, rural areas are in fact key to economic growth in developing countries when pegged to food production, according to a new United Nations agriculture agency report released Monday.

With 'sweeping transformations' that can unlock the potential of rural areas to help feed and employ a younger, more crowded planet, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report *State of Food and Agriculture 2017* argues that millions of youth in developing countries who are poised to enter the labour force in the coming decades need not flee rural areas to escape poverty.

“The overarching conclusion of this report is that fulfilling the 2030 Agenda depends crucially on progress in rural areas, which is where most of the poor and hungry live,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva, in his foreword to the report.

The report says that between 2015 and 2030, people aged 15-24 are expected to rise to 1.3 billion, with the lion's share being in rural zones. However, it continues, lagging growth in the industrial and service sectors in many developing countries will not be able to absorb the massive numbers of new job seekers – nor will agriculture in its current form.

Rural people who relocate to cities will likely run a greater risk of becoming part of the urban poor, instead of finding a pathway out of poverty. Others will need to look for employment elsewhere, leading to seasonal, or permanent migration.

According to the report, targeting policy support and investment to rural areas to build food systems and agro-industries connected to urban zones – especially small and medium size cities – represents a strategic intervention to create employment that would allow more people to stay, and thrive, in the countryside.

“Too often ignored by policy-makers and planners, territorial networks of small cities and towns are important reference points for rural people – the places where they buy their seed, send their children to school and access medical care and other services,” noted Mr. da Silva.

“Policy-makers are urged to recognize the catalytic role of small cities and towns in mediating the rural-urban nexus and providing smallholder farmers with greater opportunities to market their produce and share in the benefits of economic growth,” he added.

The report underscores that transformed rural economies won't necessarily be a panacea that solves all the pressures that drive people to relocate, but they will generate much-needed jobs and contribute to making out-migration more of a choice, rather than a necessity.

While urbanization provides a golden opportunity for agriculture, it also presents challenges for millions of small-scale family farmers, the report stated.

As more profitable markets may lead to value chains dominated by large processors and retailers – to the exclusion of



Small scale farmers preparing trenches and fertilizing a grape production project. Photo: FAO/IFAD/WFP/Eliza Deacon

smallholders – supportive public policies and investments must be hard-wired into policies to harness urban demand as an engine for transformative and equitable growth, ensuring market participation by small-scale, family-farmers.

The study lays out three lines for action:

- Put in place a range of policies designed to ensure that small-scale producers participate fully in meeting urban food demands;
- Build up the infrastructure to connect rural areas and urban markets, including rural roads, electrical power grids, storage facilities and refrigerated transportation systems; and
- Including not just mega-cities into well-connected rural-urban economies but knitting in smaller, more spread-out urban areas as well.

On World Day UN spotlights posts' contributions to development and people's lives



A rural postman of India delivers letters in Rajasthan, India. Photo: Coomaar.N.Carthik, Courtesy of Photoshare

9 October – The post plays an important role in the everyday lives of people and businesses, as well as contributes to global social and economic development, the United Nations postal agency said Monday, marking World Post Day.

“It is important to constantly remind ourselves of the role that Posts play in our societies today, because some key trends are turning our world upside down,” said Bishar Hussein, Director General of the Universal Postal Union, in his message for the Day.

He specifically mentioned Internet pervasiveness; ever-more demanding customers; e-commerce and light logistics; as well as the world economy and international trade.

“Posts can only mitigate risks and seize opportunities if they engage in reform,” he emphasized.

“They need to reinvent themselves, embrace digitalization, redefine their value proposition, and develop new products and services. They also require political support and investments, as well as an appropriate regulatory framework for their activities,” he underscored.

Future gains could include more satisfied customers, stronger postal markets and more cohesive societies, Mr. Hussein said, adding: “With countries stepping up efforts to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we should not forget that the postal sector is an enabler of inclusive development and an essential component of the global economy.”

“In the remotest and the most populated areas of our planet alike, it remains a key platform for delivering public services,” he continued.

As a specialized intergovernmental organization within the UN system, UPU strives to enable its 192 national networks of member countries to act as one.

“We offer platforms that let our members exchange views and find multilateral solutions to global issues. We provide affordable technical solutions and assistance to governments, regulators and postal operators wishing to upgrade their national postal infrastructure. And we are the only global knowledge centre for the sector, building on the power of postal big data to the benefit of all,” the Director General underscored.

Faithful to its mission, the UPU has chosen two main highlights for this year’s World Post Day celebrations. Firstly, to

recognize the top-ranked countries in the newly released Integrated Index for Postal Development.

“Providing a snapshot of postal development in 170 countries, this new index is a powerful tool which governments, regulators and postal operators can use to promote postal excellence,” said Mr. Hussein – congratulating Switzerland, France and Japan along with the regional champions Brazil, Mauritius, Poland, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

He also gave a nod to “the younger generation, who are not losing the habit of writing even in this age of new technology,” announcing Togo’s fourteen-year-old Eva Giordano Palacios as the winner of UPU’s International Letter-Writing Competition, who in a letter to Secretary-General António Guterres, called for increased efforts to help poor countries abolish old practices which persist because of a lack of socioeconomic development.

“As these examples show,” he concluded “the postal world is very much alive. So let us adopt new technologies, and embrace transformation!”

DR Congo: Two UN ‘blue helmets’ killed in attack in North Kivu



Sake, North Kivu Province, DR Congo: MONUSCO Special Forces conducting a training in fast-roping for future aircraft operations. Photo: UN Photo/ MONUSCO

9 October – Two United Nations peacekeepers have been killed and several injured in an attack on their base in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a UN spokesperson said.

“The injured peacekeepers have been evacuated to Goma for medical assistance,” said spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric at the regular news briefing at UN Headquarters, in New York.

The attack was carried out this morning (local time) by suspected Allied Democratic Forces in Mamundioma, some 1,700 kilometres east of the capital, Kinshasa.

According to the UN Spokesperson, the Organization’s Stabilization Mission in the DRC (known by its French acronym, MONUSCO) has deployed attack helicopters as well as the Force Intervention Brigade in support of operations and to reinforce its presence.

It also deployed forces on the road between Kamango and Mbau to restore order and protect the populations of these towns.

Mamundioma was also the site of an attack on UN peacekeepers last month in which one UN peacekeeper from Tanzania was killed and another injured.

Rohingya refugee children perish as boat capsizes off Bangladesh – UN migration agency



People risking sea journeys across the Bay of Bengal often set sail at night. Photo: UNHCR/S. Alam (file)

9 October – At least 13 Rohingya refugees, 11 of them young children, fleeing violence in Myanmar have drowned when the fishing boat they were on capsized in stormy weather, the United Nations migration agency said.

Among those who perished were seven boys aged between three and 10, and four girls between two-three years old.

Based on accounts from survivors, the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that there were approximately 60 refugees from the minority Muslim Rohingya community aboard the 20-metre wooden vessel with a normal capacity of 20 when it left Myanmar under cover of darkness – hoping avoid patrols there as well as in Bangladesh.

The vessel was headed for Shahporir Dwip, an island at the southern tip of Bangladesh, about 78 kilometres south of Cox's Bazar, when it foundered at Golar Para Char when the fisherman at the helm lost control and ran aground.

According to survivors, the fleeing Rohingya had paid the fisherman the equivalent of \$30 a head for what should have been a short sea journey, IOM said.

About three hours after the boat initiated its journey from Dongkhalir Char in Buthidaung Township (north Rakhine province, Myanmar) Bangladesh Coast Guard were alerted of the disaster and launched a rescue mission.

Like many of the most recent arrivals in Bangladesh, the refugees caught up in last night's tragedy came from villages well inside Myanmar, they told IOM staff that they walked for eleven days before reaching the coast.

However, even after crossing in Bangladesh, the conditions remain extremely challenging for the refugees – having to in the open or under makeshift tents and shelters using polythene, tarpaulin or pieces of cloth, with limited food, water and sanitation facilities.

This latest tragedy follows on another mass drowning on September 28, when a fishing boat carrying refugees capsized near the same area, killing 23 people.

As of 7 October, 519,000 Rohingya refugees have arrived in Bangladesh, including 467,800 identified by IOM assessments in the Cox's Bazar area.

In other news, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners announced the rollout of a

vaccination campaign – the second largest of its kind ever – in Cox's Bazar beginning tomorrow. They aim to deliver cholera vaccinations to 650,000 people initially, followed by a second round to 250,000 children between the ages of one and five.

UN concerned for safety of more than five million displaced in northern Iraq



Women and children displaced by fighting in northern Iraq. Photo: IOM

9 October – As the Iraqi offensive in and near Hawija in Kirkuk Governorate is drawing to a close, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners expressed deep concern on Monday for the safety of civilian populations in the region.

“Protection remains our overriding concern,” said Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, press release.

She said humanitarians are deeply worried about incidents of collective punishment, restrictions on free movement, evictions, forced returns and sexual exploitation and violence, including in emergency sites and camps.

Ms. Grande reported that more than 5.4 million civilians have been displaced since 2014, millions of which have been helped to safety and protected by the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Government.

Humanitarian partners working in Iraq characterize the humanitarian crisis as a protection crisis.

“There are heart-breaking cases of children, the elderly and disabled people being separated from their families. Hundreds of thousands of people, including tens of thousands of very young children, have been exposed to extreme danger, stress, and trauma and will require years of specialized support and care,” said Ms. Grande.

UNICEF warns of nutrition crisis affecting 165,000 children in Mali



At the Bellafarendi Health Center, Azaharatou Dicko gives UNICEF-supplied ready-to-use therapeutic food to her daughter, Farimata Dicko, 13 months, who suffers from severe acute malnutrition. Photo: WHO/Harandane Dicko

9 October – A nutrition crisis, exacerbated by continuing violence, instability and displacement, is threatening the lives and futures of thousands of children in Mali, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned today.

A report published today shows that an estimated 165,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition across the country in 2018.

“Behind these figures are the lives of the most vulnerable and forgotten girls and boys in Mali,” said UNICEF Representative Lucia Elmi in a press release.

“We must provide life-saving treatment and ensure each and every one of these children can fully recover. At the same time, we need to invest in the critical first 1,000 days of the lives of children to reduce the risk of acute malnutrition from occurring in the first place.”

The rate of acute malnutrition among children under five has reached critical levels in the conflict-affected areas of Timbuktu and Gao, while the national rate also remains very high.

The report finds acute malnutrition of children in Timbuktu has risen to 15.7 per cent and in Gao to 15.2 per cent, a worrying rise from “serious” to “critical” level on the World Health Organisation's classification scale. Serious levels of acute malnutrition were also recorded in the regions of Kayes, at 14.2 per cent, and in Taoudéni, at 14.3 per cent, while the

national rate is 10.7 per cent.

Children who suffer from the severe form of acute malnutrition have grave muscle wasting, very low weight for their height, and are nine times more likely to die in case of disease due to a weakened immune system.

Since the 2012 political and security crisis in Mali, violence and instability have led to displacements of population and disruption of social services in the north of the country, with detrimental impact on the nutritional status of the most vulnerable girls and boys. Other factors, such as limited access to water and sanitation in northern areas and childhood diseases like diarrhea, acute respiratory infections and malaria, have aggravated the situation.

Investing in the first 1,000 days of a child, through promotion of practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and handwashing with clean water and soap, can effectively prevent malnutrition.

UN Treaty 'beginning of the end for nuclear weapons,' say Nobel Peace Prize winners



International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, holds press conference at UN Headquarters, led by Beatrice Fihn (centre), Executive Director of ICAN. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

9 October – Speaking to journalists at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize winners – International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) – urged countries around the globe to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The award represents a special recognition for the efforts of the “new generation” of campaigners – “people who grew up after the Cold War and don’t understand why we still have the [nuclear] weapons,” said Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of ICAN.

In particular, she highlighted that it is also a huge recognition of the efforts of the *Hibakusha* (the Japanese word for the surviving victims of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) in realizing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Adopted on 7 July at a UN conference in New York, the Treaty is the first multilateral legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament in two decades.

Quoting Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, Ms. Fihn added: “7th of July marks the beginning of the end for nuclear weapons.”

Also at the press conference, Ray Acheson of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, an ICAN member organization, said diplomacy for dialogue and cooperation is all the more necessary right now given rising tensions in many parts of the world.

“I think it’s more important than ever for us to be emphasizing the importance and the utility and the practicality of working together,” she said, recalling the partnership between the civil society, governments and the UN in the realizing the Treaty.

At the press conference, the speakers outlined the dangers of by nuclear weapons as well as the rising tensions, including due to the nuclear weapons development programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the discussions over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) concerning Iran’s nuclear programme.

Expressing that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons offered an alternative to a world – one without nuclear weapons – Tim Wright, the Asia-Pacific Director of ICAN, hoped that the Nobel Peace Prize will help ICAN to get countries to sign and ratify the Treaty.

“We’ll be working over coming weeks and months to persuade governments to do just that,” he added.