

**In the headlines:**

- In Central African Republic, UN chief warns of religious divide, seeks global solidarity to rebuild country
- Plausible that 'attack or threat' led to crash that killed former UN chief Hammarskjöld – new report
- Migrants helped to return from Greece, reintegrate, start businesses back home – UN agency
- Peru must place human rights at heart of development, urges UN rights chief
- Syria: UN health agency steps up services for thousands of people in Raqqa
- Poor maritime connectivity hurting weaker, smaller nations – UN report
- In Saudi Arabia, UN envoy seeks to further initiatives to end violence in Yemen
- UN Economic and Social Council urges 'action now;' long-term measures to build resilience to natural disasters
- UN will accompany Haiti in shaping a sustainable future, deputy Mission chief says

**In Central African Republic, UN chief warns of religious divide, seeks global solidarity to rebuild country**

Secretary-General António Guterres meets with internally displaced persons in Bangassou, Central African Republic. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

**25 October** – On the second day of his visit to the Central African Republic (CAR), United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Wednesday called on the international community to show solidarity in helping the crisis-torn country chart a new future while warning against religious divide.

“This visit is a visit of solidarity but of active solidarity,” said Mr. Guterres during a press briefing after meeting with President Faustin Archange Touadéra and members of his Government in the nation’s capital, Bangui.

He called for the active engagement of the international community in the country because “there is an opportunity to build a new Central African Republic that is peaceful, secure and prosperous.”

Mr. Guterres also reiterated the need to strengthen the UN peacekeeping mission, known for its French acronym MINUSCA, so it can better protect the population.

He said a political will of openness is well translated in the recent enlargement of the Government, warning, however, that religious divisions that had not existed before are now seen.

“They are only the result of political manipulation that must be condemned and avoided at all costs,” he told reporters.



According to his Spokesman, the Secretary-General and his party then travelled to Bangassou in the southeast of the country. At the local UN force camp, he laid a wreath to honour Moroccan and Cambodian soldiers killed earlier this year in the line of duty as UN forces tried to protect the population.

In addressing representatives of the contingents, he told them how proud he was to be one of their colleagues and that their efforts were courageous as they attempted to keep the peace in areas where all too often there is no peace to keep.

From there, the Secretary-General went on to the compound of the Catholic church in Bangassou, which is now home to more than 1,200 Muslim residents of the area. They had sought shelter from communal violence earlier this year.

Mr. Guterres also listened as a 14-year old Muslim girl explained her community's concerns and wish for reconciliation.

The Secretary-General excoriated politicians who use religion to divide communities that often worship the same God, and urged religious leaders to live up to their responsibilities by being apostles for peace.

He also met with local authorities and civil society leaders, encouraging them as well with a message of reconciliation.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General returned to Bangui, where he is scheduled to meet with the UN humanitarian and development team, as well as with non-governmental organizations later on Wednesday.

## **Plausible that 'attack or threat' led to crash that killed former UN chief Hammarskjöld – new report**

**25 October** – A new United Nations-mandated report has found it “appears plausible” that an external attack or threat may have led to the fatal plane crash that killed former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

António Guterres on Wednesday called on UN Member States to make available information concerning the 56-year-old incident. A statement issued his Spokesman said Mr. Guterres is of the view that the information made available to the UN to date has been insufficient and that it seems likely that important additional information exists.

The chartered DC6 plane registered as SE-BDY crashed just after midnight on 17-18 September 1961, near Ndola (then Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia), killing Mr. Hammarskjöld and 14 of the 15 members of the party accompanying him, with the sole survivor succumbing to injuries a few days later.

“There is a significant amount of evidence from eyewitnesses that they observed more than one aircraft in the air, that the other aircraft may have been a jet, that SE-BDY was on fire before it crashed, and/or that SE-BDY was fired upon or otherwise actively engaged by another aircraft,” noted Eminent Person Mohamed Chande Othman in his report, transmitted to the General Assembly Wednesday.

“It appears plausible that an external attack or threat may have been a cause of the crash, whether by way of a direct attack causing SE-BDY to crash or by causing a momentary distraction of the pilots. Such a distraction need only have taken away the pilots' attention for a matter of seconds at the critical point at which they were in their descent to have been potentially fatal.”

Over the year, a series of inquiries have explored various hypotheses for the crash, including aerial or ground attack or other external threat (“external attack or threat”), sabotage, hijacking, and human error.



UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld holding a press conference at UN Headquarters on 24 March 1960. UN Photo.

### *Conclusions of investigation*

In the report, the Eminent Person concluded that it is almost certain that Mr. Hammarskjöld and the members of his party were not assassinated after landing and that all passengers died from injuries sustained during the plane crash, either instantaneously or soon after.

Exploring whether a sabotage – possibly a bomb planted on the plane and activated before landing – led to the crash, “as part of a plot to ‘remove’ Hammarskjöld,” Mr. Othman reported that he attempted to obtain access from South Africa to the ‘Operation Celeste’ documents, which concern this claim, but at the time of writing his report, access to the documents had not been granted.

Noting that in the time available, and in view of the emergence of new matters requiring further analysis of facts, he was not able to conclude all aspects of the work, the Eminent Person noted that it appears to him “reasonable to conclude that the burden of proof has now shifted to Member States” to show that they have conducted a full review of records and archives in their custody or possession, including those that remain classified, for potentially relevant information.

He also recommended that Member States appoint an independent and high-ranking official to conduct a dedicated and internal review of their archives, in particular, their intelligence, security and defence archives, with a view to ensuring comprehensive access to relevant information and establishing what happened on that fateful night.

“An incident such as this where one or more of the hypotheses of the air crash may have involved an adverse or hostile act or acts on the Secretary-General of the United Nations is a matter of highest public interest,” he noted, urging for meaningful participation of key Member States in identifying material relevant to the tragic incident.

“This is a step that must be taken before this matter, and the memories of those who perished on flight SE-BDY in the service of the Organization, may rest,” he concluded.

## **Migrants helped to return from Greece, reintegrate, start businesses back home – UN agency**



Hassan Hosseini working in a metal workshop that he partially owns, due to assistance from UN migration agency (IOM) offices in Greece and Afghanistan. Photo: IOM

**25 October** – Over the past 15 months, more than 2,000 migrants who have voluntarily returned home from Greece have successfully reintegrated back into their countries of origin, according to the United Nations migration agency.

“Building on the collaboration between Greece and the countries of origin, this reintegration support enhances opportunities for social and economic sustainability, both for returnees and local communities,” said Gianluca Rocco, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Chief of Mission in Greece, in a press statement on Thursday.

Between June 2016 and September 2017, IOM supported 2,084 returnees, assisting their reintegration through a grant of 1,500 euros in in-kind support, provided exclusively or in combination to set up small businesses or receive medical assistance, education, temporary accommodation, vocational assistance, material assistance, and job placement.

Mr. Rocco explained the importance of reintegration support as an essential component of IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) projects, saying that it further strengthens a cooperative, humanitarian approach for people who have decided to return home from Greece.

For migrants who need to return home but lack the means to do so, assisted voluntary return and reintegration is often the

only approach to address their immediate plight. AVRR allows the migrants concerned to prepare for their return, encouraging them to identify potential opportunities for socioeconomic reinsertion into communities of origin, thereby facilitating the sustainability of their return.

The vast majority of approved personalized reintegration plans – 1,953 – were for setting up small businesses, while IOM’s social workers and psychologists worked with cultural mediators to conduct 3,671 individual counselling sessions with voluntary returnees, 2,084 of whom were eligible for reintegration assistance.

According to IOM, the main considerations for selecting candidates to be approved for reintegration support are a person’s vulnerability, work experience and skills that can guarantee the sustainability of the reintegration plan.

Breaking down the origins of voluntarily returning migrants, Pakistan had 1,184 – the most by far. Some 342 returned to Georgia and 173 to Iraq while about 1,750 beneficiaries were male and 334 female.

IOM’s global presence makes reintegration assistance available worldwide, and the assistance is based on collaboration between the countries where the plans are being implemented.

The UN migration agency in Greece currently works closely with over 25 IOM offices and third countries to enhance tailored reintegration assistance, link it with the needs of the local labour market, and ensure long-term, sustainable reintegration assistance.

IOM’s reintegration assistance is provided under the framework of the European Union (EU) and Greek government-supported programme, Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns, which includes AVRR and is funded by the EU’s Asylum Migration and Integration Fund as well as the Greek Ministry of Interior.

## **Peru must place human rights at heart of development, urges UN rights chief**

**25 October** – While Peru has made great strides over the past decade in reducing poverty, it needs to stand up firmly for human rights to ensure an economy that is sustainable and benefits all, according to the United Nations human rights chief.

“I welcome Peru’s efforts to fight poverty and exclusion, and its economic progress is undeniable,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein on Tuesday at the end of a two-day visit to the country – where he met with President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, authorities from Congress and the Judiciary, civil society representatives and the private sector.

“The country must now consolidate such advances by continuing to strengthen the rule of law and the protection of human rights,” he added.

“Development, to be truly sustainable, should not leave anyone behind, and should never be at the expense of the rights of some members of society,” the High Commissioner stressed.

The High Commissioner highlighted the Government’s development of a National Human Rights Action Plan and called for the meaningful participation of all sectors, particularly civil society groups.

“It is our sincere hope that the resulting National Action Plan can adequately address Peru’s human rights needs, particularly those of the most vulnerable groups,” he said, reiterating his office’s readiness to continue providing support and technical expertise.



Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein, recently appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, holds his first press conference in Geneva, 16 October 2014. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

Mr. Zeid also urged the Government to protect human rights defenders, saying “Peru is no exception to a trend across the Americas – and indeed the world – of harassment, intimidation and alarming attacks on human rights activists.”

The implementation of the 2016 legal framework and National Plan to search for people missing between 1980 and 2000 is also urgent, according to the High Commissioner who voiced concern that “the recommendations made more than a decade ago by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have to date been insufficiently implemented.”

“The high level of impunity for violations committed during this period is deeply troubling,” the High Commissioner recalled, saying that victims’ needs must be addressed, including their right to truth, justice and reparations and “resources must be made available to ensure that the search for the missing can be fully carried out.”

Turning to the presidential pardon for former President Alberto Fujimori, who was sentenced in 2009 to 25 years in prison, Mr. Zeid stressed: “Fujimori was convicted of crimes amounting to crimes against humanity, that is, crimes of interest to the international community as a whole. The international community must be approached and engaged in this highly important matter.”

Mr. Zeid acknowledged that with women and girls at high risk of gender-based violence, laws designed to prevent and punish those crimes, including domestic violence and femicide, are important, however rigorous implementation and strong preventive measures are also required to ensure punishment for the perpetrator.

“I urge the Government to address the social and cultural attitudes that continue to be used to justify violence against women,” he said.

Mr. Zeid also appealed for improvements in women’s sexual and reproductive rights, calling the country’s recent amendments aimed at promoting gender equality and LGBTI a “setback.”

## **Syria: UN health agency steps up services for thousands of people in Raqqa**

**25 October** – The United Nations health agency is stepping up the delivery of medicines and medical supplies to thousands of people in newly accessible areas of Raqqa.

“The immediate objective of WHO [World Health Organization], together with local health authorities and NGO [non-governmental organization] partners, is to scale up life-saving health services for thousands of people who had been deprived of essential health care,” said Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Syria. “We are also ensuring the availability of quality vaccines for children.”

In a news release issued Tuesday, the agency said that five tons of shipment, including medicines and medical supplies for 500 trauma cases and 37,000 medical treatments, have been provided to Al-Tabqa National Hospital, the closest hospital to Raqqa.



A person walks amid destroyed buildings and rubble in Tabqa city, Raqqa governorate, Syria. Photo: UNICEF/Souleiman

This was the second shipment of health supplies provided by WHO to the hospital since its reopening in September 2017. The hospital was partially damaged in February 2017 due to intensive fighting in the area, but the emergency department, internal medicine and pediatric sections have been rehabilitated.

More than 13,500 people currently live in Raqqa city, where access to health services remains limited.

Since its rehabilitation, the hospital has treated more than 3400 patients, including more than 800 women and 1,300 children.

## Poor maritime connectivity hurting weaker, smaller nations – UN report



Photo: World Bank/Dana Smillie

**25 October** – A United Nations report out Wednesday revealed the poor maritime connectivity continues to keep smaller and weaker economies from reaching world markets, highlighting the need for evidence-based improvements to trading systems and procedures to address these challenges.

“Planning and forecasts can be significantly improved if data on maritime transport networks are included in the relevant policy processes, such as negotiating trade deals and transport infrastructure development plans,” said Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in a news release announcing the findings.

According to the UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport, lack of access is particularly challenging for landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and least developed countries leading to fewer, unreliable and expensive transport connections.

These obstacles also further widen the rift between the best- and worst-connected countries, added the news release, calling for increased interconnectedness between national, regional and intercontinental liner shipping services.

“In many countries, domestic shipping services for [transport of goods] are protected from foreign competition. Such market restrictions can lead to unnecessary inefficiencies and a loss of maritime connectivity,” it noted.

Furthermore, well-designed policies allowing – under clearly defined conditions – international shipping lines to also carry domestic or international cargo from feeder vessels can enhance both the competitiveness of a nation’s seaports and the access of importers and exporters to international shipping services, highlighted UNCTAD.

Explaining the benefits, Shamika N. Sirimanne, the Director of the Technology and Logistics Division at UNCTAD said: “Fostering competition among ports is important to ensure that port operators maximize efficiency and pass on efficiency gains to their clients.”

Equally important is improving multimodal transport links: efficient regional trucking markets, inland waterways, rail and road infrastructure, and transit regimes all have an important role to play.

### ***Importance of direct connections***

UNCTAD research also revealed that four in five trading country-pairs do not have a direct connection between them which in turn leads to lesser trade between them.

“A key question for trade and transport analysts is whether there are no direct connections between the two countries because there is not enough demand, or [...] because the two trading partners are not well connected,” highlighted Jan Hoffmann, the Chief of the Trade Logistics Branch at UNCTAD.

Improving links can, therefore, help boost trade between countries, lower costs associated and also help improve connectivity.

## In Saudi Arabia, UN envoy seeks to further initiatives to end violence in Yemen



Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**25 October** – A United Nations envoy has met with senior Yemeni and Saudi officials to discuss his initiatives to end fighting in Yemen, stressing that “this is at heart a political conflict so it can only be solved with political negotiations.”

These discussions took place in Saudi Arabia’s capital, Riyadh, where UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed wrapped up a four-day visit Wednesday.

In 2015, Yemen plunged into civil war between Houthi rebels and supporters of Yemen’s internationally recognized Government.

“We are currently exploring significant steps that each side can take to restore confidence and move towards a viable negotiated settlement,” said Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed at the end of the visit during which he

met with Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and Foreign Minister Abdel-Malek Al-Mikhlaifi.

The UN envoy added that these steps include a renewed ceasefire, confidence-building measures to alleviate the humanitarian suffering and the return to the negotiation table towards a comprehensive peace agreement.

During the visit, the UN envoy also met with Saudi officials, including Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir and Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Satterfield, as well as Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Abdullatif Al-Zayyani.

“This large-scale suffering must end. I appeal to the parties to make the necessary concessions that can help paving the way for a long-lasting peace, and to the international community to ensure unity of purpose in supporting these much-needed initiatives,” Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed said.

## UN Economic and Social Council urges ‘action now;’ long-term measures to build resilience to natural disasters

**25 October** – The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on Wednesday called on UN Member States and the international community to ensure that in the wake of the devastating floods, hurricanes and earthquakes that impacted numerous countries, the humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Following yesterday’s ECOSOC Special Meeting on the ‘Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda,’ Council President Marie Chatardová issued a Statement expressing the UN body’s deepest condolences to the victims, and extending solidarity to all the affected people and Governments in the hurricane-hit Caribbean, Central America and the United States, as well as in Mexico, which was struck by successive earthquakes, and in Africa and South Asia, where severe flooding wreaked havoc.



Destruction left behind in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria on the island of Dominica. Photo: Ben Parker/IRIN

“Early humanitarian response has been critical for saving lives and livelihoods and the provision of essential services,” said the Statement. “Preparedness and partnerships played an essential role as prepositioned personnel, logistics and stocks allowed the humanitarian response and emergency supplies to arrive more quickly.”



As assessments continue amid displacement and disruptions to livelihoods, immediate needs concentrate in the sectors of health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and shelter.

The Statement emphasized that the international community must ensure that a humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts to put countries “on a sustainable path to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda.”

It stressed that efforts build on existing initiatives to help affected countries reconstruct with resilience and called for greater investment in disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, early warning and early action, while urging greater risk-informed investment in infrastructure and housing.

“We call for stronger collaboration, connectivity and complementarity between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate action to define and deliver collective outcomes to reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years,” said the Council, indicating that specific attention must be given to the most vulnerable people facing climate change and extreme weather events.

Elaborating on the measures needed in both the medium and long term, the Council called for longer term recovery, development and reconstruction programmes, pointing to, among others, the regeneration of industries, including tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

“Importantly, key industries and livelihoods must be made sustainable and resilient to the impacts of future extreme weather events and other hazards. We must support efforts of affected and vulnerable countries to diversify their economies and harness the benefits of digital economy to enhance their economic resilience,” the Statement continued.

“We need to act urgently,” the members of the Council asserted, adding: “The Council is committed to continue to promote coordination in the work of the UN development system and intends to follow-up in 2018 to ensure strong progress on the ground.”

## UN will accompany Haiti in shaping a sustainable future, deputy Mission chief says



Mamadou Diallo, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Interim Head of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) speaks to the press in Port-au-Prince. Photo Logan Abassi UN/MINUJUSTH

**25 October** – The United Nations will remain side by side with Haiti on the country’s path to sustainable development, the Organization’s senior official in the island nation has said.

“Haiti is one of the 193 countries that have adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has set itself the goal of becoming an emerging country and economy by 2030,” Mamadou Diallo said Tuesday in his first press conference as the Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

“Not only are these objectives possible, but they represent the commitment of Haiti with its children and grandchildren for a better future, and the United Nations will remain side-by-side with Haiti on this path,” he told reporters in the country’s capital, Port-au-Prince.

Regarding MINUJUSTH, which began its mandate on 16 October 2017, he said the operation represents a new window of opportunity to foster sustainable development in the country.

“MINUJUSTH [can assist the country] to consolidate the political stability achieved during the last years towards a democratic, stable and prosperous future for all Haitians,” he stated.

Mr. Diallo called on Haiti’s youth and women to help address the challenges facing the nation.

“I would like to stress that the United Nations regards youth and women as a priority sector of the population and driving forces for the country’s development,” he emphasized.

In his capacity as UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator, Mr. Diallo affirmed that the UN system in Haiti remains engaged with the Haitian people to provide humanitarian assistance and support development.

“Nevertheless, the UN’s priority and approach will strengthen the resilience of institutions and the population to better prevent, respond to and overcome external shocks and humanitarian situations. We are convinced that this is the way to gradually reduce the need for humanitarian assistance and build a solid foundation for development,” he explained.