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Middle East: Security Council fails to adopt resolution on Jerusalem

18 December – The United Nations Security Council on Monday failed to adopt the draft resolution that reflects regret among the body's members about “recent decisions regarding the status of Jerusalem,” with a negative vote by the United States.

The text, tabled by Egypt, reiterated the United Nations' position on Jerusalem and would have affirmed “that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered, the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council.”

The text would also have called on all States “to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem.”

A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council's five permanent members – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States – blocks passage of a resolution.

Therefore, the draft was dead despite support from the other four permanent members and from the 10 non-permanent members.

The vote followed a briefing by Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace process, who said that the Israel-Palestinian conflict has not seen significant positive moves towards peace during the reporting period from 20 September to 18 December.

He said that the security situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory has become more tense in the wake of US President Donald Trump's decision on 6 December to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, citing an increase in incidents, notably rockets fired from Gaza and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces.



The Security Council votes on a draft resolution on Jerusalem. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Uncertainty about future of peace process looms over situation on the ground

“None of the developments on the ground can be divorced from the broader context in which they are happening: uncertainties about the future of the peace process; unilateral actions that undermine the two-state solution; occupation; and violence,” Mr. Mladenov told the Council.

The Special Envoy's briefing mainly focused on the status of implementation of Security Council resolution 2334, which was adopted in December 2016 by 14 votes, with the US abstaining.

In that text, the Council reaffirmed that Israel's establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity, constituting a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the vision of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders.

It underlined that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including the status of Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the two sides through negotiations.

“The United Nations maintains the view that Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions taking into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides,” Mr. Mladenov stressed, warning that there is a growing risk that the parties may revert to more unilateral actions.

He said that since the US decision, the Palestinian leadership canceled meetings with visiting Vice-President Mike Pence, and called for the establishment of a new mechanism to achieve peace.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has also vowed to seek unilateral recognition of Palestine and to seek full membership in international organizations in the absence of a meaningful peace process, Mr. Mladenov added.

Regarding Israel's settlement activities, housing construction in occupied Palestinian territory has continued, with significantly more units advanced and approved in 2017, he said.

For instance, in East Jerusalem, the increase has been from 1,600 units in 2016 to some 3,100 in 2017.

In addition, 2017 has seen worrying legislative, judicial and administrative initiatives that aim to change the long-standing Israeli policy concerning the legal status of the West Bank and the use of private Palestinian land, Mr. Mladenov warned.

Perpetrators of attack on church in Pakistan must be brought to justice, stresses UN chief



Secretary-General António Guterres. UN Photo/Violaine Martin (file)

18 December – Denouncing Monday's attack on a Methodist church in western Pakistan, United Nations Secretary-General called for those behind the incident be held accountable.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Secretary-General Anthony Guterres “strongly” condemned the attack which occurred in the city of Quetta, which is also the capital of the Balochistan province in the country.

“He calls for the perpetrators of the attack to be brought to justice,” the statement added.

According to reports, at least nine people were killed in the suicide

attack and many have been wounded.

In the statement, Mr. Guterres also expressed his condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

UN urges international cooperation to make migration safer in a world on the move



Migrants boarding the bus headed towards the processing center in Amman, Jordan. Photo: IOM/Muse Mohammed (file)

18 December – On International Migrants Day, the United Nations is appealing for cooperation in managing migration to ensure that its benefits are most widely distributed, and that human rights of all concerned are protected – as recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Evidence overwhelmingly shows that migrants generate economic, social and cultural benefits for societies everywhere,” said Secretary-General António Guterres in his message commemorating the International Day, marked annually on 18 December.

“Yet,” he continued, “hostility towards migrants is unfortunately growing around the world. Solidarity with migrants has never been more urgent.”

Climate change, instability and growing inequalities mean “[migration] is here to stay,” Mr. Guterres stated.

As such he called for effective international cooperation in managing migration to ensure that its benefits are most widely distributed and that human rights of all concerned are properly protected – as recognized by the UN 2030 Agenda.

For his part, the Director-General of the International Organization of Migration (IOM), William Lacy Swing, made an urgent call for safe migration in a world on the move, which is the theme of the 2017 edition of the International Day.

“While we live at a time when a privileged elite considers global mobility virtually its birth-right, it is denied to countless others trapped in hopelessly bad economic or conflict circumstances,” he emphasized in an opinion piece.

Mr. Swing called migration a human reality to be managed, not a problem to be solved as he underscored the benefits of the Global Compact for Migration that is expected to be adopted by the end of 2018, once negotiations by UN Member States are concluded.

“If we stop to think about the strict and mandatory rules which enable over 34.5 million flights per year that enable the equivalent of 44 per cent of the world's population to take off and land safely, it should be possible to find some common rules in order to allow many more to travel, migrate and return home freely and safely,” he stressed.

He emphasized the need to assist migrants, saying “if we don't come up with solutions, the smugglers will do it for us, at great cost to human life and to the fabric of our societies.”

Calling migration “a global phenomenon driven by many forces,” Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), meanwhile said in her message that “UNESCO is acting to advance the migration-related commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” adding that the agency's work with UN partners in shaping a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

In parallel, UN human rights experts said: “States can play a significant role in promoting positive perceptions about migrants in the general public, by using and promoting a positive discourse, and by presenting facts and studies, including

about the contribution of migrants to societies.”

“Migration itself is a natural part of human existence. It is not a crime and it is not a problem. This approach to migration governance shifts emphasis away from closing borders and keeping people out, and towards creating accessible, regular, safe and affordable migration channels, and promoting and celebrating diversity,” they stated.

Migrant numbers continue to rise

Meanwhile, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs released a new report showing that there are now an estimated 258 million people living in a country other than their country of birth — a 49 per cent increase since 2000.

“Reliable data and evidence are critical to combat misperceptions about migration and to inform migration policies,” observed Liu Zhenmin, DESA’s Under-Secretary-General.

The biannual *International Migration Report 2017 (Highlights)* states that 3.4 per cent of the world’s inhabitants today are international migrants, which reflects a modest increase from 2.8 per cent in 2000. By contrast, the number of migrants as a fraction of the population residing in high-income countries rose from 9.6 per cent in 2000 to 14 per cent in 2017.

“These new estimates of numbers of international migrants around the world will provide an important baseline for Member States as they begin their negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,” stressed Mr. Liu.

UN chief highlights need for Internet governance to support innovation, prevent criminal use

18 December – Adequate governance is critical to realizing the vast promise of the Internet for a better world for all, Secretary-General António Guterres told the annual United Nations forum on Internet governance on Monday.

“The Internet, and new technologies in general, have an immense role to play in helping us address global sustainable development challenges,” Mr. Guterres said in his video message to the opening of the 12th UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Geneva, Switzerland, which runs through 21 December.

“But there is a growing danger that the Internet can be used for polarization, division and criminal activity,” he added.

This year’s theme is *Shape your digital future!*

Mr. Guterres noted the Internet must serve to improve the human condition, which means bridging digital divides based on locality, means and gender.

“And it means establishing governance that supports innovation while respecting human rights and protecting society,” he said.

The IGF is recognized as the widest-reaching international forum on Internet governance, and is at the forefront of identifying and debating critical issues that shape international agenda. Its mandate was renewed for 10 years at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December 2015.



Participants during the 12th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). 18 December 2017. UN Photo/ Jean Marc Ferré

The 12th IGF will discuss some of the most pressing Internet Governance issues today: Connectivity and Access; Impact of the Internet on Sustainable Development and Economic Growth; Human Rights Online; Gender Issues; Cybersecurity; Multistakeholder Collaboration at National, Regional and Global Levels; and Emerging Technologies, and Trends such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Fakenews and Virtual Reality; and many others. These discussions will act as inputs toward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which relies on robust and strategic use of ICTs and sound Internet policies.

UN envoy welcomes new Somali policy on role of youth in peacebuilding



Participants attend the Somali National Youth Conference held in Mogadishu, Somalia. UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

18 December – Welcoming the launch of a national policy for young people in Somalia, the United Nations Youth Envoy expressed hope that with the new policy, young Somalis will be able to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the country.

“I want to congratulate the federal Government of Somalia, the federal member states, the UN and all stakeholders, especially young people, who were part of this process for your successful formulation of this youth policy,” Jayathma Wickramanayake said at the opening of the country’s second National Youth Conference, where the policy was launched.

“I hope that you will make those extra steps to enable youth organizations and young people to meaningfully engage in the implementation and review of this policy,” she added.

The UN had been supporting the Somali Ministry of Youth and Sports with the development of the policy since 2014. It was endorsed by the federal cabinet last month. Among its key features, the policy will promote youth participation in peacebuilding efforts and other key initiatives.

Also speaking at the Conference, Peter de Clercq, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, highlighted UN support for programmes fostering youth development in the country.

“We have contributed so far \$38 million to 18 programmes that are dedicated to youth employment, youth empowerment and more youth influence in politics, and we will continue to support the youth and the government of Somalia in this very important objective,” he said.

With many of the world’s 1.2 billion young people affected by the hardship of war, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has made empowering youth a priority for Organization, and flagged the key role that they play as agents of change and critical actors in preventing conflict and building peace.

Similarly, in 2015, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution in which it recognized the positive contribution of youth in the promotion of peace and security and supported efforts aimed at advancing their development.

Attack on humanitarian convoy north-east Nigeria leaves four civilians dead – UN aid official

18 December – At least four civilians are reported to have been killed when an aid convoy transporting food supplies was ambushed by armed individuals in Nigeria’s strife-torn north-east region, the top United Nations humanitarian official in the country said.

The attack took place along the Dikwa-Gamboru road in Borno state, and also resulted in the destruction of basic aid items initially destined to alleviate the suffering of thousands of conflict-affected women, children and men.

“Violence against convoys carrying humanitarian aid is unacceptable and can result in concerning limitations in our ability to provide life-saving relief to those who need it the most,” said Edward Kallon, the Humanitarian Coordination in Nigeria, in a news release today.



An informal IDP camp in Dikwa (Borno state, Nigeria) where 191 households are settled. Their village, Kaza, has been occupied by Boko Haram for about two years. Photo: OCHA/Yasmina Guerda

“We must ensure the safety of aid workers and aid convoys across the north-east of Nigeria, so people in need of assistance can access it in a timely manner and in sufficient quantity. Many lives are at risk,” he underscored.

The conflict in Nigeria’s north-east provoked by the Boko Haram terrorist group has triggered a deep humanitarian crisis. Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed and thousands of women and girls abducted.

Borno along with Adamawa and Yobe are the worst affected with nearly seven million people in need of humanitarian assistance, more than 50 per cent of whom are children.

Since January 2017, despite major challenges, relief efforts by the UN as well as partners have managed to assist over five million conflict-affected people, reaching about five million with health care assistance, three million with food security interventions, 936,000 with nutritional support, and over 1.3 million with safe drinking water.

Owing to such humanitarian efforts, for the first time since the onset of the crisis, hunger has considerably declined in the region.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the number of people facing acute hunger has halved since June-August – from 5.2 million to 2.6 million people.

However, there are fears that without sustained and timely assistance, the good work could quickly be undone, leaving more than 3.5 million people with acute hunger, as well as at the risk of famine, by August 2018, warned the UN food security agency.