



## The Death of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

# พระเจ้าทรงเป็นนิรันดร์

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

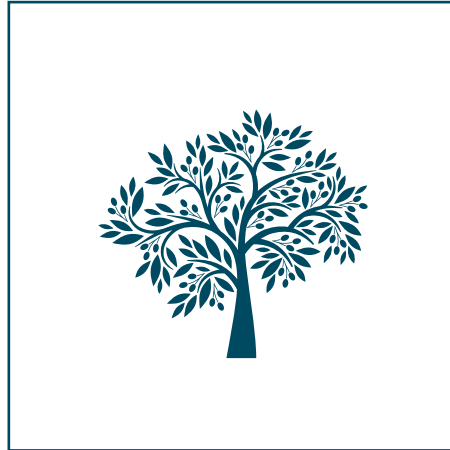
## ศาสตร์ของพระราชากับการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน His Majesty's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for SDGs

หลักปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงเป็นหลักในการคิด ตัดสินใจ และการปฏิบัติ สำหรับการดำเนินชีวิตหรือประกอบกิจการงานใด ๆ ด้วยการใช้ **ความรู้** และ **คุณธรรม** เป็นฐาน ผ่านการไตร่ตรองด้วยหลักสำคัญ ๓ ประการ ได้แก่ พอประมาณ ไม่มากเกินไป ไม่น้อยเกินไป มีเหตุผล ตามหลักวิชาการ มีภูมิคุ้มกัน หรือรองรับการเปลี่ยนแปลงหรือวิกฤตที่อาจเกิดขึ้น ซึ่งจะนำไปสู่การพัฒนาอย่างสมดุลในทุกมิติ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นด้านเศรษฐกิจ สังคม สิ่งแวดล้อม และวัฒนธรรม อันเป็นแนวทางที่จะนำไปสู่ **ความสุขที่ยั่งยืน** ได้อย่างแท้จริง

"Sufficiency Economy Philosophy" is a mindset for decision-making. We base our decisions on our **Knowledge** using our internal value - our **virtues** - through applying the three principles of **moderation, reasonableness** and **prudence**. We aim for the outcomes of our decision to be balanced among the four dimensions of human life: **economy, society, environment** and **culture**, in order to promote sustainable happiness for all.



The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of Thailand's late monarch, His Majesty King Bhumibhol Adulyadej the Great, designed in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian economic crisis, offers one of the best models of Alternative Development globally. It is now going mainstream, primarily because it has much in common with the UN SDGs. Thailand, where the 1997 Asian economic crisis started, is certainly according it more respect than ever before. The rest of the world needs to follow if true "Sustainability" is to be realised.



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**THE OLIVE TREE**

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## Message from EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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# IMTIAZ MUQBIL

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### The Death of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying global recession is set to trigger “years of depressed and disrupted economic growth”, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned on July 1, 2020. He painted a grim picture of acute suffering, saying that extreme poverty and hunger are set to increase drastically. Many healthcare systems are at breaking point and a generation of children is missing out on education.

“The pandemic threatens not just to put the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on hold, but to reverse progress that has already been made”, he said.

Did that powerful warning matter to the global Travel & Tourism industry? To the best of my knowledge, not a single Travel & Tourism industry visionary thought-leader echoed it. Not a single webinar discussed it. Not a single industry media headlined it.

Instead, all the industry wanted were bailout packages, travel bubbles and health-and-hygiene certification schemes.

That did not come as a surprise. The UN SDGs were never top priority even in the “Old Normal” days. They are unlikely to be in the “New Normal” era.

Indeed, under the current scenario, the UN SDGs are all but dead.

Just a few days earlier, on 26 June 2020, the United Nations commemorated 75 years since its founding Charter was signed in the aftermath of the devastating Second World War.

Conceived as a means to save future generations from the scourge of war, and bring hope to a world in ruins, the UN Charter sought to create a post-war “New Normal” to maintain international peace and security, promote social progress and better standards of life, strengthen international law and promote human rights.

Has it achieved those goals?

Speaking at the event, the UN chief said the “world (is) mired in a pandemic, torn by discrimination, endangered by climate change and scarred by poverty, inequality and war”. It is “reckoning with racism, environmental degradation, increasing cyberattacks, nuclear proliferation, corruption and pushback on basic human rights.” He also cited persistent gender inequality and massive gaps in financing.

Clearly, the founding principles for the post-WWII “New Normal” have fallen short. Now that yet another crippling crisis has overshadowed all the others of the “Old Normal”, what is the recommended solution for the “New Normal”?

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***“Clearly, the founding principles for the post-WWII  
“New Normal” have fallen short.”***

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## ***“Efforts to relieve human suffering and conflict resolution should go hand-in-hand in leading action to address the pandemic.”***

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Rewind a little further.

On 24 June 2020, just two days before its 75th anniversary commemoration, the UN announced that 170 signatories have endorsed the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire as a first show of unity against the pandemic. The initiative, prompted by Malaysia, was accompanied by a statement which noted that conflicts were still raging worldwide, impacting on the most vulnerable, especially women and children.

“We are mindful that a peaceful condition is indispensable to facilitate humanitarian access in fragile and conflict-affected situations”, the statement said, adding: “Efforts to relieve human suffering and conflict resolution should go hand-in-hand in leading action to address the pandemic”.

Did that powerful statement matter to the global Travel & Tourism industry? To the best of my knowledge, not a single Travel & Tourism industry visionary thought-leader echoed it. Not a single webinar discussed it. Not a single industry media headlined it.

As I have asserted in numerous public appearances over 40 years of travel journalism: An industry that sells dreams for a living has great difficulty dealing with nightmares.

I have never seen Travel & Tourism leaders venture beyond their comfort zones, critically analyse the operating environment and push to influence change rather than be influenced by it. The steady stream of man-made geopolitical and economic crises are (falsely) deemed to be beyond their influence and therefore off the table.

As there is no pursuit of accountability, the cycle simply repeats itself. The fallacy of that head-in-the-sand approach is now becoming apparent.

In the post-pandemic “New Normal”, the UN is yet again asserting that all voices matter -- young people, indigenous groups, marginalised minorities, people with disabilities. It is also calling for a new partnership with financing institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc.

Why isn't it involving Travel & Tourism, the so-called “Industry of Peace” and the only global sector which can contribute positively to achieving ALL, repeat ALL, the SDGs?

Today, pulpits resound with more clarion calls to action and high-flying rhetoric for “global unity and solidarity in confronting this scourge”. Speakers want multilateralism, rule of law, diplomacy and negotiation to promote peaceful dispute settlements.

There are reminders of our shared humanity and calls to “reshape” how people work, learn, live and consume along with greater investments in social protections, health systems, education, water, sanitation and digital connectivity.

Says the UN chief, “Now is the time to persevere, press ahead, pursue our goals, show responsibility for our world, and take care of each other....It is up to us to rise to the test of this pivotal moment for our future”.

Adds UN Deputy Secretary General Mrs Amina Mohammed, “If we do all of this - consciously, concertedly, cooperatively - we can build a better world, our shared destination...As an international community, we must rise to the test of this pivotal moment.”

And this from UN General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande: “As we work towards the future we want, and the UN we need, we must be results-focused, Now more than ever, we need a strong UN development system and effective collaboration between the UN and international financial institutions”.

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***“An industry that sells dreams for a living has great difficulty dealing with nightmares.”***

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## ***“Make the SDGs miraculously rise from the dead and Prove Me Wrong!”***

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“Humanity cannot survive these multiple parallel crises if we do not work together with full respect for all peoples and all life on this planet”, Mr Muhammad-Bande stressed, pushing for “a whole of Agenda approach”.

Does any of that matter to Travel & Tourism, said to be the industry worst affected by the pandemic? Does it truly want to be part of a wider solution? Does the slogan “Build Back Better” refer only to bailouts, bubbles and health-and-hygiene certification schemes? Or does it cover the world at large? Is saving the oceans from plastic waste more important than building and preserving peace?

The world is in “turmoil”, at a watershed moment, a tipping point. Global geopolitical leadership is devoid of intelligence, humility and a sense of humanity. As trust in public institutions erodes and “as grievances become more entrenched, the potential for instability and violence only grows,” Mr Guterres warns.

Still, he said, as a beacon of hope in the midst of this darkness, the UNSDGs are more important than ever, to “guide our recovery efforts and make our countries and communities more inclusive, equal and resilient”.

Will global Travel & Tourism sign up to that effort?

As sobering food for thought, this Edition 20 of The Olive Tree features a compilation of UN media releases showing the deep and long-lasting impact of Covid-19. As a vaccine is still a long way away, as are international travel flows, attention is shifting to domestic tourism and health-and-hygiene certification schemes.

The long and horrendously expensive recovery ahead will require rejigging the global agenda and diverting funds away from unproductive, wasteful purposes. That in turn will require mature, responsible and wise decision-making by elected representatives and global leaders.

Realistically, I see no chance of that under the current line-up of global leaders, most of whom are controlled by powerful vested interests such as the multinational corporations and the military-industrial complex.

That is why I have declared the UNSDGs dead.

But I would love to be proven wrong. So my challenge to the UN World Tourism Organisation, World Travel & Tourism Council and other global bodies such as PATA, IATA, ICCA and many more is clear: Make the SDGs miraculously rise from the dead!

Can Travel & Tourism leaders muster the moral courage to make that happen via robust debate, critical thinking and alternative perspectives? Or will they merely try and shoehorn it to fit their traditional comfort zones?

Forecasters take great pride in being proved right. As a grandfather of three young children (and one more on the way) I want, indeed yearn, to be proven wrong.

No other travel industry journalist or publication will venture down this path. I may not be around by 2030 but many of today’s young generation will be. Preserve this edition of The Olive Tree 20 and revisit it 10 years today.

I have nothing to lose. But you all do. It’s YOUR future that is at stake. Make of it what you will.

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***“No other travel industry journalist or publication will venture down this path.”***

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# COVID-19 pandemic ‘not even close to being over’, WHO chief warns



© **UNICEF/Vinay Panjwani** A woman in Gujarat, India, is educated on the benefits of handwashing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

29 June 2020, UN News - Nearly six months after the new coronavirus first emerged, the COVID-19 pandemic is “not even close to being over”, the head of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) warned on Monday.

**Speaking** on the eve of the grim milestone, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for renewed global commitment to save lives as cases surpass 10 million worldwide, with 500,000 deaths, as the virus continues to spread.

“We all want this to be over. We all want to get on with our lives. But the hard reality is: this is not even close to being over”, he told journalists

“Although many countries have made some progress, globally the pandemic is actually speeding up. We’re all in this together, and we’re all in this for the long haul.”

## ‘The new normal’

[WHO](#) has published an [updated timeline](#) on its actions since 31 December 2019, which is when it first learned about a cluster of cases of “pneumonia of unknown cause” in Wuhan, China.

That response includes educating health workers through online portals, transporting plane loads of tests and protective equipment to health workers in developing countries, and launching a “solidarity trial” to find medicines to defeat the virus.

Going forward, Tedros said the UN agency will continue to serve countries with science, solidarity and solutions, repeating a phrase he has used throughout the pandemic.

“The critical question that all countries will face in the coming months is how to live with this virus”, he said. “That is the new normal.”



## Five ways to save lives

Tedros underlined five priorities countries must focus on now to save lives.

They include empowering people to protect themselves through physical distancing and other public health measures, but also through sharing reliable information about [COVID-19](#).

Governments must continue to work to suppress virus transmission, ensuring tracing and quarantining of contacts. They must also prioritize early identification and clinical care, paying particular attention to high-risk groups such as the elderly and those living in long-term care facilities.

As there is still much to learn about the new [coronavirus](#), Tedros emphasized the need for accelerated research.

The UN's top health official, a former parliamentarian and Ethiopian Foreign Affairs minister, also underlined the role of political leadership during the pandemic.

"As we have said repeatedly, national unity and global solidarity are essential to implementing a comprehensive strategy to suppress transmission, save lives and minimize the social and economic impact of the virus", he stated.



# UN marks 75-year milestone anniversary of founding Charter



**UN Photo/Yould** The UN Charter being signed by a delegation at a ceremony held at the Veterans' War Memorial Building on 26 June 1945.

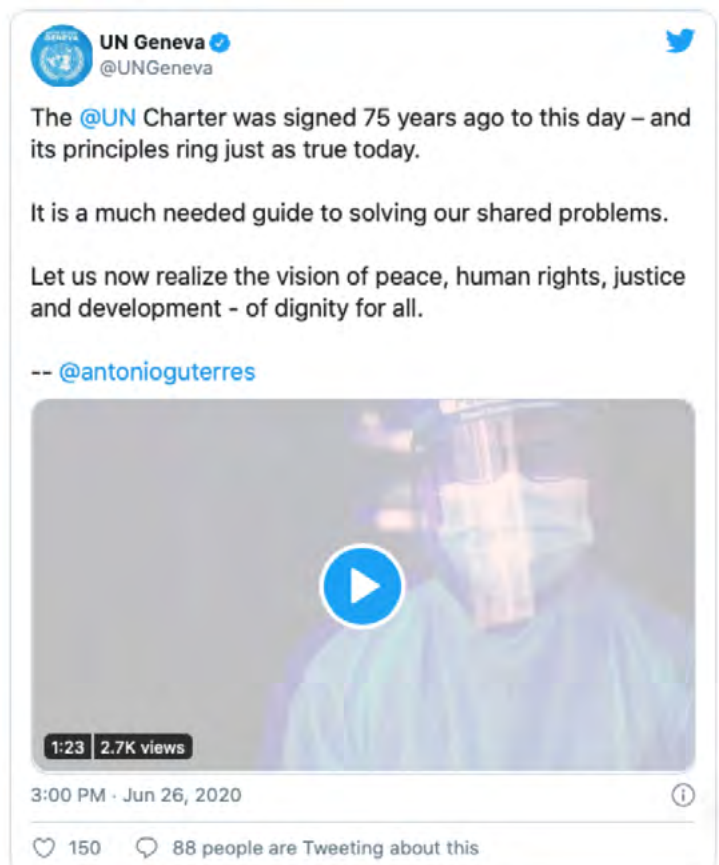
26 June 2020, UN News - The UN Charter “brought rules and hope to a world in ruins”, Secretary-General António Guterres told a virtual [ceremony](#) on Friday, commemorating 75 years since the Organization’s foundational text was signed.

Adopted by Member States as the Second World War was coming to a close, the UN chief [noted](#) that the world today was marking the milestone anniversary “as global pressures are spiraling up”.

The Charter was signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and came into force on 24 October 1945.

Conceived above all as a means to save future generations from the scourge of war, the Charter calls for the Organization to maintain international peace and security; promote social progress and better standards of life; strengthen international law; and promote human rights.

“The Charter’s vision stands the test of time and its values will continue to carry us



forward”, said the UN chief. “It remains our touchstone for a world mired in a pandemic, torn by discrimination, endangered by climate change and scarred by poverty, inequality and war”.

## Standing strong

Against a backdrop of a global reckoning with racism, environmental degradation, increasing cyberattacks, nuclear proliferation, corruption and pushback on basic human rights, he noted that back in 1945, the delegates in San Francisco – who had also lived through a global pandemic, depression and war – “seized their opportunity to plant the seeds of something better and new”.

“Today, we must do the same”, said the top UN official. “To achieve that watershed moment, we need to reimagine multilateralism, give it teeth to function as the founders intended, and ensure that effective global governance is a reality when it is needed”.

And inclusive multilateralism today also requires the “essential voices” of civil society, cities, the private sector and young people to shape the world we want.

## Drawing inspiration

Yet there is also “much to encourage us and drive us onward”, he said, such as the general level of solidarity shown in responding to the pandemic, the embracing of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), and the recent activism of racial justice protesters and others, towards advancing equality, climate action, and a green economy.

Paying tribute to the service and sacrifice of peacekeepers, staff and others who gave their lives advancing UN values, Mr. Guterres said: “I am inspired by so much that has been built and achieved across 75 years”.

“Now is the time to persevere, press ahead, pursue our goals, show responsibility for our world, and take care of each other...It is up to us to rise to the test of this pivotal moment for our future”.



## Imagining a better world

The penholders of the Charter “dared to imagine a better world defined by peace and equality”, General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande told the commemoration.

“As we work towards the future we want, and the UN we need, we must be results-focused”, he asserted. “Now more than ever, we need a strong UN development system and effective collaboration between the UN and international financial institutions”.

In pursuit of inclusive multilateralism, the Assembly president maintained that we must continue to create space for civil society and “ensure the full participation of voices that have gone unheard for too long”, such as women, youth, indigenous persons and people with disabilities.

“This is a moment of reckoning for our shared planet and shared future. This is a time for action, ambition and partnership”, he spelled out.

In closing Mr. Muhammad-Bande pointed out that three-quarters of a century ago, sceptics doubted the resolve of UN Members States, saying, “cynicism did not prevail then, nor will it now.

“We the peoples’ remain nations, united guided by the principles of our Charter”, he upheld.





## Stay engaged, unified

Mona Juul, President of the UN Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) [pledged](#) “to continue engaging... to ensure that ECOSOC remains as

relevant today and in the future, as it was when first envisioned in the Charter 75 years ago”.

“Today” she said, “the world is shifting beneath our feet”, calling the [COVID-19](#) pandemic “a wake-up call for us to strengthen international collaboration”.

“75 years ago today, the [UN Charter](#) was signed in San Francisco”, the chief for UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo [said](#).

“A declaration of unity of purpose after the ravages of the Second World War, it set out our mission: ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’ [and] guides us to this day”.



# ‘Turn the tide’ across a turbulent world, UN chief urges key development forum



**UN Women/Fahad Kaizer** Development workers hand over relief aid to a woman amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

14 July 2020, UN News - “Concrete, bold and implementable solutions” are needed to turn the tide on the many challenges the world is facing, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Tuesday, on the biggest day so far for the UN’s key international forum on sustainable development.

While acknowledging that the planet was not on track last year to deliver the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) by 2030, he [told](#) the start of the Ministerial Segment of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) that today “our world is in turmoil”.

In addition to unacceptably high levels of poverty; a rapidly worsening climate emergency; persistent gender inequality; and massive gaps in financing, the UN chief called [COVID-19](#) “another massive global challenge”.

Pointing to more than 12 million infections, 550,000 deaths, hundreds of millions of jobs lost and the sharpest decline in per capita income since 1870, the top UN official bemoaned that “some 265 million people could face acute food insecurity by year’s end – double the number at risk before the crisis”.

“The gravity of the crisis should not be lost on anyone”, he said, “and the impacts of this pandemic are falling disproportionately on the most vulnerable”.

“Although “we desperately need to leap ahead, COVID-19...is taking us further away from the SDGs”, the UN chief commented.

## Turning around

The Secretary-General cited inequalities within and between countries; a lack of resiliency investments; and disregard for the natural environment as some of the reasons sparking the “devastating impacts” of the COVID-19 crisis.

And although “we have yet to take the SDGs seriously”, he maintained, that “we can turn this around”.

“With the 2030 Agenda [for Sustainable Development], and the SDGs, we have an enduring and unifying vision; a framework to guide our decisions as we look to respond and recover better”, upheld the UN chief.

“ The gravity of the crisis should not be lost on anyone -- UN chief ”



## New normal

The world cannot go back to “the previous so-called normal”, Mr. Guterres acknowledged, stressing the need for SDG-inspired solutions.

“We must rise to meet the moment”, he said, urging the HLPF to “share experiences, understand what works and can replicated” and renew determination for multilateral responses to help turn the tide globally.

The HLPF aims to chart a clearer path for countries to better recover, share experiences and fend off challenges in pursuing the Global Goals, while sharing strategies to tackle the pandemic and help countries meet their commitments by 2030.



## Multi-dimensional challenges

According to Mona Juul, President of the Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), under whose auspices the meeting is being held, the pandemic is “not only a threat to our health, but a human crisis of multiple dimensions”.



After a week of expert-level discussions, she noted the setbacks caused by COVID-19, and encouraged a response in alignment with the 2030 Agenda “if we hope to accelerate and maintain social and economic progress”.

The ECOSOC head spelled out: “Global leadership must be strengthened in all areas” and we must galvanize our responses both individually and collectively “to work together better, and ensure that this decade ushers a new era of peace and prosperity for all”.

She elaborated on some of the steps needed, including sharing economic benefits, revamping social protection programmes, delivering universal health care for all, empowering women and girls, listening to youth and halting the reversal of gains made by the most vulnerable groups of countries.

“We must find the way to leverage political will, to ensure evidence-based decision-making”, she underscored. “The recovery phase from the pandemic represents an opportunity for all levels of government to build back more inclusive, equal, resilient and sustainable societies”.

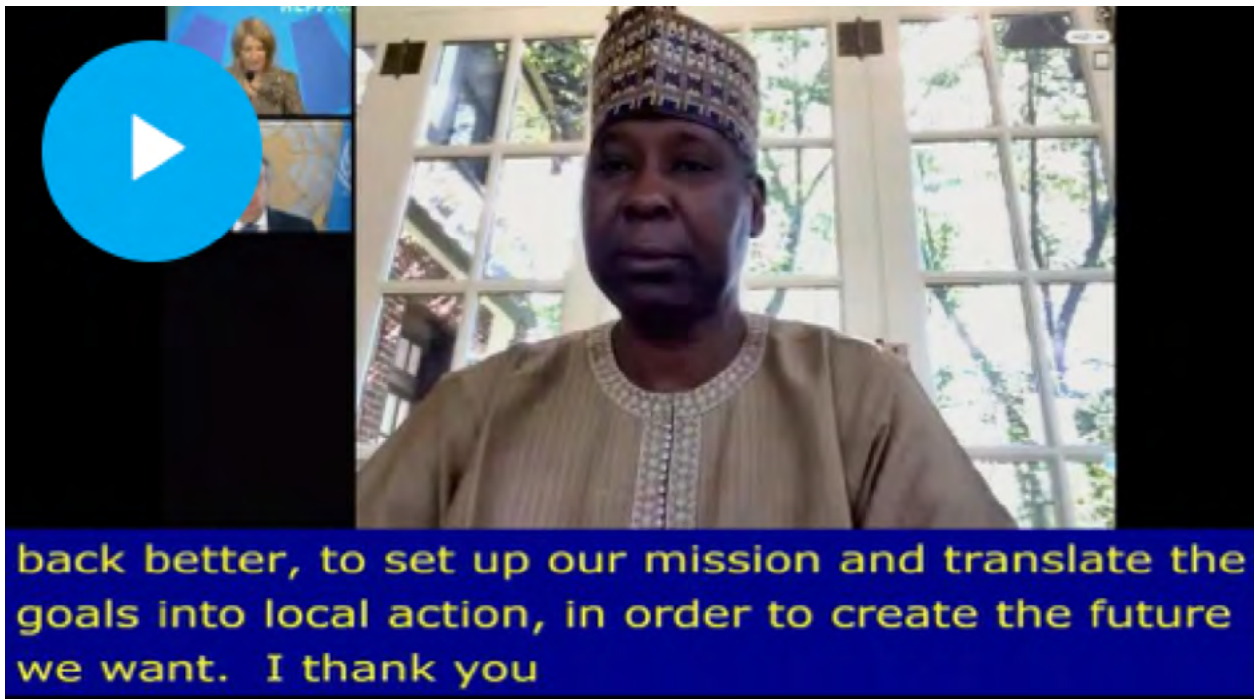
In closing, Ms. Juul commended the participants and the 47 countries that presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) on concrete plans of action to meet the 2030 challenge.

## ‘Collective efforts’

General Assembly President, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, called for “collective efforts to accelerate action and carve out transformative pathways to ensure that we leave no one behind”.

“Humanity cannot survive these multiple parallel crises if we do not work together with full respect for all peoples and all life on this planet”, he stressed, pushing for “a whole of Agenda approach”.

The Assembly president elaborated on the need to provide social protection, protect human



rights, promote health and invest in infrastructure while prioritizing education, clean water and sanitation.

## Financing progress

And progress requires financing.

“We must work to alleviate the impact on the well-being and livelihoods of people in developing countries and build back better to bolster their economies”, he advised, underlining the need to “uphold our commitments to finance sustainable development efforts”.

Creating vital fiscal space for investments to guarantee sustainable development for countries in need requires “improved governance, fair tax systems and a renewed commitment to eliminate illicit financial flows”, the UN official stated.

“Make no mistake, durable solutions emanate from strong political will and resilient institutions”, he explained and building economies with decent work for all is “the foundation” of an inclusive future.

“This is a moment of reckoning”, concluded the Assembly president. “Now is the time to build





**UNAMID/Amin Ismail** A High-Level Sudan Partnership Conference in Berlin acknowledged young people, especially women and girls, as drivers of change for a democratic, free and peaceful country.

back better, to step up our ambition and translate the Global Goals into local action... to create the future we want”.

## Voices of youth

On behalf of youth speakers, Farai Mubaiwa, Co-Founder of the Afrika Matters Initiative (AMI) and the lead at South Africa’s Youth Employment Service, spoke about what she identified as other pandemics, including femicide, which “ravages women and girls across Member States”; the plight of black bodies globally; and the human impact on climate change.

Calling young people “the leaders of today” who are “actively changing their communities for the better”, Ms. Mubaiwa declared that “youth inclusion is no longer a debate, it is a necessity” to confront what lies ahead.

Meanwhile, in her keynote statement, youth speaker Tina Hocevar, Vice-President of the European Youth Forum, counselled against a future that goes back to “normal”, saying that it had never worked “for the majority of us, nor for our planet”.

In looking ahead, she advised participants instead to embrace change with compasses “set on promoting fairness, equity, integrity, human dignity and human worth”.

# COVID-19 fast becoming protection crisis, Guterres warns Security Council



**MINUSCA.** As part of the information campaign on COVID-19, the commander of the Bangladeshi medical contingent at the Security Council-mandated UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, encourages local contractors to wear protection masks.

2 July 2020, UN News - The COVID-19 pandemic is “profoundly affecting” peace and security across the globe, the [Secretary-General](#) told the [Security Council](#) on Thursday, pressing the 15-member body to use its collective influence to protect the millions of people either trapped in, or fleeing conflict, and already facing acute vulnerabilities.

“The health pandemic has fast become a protection crisis”, António Guterres warned. With more than one billion children out of school, 135 million people facing starvation by year-end, and healthcare workers routinely being targeted by violence, “these wide-ranging risks require an urgent and united response.”

The high-level debate, convened by Germany as president for July, follows the Council’s passage on Wednesday of resolution 2532 (2020), which demands a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on its agenda.

## Trust eroded

The risks are diverse, the UN chief said. Trust in public institutions is being eroded in places where people perceive that authorities have not addressed the pandemic effectively or have not been transparent about its impact. As grievances become more entrenched, the potential for instability and violence only grows.

In some places, fragile peace processes could be derailed if the international community is distracted, he said. In Sudan’s restive Darfur region, the pandemic has led to repeated extensions of the deadline for completing the Juba peace process.

Elsewhere, he said terrorist and violent extremist groups see the uncertainty created by the pandemic as a tactical advantage. In Somalia, there is a risk that Islamist extremist group Al-Shabaab, could increase its attacks while security forces, by necessity, focus on the pandemic.



## COVID and the vote

Many countries have had to consider how to move ahead with elections slated for 2020 while trying to manage the health crisis. In the Central African Republic, attempts to use the pandemic as a pretext to postpone elections planned for year-end are creating tensions.

Collective security and a shared wellbeing are under assault on many fronts, led by a relentless disease and abetted by global fragilities. “Our challenge is to save lives today while buttressing the pillars of security for tomorrow,” he said, expressing his support for the Council in any way possible as it carries out its essential part of the response.

## Needs are vast, growing

Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said his organization sees first-hand how [COVID-19](#) is deepening fragility, spiking humanitarian needs, accelerating the impact of violence in conflict and reversing hard-won development gains.

It is clear that pandemics cannot be addressed only as a health issue.

## Health care at gunpoint ‘futile’

Sharing lessons for humanitarian response, he said international humanitarian law must be respected in order to protect civilians from pandemics. Countries where health services are destroyed, stand little chance of fighting COVID-19.

Healthcare workers - the first and last lines of defence - must be protected, he said, stressing that resolution 2286 (2016) will be “fruitless” if it does not result in meaningful behaviour change on the ground.

Assistance and protection must be available to all those in need without threat of intimidation or manipulation. “People’s needs are the only reasonable basis on which to respond”, he insisted, and he called for the development of a “people’s vaccine” that will be equitably distributed to everyone.

Further, he said the secondary impacts of the pandemic must be mitigated through the creation of safety nets and livelihoods, and that humanitarian responses must reach the most vulnerable, as failure to do so will only nurture the cycle of exclusion.

States also must guard against any rollback of civilian protections. Exceptional measures taken to fight the [coronavirus](#) must be time-bound and proportional to public health needs. Overall, he said, responses will only be effective if there is community trust and engagement. “Health care at gunpoint is futile”.

## **Broad understanding of peace, security**

Heiko Maas, Germany’s Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, underscored the urgent need

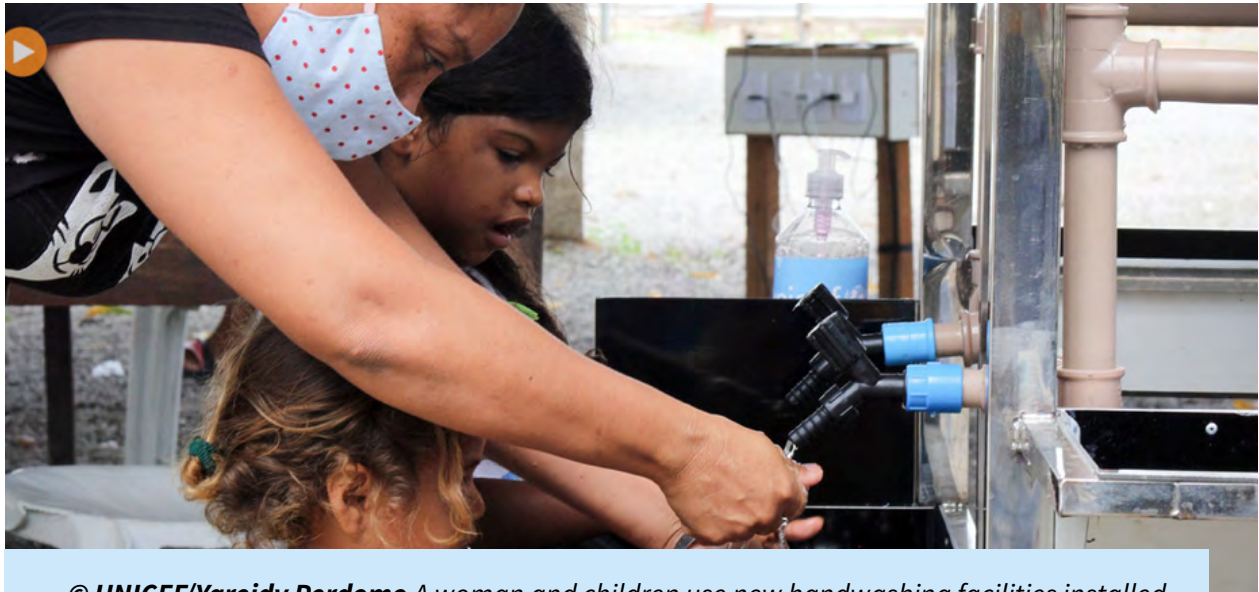
for rapid and safe humanitarian access during the COVID-19 pandemic. “The Council must finally embrace a broader understanding of peace and security” he said.

While the UN’s founders may well have had artillery batteries in mind when they drafted the Organization’s charter, “today, we know a virus can be more deadly than a gun”, he said. Today, climate change affects more people than conventional weapons. “Closing our eyes to this reality means refusing to learn.”

The United Nations must be equipped with effective capacities. While resolution 2532 (2020) was “long overdue”, the Council nonetheless sent a sign of unity by endorsing the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire. “This is what maintaining peace and security means in the twenty-first century,” he observed.



# World off track in meeting 2030 Agenda, UN deputy chief warns, calls for solidarity in COVID-19 recovery



© **UNICEF/Yareidy Perdomo** A woman and children use new handwashing facilities installed by UNICEF in Embratel, an informal urban settlement in Boa Vista, in northern Brazil.

16 July 2020, UN News - The world was off track in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, even before the COVID-19 crisis erupted, but can get back on course by increasing investment in public services, showing solidarity on financing, and “reshaping” how people work, learn, live and consume.

“We can turn this around, if we stay true to the 2030 Agenda”, said Deputy Secretary-General [Amina Mohammed](#), as she closed the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) - an annual stock-take of the world’s progress in reaching the SDGs, but “the road ahead is now even steeper”, she added.

After eight days of discussions, she said the message is clear on the need for solidarity and foresight on financing, and greater investments in social protections, health systems, education, water, sanitation and digital connectivity.

## New approaches

Staying true to the 2030 Agenda also means reimagining the way people work, learn, live and consume, and listening to young people, who are demanding justice and equality. And it means investing in an inclusive, networked multilateralism, with the United Nations at the centre.

“If we do all of this - consciously, concerted, cooperatively - we can build a better world, our shared destination,” she assured. All efforts must be made to step-up implementation of the 2030 Agenda. “As an international community, we must rise to the test of this pivotal moment.”



## Action accelerating

In the lead up to 2020 High-level Political Forum, [SDG Acceleration Actions](#) have seen a 35 per cent increase in submissions and a 21 per cent increase in published actions, just within the last two months, featuring a total of 182 bold commitments in concrete terms to advance the goals that have been made by national Governments and other stakeholders.

The Forum heard 47 countries present their Voluntary National Reviews (or VNRs), along with 150 speakers in the thematic sessions, including one Prime Minister and 31 ministerial officials, contributing online, representing all regions.

## COVID-19 a rare opportunity to ‘shape a new normal’

“The 2030 Agenda remains our shared roadmap to achieve the future we want”, said Mona Juul, President of the Economic and Social Council, which hosted the two-week Forum.

Stressing that [COVID-19](#) should not change the commitment to “realizing the future we want”, she outlined areas for accelerated progress - first and foremost to advance human wellbeing. Discussions centred on greater educational access for girls, which in turn, will reduce infant and maternal mortality.

She highlighted the importance of creating integrated food systems to drive inclusive growth, agriculture, sustainability, and achieve zero hunger.

Recovering better also means protecting the planet, she said, by addressing climate change and the “alarming” rate of biodiversity loss, land and forest degradation.

## ‘New world of opportunities’

Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy will be crucial to offering a “new world of opportunities” for billions of people, she said.

In the area of urban development, she underscored the essential role of local governments in transforming global intentions into community action. “All of our discussions have underlined that the recovery from COVID-19 represents a rare opportunity to shape a new normal”, she said.



# COVID-19: Recovery will be slower following ‘crisis like no other’, IMF predicts



**WFP/Glory Ndaka** Women queuing for food rations in Cameroon practice social distancing to help combat the spread of COVID-19.

24 June 2020, UN News - Economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is projected to be more gradual than previously forecast, according to a report published on Wednesday by the International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)).

It estimates growth this year at -4.9 per cent, or nearly two percentage points below projections in April, indicating that the recession will be deeper and recovery slower.

The latest [World Economic Outlook](#) is an update to data published two months ago. Subtitled A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery, it warns that gains made over the past two decades in driving down extreme poverty could be in peril.

## A call for strong health systems

The [IMF](#) explained that the report reflects “a higher-than-usual degree of uncertainty” around the projections, which are based on key assumptions about the pandemic’s impacts.

In countries with declining [COVID-19](#) rates,

slow recovery is based on factors such as the continuation of physical distancing measures, reduced productivity due to lockdowns, and a hit to surviving businesses ramping up, to meet necessary workplace safety and hygiene practices.

The IMF further predicts that lengthier lockdowns will exert an additional toll on economic activity in countries struggling to control infections.

“All countries—including those that have seemingly passed peaks in infections—should ensure that their health care systems are adequately resourced,” the agency said.

“The international community must vastly step up its support of national initiatives, including through financial assistance to countries with limited health

care capacity and channeling of funding for vaccine production as trials advance, so that adequate, affordable doses are quickly available to all countries.”

## Fiscal measures and global cooperation

The report recommends that in areas still under lockdown, authorities should continue to “cushion” household income losses, while also supporting firms forced to curtail their activities due to mandated restrictions.

“Where economies are reopening, targeted support should be gradually unwound as the recovery gets underway, and policies should provide stimulus to lift demand and ease and incentivize the reallocation of resources away from sectors likely to emerge persistently smaller after the pandemic,” the authors said.

They underlined the importance of strong global cooperation throughout the pandemic, noting that countries confronting the crisis while also facing a drop in external funding, or other financing, urgently need “liquidity assistance”.

## Act now to avert future catastrophe

Looking beyond the crisis, the report urges policymakers to resolve trade and technology “tensions” that will put recovery at risk.

Additionally, they should implement climate-related commitments and scale up carbon taxation.

“The global community must act now to avoid a repeat of this catastrophe by building global stockpiles of essential supplies and protective equipment, funding research and supporting public health systems, and putting in place effective modalities for delivering relief to the neediest”, the authors stated.

The #COVID19 pandemic has had a more negative impact on activity in the first half of 2020 than anticipated. Global growth is now projected at –4.9% in 2020, 1.9 percentage points below our April 2020 #WEO. Read the latest report [ow.ly/rvaG50AeMMa](https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/w2006)

**GROWTH PROJECTIONS**  
A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery

Category	2019	2020	2021
GLOBAL ECONOMY	2.9	-4.9	5.4
ADVANCED ECONOMIES	1.7	-8.0	4.8
EMERGING MARKETS & DEVELOPING ECONOMIES	3.7	-3.0	5.9

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND | IMF.org | #WEO

8:05 PM · Jun 24, 2020

523 446 people are T...



# A sustainable future for all depends on ‘resolve to act together in solidarity’



**MONUSCO** UN Police hold a COVID-19 information session for vulnerable street children in Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6 July 2020, UN News - The United Nations vision for a sustainable future for all “will depend on our policy choices today, and our resolve to act together in solidarity”, a senior UN official told delegates on Monday at a meeting to discuss post-pandemic recovery.

Mher Margaryan, the vice-president of the UN Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), was speaking at the Integration Segment of a day-long meeting on the eve of the High-Level Political Forum ([HLPF](#)), the annual stock-take of the world’s progress towards achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the UN’s blueprint for a better future, for people and planet. The segment aims to help prepare the thematic reviews of the Forum, which takes place between 7 and 16 July.

## SDGs must ‘guide our recovery efforts’

In his opening address, Mr. Margaryan acknowledged that the conference programme had been altered, in light of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, “to reflect our realities today”, with a focus on overcoming the human crisis and “recovering better”.

Echoing comments made in the latest Secretary-General’s [report](#) on progress towards achieving the SDGs – as the basis of HLPF discussions – the ECOSOC deputy chief underlined the importance of collective action to respond effectively to a crisis whose implications run beyond the health sector to impact each of the 17 Goals.

The SDGs, he said, are more important than ever, to “guide our recovery efforts and make our countries and communities more inclusive, equal and resilient”.

Mr. Margaryan named six subject areas, identified in the [2019 Global Sustainable Development Report](#), as a basis for discussion on achieving the 2030 Agenda: human well-being and capabilities; sustainable and just economies; food systems and nutrition patterns; energy

decarbonization with universal access; urban and peri-urban development; and global environmental commons.

In a video message released on Monday, Mr. Guterres warned that the COVID-19 pandemic is laying bare inequalities, such as inadequate health care and gaps in social protection; reversing progress on poverty and hunger; and particularly affecting the vulnerable, such as marginalized groups, women, and children.

The UN, said Mr. Guterres, has called for massive global support for vulnerable groups and countries. The Organization is supporting research into a “people’s vaccine”, that is affordable and accessible for all; and is leading efforts towards creating societies that are more resilient, inclusive and sustainable. “Returning to the frameworks and systems that gave rise to this crisis”, said Mr, Guterres, “is unthinkable”.

## What is the HLPF?

- The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), is the core UN platform for follow up and review of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#),
- The 2020 Forum takes place between 7 and 16 July, and includes a three-day ministerial meeting from 14 to 16 July,
- Participants will debate where the world stands on the SDGs in light of the impact of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, and reflect on how the international community can accelerate progress over the coming decade.



UN ECOSOC Presid...  
@UNECOSOC



"The Integration segment, with its focus on integrating all the dimensions of sustainable development, can play a key role in ensuring that the response to #COVID19 stays true to the promise of the #2030Agenda," said #UNSG @antonioguterres to @UNECOSOC [bit.ly/2BJS2rc](https://bit.ly/2BJS2rc)



8:12 PM · Jul 6, 2020



108



62 people are ...

# 170 signatories endorse UN ceasefire appeal during COVID crisis



**UN Photo/Sahem Rababah** Refugee children at the Zaatari camp in Jordan.

24 June 2020, UN News - UN Member States, Observers and others, sent a strong political message this week, with the announcement that 170 signatories have now endorsed the UN's call to silence the guns, and stand united against the global threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative, prompted by Malaysia, shows that a large majority of nations are now standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the global ceasefire call that [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) made back in March, when the pandemic was just picking up speed.

The statement on Tuesday expressed “deep concern” for those areas of the world where fighting continues, particularly in the midst of the global health crisis.

While spotlighting the impact on the world's most vulnerable, especially women and children, the document reads: “We must muster all our efforts to save lives and alleviate social and economic devastation on our peoples.”

## Acting collectively

The signatories underscored that diplomatic action and collective efforts are needed in the common fight against [COVID-19](#) and reaffirmed the importance of “global unity and solidarity in confronting this scourge”.

Against the backdrop of the pandemic's profound impact on all three key UN pillars – peace and security, development and human rights – the States underscored the importance of multilateralism, rule of law, diplomacy and negotiation as “fundamental” in promoting and supporting peaceful dispute settlements.

“We are mindful that a peaceful condition is indispensable to facilitate humanitarian access in fragile and conflict-affected situations”, the statement spelled out, highlighting the belief that “efforts to relieve human suffering and conflict resolution should go hand-in-hand in leading action to address the pandemic”.



## Give peace a chance

In approaching the 75th anniversary of the signing of the [UN Charter](#), the signatories called on all actors “to do the utmost” to respond to the ceasefire appeal.

“We remain united in our shared humanity and in giving peace a chance.”

## Standing in solidarity

In alphabetical order, here is the full list of signatories endorsing the UN chief’s global ceasefire appeal, so far:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte D’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia,

Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Macedonia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the European Union.

# Stalled Security Council resolution adopted, backing UN's global humanitarian ceasefire call



**OCHA/Steve Hafez** A widow holds her grandson in a displaced persons camp in northern Idlib Governorate, Syria.

1 July 2020, UN News - The [Security Council](#) on Wednesday echoed the [Secretary-General's](#) call for a worldwide ceasefire, to combat the coronavirus pandemic that has already claimed more than half a million lives. The UN chief welcomed the long-awaited move, calling for countries to “redouble their efforts for peace”.

Unanimously adopting [resolution 2532](#) (2020) on Wednesday, the 15-member peace and security body demanded “a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations, on its agenda.”

It also voiced its support for efforts by [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) – who first [appealed](#) for a global ceasefire on 23 March – towards that goal.

## Endangering peace

The unprecedented extent of the novel [coronavirus](#) pandemic “is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security”, it said, adding that it could also set back peacebuilding and development gains in countries emerging from conflict.

The two-page resolution – drafted by France and Tunisia - was adopted 111 days after the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) declared [COVID-19](#) to be a global pandemic.

“It is a very strong signal of unity (within) the Council and a sign of hope that we send from the Security Council out into the world”, said Christoph Heusgen, Germany’s Permanent Representative to the UN.

He announced the 15-in-favour vote on the first day of his country’s Council presidency.



Rosemary A. DiCarlo ✓  
@DicarloRosemary



I welcome the Security Council resolution on [#COVID19](#) demanding a cessation of hostilities in situations on its agenda & recognizing the Secretary-General's global ceasefire appeal. Let's now truly press conflict parties to silence the guns and focus on fighting the common enemy.



11:24 PM · Jul 1, 2020



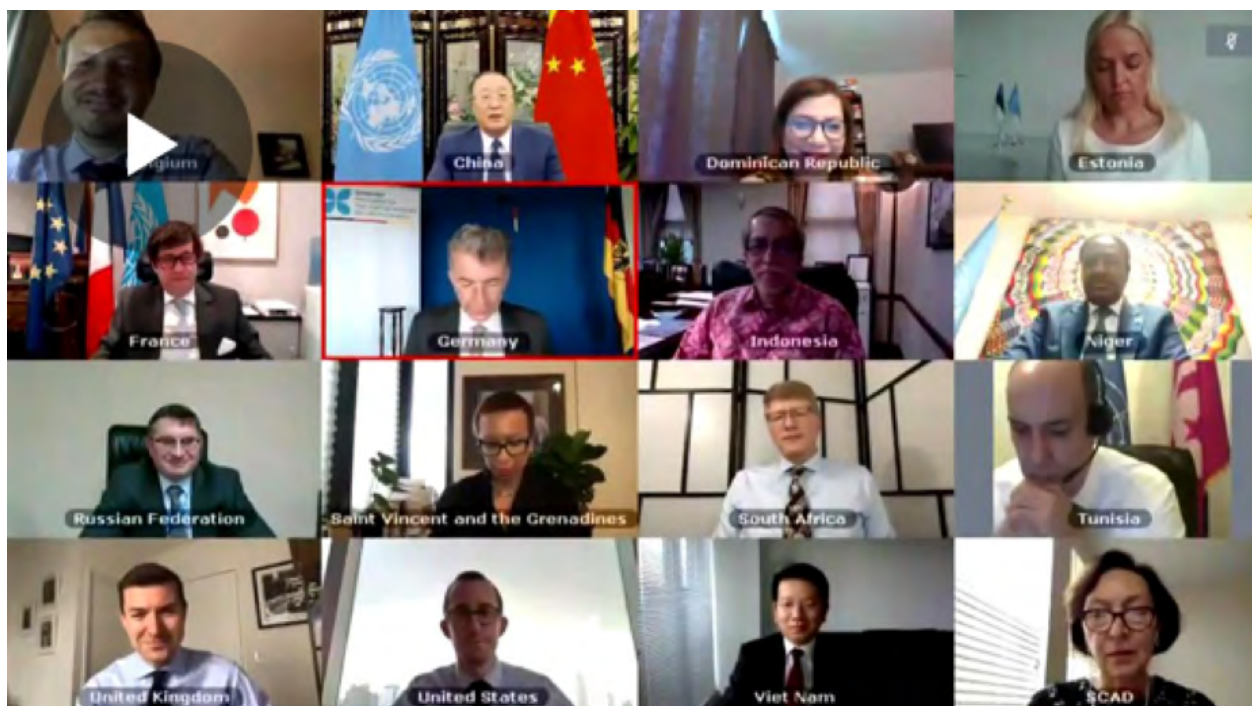
♡ 244    💬 111 people are Tweeting about this

## ‘Durable humanitarian pause’

Through the resolution, the Council called upon all parties to armed conflicts to immediately engage in a “durable humanitarian pause” of at least 90 days, to enable the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of lifesaving aid.

It affirmed, however, that no ceasefire would apply for ongoing military operations against the extremist group ISIL, otherwise known as Da’esh, Al Qaeda, the Al Nusra Front and other Council-designated terrorist groups.

It requested the Secretary-General to instruct the United Nations’ 13 peacekeeping missions to support host country efforts to contain the coronavirus, and to provide updates on UN efforts to address the pandemic in conflict zones and humanitarian crisis areas.



## Guterres welcomes resolution

On Wednesday afternoon, UN chief António Guterres [welcomed the adoption](#), “and the Council’s recognition of his efforts to respond to the crisis, in particular his appeal for a global ceasefire”, according to a note issued to correspondents in New York.

“The adoption of this resolution will send an important signal to conflict parties and may help change calculations on the ground.

“The Secretary-General continues to urge individual Member States to redouble their efforts for peace in the conflicts in which they have influence”, the statement continued. “He looks forward to working with all stakeholders to advance efforts towards concrete ceasefires and durable peace.”

Wednesday’s resolution makes no mention of the World Health Organization (WHO) which according to news reports was a bone of contention during lengthy negotiations on the text, notably between China and the United States, which announced its withdrawal from the UN health agency in April.

## More to come on COVID

In its latest situation [report](#), the WHO on Tuesday put the worldwide total of [COVID-19](#) cases at 10,185,374, with 503,862 deaths. Hardest hit are the Americas with 5,136,705 cases and 247,129 deaths.

Security Council resolutions are currently adopted through a written procedure vote under special temporary measures put into place by its members in mid-March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council is planning an open video-teleconference on Thursday on the implications of COVID-19 on the maintenance of international peace and security.



# ‘Bold and creative’ solutions needed for a sustainable, post-pandemic economy



**UN Women/Fahad Abdullah Kaizer** A woman works as a fruit vendor in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A single parent, she is accompanied at work by her two daughters.

1 July 2020, UN News - Unless the world acts now, the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying global recession, will trigger “years of depressed and disrupted economic growth”, the UN chief warned on Wednesday.

During the first in a series of roundtable discussions on responding and recovering better from the global crisis, this one with women economists, he painted a grim picture of acute suffering, saying that extreme poverty and hunger are set to increase drastically. Many healthcare systems are already at breaking point; and a whole generation of children is missing out on education.

“The pandemic threatens not just to put the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) on hold, but to reverse progress that has already been made”, [Secretary-General António Guterres said](#).

## Building back better

Against the backdrop of his call for an overall rescue package by governments, equivalent to at least ten per cent of the global economy,

Mr. Guterres said he had convened world leaders and international organizations in a joint initiative to sharpen and accelerate the global response to the impacts of [COVID-19](#). Headed by the Prime Ministers of Jamaica and Canada, and with more than 50 heads of State and government taking part, they focused on identifying ways to finance the recovery and [build back better](#).

The top politicians stepped forward to lead the joint effort – with UN agencies, financial institutions, private sector creditors and others – to address key challenges, ranging from global liquidity and debt vulnerability, to eroding illicit financial flows.

Mr. Guterres pointed out that developing countries face vastly increased demands for public spending “exactly at the same time” as tax and export revenues, inward investments and remittances, are plummeting.

“As we craft a comprehensive global response, action on finance must be central”, underscored the UN chief. “If countries lack the financial means to fight the pandemic and invest in



recovery, we face a health catastrophe and a painfully slow global recovery”.

## Debt crisis

The world is on the cusp of a widespread debt crisis, the top UN official said, noting that many countries face “an impossible choice” between servicing their debt or protecting their most vulnerable communities and fighting the pandemic.

Explaining that “debt defaults can have devastating social consequences”, he made clear that many countries lack financial market access to enable them to service their debt.

“Beyond the fiscal shock, the COVID-19 crisis has impacted all the components of external finance: direct investment, exports and remittances”, he continued, adding that as developed countries themselves deal with the crisis, official development assistance is also under pressure.

For recovery and to realize the SDGs, “durable solutions on debt” must be considered “to create fiscal space for investments”, stressed Mr. Guterres.

“Uncertainty and a further retreat to inward-

looking policies and protectionism could turn today’s sharp decline into a prolonged period of weak external financing”, the UN chief cautioned.

Moreover, as the pandemic disrupts supply chains and trade, he flagged the danger that some manufacturing will move back to developed countries, further reducing developing countries’ resources, and challenging their integration into the global economy.

“These questions need bold and creative answers” Mr. Guterres upheld.

## Finding solutions

According to the UN chief, “we need the insights and perspectives of all”, including “prominent and innovative” women economists, to create “inclusive, resilient and gender-equal societies” to address the climate crisis and other global challenges.

“We need concrete, radical and implementable solutions”, spelled out the Secretary-General, voicing hope that the series of roundtables will stimulate new ideas and “a totally different debate in relation to the classic ones we have witnessed in the recent past”.

## Much-needed transformation

In imagining “a new global economy in which finance becomes a means and not an end”, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed noted that external finance “needs to change course”.

“We need a partnership with financial markets to change the balance and achieve the SDGs”, she said, adding that investments cannot be only about profit at any cost but must “land on the right side of history”.

The transformation must “break the inequality and environmental degradation enchantment that darken our future”, she continued, pushing for a new global economy “based on sustainable consumption and production, on sustainable infrastructure that gives access to all to the opportunities of the future”.

“And we need to do it for the next generations”, concluded the deputy UN chief. “Rebirthing the global economy is an opportunity to empower them to confront the current and looming challenges”.





# COVID-19 upends ‘entire generation’ of 600 million South Asian children



© **UNICEF/Parvez Ahmad** Twelve-year-old boy in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, sorts through hazardous plastic waste without any protection, working to support his family amidst the lockdown.

23 June 2020, UN News - Without urgent action, COVID-19 will continue to unravel decades of progress across South Asia, destroying the “hopes and futures of an entire generation”, [warns a new report](#) released on Tuesday by the UN Children’s Fund, [UNICEF](#).

[Lives Upended](#), notes that the rapidly advancing [coronavirus](#) pandemic, expanding across a region that is home to a quarter of the world’s population, is particularly affecting health and educational advances for children.

“The side-effects of the pandemic across South Asia, including the lockdown and other measures, have been damaging for children in numerous ways”, said Jean Gough, [UNICEF](#) Regional Director for the vast region. “But the longer-term impact of the economic crisis on children will be on a different scale entirely”.

## Catastrophic consequences

The report illustrates the disastrous toll of the virus on some 600 million South Asian children, such as growing food insecurity and the disruption of immunization, nutrition and other vital health services, that could be potentially life-threatening for around 459,000 over the next six months.

Meanwhile, school closures have pushed more than 430 million children into remote learning, which has only partially filled the gap as many households in rural areas lack both internet access and electricity.

At the same time, concerns are heightening that some disadvantaged students may join the nearly 32 million children who were already out of school, before [COVID-19](#) struck.

This all comes against a backdrop of children struggling with depression and a surge in calls to help hotlines, as they suffer violence and abuse during home confinement.





The report notes that life-saving vaccination campaigns against measles, polio and other diseases must resume, along with work to help an estimated 7.7 million children – more than half the global total – who are suffering from severe wasting, which impairs physical and mental development.

Moreover, as soon as possible, schools should reopen with adequate handwashing and other physical distancing precautions in place.

## Economic turmoil

The economic shock triggered by COVID-19 is hitting families hard across the region, with large-scale job losses, wage cuts and remittance losses from overseas workers and through tourism.

According to UNICEF projections, as many as 120 million more children could be pushed into poverty and food insecurity over the next six months, joining some 240 million children already classified as poor.

To mitigate the impact, the report maintains that Governments should immediately direct more resources towards social protection schemes, including emergency universal child benefits and school feeding programmes.

“Putting such measures in place now will help the countries of South Asia transition faster from the humanitarian crisis caused by COVID-19 to a resilient and sustainable development model, with long term benefits for child wellbeing, the economy, and social cohesion”, said Ms. Gough.

**Tackling COVID-related issues affecting children**

- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to health and social services staff.
- Scale up home learning solutions for those without internet access, such as using more paper and mobile phone-based materials.
- Address widescale need for water, toilets and hygiene services in schools and health care facilities.
- Work with religious leaders and others to address pandemic-driven myths and hate-speech.

# Identify and address ‘real needs’ to recover from COVID-19, UN rights expert urges



© **World Bank/Stephan Bachenheimer** Women are among the marginalized, disempowered and excluded, whose needs must be addressed to build the future we want.

8 July 2020, UN News - There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in “a serious setback” for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an independent UN human rights expert said on Wednesday, urging a high-level meeting to “take a hard look” at implementation efforts to live up to the promise to leave no one behind.

“One of the main reasons implementation of the SDGs [[Sustainable Development Goals](#)] continues to lag behind is that policies and programmes fail to identify and address people’s real needs”, Saad Alfarargi, Special Rapporteur on the right to development, said at the second day of the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) (HLPF).

“If efforts to achieve the goals are not based on these needs, they cannot succeed”, he spelled out.

## **‘Marginalized, disempowered and excluded’**

The UN rights expert maintained that those denied during past development efforts remain “marginalized, disempowered and excluded”, including many women, racial, religious and ethnic minorities, and those impoverished and displaced.

“Unless we address the inequalities, exclusion and entrenched discrimination these

communities face, durable and inclusive development for all will remain elusive”, he underscored.

The right to development entitles every human being and all peoples to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development.

Ensuring meaningful participation means placing them at the centre of decision-making that affects their own development.

## Removing barriers

To achieve sustainable results, development must be a holistic process involving everyone who has a stake – from States, to international organizations and civil society, to marginalized populations.

Mr. Alfarargi told the participants that priorities must be set by the people who should benefit most, saying “communities must set development agendas, budgets and processes”.

“It is, therefore, essential to remove visible and invisible barriers that hinder community participation, such as lack of legal identity, high financial cost or social restrictions, to ensure that the whole of society benefits from development”, he stated.

This means that States need to “institute and budget for planning processes and monitoring mechanisms that enable everyone to participate”, including civil society, the Special Rapporteur added.

## Moving forward

Business as usual is not going to deliver results: “In recent decades, economic growth has been accompanied by increasing or persistently high levels of inequality within countries and a call

for fundamental reconfiguration in economic policymaking”, Mr. Alfarargi noted.

The current crisis provides an opportunity to those involved in development to “take a hard look” at the ways they identify those left behind, “including their efforts to mitigate the damage inflicted by the pandemic”, the UN expert (CAN’T CALL HIM AN ENVOY, HE’S AN EXPERT) continued.

Efforts must also resonate with the real and actual needs of the most marginalized parts of the society.

## Further action

The Special Rapporteur informed the meeting that his reports to the Human Right Council (HRC) and the UN General Assembly this year are devoted to development finance.

“I am issuing a number of recommendations to all stakeholders on resource mobilization, tax policies and ensuring meaningful participation I development finance”, he concluded with an offer to discuss further.

## Background information

Under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, the HLPF on sustainable development will run until 16 July. Against the backdrop of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, it aims to galvanize international solidarity in responding to economic shocks, relaunching growth, sharing economic benefits and addressing financing challenges of developing countries.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the HRC to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.



# ‘New contract’ needed with nature to keep drought and deserts at bay



© **UNICEF/Tanya Bindra** A young girl cooks in a rural village in Ethiopia, where the land has been affected by recurrent droughts.

17 June 2020, UN News - The UN Secretary-General has called for “[a new contract for nature](#)” to address ongoing global challenges connected to land degradation, such as forced migration, hunger and climate change.

António Guterres made the appeal on Wednesday in a message to mark the [World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought](#).

“Through international action and solidarity, we can scale up land restoration and nature-based solutions for climate action and the benefit of future generations. By doing so, we can deliver on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and leave no one behind”, he said.

Desertification, or the degradation of land in arid areas, is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations, with more than three billion people routinely affected.

Drylands cover more than a third of the planet’s land surface. They are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation and inappropriate land use, such as through overgrazing or bad irrigation practices.

## Choose to protect nature

This year’s observation puts the spotlight on sustainable production and consumption.

With ‘Food. Feed. Fibre’ as the slogan, the aim is to get people everywhere to reduce food waste, shop at local markets, and swap clothes instead of always buying new items.

The head of the UN office which oversees a global treaty on preventing land degradation said that although the [COVID-19](#) pandemic may have temporarily curtailed some freedoms, such as travelling at will, people still have freedom of choice.



“In our globalized world, the food we eat, the feed for our livestock and the fibre for clothes, impact land thousands of miles away,” [said](#) Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary at the [UN Convention to Combat Desertification](#).

“Each of us holds the power to protect the land for each choice we make in our daily lives. And we can still choose to protect nature. By doing so, we in fact protect our future.”



## Great Green Wall

The Secretary-General pointed to efforts to reverse land degradation, such as the Great Green Wall in Africa’s Sahel region, launched by the African Union in 2007.

Through the initiative, trees are being planted from Senegal to Djibouti, to restore land and boost food security, transforming lives and livelihoods along the way.

“Such efforts bring back biodiversity, reduce the effects of climate change and make communities more resilient,” the UN chief said. “All told, the benefits outweigh the costs ten-fold.”

Globally, 75 per cent of land is degraded, according to the President of the UN General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande.

“As land degrades, resources deplete. Thus, the most vulnerable people are further exposed to poverty and hunger; with women, smallholder farmers, indigenous communities and children being disproportionately affected”, he [said](#).

## **‘Urgent paradigm shift’**

The resulting extreme poverty and hunger are among the root causes of both conflict and migration, he continued, outlining a cycle of “degrade-abandon-migrate”.

Mr. Muhammad-Bande believes an “urgent paradigm shift” is needed, focusing on protection, sustainability and restoration, and he called for renewed commitment to safeguarding the planet.

“As we build back better in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, let us work together with farmers to promote sustainable land management”, he said.

“We must support smallholder farmers, the vast number of whom are women, to make evidence-based decisions in regard to crop selection, inputs usage, and land resilience, in the face of climate change and loss of biodiversity.”

# Hard times forecast for global job recovery in 2020, warns UN labour agency chief



**ILO/Yacine Imadalou** Vendors in a bakery in Constantine, Algeria, during the COVID-19 crisis.

30 June 2020, UN News - The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on jobs has been much worse than expected initially, the head of the UN labour agency said on Tuesday, in an appeal to Governments, workers and employers, to agree on a sustainable economic recovery plan to reduce inequalities laid bare by the pandemic.

Under three possible scenarios for recovery in the next six months, “none” sees the global job situation in better shape than it was before lockdown measures began, the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) insisted.

“This is why we talk of an uncertain but incomplete recovery even in the best of scenarios for the second half of this year.

So there is not going to be a simple or quick recovery”, said Director-General Guy Ryder, his comments coinciding with new [data](#) from the ILO, showing that working hours fell 14 per cent during the second quarter of 2020 - equivalent to the loss of 400 million full-time jobs.

That’s a sharp increase from ILO’s last estimate, issued a month ago, of a 10.7 per cent drop (equivalent to 305 million jobs) from April to June.

## Looking ahead

According to ILO’s recovery modelling for the second half of 2020, even the most optimistic scenario assumes that global loss of working hours would fall by 1.2 per cent (equivalent to 34 million full-time jobs), compared with the last three months of 2019.

The agency’s baseline model – which assumes a rebound in economic activity in line with existing forecasts – projects a decrease in working hours of 4.9 per cent (equivalent to 140 million full-time jobs).

ILO’s most pessimistic scenario assumes a second pandemic wave and the return of restrictions that would significantly slow recovery, resulting in a fall in working hours of 11.9 per cent (340 million full-time jobs).



## Americas worst hit

More than nine in 10 of the world's workers continue to live in countries with some sort of workplace closures, with the Americas experiencing the greatest restrictions, the Geneva-based UN body said.

Regionally, the Americas have been worst affected by far, with working hours diving 18.3 per cent, according to the latest ILO Monitor report on [COVID-19](#) and the world of work.

Europe and Central Asia saw a 13.9 per cent fall, followed by Asia and the Pacific (13.5 per cent), Arab States (13.2 per cent) and Africa (12.1 per cent).

Highlighting concerns for workers in the informal sector who lack a social welfare safety net, Mr Ryder expressed particular concern for all those in Latin America, where they number as many as one in two of the region's workforce.

It is important "to understand what the human realities of these statistics really are", he said.

## Global summit for a 'better normal'

Ahead of next week's [Global Summit on COVID-19 and the World of Work](#), convened by ILO chief Ryder urged government and social partner participants to build a better future of work for everyone.

"The decisions we adopt now will echo in the years to come and beyond 2030", he said, underscoring persistent inequalities and vulnerabilities of women in the workplace. "Although countries are at different stages of the pandemic and a lot has been done, we need to redouble our efforts if we want to come out of this crisis in a better shape than when it started."

Despite the urgent need for Governments, trades unions and workers to create a "better normal" in the post-COVID era, Mr. Ryder cast doubt on the ability of countries to sustain such stimulus measures.



## Trillions spent so far

Some \$10 trillion dollars worldwide have been spent supporting workers and industry since the pandemic began, he explained, “but this has been highly concentrated; 88 per cent of that total has been spent by advanced countries on advanced countries... that’s the equivalent of about five per cent of GDP; the equivalent figure for developing and

emerging economies is 2.2 per cent, for the less developed countries, it’s much less.”

As the pandemic hits the developing world “with increasing ferocity, I think that mismatch is going to be more than ever evident”, the ILO chief warned, insisting that it presented an imperative of much greater international cooperation and solidarity in responding to this global crisis”.

# UN chief highlights need for decent jobs to fuel COVID-19 recovery



**ILO/E. Raboanally** A woman runs a small shop selling prepaid telephone cards in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

8 July 2020, UN News - More than 50 Heads of State and government, alongside global employers' and trade union leaders, have been taking part in an online discussion on Wednesday looking at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work.

[The Global Summit](#) is part of a five-day virtual event organized this month by the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), to examine issues that include countering the economic and social impact of the crisis.

In a video message, [UN Secretary-General António Guterres](#) told leaders that they are essential to global efforts to “build back better” after the pandemic.

“Together, we can emerge from this crisis stronger, with decent jobs and a brighter, more equal and greener future for all”, he said.

## Crisis exposes vulnerabilities

The [COVID-19](#) pandemic has exposed the extreme vulnerability of millions of workers and businesses worldwide.

It has led to a 14 per cent drop globally in working hours during the second quarter of this year: equivalent to the loss of 400 million full time jobs, according to data from the [ILO](#).

Furthermore, most of the world's workers - a staggering 93 per cent - continue to live in countries that have implemented some form of workplace closures.

As of Wednesday, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reported more than 11.6 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide, and nearly 540,000 deaths.

The UN chief pointed out that while some countries are just entering the worst days of the pandemic, others are struggling to open up their economies amid the threat of a resurgence in cases.

## **Shaping winning responses**

“But let’s be clear: it’s not a choice between health or jobs and the economy”, he said. “They are interlinked. We will either win on all fronts or fail on all fronts.”

He underscored the importance of global solidarity as no country can solve the crisis alone.

“This Global Summit is an opportunity for governments, workers and employers’ representatives to shape winning responses”, he said.

“Responses that stimulate the economy and employment. Solutions that support enterprises, decent jobs and incomes. Approaches that safeguard workers and expand social protection. Plans that promote gender equality and reinforce social cohesion. Proposals that protect the most vulnerable and invest in essential workers — such as those in health and care services — who are on the frontlines of the response. And above all, initiatives that are grounded in unity and solidarity.”

## **A better world of work**

Leaders addressed the summit via video messages, outlining how their countries or organizations are responding to the crisis.

“I’ve no doubt that these messages will provide us with invaluable guidance and encouragement in our efforts to overcome the pandemic and to address effectively and urgently, its impact on the world of work,” said ILO Director General Guy Ryder in delivering the opening remarks.

The Global Summit was preceded by five regional virtual events held last week looking at the challenges of recovery and building a better future of work after the pandemic.

Over two days, government, employer and worker representatives and academia from across five regions of the world – Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, Asia-Pacific and Europe – discussed the huge costs of the COVID-19 pandemic to their economies, labour markets and societies.

Their exchanges helped inform the Summit, which the ILO said is the largest-ever online gathering of its kind.

# Illegal trade in fake or faulty COVID-19 products booming, new UN research reveals



**World Bank/Henitsoa Rafalia** Health workers in Madagascar test citizens for COVID-19.

8 July 2020, UN News - A surge in demand for medical products to combat COVID-19 has led to a jump in the trafficking of substandard and faulty merchandise, according to [new UN research](#) published on Wednesday.

“Health and lives are at risk with criminals exploiting the [COVID-19](#) crisis to cash in on public anxiety and increased demand for PPE and medications”, said Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)).

Among its countless other impacts, the [coronavirus](#) has further highlighted the shortcomings in regulatory and legal frameworks aimed at preventing the manufacturing and selling of these products, points out the UNODC research brief, entitled “COVID-19-related Trafficking of Medical Products as a Threat to Public Health”.

## Preying on vulnerabilities

The research reveals that criminal gangs are exploiting both the uncertainties surrounding the coronavirus along with inconsistencies in

national regulation regimens.

“Transnational organized crime groups take advantage of gaps in national regulation and oversight to peddle substandard and falsified medical product”, explained the UN crime-fighting chief.

The falsification of medical products bears significant risks for public health as products may not properly treat the disease and may facilitate the development of drug resistance.

Criminal groups have also quickly adjusted to the opportunities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic to exploit the vulnerabilities and gaps in the health and criminal justice systems.

Evidence shows that fraud, scams and seizures, involving the manufacture and trafficking of substandard and falsified medical products, have followed the spread of the virus.

In one case, German health authorities contracted two sales companies in Switzerland and Germany to procure €15 million worth of face masks through a cloned website of an



apparently legitimate company in Spain.

“We need to help countries increase cooperation to close gaps, build law enforcement and criminal justice capacity, and drive public awareness to keep people safe”, Ms. Waly upheld.



## Harmonized global approach needed

The pandemic has also highlighted a boom in data-based scams – including phishing, and business email attacks – or the creation of fake corporate websites to fool purchasers.

UNODC’s research also predicts that the behaviour of organized criminal groups will gradually change over the course of the

pandemic.

When a vaccine is developed, it will likely lead to a shift in focus away from PPE smuggling to trafficking in the vaccine.

Moreover, cyberattacks on critical infrastructure involved in addressing the pandemic are also likely to continue in the form of online scams aimed at health procurement authorities, according to the research.

Strengthening legal frameworks and penalties, and a more harmonized global approach to the criminalization of the manufacture and trafficking of falsified medical products is crucial, as only a common approach will enable effective responses to crimes impacting individuals and public health, the UNODC brief maintains.

At the same time however, preventing, detecting, and responding to medical product-related crime will require people who work in the medical product sector to acquire new or additional skills.

## Examples worldwide of COVID-19 scams

The UK’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) said it took down more than 2,000 online coronavirus scams in March alone, which included 471 fake online shops selling fraudulent COVID-19-related items.

Police in France removed 70 fraudulent websites claiming to sell chloroquine in April.

COVID-19-related scams in the USA amounted to approximately US\$13.4 million in fraud, from the beginning of January to mid-April this year, and have affected more than 18,000 citizens.

In the first four months of 2020, 1,541 cyberattacks related to COVID-19 were detected in the United Arab Emirates including 775 malware threats, 621 email spam attacks and 145 URL attacks.

A seizure of 3,300 thermometers was reported in Thailand, after being trafficked through three other countries and a report of thermometers which do not conform with EU regulations was also noted in Italy.

Organized criminal groups in the Western Balkans are believed to be involved in money laundering and investing their illicit gains in the production and trafficking of falsified medical products and protective clothing.-

There have been COVID-19-related reports of

substandard and falsified ventilators in Russia, where a fraud enquiry has begun, as well as in the UK, where ventilators supplied were substandard and potentially dangerous. The supply of substandard ventilators was also reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

# Independent rights expert speaks of ‘anguish, stress and disempowerment’ of poverty



**FAO** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and China's Tsinghua University built an innovative lab to experiment on new methods to reduce poverty.

7 July 2020, UN News - More than 70 million people are expected to fall into extreme poverty because of COVID-19, the UN Human Rights Council heard on Tuesday, as a leading rights expert slammed “greatly exaggerated” claims of global poverty eradication between 1990 and 2015.

Highlighting his predecessor Philip Alston’s final report, UN-appointed independent Special Rapporteur Olivier de Schutter, insisted that without China’s “outsized contribution” in lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty during that period, overall progress globally towards reversing the scourge, suddenly appeared far less impressive.

According to the World Bank’s international poverty line (IPL) – which is subsisting on \$1.90 per day - the number of people in extreme poverty fell from 1.895 billion in 1990, to 736 million in 2015.

## Statistical mismatch

But this includes the 750 million people in China living below the poverty line in 1990, who numbered just 10 million in 2015, the Special Rapporteur explained, before questioning the “very weak, unsatisfactory” World Bank measure of poverty.

“Leaving out China, the number of people living below the \$2.50 USD per day would barely have changed throughout this period, and it would have increased by 140 million people in Sub-Saharan African and the Middle East”, Mr. de Schutter said.

In local currencies, \$1.90 “translates to living on 7.49 yuan per day in China, 1.41 euros in Portugal, 22.49 pesos in Mexico, 50.83 roubles in Russia, 355.18 naira in Nigeria, 910.15 pesos in Chile, or 36.27 rupees in India”, he said. “The IPL is of course well below the national poverty lines of most countries, and accordingly generates dramatically lower numbers in poverty.”



## Anguish and disempowerment

Highlighting calls to adopt a much more realistic measure of poverty than the IPL baseline amount, the Special Rapporteur noted that it could be based on meeting people's basic needs – and particularly children's – which the Council heard were twice as likely as adults to be living in poverty.

“If you speak to people in poverty and ask them about their experience of poverty, they will tell you about the anguish, the stress, the disempowerment, the discrimination and the social and institutional abuse”, he said, before urging Member States to focus less on economic growth as a means to reduce poverty, and more on the reduction of inequalities and the redistribution of wealth.

Turning to his predecessor's report, he noted that “in the name of achieving growth, we have lowered corporate tax rates (from an average of 40 per cent in 1980 to 24 per cent in 2019)”.

In addition, States “have tolerated aggressive practices of tax avoidance by transnational corporations” which had cost States \$650 billion per year, the Special Rapporteur's findings suggested, in addition to deregulating labour markets and privatising public services, which had led to an increase in the cost to users.



© UNICEF/Popov Roma children and adults in Bulgaria (file photo)



# Children caught in conflict facing ‘brutality and fear while the world watches’



© **UNICEF/Helene Sandbu Ryeng** On 26 May 2020 in Juba, South Sudan, children released from armed forces are seated on the ground while negotiations for their reintegration take place.

15 June 2020, UN News - Boys and girls used and abused in armed conflict have had their childhoods replaced by “pain, brutality and fear while the world watches”, the UN [Special Representative](#) of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, said on Monday.

Launching the Secretary-General’s Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba maintained that parties to conflict often “neglect to protect children in the conduct of hostilities and deny them the vital aid they desperately need”.

The tragedy children face continued unabated throughout 2019, the report highlighted, disclosing that the UN had verified over 25,000 grave violations against children.

The overall number of grave violations, which remains similar to 2018, translates into some 70 recorded abuses per day.

“By violating the rules of war, parties endanger their own children”, she spelled out.

## Humanitarian breaches

Citing 4,400 verified incidents, the report revealed a shocking 400 per cent jump in the denial of humanitarian access to children last year, which Ms. Gamba called “by far most worrisome trend in 2019”.

It also painted a picture of frequent violence against humanitarian workers, along with aggressions to impede their work in providing basic assistance to children, such as looting supplies and restricting movements, among many other disruptions.

The document spotlighted Yemen, Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Syria, Israel and Palestine as the most worrying situations.

Disrespect shown to fundamental rights within schools and hospitals is also extremely concerning, particularly in Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine and Syria where some 927 verified incidents of attacks were reported.

As a direct result of attacks, or closures for military use, millions of children during 2019 were deprived of both an education and effective healthcare.

"I call on all parties to conflict to immediately prioritize humanitarian access to children and vulnerable populations in situations of armed conflict, and to allow child protection experts and humanitarians to do their work", said the Special Representative.

## Sexual exploitation

Throughout 2019, boys and girls continued to endure sexual violence and although 735 cases had been verified, according to the brief, these violations are vastly underreported.

Factors, such as impunity for perpetrators, and lack of access to justice; fear of stigma and lack of services for survivors; are largely the cause of under-reporting.

The largest verified incidents are occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and CAR.

"I commend the courage and dedication of these humanitarian professionals and call on all Member States to support the work of child protection actors in the field", said Ms. Gamba.

## Disrespecting boundaries

The cross-border nature of conflict is also greatly disturbing, including in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions.

To address the plight and vulnerability of girls and boys in Burkina Faso – where terrorist-related and inter-communal violence is rising fast - and Cameroon, the Secretary-General will include both, for the first time, as situations of concern in his upcoming report.

The Special Representative expressed the readiness of her office in continuing to support children throughout the regions.

## Raising the alarm

Another cause for alarm is that 2,500 children are detained for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, including possible associations with those designated by the UN as terrorists.



“ Denial of humanitarian access to children 'by far most worrisome trend in 2019' -- UN envoy ”

The Special Representative reminded that children must be treated primarily as victims; that detention is used only for the shortest period and as a measure of last resort; and that alternatives to incarceration are actively sought.

“I call on Member States to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of children stranded in camps in Iraq and Syria to their countries of origin or to the countries of origin of their parents”, she concluded.

# Digital tools being used to track people as never before, warns UN rights chief



*Unsplash/Ian Usher A drone flies over Mount Tamalpais in the United States.*

25 June 2020, UN News - The internet and new digital tools are being manipulated as never before to infringe on people's right to free assembly, the UN's top rights official said on Thursday, in a call for a moratorium on the use of facial recognition technology during peaceful demonstrations.

Amid global protests against systemic racism, corruption and economic woes exacerbated by the [COVID-19](#) crisis, High Commissioner for Human Rights [Michelle Bachelet](#) also expressed concern about the use of non-lethal weapons against demonstrators.

These emerging devices include pepper ball launchers, acoustic weapons and drones and other "autonomous systems" that release tear gas, Ms. Bachelet's Office, [OHCHR](#), said in a report, mandated by the UN [Human Rights Council](#).

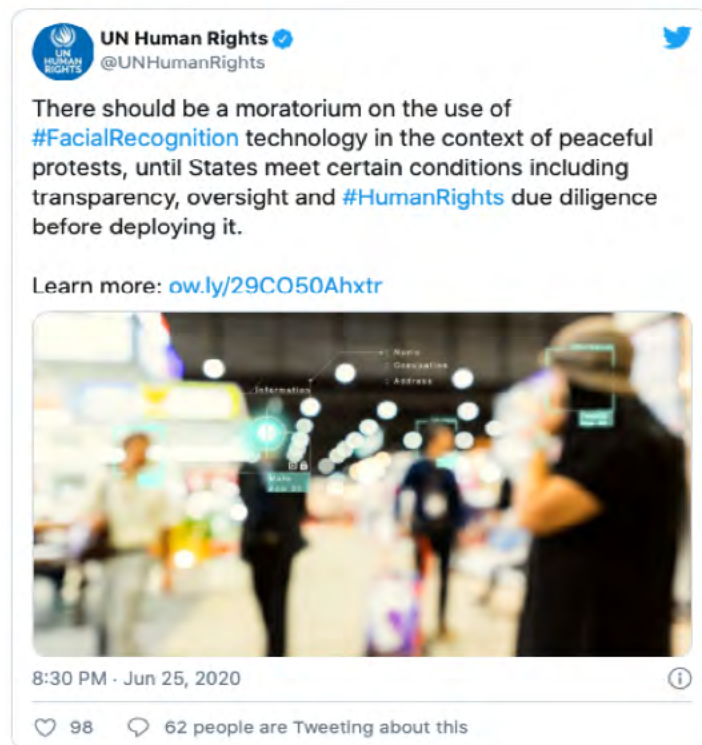
The High Commissioner urged States and businesses to ensure that these and other fast-developing technologies are developed and used in ways that do not disrupt and prevent people's participation in public affairs.

"New technologies can be used to mobilize and organize peaceful protests, form networks and coalitions...thus driving social change", Ms. Bachelet said, a former two-term president of her native Chile. "But, as we have seen, they can be – and are being – used to restrict and infringe on protesters' rights, to surveil and track them, and invade their privacy."

## Training call

In a call for mandatory training for law-enforcement personnel on the use of crowd control weapons - and accountability for rights violations related to their misuse - the High Commissioner explained that they "can kill if ...improperly used, whether deliberately or accidentally".





According to [OHCHR](#) protests took place in some 80 countries around the world in 2019, with many grievances at the core of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

This year, people in thousands of cities worldwide took to the streets in the wake of the death in the U.S. of George Floyd, whose death on 25 May in Minneapolis was captured on video, while a police officer knelt on his neck for over eight minutes.

## More facial recognition

In a worrying development, more States are increasingly using facial recognition technology to identify protesters, “sometimes in real time”, said OHCHR’s Peggy Hicks, Director of Thematic Engagement.

This was despite the fact that the technology was allegedly “prone to errors”, she continued, urging its proportionate use.

“That means in this context that misidentification could lead to wrongful arrest for example, or prosecution. These risks we know are substantially greater for women and people of colour, raising the likelihood that facial recognition technology may perpetuate and amplify discrimination.”

## Calls blocked, accounts hacked

It was also deeply concerning that protesters faced having their cell phone calls intercepted or blocked by “many” police forces, or their social media accounts hacked and systematically monitored.

“Too often authorities have viewed peaceful assemblies as something that needs to be controlled or managed, rather than as critical vehicles for public participation in democracy”, Ms. Hicks told journalists via video conference in Geneva.

Among its recommendations, the OHCHR report urged States to avoid resorting to internet shutdowns, which happened during at least 65 protests in 2019.

Addressing the fact that only around half of the world's people have access to the internet today, Ms. Bachelet also insisted that it was “crucial” that States ensure secure and affordable online access for everyone.

“Given the importance of the enjoyment of the right of peaceful assembly for democracies, and the role Internet-based technologies can play, it is crucial that States close the digital divide and ensure the greatest number of people possible can get secure, affordable Internet access”, the High Commissioner said.

# Terrorist groups must not be allowed to exploit ‘fragilities’ caused by global health pandemic



**Photo: UNODC** Many countries continue to face terrorism threats during the global pandemic. (file)

6 July 2020, UN News - As COVID-19 continues to disrupt the world's health systems, economies and local communities, the UN Secretary-General on Monday highlighted how the pandemic has laid bare vulnerabilities to “new and emerging forms of terrorism”, such as cyberattacks, bioterrorism and the misuse of digital technology.

While the [coronavirus](#) has put the international community in the crosshairs of a crisis like no other since the founding of the United Nations 75 years ago, António Guterres noted that “like the virus, terrorism does not respect national borders”.

“It affects all nations and can only be defeated collectively”, he said, opening the second annual gathering of UN and international experts known as [Counter-Terrorism Week](#), held virtually this year, with a call to “harness the power of multilateralism to find practical solutions”.

Acknowledging that it is “too early to fully assess the implications of [COVID-19](#) on the terrorism landscape” the UN chief [told](#) the first of series of virtual interactive discussions

on strategic and practical challenges of countering terrorism during a global pandemic that ISIL, Al-Qaida, neo-Nazis and other hate groups “seek to exploit divisions, local conflicts, governance failures and grievances to advance their objectives”.

## Guiding the fight

Mr. Guterres highlighted five areas to guide counter terrorism, beginning with keeping up the momentum.

“This includes continuing to invest in national, regional and global counter-terrorism capabilities, especially for countries most in need of assistance”, he said.

Evolving terrorist threats and trends must also be closely monitored and met with innovative responses that have not only the right technology, tools and concepts to stay ahead of terrorists but that are gender sensitive and recognize that violent misogyny lies at the heart of many groups.

“Full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law is essential, the Secretary-General stated,

adding, “the fight against terrorism must uphold these values or it will never succeed”.

His fourth point flagged the need to tackle the spread of terrorist narratives through pandemic-sensitive, holistic approaches, and he said that non-State actors must not be allowed to exploit the “fissures and fragilities” of rising psycho-social, economic and political stresses, related to the coronavirus.

Throughout the upcoming discussions, victims’ voices will be heard to help prevent violent extremism and build inclusive, resilient societies, said Mr. Guterres.

And finally, he stressed the importance of strengthening information sharing to learn from the experiences and good practices of others in the COVID-19 security landscape, saying that “quality capacity-building assistance to Member States will remain an important pillar” of UN counter-terrorism work.

“We must commit to do more and better”, stated the UN chief. “As in every other area of our mission, our work should be assessed by the difference we make in people’s lives.

In conclusion, Mr. Guterres said that as the discussions over the coming week will feed into next year’s High-Level Counter-Terrorism Week – including the seventh biennial review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the second Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism agencies of Member States, and the inaugural Congress of Victims of Terrorism – the UN will remain “fully committed to advancing our common struggle against terrorism and upholding our common values”.

## **Terrorism issues abound**

Meanwhile, Vladimir Voronkov, the UN Counter-Terrorism chief, stressed in his [opening remarks](#)

that although the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities has been declining since its peak during the rise of ISIL, terrorism remains “a major threat to international peace and security” as some groups are extending their reach into new areas.

With this in mind and amid the expanding work of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) and its partners, as well as that of the Security Council, he said the UN is implementing more than 300 counter-terrorism capacity-building projects around the world, including 50 overseen by his Office, benefitting 72 countries.

“I think it is therefore safe to say that the United Nations is contributing to the efforts of many Member States and international actors to effectively address the threat of terrorism,” Mr. Vonkov stated.

And while he said COVID-19 has not changed this positive trend, he cautioned that “we must stay vigilant as terrorists are using innovative tactics and tools to exploit vulnerabilities and conditions conducive to terrorism, many of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.”

Picking up that thread, Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)) underlined that detention sites must be addressed, noting that radicalization to violence in prison settings represented a “potential breeding ground” for terrorists as well as the spread of COVID-19.

The deputy chief of UN Women, Åsa Regnér, saw the Covid19 response as “an opportunity to reset counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism interventions by recognizing and valuing the role women play at the local level during crisis and emergencies and improving inclusivity of women in emergency plans decision making processes”.



# UNAIDS report: COVID-19 pandemic derails 2020 HIV targets



© **UNICEF/Hiraj Singh** Counsellors talk with the mother of a nine-year-old boy at a Pediatrics Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Centre at a hospital in Mumbai, India.

6 July 2020, UN News - HIV targets set for 2020 will not be reached, owing in part to deeply unequal access to antiretroviral therapy and service disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new UNAIDS report released on Monday.

The report – [Seizing the Moment](#) – warns that the remarkable achievements made in the fight to end AIDS have not been shared equally within and between countries.

Moreover, decades of hard-won gains could be lost if the world fails to act.

Missed targets have resulted in more than 3.5 million HIV infections and 820,000 AIDS-related deaths since 2015 than if the world was on track to meet the 2020 targets. And the global AIDS response could be set back by 10 years or more if COVID-19 disrupts HIV services.

“Every day in the next decade, decisive action is needed to get the world back on track to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030,” said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “The progress made by many needs to be shared by all communities in all countries.”

## Prevention efforts lagging

The world is far behind in preventing new HIV infections, the report finds. Some 1.7 million people were newly infected, reflecting more than three times the global target.

While progress has been made in eastern and southern Africa, where new infections have fallen by 38 per cent since 2010, eastern Europe and central Asia have seen a staggering 72 per cent rise in new HIV infections since 2010. New infections also rose by 22 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa, and by 21 per cent in Latin America.

“The HIV epidemic remains enormous, unfinished business,” [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) says in the report’s preface. “Gender inequalities, gender-based violence and the criminalization and marginalization of vulnerable groups continue to drive HIV forward.”

Indeed, the report finds that marginalized populations who fear judgement, violence or arrest struggle to access sexual and reproductive health services - especially those related to contraception and HIV prevention. And stigma against people living with HIV is still commonplace, with 82 countries criminalizing some form of HIV transmission, exposure or non-disclosure.

## **Women, girls most affected**

Women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be the most affected, accounting for 59 per cent of all new HIV infections in the region in 2019, with 4,500 adolescent girls and young women between 15 and 24 years old becoming infected every week.

Despite making up only 10 per cent of the population there, young women accounted for 24 per cent of new HIV infections.

However, transmission levels are reduced significantly in areas where HIV services are comprehensively provided, and high combination prevention options coverage have also narrowed inequality gaps and driven down incidences.

## **A clarion call**

The COVID-19 pandemic has already seriously impacted the AIDS response and threatens further interruption.

A six-month HIV treatment disruption could cause more than 500,000 additional deaths in sub-Saharan Africa between 2020 and 2021, bringing the region back to 2008 AIDS mortality levels, according to the report. And even a 20 per cent disruption could trigger an additional 110,000 deaths.

To fight the two colliding epidemics, UNAIDS and its partners are leading a global call for a “people’s vaccine for COVID-19, demanding that all vaccines, treatments and tests be patent-free, mass produced and distributed fairly and free for all”.

UNAIDS is also urging countries to bump-up investments in both diseases.

# New UN report outlines ways to curb growing spread of animal-to-human diseases



**ILRI/Barbara Wieland** Researchers from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) work to control bird flu in Indonesia.

6 July 2020, UN News - As the battle against COVID-19 rages, the world can expect to see other diseases that pass from animals to humans emerge, according to a new UN report launched on Monday, which maintains that there is still time to head off potential zoonotic pandemics.

[Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission](#) identifies seven trends driving the increasing emergence of [zoonotic diseases](#), including a growing demand for animal protein, unsustainable farming practices and the global climate crisis.

It also sets out 10 practical steps that nations can take right now, including expanded research into zoonotic diseases, improved monitoring and regulation of food systems, and incentivizing sustainable land management practices.

In particular, the report recommends that governments adopt a “One Health” approach that brings together public health, veterinary and environmental expertise to prevent and respond to zoonotic disease outbreaks.

Preventing the Next Pandemic is a joint effort by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), both based in Nairobi.

## Zoonoses Day

The report was published on World Zoonoses Day, which commemorates the work of French biologist Louis Pasteur who, on 6 July 1885, successfully administered the first vaccine against the zoonotic disease rabies on a nine-year-old boy who had been badly mauled by a dog.

“The science is clear that if we keep exploiting wildlife and destroying our ecosystems, then we can expect to see a steady stream of these diseases jumping from animals to humans in the years ahead,” said UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen.

“Pandemics are devastating to our lives and our economies, and as we have seen over the past months, it is the poorest and the most vulnerable who suffer the most,” she added. “To prevent future outbreaks, we must become much more deliberate about protecting our natural environment.”





## COVID-19, latest in line

As the report explains, [COVID-19](#) is only the latest in a growing number of disease, which – including Ebola, MERS and West Nile

fever – whose spread from animal hosts into human populations has been intensified by anthropogenic pressures, or human impact on the environment.

Excluding the spiraling cost of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic that has so far claimed more than 500,000 lives – every year some two million individuals, mostly in low- and middle-income countries, die from neglected zoonotic diseases.

## Tackling outbreaks

While zoonotic diseases are on the rise worldwide, Africa has the potential to leverage its experience to tackle future outbreaks through approaches that incorporate human, animal and environmental health, according to the report.

“The situation on the continent today is ripe for intensifying existing zoonotic diseases and facilitating the emergence and spread of new ones,” said ILRI Director-General Jimmy Smith. “But with their experiences with Ebola and other emerging diseases, African countries are demonstrating proactive ways to manage disease outbreaks”.

## UN chief weighs in

Welcoming the report, [UN Secretary-General António Guterres](#) called on Monday for a new ambitious framework to protect and sustainably use biodiversity to be adopted.

“To prevent future outbreaks, countries need to conserve wild habitats, promote sustainable agriculture, strengthen food safety standards, monitor and regulate food markets, invest in technology to identify risks, and curb the illegal trade in wildlife,” he said.



**ILRI/Barbara Wieland**  
A researcher from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) collects serum samples from sheep in Horro, Ethiopia.



# Countries fail to protect a billion children from violence each year, UN warns



© **UNICEF/Anush Babajanyan** A five-year-old girl plays in her family's apartment in Kazakhstan, where UNICEF is working to eliminate domestic violence through home visits.

18 June 2020, UN News - Each year, half of the world's children – around one billion youngsters – are affected by physical, sexual or psychological violence because countries fail to follow established strategies to protect them, according to a new UN report issued Thursday.

The [Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children 2020](#) - the first of its kind - charts progress in 155 countries against the “INSPIRE” framework, a set of seven strategies for preventing and responding to violence against children.

Published by the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), and the UN [Special Representative](#) for ending Violence against Children – with the End of Violence Partnership - it finds that while nearly all countries (88 per cent) have laws in place to protect minors, less than half (47 per cent) say they strongly enforce them.

## Central to our ‘collective health’

“Protecting the health and wellbeing of children is central to protecting our collective health and wellbeing,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, stressing that there is never any excuse for such violence. “We have evidence-based tools to prevent it, which we urge all countries to implement.”

The report also includes the first-ever global homicide estimates specifically for children under 18 years old. It finds that 40,000 children were victims of homicide in 2017.

With the [COVID-19](#) pandemic ongoing, lockdowns, school closures and movement restrictions have left far too many children stuck with their abusers, said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta

Fore. “It is urgent to scale up efforts to protect children during these times and beyond, including by designating social service workers as essential and strengthening child helplines.”

## Progress uneven

Of the INSPIRE strategies, access to schools through enrollment showed the most progress, with 54 per cent of countries reporting that a sufficient number of children in need were being reached in this way.

However, while most countries (83 per cent) have national data on violence against children, only 21 per cent use them to set baselines and national targets to prevent and respond to such abuse.

Similarly, 80 per cent of countries have national action plans and policies, yet only one-fifth have plans that are fully funded or have measurable targets. A lack of funding and inadequate professional capacity are likely reasons why implementation has been slow.

UNESCO Director-General [Audrey Azoulay](#) said there has also been a rise in violence and hate online, making children fearful of going back to school as [COVID-19](#) restrictions begin to lift. “We need to think and act collectively to stop violence at school and in our societies at large”, she added.

A “unified, child rights and multisectoral framework for action for children is critical”, said Special Representative [Najat Maalla M’jid](#), one that requires the full engagement of Governments, donors, civil society, the private sector and children themselves.

## Accelerating action

For its part, WHO and its partners will continue to work with countries to implement the INSPIRE strategies. Global action is needed to ensure that the necessary financial and technical support is available to all countries. Monitoring and evaluation are also crucial to determine the extent to which these prevention efforts are effectively delivered to all who need them.

“Ending violence against children is the right thing to do, a smart investment to make - and it’s possible”, said Howard Taylor of the End Violence Partnership. “We can and must create a world where every child can thrive.”



# World Refugee Day: End conflict that drives ‘appalling’ displacement numbers



© **UNHCR/Vincent Tremeau** A Rohingya refugee family sit in the doorway of their new monsoon-ready shelter in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

19 June 2020, UN News - UN Secretary-General António Guterres has reminded countries of their fundamental obligation to protect the nearly 80 million people worldwide forced to flee their homes due to conflict, persecution and other crises.

In his message to mark World Refugee Day on Saturday, the UN chief also praised those nations and communities hosting refugees and internally displaced people, often amid their own economic and security challenges.

“We owe these countries our thanks, our support and our investment,” he said.

## Record displacement

Global displacement is at a record high, the UN refugee agency, [UNHCR](#), reported on Thursday.

Figures reached 79.5 million in 2019, with 10 million people fleeing in the past year alone.

“On World Refugee Day, we pledge to do everything in our power to end the conflict and persecution that drive these appalling

numbers”, said Mr. Guterres.

## Stepping up to COVID-19

While refugees and internally displaced people are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, the Secretary-General commended them for stepping up on the frontlines of response.

“From camps in Bangladesh to hospitals in Europe, refugees are working as nurses, doctors, scientists, teachers and in other essential roles, protecting themselves and giving back to the communities that host them”, he said.

“On World Refugee Day, we thank refugees for their resourcefulness and determination to rebuild their own lives, and to improve the lives of those around them.”

In a recent policy brief, Mr. Guterres urged governments to ensure “people on the move” are included in pandemic response and recovery.





## A heart for refugees

[UNHCR](#) is hoping people everywhere will ‘have a heart’ for refugees.

The agency has partnered with Twitter and a young Ivorian graphic artist, O’Plérrou Grebet, to launch [the 2020 World Refugee Day emoji](#).

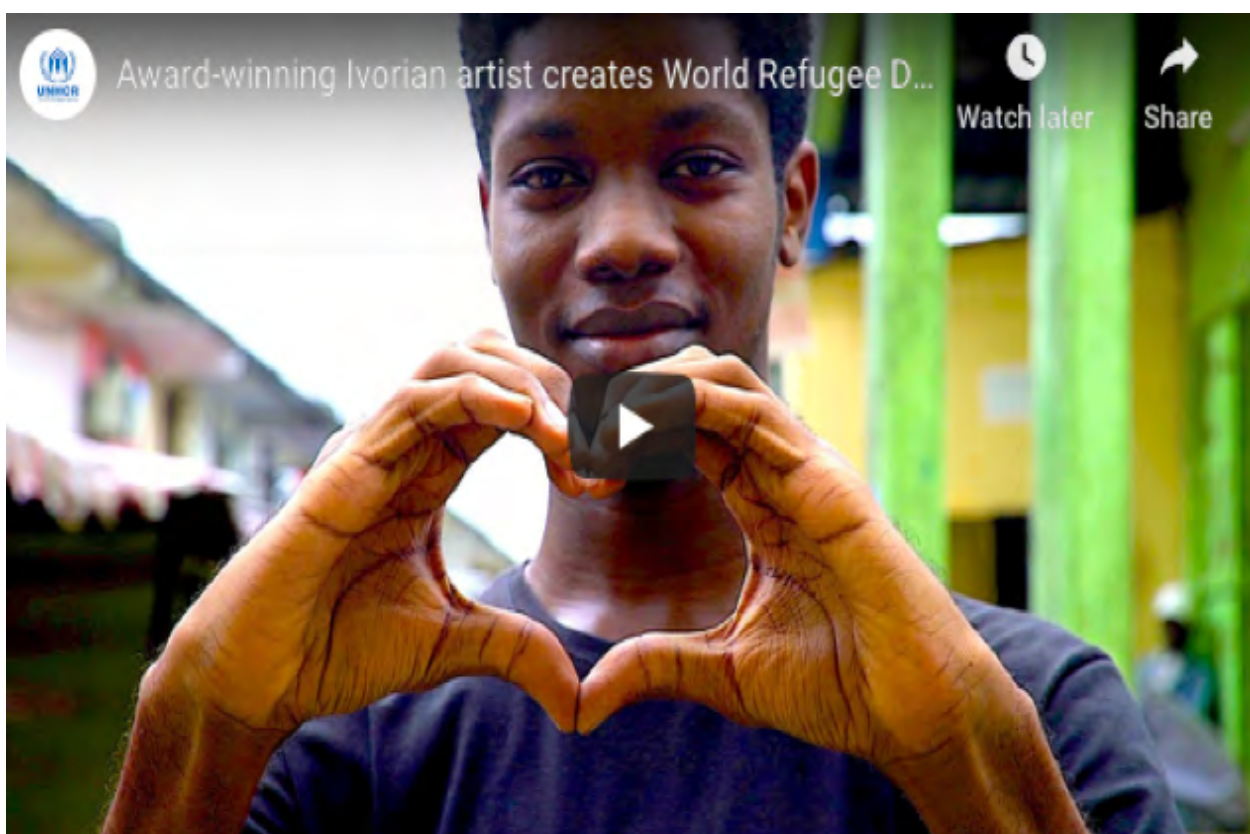
It consists of two different coloured hands

linked together to form a heart, symbolizing solidarity and diversity.

The artist, known professionally as ‘O’Plérrou’, is famous for creating 365 emojis representing elements of life in West Africa. He is also included on Forbes Africa’s list of young talents under 30.

“Refugees are people like everyone else”, he told UNHCR recently. “Just because you find yourself in another country, it does not mean you are worth less. Friends of my parents are refugees. In 2010, there was a crisis in Côte d’Ivoire after the elections. Those who were close to the previous ruling party had to flee for their lives. So, this impacted people I know.”

The emoji will be associated on Twitter with the #WorldRefugeeDay hashtags through 23 June.





# Human Rights Council calls on top UN rights official to take action on racist violence



**UN Photo/Evan Schneider** Protests have been occurring daily in New York City against racism and police violence, following the death of George Floyd.

19 June 2020, UN News - The UN's top rights official, Michelle Bachelet, is to spearhead efforts to address systemic racism against people of African descent by law enforcement agencies, the [Human Rights Council](#) decided on Friday. The resolution – decided unanimously without a vote – follows a rare Urgent Debate in the Council earlier in the week, requested by the African group of nations, following the death of George Floyd in the US state of Minnesota.

The unarmed African-American's death on 25 May was captured on video while a police officer knelt on his neck for over eight minutes in Minneapolis, sparking worldwide protest.

During the debate on racism, alleged police brutality and violence against protesters that preceded the resolution's adoption, no less than 120 speakers took the floor.

Many expressed sympathy for the family of Mr. Floyd, whose brother also addressed Council members in Geneva, in a passionate pre-recorded video message in which he urged the United Nations to act.

## No international probe

Although some delegates had called for an international probe to investigate killings of black people in America, and violence against demonstrators, others maintained that the issue impacted on all nations, and required a broader approach.

In line with the final version of the resolution text, the High Commissioner should “prepare a report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies, especially those incidents that resulted in the death of George Floyd and other Africans and of people of African descent”.

The text also calls on Ms. Bachelet – assisted by UN appointed independent rights experts and committees “to examine government responses to anti-racism peaceful process peaceful protests, including the alleged use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders and journalists”.

Overseeing the resolution, Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger (Austria), President of the [Human Rights Council](#) (14th cycle) announced that the text was ready for their consideration and asked whether a vote could be dispensed with, in light of the general consensus.

### ‘An historic step’

“Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I have been informed that a number of resolutions are ready for adoption during this meeting as shown on the screen...So, I would like to ask if there is a request from anybody for a vote...I see none, so may I take it that the draft proposal L50 as orally revised may be adopted without a vote? It is so decided.”

In his address to Member States as coordinator of the African Group, Dieudonné W. Désiré

Sougouri, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations Office, declared the Urgent Debate “an historic step” in the combat against racism of which the Human Rights Council could be “proud”.

“The international outrage caused by the tragic events that led to the death of George Floyd underlined the urgency and importance for the Human Rights Council to raise its voice against injustice and police brutality which African people and people of African descent are faced with every day in many regions of the world,” he said.

The Council also heard widespread declarations of support for an investigation into violence against protesters supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

### Racism will remain ‘a priority’

“The fight against all forms of racism and racial discrimination remains a priority for us,” said Michael Ungern-Sternberg, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Germany to the United Nations Office at Geneva. “The past weeks, many people around the world raised their voices and took to the streets to send a clear signal that racism and excessive use of force by law enforcement officials against minority populations cannot (any) longer be accepted.”

Other speakers insisted that the resolution was necessary and important in promoting awareness about systemic racism, and in continuing the work of implementing key pledges taken to combat the scourge in 2002 at the Durban World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.



“Black lives matter,” said Ambassador Coly Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Racism continues to happen in many countries too, he said, noting that it was in “flagrant contradiction” to the [UN Charter](#) in which we place our faith in the basic rights of man and in the value of the human person”.

## **UN independent experts voice ‘profound concern’ over US Government accusations of ‘domestic terrorism’**

And in another human rights development concerning the fallout from protests over George Floyd’s death in the US, UN independent experts on Friday [expressed “profound concern”](#) over a recent statement by the US Attorney-General describing the so-called Antifa movement and other anti-fascist activists as “domestic terrorists”, saying it undermines the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly in the country.



“International human rights law protects the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly”, said [Fionnuala Ní Aoláin](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

“It is regrettable that the United States has chosen to respond to the protests in a manner that undermines these fundamental rights.”

Following nationwide demonstrations that began after police in Minneapolis killed African American George Floyd, US Attorney General William Barr warned that alleged violence carried out by Antifa and other movements “is domestic terrorism and will be treated accordingly”, noted the press release issued by the UN rights office, [OHCHR](#).

### **‘Loose use of terrorist rhetoric’**

Although there has not been an legislative action taken following the 31 May statement, Ms. Ní Aoláin – an expert lawyer who worked extensively in the human rights and terrorism-related field in her native Northern Ireland - said that the “the loose use of terrorism rhetoric undermines legitimate protests and dampens freedom of expression in the United States, which has been a

hallmark of US constitutional values, and a beacon far beyond its shores”.

Echoing the unease expressed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding structural race discrimination in the US, particularly in the realm of policing, the Special Rapporteur said that regulating protests and violence through the lens of counter-terrorism may only sharpen divisions and accentuate tensions, fuelling further human rights violations.

The group of independent experts strongly recommend that the violent elements among peaceful protesters who have been identified by law enforcement, be dealt with fairly, and in accordance to due process under existing penal law.

Ms. Ní Aoláin is urging the US Government to take a human rights-based approach in their response to protests and violence and avoid the misuse and misappropriation of the language of terrorism.

“Unless it does, the Government risks cheapening grave crimes that fall under the rubric of terrorism and failing to fulfil fundamental obligations to ensure counter-terrorism measures are fully compliant with international human rights law.”



The [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council constitute the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, and they address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world.

The experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work, as well as being independent from any government or organization.



# New UN report offers blueprint for greener, more resilient world of work



**ILO/Marcel Crozet** *Factory workers in an assembly line in Cambodia.*

19 June 2020, UN News - Jobs, livelihoods and the well-being of workers, families and businesses across the globe, continue to take a hit from the COVID-19 pandemic; with micro, small and medium enterprises in particular, suffering the dire economic consequences, according to a new policy brief released by the UN on Friday.

“The [COVID-19](#) pandemic has turned the world of work upside down”, said [Secretary-General António Guterres](#). “Every worker, every business and every corner of the globe has been affected. Hundreds of millions of jobs have been lost”.

Vulnerable groups are particularly affected, including informal workers, young people, women, persons with disabilities, refugees and migrants, highlights the World of Work and COVID-19 .

The report reveals the disproportionate and devastating impact on young people, raising the possibility of an entire so-called “lockdown generation”, which will likely emerge with fewer skills and smaller pay packets.

In addition to young women, who are at particular risk, this also threatens to increase inequalities, both within and between countries.

“Women have been especially hard hit – working in many of the most critically affected sectors, while also carrying the greatest burden of increasing levels of unpaid care work”, stated the UN chief. “Young people, persons with disabilities, and so many others, are facing tremendous difficulties”.



## Economic reset

Meanwhile, high levels of informal work coupled with inadequate fiscal support for equal social protections, leave developing and fragile economies in the lurch, least able to cope.

A reset to the past is not an option, the report spells out, endorsing a recovery that tackles underlying deficits in social protection, unpaid care work, labor rights protection and risks associated with new technologies.

“It is time for a coordinated global, regional and national effort to create decent work for all as the foundation of a green, inclusive and resilient recovery”, stressed the world’s top diplomat.

## Three-stage approach

Against this backdrop, World of Work lays out a three-phased response, which recommends, in the short-term, keeping businesses open and jobs available. It contends that interventions be built on existing structures, while steering activity towards sustainable ‘green’ development.

Without compromising the health of workers or becoming less vigilant in the battle to contain the virus, the second phase focuses on the medium term and encourages a structured restart of economies and a return to work.

“Protecting health does not mean keeping enterprises and economic activity locked down”, the report advises.

And the final phase considers the long-term, pushing for the creation of decent jobs that support a green, resilient recovery and an inclusive future of work, that invests in social protections and increasing formalization of the workforce.

### A glance at the key numbers

- Some 1.25 billion workers are employed in high-risk economic sectors, such food and accommodation; retail and wholesale; business services and administration; and manufacturing.
- While almost one in five young people are out of work through COVID, those employed have had their hours cut by 23 per cent.
- Women are disproportionately employed in the worst-affected sectors, including caring professions, where they make up between 60-70 per cent.
- Informal economy workers, who often lack social protection, suffered a 60 per cent drop in earnings in the first month of the crisis, alone.
- By mid-May, 94 per cent of the world’s workers were living in countries suffering workplace closures.

## Looking ahead

Pre-pandemic fears over existing challenges, such as new technologies, demographic changes, climate change and globalization, were already fueling anxiety the world over, the report argues.

[COVID-19](#) is exacerbating this unease by triggering unemployment, growing poverty, the tearing of the social fabric, together with political and economic destabilization.

“This crisis in the world of work is adding fuel to an already burning fire of discontent and

anxiety”, asserted the UN chief.

While the world cannot go backwards to pre-COVID days, it can proactively shape a “new, better, normal” in moving forward, according to the report.

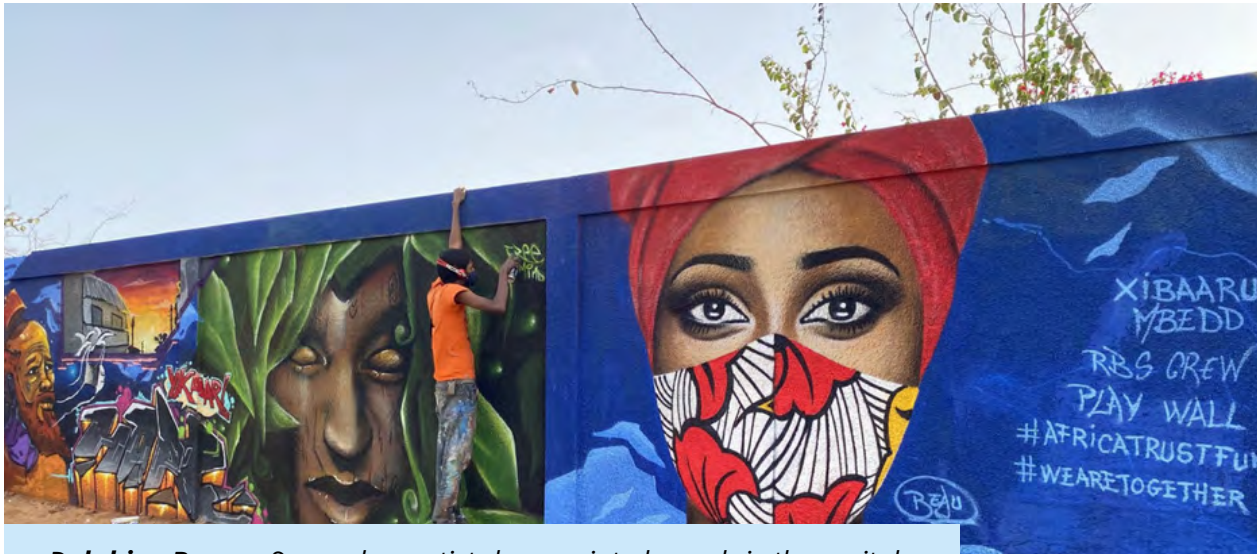
“The world of work cannot and should not look the same after this crisis”, he upheld. “It is time for a coordinated global, regional and national effort to create decent work for all as the foundation of a green, inclusive and resilient recovery”.



**ILO/Yacine Imadalou** A man at work in Algeria wears a face mask to protect himself from COVID-19.



# Painting the post-pandemic world in Senegal



**Delphine Buysse** Senegalese artists have painted murals in the capital, Dakar, to raise awareness about COVID-19.

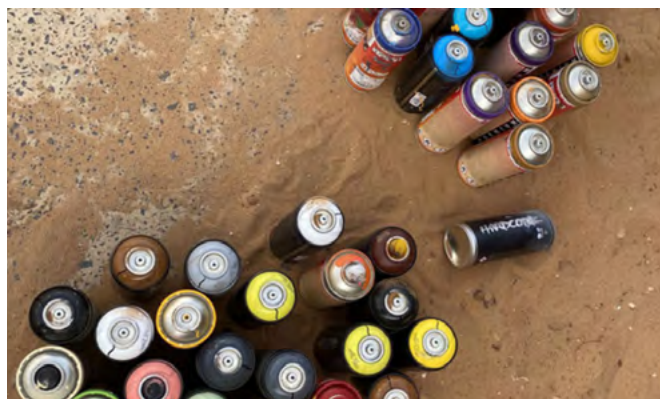
22 June 2020, UN News - A group of mural artists in Senegal is painting its vision of how the world may look after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, whilst providing important information about how, in the meantime, to stay safe from the deadly virus.

Ten muralists from the capital, Dakar, have been supported by the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) and the European Union, to depict issues relating to social distancing, stigmatization and the fight against misinformation.

Their messages are targeting young people and others in two of the city's busiest neighborhoods.

On 19 June, the West African country had 5,475 confirmed cases of [COVID-19](#) with 76 deaths.

Read more [here](#) about how the muralists are spreading positive messages through art.



*A street artist's supplies., by Delphine Buysse*



# Frontline public servants lauded for ‘remarkable acts of service to humankind’



**World Bank/Henitsoa Rafalia** Health workers in Madagascar remind citizens to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

23 June 2020, UN News - As the world continues to grapple with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Monday paid tribute to frontline public sector workers for their “remarkable acts of service to humankind”, marking [Public Service Day](#).

Pointing to the nurses, doctors and paramedics who provide life-saving care; sanitation workers “who disinfect and clean public spaces”; transportation workers who have kept buses and trains running worldwide; teachers and the “public health officials, data managers and statisticians who provide vital and reliable information on the transmission and prevention of the disease”; the UN chief [said](#) selfless public servants had often operated “in dangerous conditions, with high human interaction and without access to personal protective equipment”.

“Some have lost their lives to [COVID-19](#) in the process”, he added.

While honouring essential workers, the top UN official highlighted the importance of better protecting, recognizing and investing in their well-being.

“And I say directly to these inspiring public servants: We are all deeply indebted to you”.

## Boost public service morale

General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande told the virtual gathering that the day offered “a rare opportunity to discuss how to reposition governments and the public service for effective containment of the current and future threats to public safety”.

“In discharging its responsibilities and fulfilling its mandates, the public sector must constantly be guided by the finest principles of public administration, notably, altruism, loyalty, dedication, excellence, integrity, responsiveness, and accountability”, he said.



To contain the spread of fallout from natural disasters, frontline workers need to be permanently ready with containment and mitigating scenarios, and above all, contact tracing and effective public communication should be the highpoints of pandemic control efforts.

“If we learnt any lesson from COVID-19, it is that, in a period of emergency, the proactive and morale-boosting role of the public service remains critical”, he added.

### **Commit to action: WHO chief**

More than ever, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the necessity of robust, responsive and effective public service delivery.

“We have all become acutely aware of the capacity and resilience of public servants, especially the millions of essential workers who keep systems and services functioning”, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) told the virtual celebration event.

And while acknowledging that it is right to applaud and celebrate public sector workers, he asked the question: “What is it that we are doing for others?”

The WHO chief stressed that the pandemic continues to grow and “the number of cases and deaths continues to rise”.

“We have a lot of work to do”, he said, elaborating, among other things, on the need to enhance the capacities of public services, protect them from stigma and harassment, and enable better and stronger regulations to support health workers to deliver safe care for the public.

“This is not just about survival. It is about building back better”, he concluded asking everyone to “commit to action...that empowers and enables health workers as the foundation of the healthier, safer, fairer world we all want”.



# Extreme weather ‘record’ likely in Arctic Circle, says UN weather agency WMO



**UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe** Aerial view of melting glaciers on King George Island, Antarctica. This latest report of an Arctic temperature more typical of the Tropics comes a few months after the Argentine research base, Esperanza, on the northern tip of the Antarctic peninsula, set a new record temperature.

23 June 2020, UN News - [Reports](#) that temperatures in a Russian town in the Arctic Circle likely reached a record 38C (100.4F), last weekend, have been approved by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) pending final verification, it said on Tuesday.

“The WMO is seeking to verify reports of a new temperature record north of the Arctic circle”, WMO spokesperson Clare Nullis told journalists in Geneva. “It was reported in the Russian town of Verkhoyansk amid a prolonged Siberian heatwave and increase in wildfire activity.”

If the Russian authorities confirm the temperature observation taken last Saturday, WMO will then refer the finding for a further detailed review by an international panel of experts, Ms. Nullis explained.

The region of Eastern Siberia now in the spotlight is known for its weather extremes in winter and in summer, with temperatures above 30C (86F) not unusual in July.

This latest report of an Arctic temperature more typical of the Tropics comes a few months after the Argentine research base, Esperanza, on the northern tip of the Antarctic peninsula, set a new record temperature of 18.4C (65.3F) on 6 February. Arctic heating up twice as fast

According to WMO, the Arctic is heating at roughly twice the global average. The heat spike follows a prolonged Siberian heatwave and wildfire period, Ms. Nullis explained, after an unusually warm spring that was also characterised by a lack of snow.





**António Guterres** ✓  
@antonioгутеррес



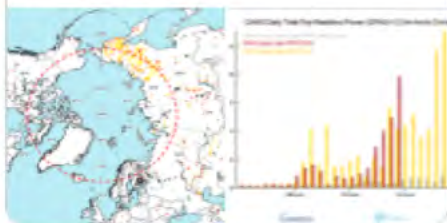
Temperatures in the Arctic Circle appear to have reached a record high over the weekend.

Our planet is sending us a clear warning. The need for immediate and ambitious [#ClimateAction](#) is more urgent than ever.



**World Meteorological ...** ✓

🔥 Amid abnormally high temperatures, the number & intensity of [#wildfires](#) in NE [#Siberia](#)/[#Arctic Circle](#) has in last few days, per [#Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service](#) Daily total intensity is at similar levels to 2019 says [@m\\_parrington](#) [blt.ly/2YkbwLY](#)



4:15 AM · Jun 23, 2020



1.8K



1.3K people ar...

Data from WMO shows that May was about 10C (18.5F) above average in many parts of Siberia, “and it was this extraordinary heat which actually drove, made the warmest May on record for...the northern hemisphere, and also we think at a global level as well”, said Ms. Nullis.

According to WMO, air temperatures in the Arctic from 2016 to 2019 were the highest on record.

## Sea ice declines

Equally worrying, the volume of Arctic sea ice in September 2019 – after the melting season - declined by more than 50 per cent, compared to the average from 1979 to 2019.

WMO’s verification process involves requesting additional information from the Russian meteorological service Roshydromet, including the readings, the type of equipment used and how the observation corresponds to others taken by surrounding weather stations.

“Those data will then be very carefully examined by an international panel of atmospheric scientists who, once they discussed it, will make a recommendation as to whether or not the observation is valid,” said Professor Randall Cerveny, WMO Rapporteur, in a statement.

He added: “The end result will be incredibly valuable information that will help climate scientists better understand climate, engineers and medical doctors better prepare for climate extremes and even the general public in achieving a better appreciation of climate change across this planet.”



# ‘Historic’ Caribbean dust storm shows value of forecast services: UN weather agency



**WMO** A dust storm which originated in the Sahara in Africa has arrived in the Caribbean.

26 June 2020, UN News - A massive dust storm currently blanketing many parts of the Caribbean, posing a significant threat to regional health, has revealed the importance of having effective warning systems in place, the World Meteorological Office ([WMO](#)) said on Friday.

The storm arrived in the Eastern Caribbean from North Africa last week, affecting a wide area so far, spanning from the northern coast of South America to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico.

## Daily life affected

“Sand and dust storms are severe hazards that can affect weather, climate, the environment, health, economies, transport and agriculture in many parts of the world”, [said](#) Dr. Oksana Tarasova, Head of WMO’s Atmospheric Environment Research Division.

“The ongoing dust storm, which has affected daily life in the Caribbean, shows the importance of forecast and warning services.”

## ‘Hazardous’ air quality levels

Although dust blows from Africa across the Atlantic every year, the UN weather agency said this year’s event has been particularly intense and extensive.

The dust storm has darkened skies, contaminated rainwater and greatly reduced visibility. It also poses a significant health hazard.

Countries such as Martinique, Guadeloupe and Puerto Rico have reported air quality levels in the “hazardous” category, with record values of PM10 – a particulate matter which can cause respiratory problems and disease.

Concentrations reported in Puerto Rico are at the highest level observed in the last 20 years.

Scientists at the University of Puerto Rico have also observed record high levels of aerosol optical thickness, or the measure of tiny solid or liquid particles in the air, such as dust, sea salt, or pollution from factories.

“This is a dust event of truly historic proportions”, said Professor Olga L. Mayol-Bracero at the University of Puerto Rico, and her counterpart, Dr. Andrea Sealy, meteorologist with the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology.

## Natural and man-made causes

Sand and dust storms are common in arid and semi-arid regions of the world. They are usually caused by thunderstorms, which create strong winds that can transport large amounts of sand and dust thousands of kilometres away.

Every year, around 2,000 million tons of dust enters the Earth’s atmosphere, according to WMO. While much of this occurs naturally,

a large part is due to poor water and land management.

WMO on Friday released the latest edition of its annual [Airborne Dust Bulletin](#) which found that mineral dust concentrations last year generally were similar to 2018 levels.

Through its Sand and Dust Storm – Warning Advisory and Assessment System ([SDS-WAS](#)), the UN agency provides operational forecasting aimed at reducing impacts on the environment, health and economies.

It has regional centres providing forecasts for Asia, Northern Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

# COVID-19's far reaching impact on global drug abuse



25 June 2020, UN News - More than 35 million people around the world now suffer from drug addiction, according to the latest annual report on the scourge, from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) [released](#) on Thursday, which also analyzes the far-reaching impact of the coronavirus pandemic on global drug markets.

According to [UNODC's](#) World Drug Report 2020, some 269 million people abused drugs in 2018 – a 30 per cent jump from 2009.

“Vulnerable and marginalized groups, youth, women and the poor pay the price for the world drug problem”, UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly said.

## Health pandemic/drug epidemic

While the impact of [COVID-19](#) on illegal drug supplies is not yet fully known, border and other restrictions linked to the pandemic have already caused drug shortages on the street, that have diminished purity, while leading to price hikes.

Meanwhile rising unemployment and plummeting opportunities are expected to disproportionately affect the poorest, making them more vulnerable to drug use, trafficking and cultivation, to earn money so they can survive the global recession.

“The [COVID-19](#) crisis and economic downturn threaten to compound drug dangers further still, when our health and social systems have been brought to the brink and our societies are struggling to cope”, added Ms. Waly, a former Egyptian Government minister, who was appointed to the top job at [UNODC](#) last November.

## Pandemic storm clouds

As COVID-19 is prompting traffickers to find new routes and methods, illicit activities via the so-called 'darknet' and shipments by mail, may increase, according to the report.

And because the pandemic has led to highly-addictive opioid shortages, people may seek out more readily available substances, including alcohol, sedatives or by using more harmful delivery methods, such as intravenous injection.

If Governments react as they did to the 2008 economic crisis by reducing drug-related policy interventions; prevention, and treatment services; the report says that opioid addiction counter-measures could be particularly impacted.

## Cannabis trending

Against the backdrop of legalized cannabis in some countries, and regions such as some states in the US, the report notes that frequent use has increased, along with the wider availability of higher-potency products in some markets.

And based on data from 69 countries covering the period between 2014 and 2018, cannabis accounts for more than half of all drug offences registered.

## Socio-economic impacts

While the availability of medical opioids varies across the globe, the report points out that low-income countries still suffer a critical shortage of therapeutics for pain management and palliative care.

In 2018, more than 90 per cent of pharmaceutical opioids were made available for just 12 per cent of the global population, based in high-income countries. Meanwhile, 88 per cent of the global population in low and middle-income countries consumed less than 10 per cent.

Legislation, culture, health systems and prescribing practices, are all important factors in accessing pharmaceutical opioids, the report says.

At the same time, poverty, limited education and social marginalization, not only increase the risk of drug addiction but are areas in which marginalized groups may face discrimination and stigma in getting effective treatment.

"We need all Governments to show greater solidarity and provide support, to developing countries most of all, to tackle illicit drug trafficking and offer evidence-based services for drug use disorders and related diseases, so we can achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), promote justice and leave no one behind," concluded the [UNODC](#) chief.

### Drug usage

- Cannabis was consumed most widely in 2018, with an estimated 192 million users globally.
- Opioids are the most deadly drug being misused, with a 71 per cent jump in deaths over the past decade, registering increases of 92 per cent among women and 63 per cent among men.
- Drug use increased more rapidly within developing countries over the 2000-2018 period, than in developed countries.
- Adolescents and young adults account for the largest share of those using drugs.



# Speak out against torture, an ‘abhorrent denial of human dignity’, urges UN chief



**UN Women/Ryan Brown** After surviving military enslavement in Guatemala, Maria Ba Caal received help through an emergency grant from the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

26 June 2020, UN News - Torture is an “egregious abuse of human rights”, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said on Friday, the [International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture](#).

Although international law “unequivocally prohibits torture in all instances”, the UN chief [pointed out](#) that it nevertheless continues in many countries, “even those where it is criminalized”.

Torture seeks to annihilate a victim’s personality and denies a human being of his or her inherent dignity.

## No justification

Concerns about protecting national security and borders are increasingly used to allow torture and other forms of cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment.

And its pervasive consequences often go

beyond the isolated act on an individual to be transmitted through generations, leading to cycles of violence.

From the outset, the UN has condemned it as one of the vilest acts perpetrated by human beings on their fellow human beings.

“On this International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture, human rights defenders and survivors of torture around the world take the opportunity to speak out against this abhorrent denial of human dignity and they act to remember and support its victims”, Mr. Guterres said in his message.

## No legal basis

Torture is absolutely banned under all relevant legal instruments and cannot be justified under any circumstances.

Its prohibition forms part of customary international law, which means that it is

binding on every member of the international community, regardless of whether a State has ratified international treaties that expressly prohibit the practice or not, according to the UN.

Moreover, the systematic or widespread practice of torture constitutes a crime against humanity.

“Torture diminishes everyone and everything that it touches, including torturers and the systems and States where it occurs”, maintained the top UN official. “Torturers must never be allowed to get away with their crimes, and systems that enable torture should be dismantled or transformed”.

## Recovery

To transition from horror to healing, victims of torture require prompt and specialized programmes.

“Victims and survivors and their families must be empowered and assisted to seek justice for their ordeal”, Mr. Guterres asserted.

The [UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture](#), channels funding to assist victims of torture and their families by awarding hundreds of grants to civil society organizations worldwide for medical, psychological, legal, social and other assistance.

It contributes to the rehabilitation, reparation, empowerment and access to remedies for nearly 50,000 torture survivors each year.

“To that end, I commend the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and call for its replenishment”, added the UN chief.

The dedicated day offers an opportunity for everyone, everywhere, to unite in support of the hundreds of thousands of people around the world who have been tortured and those who are still being abused today.

“On this International Day, let us honour the victims of torture and commit to work to achieve a world where such abuse cannot happen”, the Secretary-General concluded.



# Global partners require \$31 billion to speed up COVID-19 medicines for all



**MINUSCO** As part of the information campaign on COVID-19, the commander of the Bangladeshi medical contingent at the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, encourages local contractors to wear protection masks.

26 June 2020, UN News - More than \$31 billion is needed over the next 12 months to develop medicines that will be effective against COVID-19, and make them available to all people, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and partners said on Friday.

Ahead of a major pledging summit, they updated journalists on a recently announced initiative to speed up production of these treatments, known as [the Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#).

“It’s clear that to bring [COVID-19](#) under control, and to save lives, we need effective vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics – in unprecedented quantities and at unprecedented speed”, [said WHO](#) chief Tedros Adhanom.

## Access for all

The ACT-Accelerator was launched at the end of April, bringing together governments, health organizations, scientists, businesses, civil society and philanthropists.

Members work across four pillars: diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, and what they call “the health system connector”.

They have outlined [a plan](#) that sees low- and middle-income countries receiving 500 million diagnostic tests, 245 million courses of treatments, and two billion vaccine doses, before the end of next year.



## Race for a vaccine

WHO this week warned that the global COVID-19 caseload was approaching 10 million. So far, more than 484,000 people have died from the disease.

A safe and effective vaccine is the only way to prevent further spread and transmission of the new [coronavirus](#), according to Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist at WHO.

Although it normally takes up to 10 years to develop and manufacture a vaccine, the partners are looking to significantly shorten that timeline.

“We’re aiming for 12, maximum of 18 months. And that would be unprecedented”, said Dr. Swaminathan.

“The good news is we have over 200 candidates at some stage of clinical development; about 15 of them are actually now in human clinical trials.”

## ACT now

WHO and partners will need \$31.3 billion to achieve their goals. So far, \$3.4 billion has been received.

“This is an investment worth making, more than any other we can think of”, said Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, one of the two Special Envoys for the ACT-Accelerator.

“If we don’t rally now, the human costs and economic pain will deepen. So, though these numbers sound big, they are not when we think of the alternatives.”

The European Commission will host a pledging summit on Saturday to support the initiative.

It will be followed by a concert organized jointly with the advocacy group Global Citizen, hosted by American actor, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson.

**World Health Organization (WHO)** · Jun 26, 2020  
Replying to @WHO

The Access to **#COVID19** Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator) will end the pandemic faster by ensuring that the tools developed are allocated rationally & equitably around the world, maximizing the chances of global success of finally ending the pandemic



**ACT-Accelerator update**  
The tools developed will benefit the whole world, and by saving lives and reducing severe COVID-...  
[@who.int](#)

**World Health Organization (WHO)** @WHO

The Access to **#COVID19** Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator) is led by the work of partner organizations collaborating under **4** pillars:

- 1 diagnostics
- 2 therapeutics
- 3 vaccines
- 4 strengthening health systems

[bit.ly/3i6tzx2](https://bit.ly/3i6tzx2)



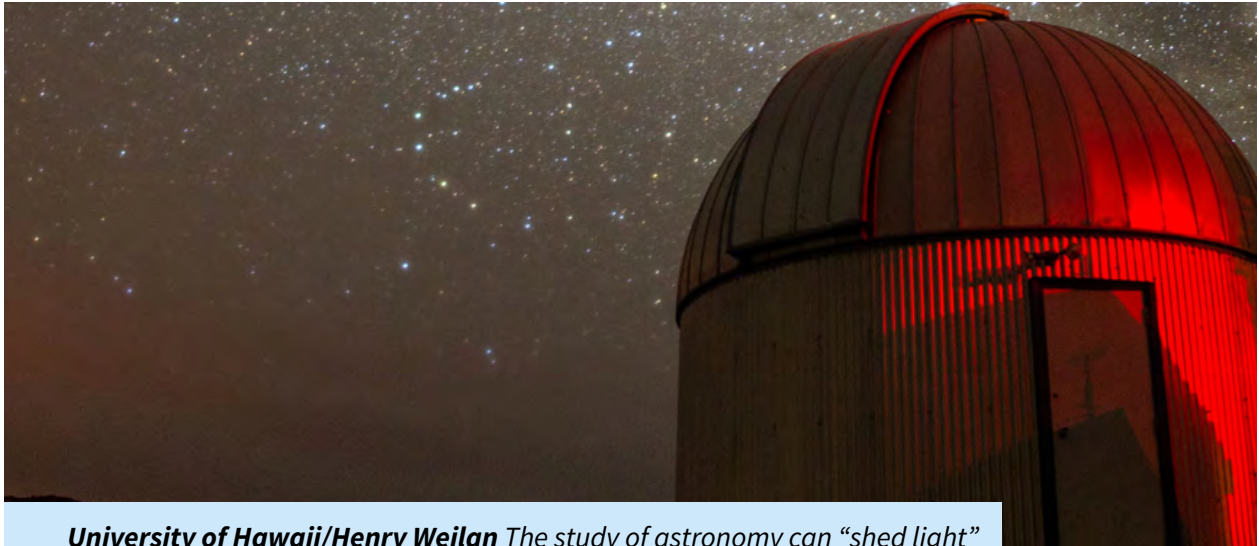
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# First Person: Looking to the skies to understand the climate crisis



**University of Hawaii/Henry Weilan** *The study of astronomy can “shed light” light on the challenges the planet faces from climate change.*

29 June 2020, UN News - Could studying the cosmos help us to fight the climate crisis? Two astronomers at the University of Hawaii think that knowledge of the solar system may help to slow down the warming of the Earth’s atmosphere.

Professor John Tonry leads the NASA-funded ATLAS (Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System) project which bills itself as “Earth’s Last Defence.” He works alongside postdoctoral researcher Ari Heinz.

Their work could play an important role in the global debate about climate change and, as a result, contribute to realizing some of the 17 goals [Sustainable Development Goals](#) agreed by the global community to reduce poverty and create a sustainable planet.

UN News joined the International Labour Organization on a visit to Hawaii to meet the two astronomers ahead of International Asteroid Day marked annually on 30 June.

John Tonry: I really like big questions; like, where did the universe come from and where is it going? One way to continue answering those

types of questions was to create this asteroid survey. Our job is to track asteroid hazards and calculate if and when they will hit Earth. We have the technology to measure these events beautifully. The chances of being hit by an asteroid in the next year is very small, but in the next 100 years, it’s not so small and that could result in many deaths. So, we see an asteroid strike as a low probability but high consequence event.

Ari Heinz: While most of our surveys focus on larger asteroids that we can see decades, or even a century, before they hit Earth, ATLAS focuses on smaller asteroids, which wouldn’t cause global devastation, but which could destroy a city, and which we can only detect when they are close to Earth. If ATLAS discovers that kind of asteroid, then we would treat it like, for example, a hurricane and advise a city or state to evacuate, because there’s going to be a big explosion there.

JT: 20 years ago, we couldn’t purchase the computers we use nowadays, as they were hopelessly expensive. The cameras and telescopes that we’re building now simply weren’t possible even 10 years ago, and we have

developed the software to match the hardware capabilities.

AH: The threat of asteroids although small, certainly motivates me to be careful and try not to miss anything. There's a strange paradox here. We're sort of laid back in the asteroid community, we're trying hard but we're not under a lot of stress in general, but then we understand that at any moment, we could suddenly be some of the most important people in the world for a short amount of time.

JT: Astronomy can play an important role in understanding climate change. It's possible that the sun actually goes through century-long cycles: it's crucial to understand how the sun behaves, and we have just built a new telescope to look at its surface.

ILO Photo/Kevin Cassidy John Tonry (left) and Ari Heinz work on the ATLAS project, at the University of Hawaii, Institute for Astronomy.

We can learn from other planets in the solar system where climate change went seriously wrong. Venus was driven to extreme heat by its atmosphere while Mars went the other way and cooled down and now needs a warming atmosphere. So, the understanding of planetary atmospheres tells us an awful lot about how climate change can actually run away.

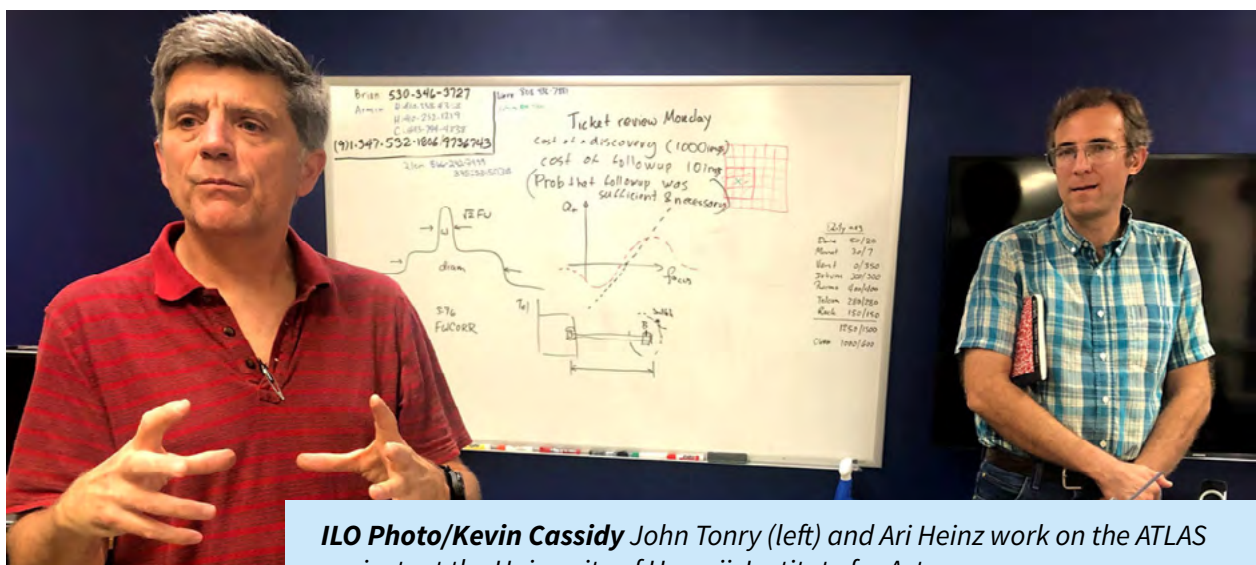
AH: In terms of the future, I see a lot of exciting developments with new telescopes being built and new space missions being launched. There are areas where we can certainly make huge

strides forward, for example, asteroids and solar system exploration.

Then there are big questions that are extremely interesting, but may be completely intractable. We have been trying to figure out what dark matter is for 50 years now. We might find out tomorrow, but it's also possible that we'll never find out what it is.

JT: Astronomers are in a good position to correct misconceptions about whether climate change is happening or not. The simple answer is "yes," and that's what I told my students 30 years ago. The only questions are really, how severe it will be, and how much it will cost to put right. The most important thing for the human race right now is that we absolutely need to deal with it. I think astronomers understand all of this very clearly, and we can also explain it pretty clearly.

“ The understanding of planetary atmospheres tells us an awful lot about how climate change can actually run away. John Tonry, Astronomer, ATLAS ”



# Harmful practices rob women and girls of ‘right to reach their full potential’



**UNFPA-UNICEF/Kiran Panday** In 2016, UNFPA and UNICEF launched a global programme to tackle child marriage in twelve of the most high-prevalence countries, including Nepal.

30 June 2020, UN News - Urgent, and accelerated action is needed to end female genital mutilation, child marriage, and other “harmful practices” and abuses carried out against women and girls, the UN sexual and reproductive health agency (UNFPA), said on Tuesday, in its latest major [report](#) on the state of the world’s population.

Every year, millions of girls are subjected to practices that routinely harm them, both physically and emotionally, with the full knowledge and consent of their families, friends and communities, the report states.

“Harmful practices against girls cause profound and lasting trauma, robbing them of their right to reach their full potential”, [UNFPA](#) Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem said, in a press release.

[The State of World Population 2020: Against my will, defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality](#), highlights at least 19 rites - ranging from breast ironing to virginity testing - which are considered human rights violations.

## Focus on three common abuses

The report focuses on the three most prevalent; female genital mutilation, child marriage, and extreme bias against daughters, in favour of sons.

Highlighting that an estimated 4.1 million girls will be subjected to female genital mutilation this year alone, the report also notes that today, 33,000 girls under age 18 will be forced into marriage, usually to much older men.

Also, an extreme and continuing preference for sons over daughters in some countries has fuelled gender-biased sex selection, or extreme neglect, that leads to girls’ death as children, resulting in what amounts to around 140 million “missing females”, the report continues.



Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Monica Ferro, UNFPA Geneva Director, alerted that all these harmful practices are based on the “assumption that the rights and the well-being of women and girls are less of those of men and boys”, resulting in “fewer choices and “putting them under the sexual, economic and legal control of men, which is also a violation of their human rights.”

## Respect, protect, fulfil legal obligations

Ms. Ferro pointed that the new data gathered in the report could be summarized in three words: respect, protect and fulfil.

“We must foster respect for women and girls, by changing attitudes and practices”, that commoditize them. “We must protect women and girls by enforcing laws against practices like child marriage and female mutilation, but also by changing attitudes and norms. And governments must fulfil their obligations under human rights treaties”, that require elimination of these practices and rituals, she explained.

According to the report, some practices are waning in countries where they have been most prevalent. But because of population growth, the number of girls subjected to them will actually rise in the coming decades, if urgent action is not taken.

Countries that have ratified international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, have a duty to end the harm, whether it’s inflicted on girls by family members, religious communities, health-care providers, commercial enterprises or State institutions themselves.

Many have responded with laws, but laws alone are not enough, the press release added.

Decades of experience and research show that bottom-up, grassroots approaches, are better at bringing change, said UNFPA.



**“We will not stop until the rights, choices and bodies of all girls are fully their own.” - UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem**



## Confronting the silent and endemic crisis

“We must tackle the problem by tackling the root causes, especially gender-biased norms. We must do a better job of supporting communities’ own efforts understand the toll these practices are taking on girls and the benefits that accrue to the whole of society by stopping them”, said Dr. Kanem.

According to the agency, ending child marriage and female genital mutilation worldwide is possible within 10 years, by scaling up efforts to keep girls in school longer and teach them life skills and to engage men and boys in social change.

Investments totalling \$3.4 billion a year through 2030 would end these two harmful practices and end the suffering of an estimated 84 million girls.

## COVID-19 disruption

While progress has been made in ending some harmful practices worldwide, the [COVID-19](#) pandemic is threatening to reverse gains.

A recent analysis revealed that if services and programmes remain shuttered for six months, an additional 13 million girls may be forced into marriage and 2 million more girls may be subjected to female genital mutilation between now and 2030.

“The pandemic both makes our job harder and more urgent as so many more girls are now at risk”, Dr. Kanem concluded: “We will not stop until the rights, choices and bodies of all girls are fully their own.”

In Geneva, Ms. Ferro added that in order to get to zero, action is needed to be taken much faster. “We can’t stop until we get to zero, and we can’t let the COVID-19 pandemic get in our way”.

# Impacts of poor and vulnerable: UN chief COVID-19 disproportionately affect



© **UNICEF/Parvez Ahmad** Twelve-year-old boy in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, sorts through hazardous plastic waste without any protection, working to support his family amidst the lockdown.

30 June 2020, UN News - Addressing poverty eradication on Tuesday in front of the General Assembly, UN chief António Guterres warned that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are falling “disproportionately on the most vulnerable: people living in poverty, the working poor, women and children, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups”.

The virtual high-level UN meeting was billed as the first in a series of policy dialogues on ending poverty, and also served as the official inauguration of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication, an initiative of the President of the General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres noted that the pandemic has “laid bare” challenges –such as structural inequalities, inadequate healthcare, and the lack of universal social protection – and the heavy price societies are paying as a result.

## ‘People-centred’ recovery

Ending poverty sits at the heart of the UN’s [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and is the first of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). Despite this, poverty and hunger, as the UN chief reminded his audience, are on the rise, following decades of progress.

Economic recovery plans should prioritize at-risk workers, such as those in the informal sector; protect micro, small and medium enterprises, including those owned by women; and involve an expansion of universal social protection, said Mr. Guterres. The Secretary-General has also proposed a rescue and recovery package equivalent to more than 10 per cent of the global economy’s overall value.

The UN chief called for improved international cooperation; more support for developing countries – by providing financial assistance, and relieving or postponing foreign debt – and for economies to be steered towards inclusive and green growth.



© UNICEF/UN039294/Popov Roma children and adults in Bulgaria (file photo)

## ‘A blot on humanity’s conscience’

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Muhammad-Bande described poverty as a “blot on humanity’s conscience”, which is the underlying trigger of conflict and civil strife, and “the most formidable obstacle” realizing the SDGs. Research, he said, has shown that due to the sharp decline in economic activity resulting from the pandemic, more than 850 million people now risk falling into poverty.

The Alliance for Poverty Eradication, he

continued, is designed to address the poverty question from all possible angles, and serve as a forum for networking, information-sharing, and bridge-building.

Mr. Muhammad-Bande pointed out that the Alliance would be the first UN group to promote ending poverty, and will provide a major opportunity to confront the challenge, which he described as “enduring, complex and multi-sided”.



# UNESCO urges caution over fraudulent African artefacts, sold in its name



**UN Photo/Marco Dormino** A resident walks past Djingareyber Mosque in Timbuktu, Mali, once a legendary city with a large collection of treasured manuscripts, now an endangered UNESCO World Heritage Site.

1 July 2020, UN News - The UN on Wednesday revealed the existence of an illicit trafficking scam in African cultural artefacts, which are being sold to unsuspecting buyers, thanks to the entirely fake UNESCO stamp they come with.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is warning art lovers who may be approached to buy African cultural treasures, apparently endorsed by the agency, to exercise the “utmost vigilance” after receiving numerous reports of the trafficking ruse.

The organization said that false documents claimed that [UNESCO](#) had authorized the transactions, and certified the monetary value of collections, which is not true.

It said that most victims of the fraud live in France and many have links to French-speaking African countries.

## Million-Euro scam

More than one million euros’ worth of goods have been pilfered to date, UNESCO said, while Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, described cultural theft as a “lucrative global scourge” that was “in most cases connected to other forms of organized crime, including terrorism”.



It is 50 years since an international Convention was adopted to combat the illicit traffic in cultural property.

Although African cultural heritage has long been the victim of looting and destruction, the Middle East has become a recent target in connection with conflict in Iraq and Syria.

The illicit trade is also growing on the internet, where tracing origins and intermediaries is difficult, UNESCO warned.

UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture, Ernesto Ottone Ramirez, noted that "illicit trafficking in cultural property is a worldwide, lucrative scourge linked to other forms of organized crime, including the financing of terrorism.

"Not only is it rife in Africa, whose cultural heritage has long been the victim of looting and destruction, but it has exploded more recently in the Middle East in connection with the conflicts in Iraq and Syria."

## **Efforts to end trafficking**

UNESCO added that over the past five years, it had helped several dozen countries to incorporate into their national laws the provisions for the prevention of illicit trafficking in cultural property contained in the 1970 Convention, and encouraged the restitution of objects illegally removed from their territory.

The Paris-based agency has organized more than 80 training and capacity-building sessions for State representatives and their relevant ministries, police and customs services – as well as museum professionals - in partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization, and others including the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

The Organization provides States with essential knowledge on legal standards, reference data on trafficking, a database of national laws, as well as practical tools.

UNESCO does not ever issue certificates or authorizations for the commercialization of cultural property.

# Youth activist speaks up for environmental protection at Human Rights Council



**UNHRC Video Screenshot** Junior, a teenage youth activist from Côte d'Ivoire, speaks via videolink to the UN Human Rights Council about protecting the environment.

1 July 2020, UN News - At the UN [Human Rights Council](#) on Wednesday, a teenager from Côte d'Ivoire has explained why protecting the environment matters so much.

The rare and refreshing intervention came from 14-year-old activist Junior, who spoke out against alleged industrial pollution, including from the cocoa production sector, in his home town of San-Pédro, in the West African State.

## Bachelet warning

At the child rights debate, Member States also heard from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Michelle Bachelet](#), who warned

that environmental harm severely affects “the youngest children, indigenous children and those from low-income and marginalized communities”.

This damage was being done, despite the fact that the effects of environmental degradation on children and their rights were “completely preventable”, Ms. Bachelet insisted.

At the same time, the High Commissioner warned that over-exploitation of the environment “increases the risk of infectious diseases like [COVID-19](#) jumping from animal to human hosts”.

“ I want the authorities to take this question of the environment to heart. Because we children are suffering a lot – *Junior, 14, from Côte d'Ivoire* ”

## Air pollution threat

She also insisted that now was a key opportunity to discuss the rights of the child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as 93 per cent of children live in environments where air pollution exceeds World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) guidelines, making them more susceptible to air-borne infections, such as the new [coronavirus](#).

Echoing that concern, Junior explained that children made up between 30-40 per cent of those suffering from respiratory and skin diseases, according to data from his town's health authority.

“I want the authorities to take this question of the environment to heart. Because we children are suffering a lot,” he said via video message.

‘Burned by the sun, drowned by the rain’

“If nothing is done to protect the environment, then all your (the Council's) efforts to realize children's rights will be burned by the sun and drowned by the rain.”

Also participating in the debate, at the Council, WHO's Dr Maria Neira said that one in four children globally is dying because of environmental factors, at home or elsewhere, and 570,000 children under five, are dying from respiratory infections every year.

These include pneumonia, which is attributable to indoor and outdoor air

pollution, and second-hand smoke, said the head of the agency's environment, climate change and health unit.

## Common killers

Other common killers include poor access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, with diarrhoea responsible for the deaths of 297,000 under-fives.

By 2025, half of the world's population will be living in water-stressed areas, Dr Neira warned.

This is already a problem in least developed countries, where one in five health care facilities lacks water, sanitation service and waste management.

## Climate change impact

Turning to climate change, the WHO senior official added that as temperatures and levels of carbon dioxide rise, this promotes pollen growth, which is associated with increased rates of asthma in children.

“We have been listening to the children marching and demanding we protect their future,” she said. “We no longer need to raise awareness; we need to act. Many in our audience are uniquely positioned to provide a leverage for these new greener healthier society to happen.”



UN Human Rights   
@UNHumanRights



In recent years, many children and young people have joined and strengthened the worldwide struggle for protection of the environment and realisation of climate justice –

@mbachelet tells @UN\_HRC.



Watch the #HRC44 annual session on #ChildRights:  
[ow.ly/dZ5s50AmNew](https://ow.ly/dZ5s50AmNew)



11:00 PM · Jul 1, 2020



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75 people are Tweeting about this



# ‘Long, hard road ahead’ for countries taking piecemeal approach to COVID



**UN Mexico/Luis Arroyo** *WHO/PAHO recommendations have been instrumental in the Juarez Hospital in Mexico City.*

1 July 2020, UN News - The head of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) warned on Monday that some nations battling the COVID-19 pandemic who have been taking a “fragmented approach” to suppressing the deadly virus, “face a long, hard road ahead.”

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the regular [coronavirus press briefing](#) at [WHO](#) headquarters in Geneva, that “flare-ups are to be expected as countries start to lift restrictions.”

But he noted that countries with “systems in place to apply a comprehensive approach, should be able to contain these flare-ups locally, and avoid reintroducing widespread restrictions.”

## ‘It’s never too late’

However, he continued, “we are concerned that some countries have not used all the tools at their disposal and have taken a fragmented approach. These countries face a long, hard road ahead.

“But one of the lessons of the pandemic is that no matter what situation a country is in, it can be turned around”, he added, injecting a note of optimism for countries such as the United States which has seen cases rise steeply in Texas, Florida and Arizona in recent days.

“It’s never too late.”

## More than half a million deaths

More than 10.3 million cases of [COVID-19](#) have now been reported to WHO, and over 506,000 deaths. For the past week, the number of new cases has exceeded 160,000 on every single day, the WHO chief said, adding the chilling perspective that 60% of all cases so far across the world, have been reported just in the past month.



“We will never get tired of saying that the best way out of this pandemic is to take a comprehensive approach”, Tedros added.

“Find, isolate, test and care for every case, trace and quarantine every contact, equip and train health workers and educate and empower communities to protect themselves and others.

“Not testing alone. Not physical distancing alone. Not contact tracing alone. Not masks alone. Do it all.”

In March, Italy and Spain were the epicenter of the pandemic, but both “brought their epidemics under control with a combination of leadership, humility, active participation by every member of society, and implementing a comprehensive approach”, said Tedros.

“The fastest way out of this pandemic is to follow the science and do what we know works: the comprehensive approach.”

## Forum for over 1,000 top scientists

WHO convened its second research and innovation forum on Wednesday, bringing together more than 1,000 scientists from all over the world to take stock of the progress made so far, discuss new research questions and knowledge gaps, and to define research priorities, going forward.

Research and innovation have played a vital role since the beginning of the pandemic – and even before, said the WHO chief: “We have a shared responsibility to ensure that all people have access to the tools to protect themselves, especially those who are most at risk.

# Helping youth enterprise take off, will bring sustainable returns, say UN economists



© **UNICEF/Seyba Keïta** Every country counts on its youth. When youth tremble, the world crumbles. - Fatoumata Tamboura, 15, a child journalist, at Kaoural FM, a community radio in the volatile central region of Mopti.

2 July 2020, UN News - Young entrepreneurs who want their work to have a positive impact on their communities, urgently need more help from governments if they're to succeed and resist the COVID-19-fuelled economic downturn, UN economists said on Thursday.

Amid worsening global employment prospects owing to the pandemic, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) maintained in a [new report](#) that unlocking business opportunities for young adults "could lower unemployment and bring social benefits".

It said that socially-minded enterprises benefited 871 million people in just nine countries in Europe and Central Asia in 2016, providing services and products worth around \$6.7 billion and creating employment, particularly among marginalized groups.

## Sky's the limit for start-ups

Young entrepreneurs who have already made a difference include Zaid Souqi, from Jordan, who created The Orenda Tribe: Art for Hope, in

2014.

His art and art therapy initiative empowers Syrian and Jordanian children in vulnerable situations.

In Malawi, business trainer Ellen Chilemba started Tiwale when she was 18; now 30, she now has trained more than 150 women as entrepreneurs.

And Pezana Rexha, a young architect from Albania, set up Pana Design: Storytelling Furniture, making furniture from reclaimed wood with people who normally face difficulties finding employment, such as older workers and those with disabilities.

Chief among DESA's recommendations is the removal of obstacles to start-up funds for youngsters.

This is a common failing in "many" countries, where regulatory systems often prevent them from accessing the financial products and services they need to start a business.



In addition, lack of access to training, technical support, networks and markets, all combine to discourage the growth of such social enterprises, said DESA, which defines social entrepreneurship as “businesses that generate profits while seeking to generate social impacts”.

## Joblessness hits youngsters hardest

According to the agency’s 2020 [World Youth Report](#), unemployment among the world’s 1.2 billion young people (aged 15-24) is far higher than for adults.

The [COVID-19](#) crisis has worsened their job prospects, the DESA report continues, although before the new [coronavirus](#) emerged in China late last December, before turning into a pandemic, labour experts estimated that 600 million jobs would be needed in the next 15

years to meet youth employment needs, the report noted.

Highlighting the multiple benefits that could come if Governments did more for their aspiring youngsters, the UN agency explained that new measures could also contribute to advancing the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), 17 objectives to tackle everything from poverty to inequality.

“Creating pathways for youth social entrepreneurship can generate positive outcomes for everyone,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. “When supported by enabling policies and programmes, social entrepreneurship can represent a great way for young people to earn a living and improve the world around them.”



# Move away from outdated ‘mad or bad’ approach to mental illness, urges independent UN expert



**WHO/P. Viro** Patients at the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences in Delhi, India.

6 July 2020, UN News - States, civil society, psychiatric organizations and the World Health Organization (WHO) itself must change the way they address mental health challenges, a UN independent rights expert said, calling for a shift towards understanding the context behind mental distress.

While welcoming international recognition of mental health, Dainius Pūras, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health, told the [Human Rights Council](#) on Monday that “much more is still needed”.

“The global mental health status quo should move away from the outdated ‘mad or bad’ approach which seeks to prevent behaviours deemed as ‘dangerous’ or provide treatment considered ‘medically necessary’ without consent,” he said.

Mr. Pūras also warned against the exaggerated benefits of psychotropic medications, stressing that it has led to an overuse of medicalization and institutionalization.

“I appreciate the progress made to understand the role of psychotropic medications, but also recognize that there are no biological markers for mental health conditions,” he said. “Hence, the specific mechanisms by which psychotropic drugs might be effective, are simply unknown.”

## Failures of the status quo

The UN envoy said the status quo in mental health care ignores the social, political or existential context that contributes to a high prevalence of sadness, anxiety, fear and other manifestations of mental distress.

And [COVID-19](#) has only exacerbated the failures of the status quo.

“There is no simplified mechanistic solution to mental distress,” the Special Rapporteur said. “For the majority of mental health conditions, psychosocial and other social interventions are the essential option for treatment.”

Systemic obstacles - such as power irregularities in mental health care, the dominance of the biomedical standards and the biased use of knowledge – must be addressed by changes in laws, policies and practices.

## Invest in rights-based support

Mr. Pūras reiterated his call for mental health care action and investment to be redirected to rights-based supports; non-coercive alternatives that address the psychosocial determinants of health; and the development of practices that are non-violent, trauma-informed, community-led, healing and culturally sensitive.

“I’m calling once again for the ultimate elimination of segregated psychiatric institutions that reflect the historic legacy of social exclusion, disempowerment, stigma and discrimination”, concluded the Special Rapporteur.

## Legalese

The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should guide mental health policies and services, and discriminatory laws and practices should be abandoned.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.



# UN report sends ‘sobering message’ of deeply entrenched hunger globally



**FAO/Nozim Kalandarov** Women farmers harvest grains in Gisar, Tajikistan.

13 July 2020, UN News - In much of the world, “hunger remains deeply entrenched and is rising”, the UN chief said on Monday, launching this year’s major UN food security update, highlighting that over the past five years, tens of millions of people have joined the ranks of the chronically undernourished.

As countries “continue to grapple with malnutrition in all its forms, including the growing burden of obesity”, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said that this year’s State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report “sends a sobering message”.

The authoritative global study tracking progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition, is produced jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), International Fund for Agriculture ([IFAD](#)), the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) and World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

In the Foreword, the heads of the UN agencies involved cautioned that “five years after the world committed to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, we are

still off track to achieve this objective by 2030.”

In his video message marking the [launch](#), the UN chief spelled out that if the current trend continues, “we will not achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 – zero hunger – by 2030”.

## Pandemic ‘wake-up call’

As progress in fighting hunger stalls, the [coronavirus](#) pandemic is intensifying the vulnerabilities and inadequacies of global food systems, making things even worse.

“We cannot continue thinking of agriculture, the environment, health, poverty and hunger in isolation”, IFAD President Gilbert F. Hounbou [said](#) at the virtual launch. “World problems are interconnected, and the solutions are intertwined. The current pandemic is a wake-up call to all of us”.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus [said](#) that “while it is too soon to assess the full impact of #COVID19, the report estimates that 130 million more people may face chronic hunger by the end of this year”,





At the same time, Mr. Guterres maintained that [COVID-19](#) response and recovery investments must help deliver on the longer-term goal of a more inclusive, sustainable world, with resilient food systems for people and planet.

“The transformation can begin now”, he upheld.

To help “make healthy diets affordable and accessible for everyone”, Mr. Guterres announced that he would be “convening a Food Systems Summit next year”.

Against the backdrop that “many more people could slip into hunger this year”, the UN chief concluded: “We cannot let this happen”.

## Most undernourished continents

While Asia currently has the greatest quantity of undernourished (381 million), people, the report showed that the number in Africa is growing fast (250 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (48 million).

And although the global prevalence hungry has changed little, over the last five years, hunger has grown in step with the global population, which, in turn, hides great regional disparities.

With 19.1 per cent of its people undernourished, Africa is hit hardest and becoming even worse. This is more than double the 8.3 per cent rate in Asia and 7.4 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

On current trends, by 2030, Africa will be home to more than half of the world’s chronically hungry.

## Unhealthy diets, malnutrition

Around the world, countries continue to struggle with multiple forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, according to the food security survey.

It reveals that a staggering three billion people could not afford a healthy diet and in 2019,





some 191 million children under five were stunted or wasted – too short or too thin – while another 38 million were overweight.

Meanwhile, adult obesity has become a global pandemic in its own right.

“This is unacceptable,” [said](#) FAO Director-General QU Dongyu. “We need urgent transformation of food systems to reduce cost of nutritious foods and increase affordability of healthy diets”.

The report evidenced that a healthy diet with nutrient-rich dairy, fruits, vegetables and protein-rich foods, are the most expensive food groups globally and cost far more than \$1.90 a day – the international poverty threshold.

Although high costs and low affordability prohibit billions from eating nutritiously, securing healthy diets for people who do not have enough money to pay would help check the backslide into hunger while saving some \$1.3 trillion in health costs by 2030.

While specific solutions differ from country to country, and even within them, the overall answers lie with interventions along the entire food supply chain, in the food environment, and the political economy that shapes trade,

public expenditure and investment policies, according to the publication.

“Despite COVID19, conflicts, weather extremes and desert locusts”, [WFP](#) chief David Beasley stressed, “we have enough wealth in the world to feed everybody”.

And yet, the UN agency is “scaling-up its scope from feeding 100 million to 130-140 million people”, he added.

In support, the [IFAD](#) president [chimed in](#), “there are 7.8 billion people in the world. We grow enough food to feed 10 billion”.

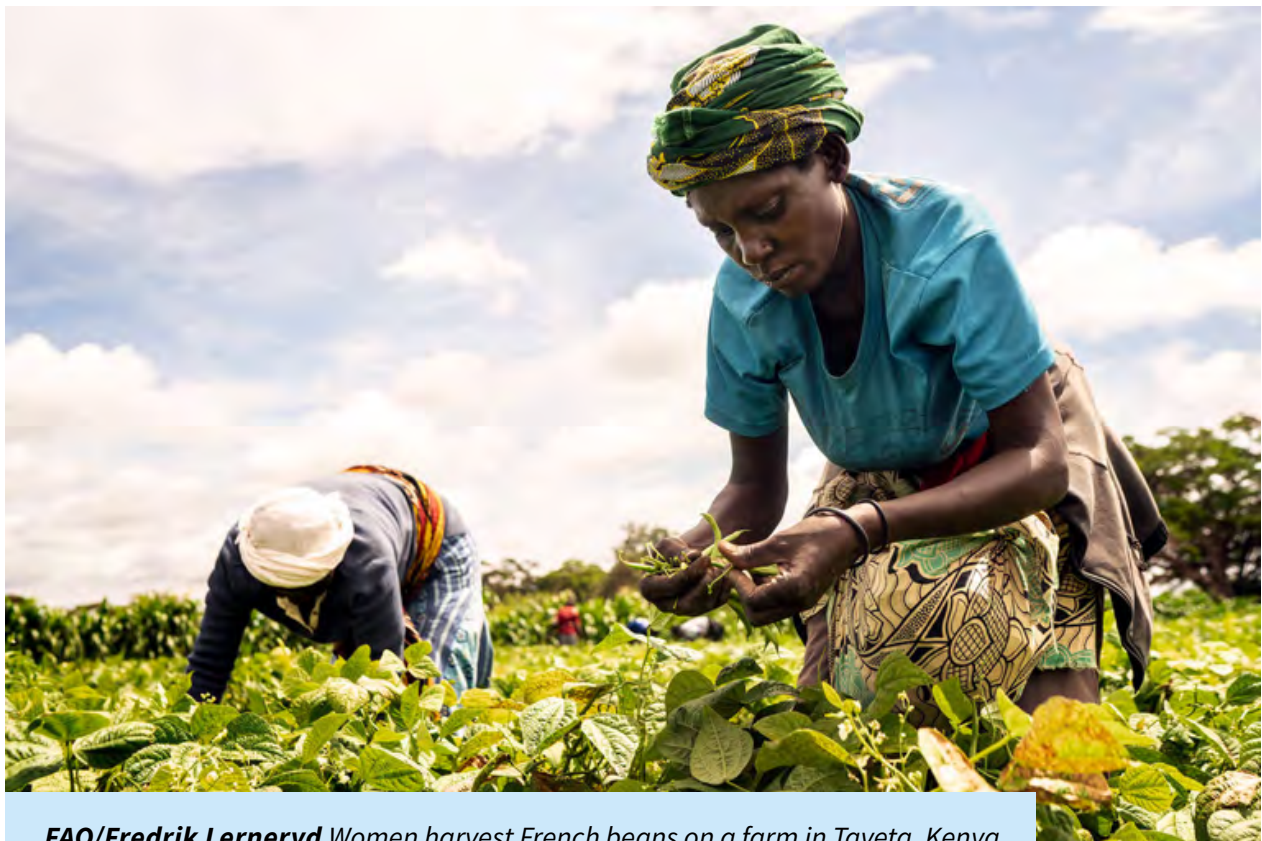
“The problem is not production”, he said. “Persistent and chronic hunger is the result of poverty, inequality, conflict, poor governance and marginalization of the most vulnerable”.

## Clarion call

The study calls on governments to mainstream nutrition in their approaches to agriculture; support local small-scale producers to grow and sell more nutritious foods and secure their access to markets; prioritize children’s nutrition as the category in greatest need; and embed nutrition in national social protection systems and investment strategies.

### Key numbers

- 690 million undernourished or hungry people in the world.
- 840 million people are forecast to be hungry in 2030 on current trends.
- 8.9 per cent of people in the world are hungry.
- 2 billion people are unable to access safe, nutritious and sufficient food year-round.
- 750 million people are severely food insecure.
- 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet.
- 5 starch-only meals can be purchased for the cost of a single healthy meal.
- 97 per cent of health costs could be offset by switching to healthy diets.
- 74 per cent of gas emissions costs could be offset by switching to healthy diets.
- 132 million: the additional number of people in 2020, who could become chronically hungry, as a result of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.



**FAO/Fredrik Lerneryd** Women harvest French beans on a farm in Taveta, Kenya.

# Cities and local government must focus on well-being of people in developing countries



*©UNICEF/Vincent Tremeau A people-centred focus on the well-being of those in developing countries, such as Burkina Faso, must be applied in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

13 July 2020, UN News - While the scale and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic is being felt in developing and developed countries alike, the President of the UN General Assembly maintained on Monday that the response must focus on “the two-thirds of the world’s population at risk of being left behind”.

“We need to focus on specific actions that will alleviate the impact on the well-being and livelihoods of people in developing countries and the marginalized around the world”, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande [told](#) the virtual United Cities and Local Government Forum, part of the on-going High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

“We need to address their specific needs now while building back”.

## Shifting populations

By 2050, 68 per cent of the world’s population is expected to be urban. And in developing countries, the urban population will double.

Moreover, the area covered by cities could triple by 2030, with many people projected to live in informal settlements.

“To respond effectively, the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) must be at the forefront of government strategies for recovery to safeguard our communities against future shocks by building resilient systems”, the Assembly president said.

He maintained that this requires a recommitment to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for development financing, along with stemming illicit financial flows, which threaten community development everywhere.



Heartened that 152 countries had adopted national urban policies to promote sustainable urbanization, Mr. Muhammad-Bande urged all Member States to “emulate this leadership and work to safeguard the future for urban communities”.



**World Bank/Simone D. McCourtie** By 2050, urban populations in cities will double, requiring the Sustainable Development Goals to safeguard communities and build resilient systems.

## Climate factor

Meanwhile, as urban centres along coastal areas are increasing, the threat of climate change is not receding. And the negative effect of climate change is also felt by those living in mountainous areas.

“We require climate-resilient urban management and a more concerted effort to utilize culture and innovation”, underscored the UN official.

Noting that this is not a task for federal or local governments alone, he maintained that “transformative partnerships...are key to promote people-centered policies and investments for liveable cities that provide decent, sustainable jobs, universal access to vital services including health, education, water, transport, energy and sanitation”.

## An extraordinary year

Against the backdrop of the UN’s 75th anniversary, the [25th anniversary](#) of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the beginning of the [Decade of Action](#) and Delivery on the SDGs, Mr. Muhammad-Bande called 2020 “a seminal year”.

“It will, however, be remembered as the year that the world united against the [coronavirus](#) to protect the people we serve”, he said.

To communities around the globe, he upheld that the General Assembly stands united in their fight against the [COVID-19](#) pandemic and urged participants to utilize the event to connect with others and commit to urgent action to accelerate sustainable development.

“Clearly, the 2030 Agenda is our best way to safeguard the people we serve”, the Assembly president concluded.



# ‘Country-driven’ approach needed to limit COVID-19 damage to food security



© **Hadong County, Republic of Korea** Traditional Hadong Tea Agrosystem in Hwagae-myeon, Korea, cultivate indigenous tea trees around streams and between rocks in hilly areas surrounding temples.

14 July 2020, UN News - A ‘business as usual’ approach is no longer an option, the head of the UN agriculture agency said on Tuesday, launching a new plan to move past the coronavirus pandemic.

“We must work very hard to limit [COVID-19](#)’s damaging effects on food security and nutrition”, QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Agency ([FAO](#)) [said](#) in his opening remarks launching the new strategy: “We need to be more country-driven, innovative and work closely hand in hand”.

FAO’s comprehensive [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme](#) aims to avert a global food emergency during and after the pandemic while simultaneously working on medium to long-term development responses for food security and nutrition.

To provide a coordinate response that ensures access to nutritious food globally, resources and partnerships must be mobilize at country, regional and global level, requiring a \$1.2 initial investment.

The new programme aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the longer-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods.

“This is how [FAO](#) has built its [COVID-19](#) comprehensive response and recovery programme, and today we are asking you to join us”, said the FAO chief.

## Food security hangs in balance

In addition to being a major public concern, the pandemic also imperils global food security.

According to World Bank’s estimates, the economic impact of the crisis could push some 49 million more people into extreme poverty.

Furthermore, soaring unemployment rates, income losses and rising food costs not only jeopardize food access in both developed and developing countries but also have long-term effects on food security.

And as [COVID-19](#) plunges national economies into recession, with more to come, countries must urgently act to mitigate the longer-term impacts on food systems and food security.

Meanwhile existing crises – such as conflict, natural disasters, climate change and plagues – that are already stressing food systems and triggering food insecurity around the globe, are compounding a precarious situation.

## Reading the future

[FAO](#) is asking governments to better understand emerging trends, pinpoint any lapses and provide technical advice and capacity development across a wide range of disciplines. In addition, it is offering more investment support.

“The Food Coalition is an exemplary approach to leveraging high-level capital and political will to avoid an escalation of the pandemic from a health crisis to a food crisis”, FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol told the meeting, amidst a warning that “immense” efforts will be needed ahead.

### Key response areas

The report lays out seven priorities to enhance food system and minimize [COVID-19](#) effects on food security.

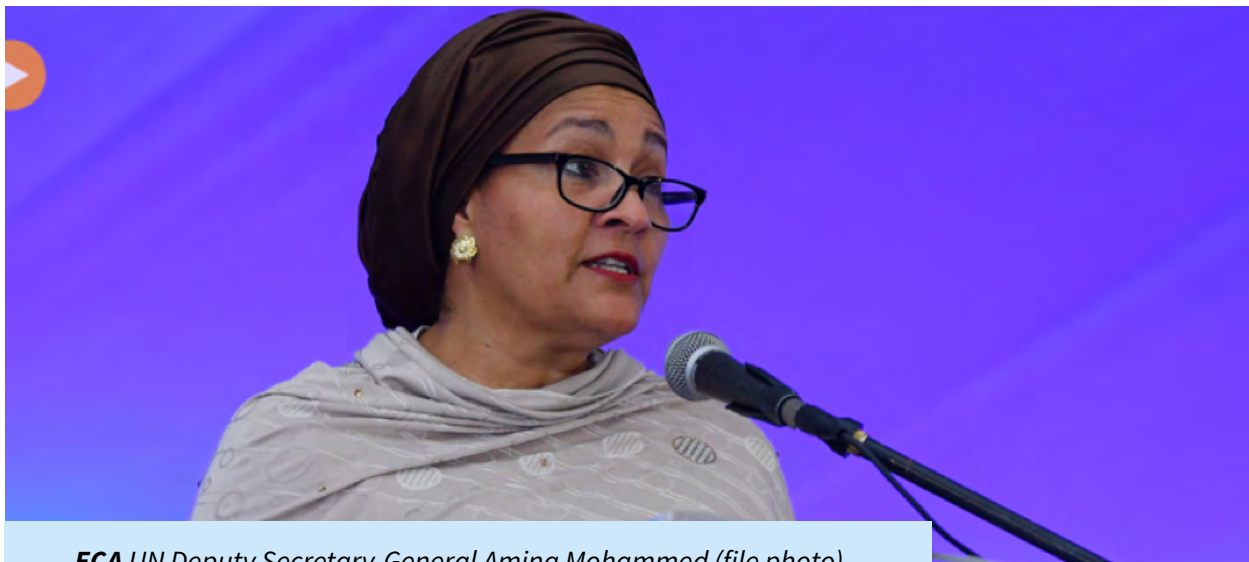
- Reinforce a global humanitarian response plan for COVID-19.
- Improve data for decision-making,
- Ensure economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty.
- Bolster trade and food safety standards.
- Boost smallholders' ability to recover.
- Strengthen a “[One Health](#)” approach to prevent the next zoonotic pandemic
- Transform how food systems work



**WFP/Mauricio Martinez** A tropical storm in El Salvador damages roads and infrastructure across the country and increases the number of food insecure families.



# ‘Women Rise for All’ to shape leadership in pandemic response and recovery



*ECA UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (file photo).*

14 July 2020, UN News - Although the COVID-19 pandemic has generated an unprecedented global health, humanitarian and development crisis, it has also revealed the power of women’s leadership, according to the UN Deputy Secretary-General.

“Over the past months, people around the world have come to see what many of us already knew: women’s leadership makes a profound difference”, Amina Mohammed [said](#) on Tuesday.

“The evidence has shown — in country after country — how governments led by women are more effective in flattening the curve and positioning for economic recovery.”

Ms. Mohammed was addressing [Women Rise for All](#), a virtual gathering of influential women from across different regions, sectors and generations, to examine how their leadership is shaping pandemic response and recovery that benefits all people.

“We want to shape the way we define leadership. And ensure that we emerge from this pandemic with women leading, in equal numbers, and equal partnership”, she explained.

## ‘Silver lining’ in the crisis

Women’s proven leadership has emerged as a “silver lining” in the pandemic, one of the world’s leading advocates for the rights of women and children told the gathering.

Graça Machel believes it was no accident that countries with women Heads of State—such as New Zealand, Germany, Finland and Taiwan—have been comparatively successful in beating back the deadly new [coronavirus](#).

“This crisis has brought to light an undeniable truth: that the leadership of women is essential for us to effectively recreate the world...that is more human-centred, that is more equal; a world in which such social justice is the goal”, she said in her keynote address.



For former Mozambican minister Ms. Machel, the pandemic must also lead to a re-examining of dominant value systems as the world cannot return to how it was prior to the crisis.

“We must live on a planet where materialism, greed, inequalities no longer divide the human family”, she stated.

## Solidarity for all

Women Rise for All was launched on social media in April, to support the UN Secretary-General’s call for solidarity and urgent action during the pandemic.

As of Tuesday, there were more than 12.9 million cases of [COVID-19](#) globally, and more than 560,000 deaths, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reported.

Even in the midst of this “devastating crisis”, there is an opportunity to build a better world that works for all, according to Ms. Mohammed.

“That will only be possible when we recognize the value of women front and centre, together leading the way and rising for all”, she said



# Nuclear testing legacy is ‘cruellest’ environmental injustice, warns rights expert



**CTBTO** Licorne nuclear test, 1971, French Polynesia. Photo: The Official CTBTO Photostream

16 July 2020, UN News - The dangerous legacy of nuclear weapons testing continues to affect many communities, a leading rights expert said on Thursday, on the 75th anniversary of testing in the United States, that heralded the nuclear age.

In an appeal to governments worldwide to get rid of weapons of mass destruction, [UN Special Rapporteur on toxics](#), Baskut Tuncak, said that the Trinity tests in New Mexico on 16 July 1945, were the prelude to “two horrific explosions suffered by (the) innocent people of Japan”, during the Second World War.

They were also followed by the detonation of hundreds of nuclear bombs over vulnerable communities in the Pacific, and the disposal of radioactive waste on lands and territories of indigenous peoples.

## Paradise lost

This had created a legacy of nuclear testing that “is one of the cruellest examples of environmental injustice witnessed” in “what should be a peaceful island paradise”, said Mr Tuncak, who reports to the [Human Rights](#)

[Council](#) in Geneva. From 1946-58, 67 nuclear bombs were detonated on [the Marshall Islands](#), he said, the equivalent of more than 1.5 “Hiroshima-sized explosions every day for 12 years”.

Communities “have suffered unimaginably” from radioactive contamination and this continues today “with a legacy of contamination, illness and anguish”, the expert insisted.

Twin environmental disasters made matters worse, he added, referring to climate change-induced sea level rise and nuclear waste concentrated in a radioactive “tomb”.

## 200 tests in 30 years

Similarly, in [French Polynesia](#), over 200 nuclear tests were conducted over a 30-year period from 1966 to 1996, subjecting inhabitants to associated health and environmental damage, the Special Rapporteur said.

From Greenland to the indigenous territories of the United States, he warned that people continued to suffer from the nuclear testing era.



## Waste not

“In recent decades, numerous Native American tribes received funding to store unwanted nuclear waste on their lands,” he said.

“Those of Point Hope, Alaska, became recipients of radioactive soil and higher cancer rates that are believed to have been the foreseeable result. And the people of Greenland discovered radioactive waste left by the US military, unbeknownst to them as the

ice continues to melt in the Arctic.”

This discriminatory approach should be addressed by all States as part of the discussion on “systemic racism” and nuclear disarmament, Mr. Tuncak insisted.

“Unaddressed, the dangers of radioactive contamination will persist for centuries, and so too will the harmful legacy of racism that surrounds this tragic chapter of humanity,” he added.

