

**In the headlines:**

- UN chief commends peaceful vote in Liberia, dispatches Nigeria's Obasanjo
- Sustained cooperation vital to address Somalia's challenges, says UN envoy
- World could see 1.8 billion tourists by 2030 – UN agency

**UN chief commends peaceful vote in Liberia, dispatches Nigeria's Obasanjo**

A voter in Liberia casting his ballot for a president in the second round of vote on 26 December 2017. Photo: UNMIL/Shpend Berbatovci

**27 December** – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Wednesday welcomed the peaceful conduct of the second round of the presidential election in Liberia, and announced he is sending former Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo to support the country in the first peaceful transfer of power from one democratically-elected leader to another in more than 70 years.

“The Secretary-General hopes that the will of the Liberian electorate will be respected and that a seamless transfer power will take place within constitutional timelines,” his spokesperson said in a statement.

Mr. Guterres has requested Mr. Obasanjo, who is a member of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, to travel to the capital, Monrovia, from 28 to 30 December.

Liberians yesterday voted in a second round of elections, deciding between Vice-President Joseph Boakai and George Weah, a politician and former soccer star.

The first round of elections in the west African country was held in October. A runoff was originally scheduled for November, but was delayed due to allegations of voter irregularities by a third candidate.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly in September, outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – the first woman elected as head of an African country – said that the polls would signal an “irreversible course” towards democracy in the country.

Ms. Sirleaf took office in 2006, ending a civil war that erupted under the leadership of her predecessor, Charles Taylor.



### *High-level Advisory Board*

Mr. Obasanjo is one of 18 global leaders, senior officials and experts on the high-level board created earlier this year to advise the Secretary-General on mediation and back those efforts around the world.

The former President of Nigeria was involved in mediation efforts in Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, among others.

The high-level board is part of the Secretary-General's pledge for the UN to embark on a “surge in diplomacy for peace.”

The idea, according to Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and also a high-level board member, is to prevent wars by “hybrid peace-building.”

Ms. Halonen spoke to *UN News* during the board's first meeting last month.

## **Sustained cooperation vital to address Somalia’s challenges, says UN envoy**



Residents of the Bullo Isak camp for the internally displaced persons wait to collect safe drinking water. Baidoa, Somalia. Photo: UNICEF/Makundi

**27 December** – In a year which saw millions of Somali civilians displaced by armed conflict and thousands more killed and wounded in violence, the United Nations envoy to the country has called for sustained cooperation to tackle a number of pressing challenges.

“No one should underestimate the many challenges ahead, and the serious issues that continue to retard and even threaten further progress,” said Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

“These include pervasive corruption, most obviously in politics, and powerbrokers’ willingness to use violence, or the threat of violence, against opponents,” he added.

Noting that the militants have retained the capacity to mount such devastating attacks, Mr. Keating also emphasized that the terrorist group thrives, among other things, on the absence of functional local government and on the many conflicts around the country.

### ***Severe and growing humanitarian needs***

At the same time, there is “severe and growing” humanitarian needs across the Horn of Africa nation.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), food security needs are nearly double the five-year average due to limited rain, increased displacement, lack of access to basic services, and continuing insecurity and conflict.

“The number of people in [humanitarian] emergency [phase] have increased tenfold from 83,000 in January to 866,000 people in November 2017,” OCHA said in a humanitarian bulletin.

“Humanitarian Emergency” is a state in which the acute malnutrition rate has surpassed the “emergency threshold” of 15 per cent. In Somalia, the rate stands at 17.4 per cent.

Across the country, some 6.2 million are in need of humanitarian and protection assistance and more than half that number require urgent life-saving assistance. This year witnessed the displacement of a further one million Somalis, taking the total across the country to more than two million.

### ***Prospects of humanitarian recovery in 2018 ‘grim’***

However, with forecasts for poor rains during the two main crop seasons and as well as a heightened risk of the La Niña weather phenomenon in early-mid 2018, the prospects for recovery next year look “grim,” said the UN relief wing.

Life-saving assistance will, therefore, remain an urgent priority, it said, noting the need to also address the underlying causes of recurring humanitarian crises.

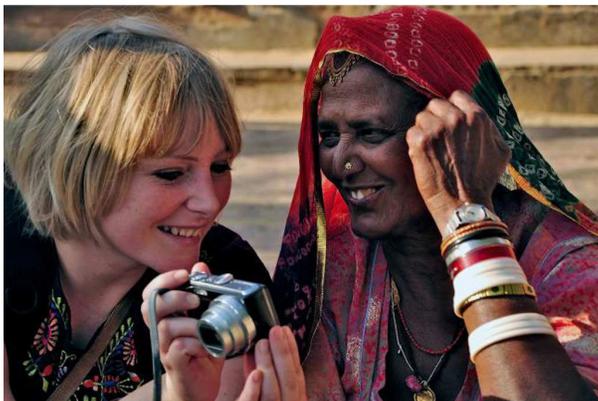
“In line with the New Way of Working and building on efforts since 2012 to create household resilience, humanitarian and development partners are pursuing more sustainable mid- to longer-term investment in reducing risk and vulnerability,” said OCHA.

In the same vein, Mr. Keating, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), underscored the need the need for greater cooperation to overcome the obstacles.

“Lessons can be drawn from 2017, both good and bad. A central one may be that when the most powerful actors cooperate, whether the Federal Government, Federal Member States, parliamentarians, clan elders, business or the international community, great progress can be made,” he said.

“When they do not cooperate, the risks are enormous.”

## **World could see 1.8 billion tourists by 2030 – UN agency**



This photograph, “East West Jubilation” by Rabin Chakrabarti, was a runner-up in UNWTO’s 2011 World Tourism Day photo contest

**27 December** – By 2030, there could be 1.8 billion tourists – just over one in five persons in the world – travelling around the globe, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has said.

Speaking with *UN News*, Taleb Rifai, the Secretary-General of UNWTO, highlighted the role of travel and tourism in impacting global developments and making the world a better place.

“It is bringing the world together in an incredibly impressive way: it is making the world smaller, more connected, more informed, and therefore... a more caring world,” he said.

At the same time, the global phenomenon has also brought about serious challenges, including pollution, waste, labour exploitation, prostitution and abuse of children, and looting of natural resources.

Given that all human activity has both advantages and disadvantages, it is up to people to ensure that the impacts from tourism are positive and contribute to sustainable development, Mr. Rifai noted.

“1.8 billion travellers by 2030 could be 1.8 billion opportunities or 1.8 billion disasters and it is all up to us [to choose].”

In recognition of the potential of the tourism industry, the General Assembly had proclaimed 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.