



## **Bi-Weekly Press Briefing 28 October 2022**

28-10-2022 | Press Conferences

### **Story**

PRESS BRIEFING BY THE UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SERVICE

28 October 2022

### **Announcements**

Mr. Zaccheo announced several press conferences, including the launch of the 10th ILO Monitor on the labour impact of economic and geopolitical crises, under embargo until Monday, 31 October at 12 pm, Geneva time. Speakers include Gilbert Hougbo, ILO Director-General and Sangheon Lee, Director, ILO Employment Policy Department. The Conference would take place on Wednesday, 2 November at 10 a.m., online.

A background in-person briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, would be held on Wednesday, 2 November at 10am at Palais Wilson.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was closing its 83rd session this afternoon at the Palais des Nations and would adopt its concluding observations on the eight countries reviewed: Finland, Armenia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Belgium, Ukraine, Honduras, Gambia and Switzerland.

The Human Rights Committee would hold its next public meeting next Wednesday morning, 2 November,

at 10am, to review its report on the follow-up of views. The Committee had reviewed the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, Japan, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and the Russian Federation. The review of Haiti which was initially scheduled for the session had been postponed.

The Committee Against Torture would open its 75<sup>th</sup> session next Monday at 10am at Palais Wilson, during which it would review the reports of Chad, Malawi, Somalia, Uganda, Australia and El Salvador.

### **Concerns over Russia's new LGBTI Law**

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that yesterday (Thursday), the Russian parliament had adopted proposals to broaden a ban on any discussion and sharing of information about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and their human rights. The High Commissioner for Human Rights was deeply concerned about the latest development, which infringed further on international human rights norms and standards. The proposals would expand an existing law from 2013, which had been extensively condemned by UN human rights experts as discriminatory, and leading to an increase in hate speech, and abuse, including against children. The legislative amendments worsened this situation by broadening the scope of the law to a blanket ban on all communications on the subject, including to adults, and targeting the rights of transgender people. The High Commissioner appealed to legislators, who would consider the proposals in a further two readings, to reject the proposal, and to instead repeal the existing law and take urgent steps to prohibit and actively combat both discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Responding to questions, Ms. Shamdasani said there was no OHCHR office in Russia, so they did not have precise figures, however various United Nations human rights mechanisms had all highlighted how the legislation had encouraged discrimination against LGBTI people including children. Rather than protecting children, this led to their ongoing persecution and abuse. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women had expressed concern that the law reinforced stereotypes and hate speech and incited an increase in gender-based violence. OHCHR had raised their concerns about the current law, as had treaty bodies and multiple special rapporteurs. Detailed concerns had also been raised by regional human rights mechanisms.

The Rapporteur for Russia would be appointed by the Human Rights Council. There were no figures on the number of people affected; however, the existing law had already had a detrimental impact on various groups and led to increased levels of hate crimes based on people's sexual orientation and gender identity.

Ms. Shamdasani did not have questions on the number of prosecutions. Punishment ranged from a fine of 50,000 to 400,000 rubles (around 800 – 6000 USD), and 13,000 USD for officials, or 81,000USD for legal entities. There were also further, more severe sanctions.

Regarding the upcoming elections in Brazil, Ms. Shamdasani said that concerns had been expressed around the conduct of the campaigns and the elections. Ahead of Sunday's elections, it was stressed that authorities should take all available measures to combat disinformation and ensure all citizens could exercise their rights to freely choose their representatives.

### **Occupied Palestinian Territory: Concerns about the possible resumption of unlawful targeted killings by Israeli security forces**

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), violence in the occupied West Bank, raising concerns about the possible resumption of unlawful targeted killings by Israeli security forces. During operations on Tuesday, 25 October, against “the Lion’s Den” members, Israeli security forces shot dead three men in the old city of Nablus. On Tuesday, another man from the same group, was shot dead, and another was killed when the car he was in exploded right outside of the old city. Earlier, on 25 September, Israeli security forces killed a member of “the Lion’s Den” who was riding a motorcycle in Nablus. The circumstances of all these incidents were being verified by OHCHR.

At least 118 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli security forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, this year, including 26 children and five women. Three Palestinians, including one child, were killed by settlers or settlement guards, while another child was killed by either a settler or by Israeli security forces. Four members of the Israeli security forces and one settlement guard have been killed by Palestinians in the West Bank.

OHCHR recalled that international human rights law only permitted the use of firearms when absolutely necessary. Any killing resulting from the use of firearms or targeting of individuals who did not present an imminent threat to life, may amount to extrajudicial executions or unlawful killings, under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Responding to questions, Ms. Shamdasani said a statement issued by the Israeli forces identified the Palestinian men during a proactive activity in the area and they opened fire against them. OHCHR were concerned this could lead to an escalation, particularly the resumption of the unlawful, targeted killings in the occupied West Bank. OHCHR were worried this could be a new pattern which would lead to further escalation. Several reports had been published and OHCHR had attempted to engage. There used to be an office in the region, but the Israelis had not renewed the visas, and OHCHR were now unable to gain access.

Asked about media availability of OHCHR field representatives, currently in Geneva for a global meeting, Ms. Shamdasani said that these representatives were still in town and potentially available for interviews.

On the situation in Iran, Ms. Shamdasani said the Office continued to follow the situation closely, including the use of live ammunition. The new information was that ill treatment of protesters continued, as well as the harassment of the families of protesters. Of particular concern was that authorities were moving injured protesters from hospitals to detention facilities. There were also reports of ill treatment of detained protesters, including denial of medical care to those in places of detention. OHCHR called on the State to ensure all protesters were given the medical attention they needed. These reports were accurate and provided from multiple, credible, sources.

In response to a question about OHCHR presence in the Horn of Africa, Ms. Shamdasani said that there was a regional office in Addis Abba and a presence had always been maintained.

### **The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) Report 2022**

Maximo Torero, Chief Economist for the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), said the new State of Agriculture and Food report by the FAO showed that during Covid-19, automation became extremely relevant and continued to become more relevant today.

With many emerging technologies which were unthinkable even two years ago, including fruit-picking robots that use artificial intelligence, new technologies are part of the ongoing process of automation, which allows agriculture to be more efficient and sustainable and could improve working conditions. However, as with any technological change, it also implies disruption to their systems and the risk was that automation could exacerbate inequalities. The report, under embargo until 2 November, focuses on responsible technological change, so that automation offered opportunities for all, from the smallest producers to large commercial farms.

The new elements of the report were the seven case studies all over the world, which represented different stages of readiness, production, and scale, across a range of countries. The report investigated the drivers of these technologies and barriers to their adoption, including for small scale producers. The report also looked at one of the most common concerns of automation, unemployment, which could occur in certain contexts. It was important to understand that in a continent like sub-Saharan Africa, where there was a large youth population, that the capacities of these people could be built, so that they could be attracted to the food system today and have access to these technologies.

Recommendations for building ecosystems were based on analysis in the report. FAO suggested policies to ensure that automation was included and contributed to a sustainable ecosystem. Barriers for adoption needed to be overcome, and required investments made in infrastructure for transport and energy. Effectiveness and efficiency of farms needed to be increased. Automation solutions also needed to be adapted to local contexts and characteristics of the procedures. Automation should also consider psychological, topographic and socioeconomic conditions. Finally, automation needed to bring about sustainability. The report contained a suite of actions to make the food systems more productive, efficient, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive.

Andrea Cattaneo, the lead author of this report for [FAO](#), said automation was changing the face of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and highlighted how new technologies were leapfrogging large machinery, which was a key part of developing the report.

Responding to questions, Mr. Torero said it was important to look at the benefits as well as the costs. There were mechanisms in place which allowed farmers to share the costs of the arrangement, meaning they did not have to buy a tractor but could share a service. This allowed small farmers to use this technology. Information would allow farmers to create bigger benefits from the cost, including blending and fertilizers, and cost effectiveness could be increased.

Mr. Cattaneo said traditional mechanization was an area which could still bring great benefits. Mechanization with digital support could really go a long way

### **Millions face harm from flooding across**

Olga Sarrado, [for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), said UNHCR was warning of surging needs for more than 3.4 million displaced people and their hosts in the face of recent destructive flooding in Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Cameroon. Nigeria was facing the worst floods in a decade. Hundreds of lives had been lost, over 1.3 million people had been displaced, and more than 2.8 million had been affected, as farmlands and infrastructure had been submerged. Floodwaters in northeast Nigeria had swept through sites for internally displaced people and host community villages in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States, forcing people to higher ground. UNHCR and partners had been providing shelter and essential aid to thousands of families, including 14,900 tarpaulin sheets and 550 kits with basic household items. In Taraba State, heavy rain has cut off affected communities in Baissa town from humanitarian assistance.

Chad's Government had declared a state of emergency after floods affected more than 1 million people. In the south, heavy rains had caused the Chari and Logone rivers to burst their banks, submerging fields, killing livestock, and forcing more than 90,000 people to flee their homes and seek refuge in N'Djamena. In Cameroon, more than 63,000 people were affected by the flooding from the two rivers, in the districts of Kousseri, Zina, Makari, Blangoua and Logone Birni. UNHCR, local authorities, and other partners were rushing to provide humanitarian assistance in N'Djamena and had identified two sites to shelter disaster survivors.

In the countries of the Central Sahel – Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso – above-average rains and flooding had killed hundreds, displaced thousands, and decimated over one million hectares of cropland. Some 379,500

internally displaced people lived in Burkina Faso's flood-affected areas – in the Sahel, Central North and Northern regions. Over 32,000 people had been affected by flooding in the Diffa region of Niger, and more than 13,000 had been displaced. This year, more than 41,000 people had been affected by flooding throughout Mali, compared to 10,511 in 2021. The link between climate shocks and displacement was clear and growing. Worsening climate shocks in the Sahel had fuelled drought and flooding, lowered crop yields and contributed to a general deterioration in public services for one of the world's worst displacement crises.

Humanitarian operations in West and Central Africa were dangerously underfunded. In Chad, only 43 per cent of the funds UNHCR needed in 2022 had been received and 2022 operations in Burkina Faso were just 42 per cent funded. With less than two months left, UNHCR had received 39 per cent of the funds needed in Nigeria and 53 percent in Niger.

UNHCR was appealing to all donors for urgent support to our life-saving work in West and Central Africa.

Responding to questions, Ms. Sarrado said all the countries were facing a toxic mix of conflict, food insecurity and displacement. Humanitarian aid could help to support the communities and provide assistance, however the current levels were not sufficient to cover the needs. This was just part of the solution; peace and security were needed in these locations.

### **UNHCR's 2022 Mid-Year Trends Report**

Olga Sarrado, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said in May, UNHCR announced that 100 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide. The Media Trends report released yesterday provided up to date data. The number of forcibly displaced people globally had surged to 103 million in the first half of 2022; the biggest six month increase ever seen. 1 in 77 people on earth were current forcibly displaced. The report offered some hope with some positive trends, and durable solutions. The link to the report was available.

### **ACT Accelerator council meeting**

Tarik Jašarević for the World Health Organisation (WHO) said there would be a Council ACT tracking and monitoring taskforce meeting from 1 – 3:30pm which would be live streamed on the WHO website, with the objectives of analysing evaluation and learnings for pandemic preparedness and response. There would be a number of high-level speakers at the meeting. WHO had also posted a statement of the technical advisory group meeting on virus evolution, which would be sent to media.

Responding to questions, Mr. Jašarević said the virus evolution discussion was on COVID-19, regarding the omicron variant which had been named as a variant of concern. WHO were still waiting for the final statement on Monkey pox to be released. The exact timing was unknown but as soon as it was finalised it would be shared with the media.

### **Announcements**

Michele Zaccheo quoted the note from the Secretary General on the Lebanon Maritime agreement which had been sent to media. In this note, the Secretary General welcomed the signing of the agreement to delineate the maritime boundary between Lebanon and Israel. The Secretary-General strongly believed this development could promote increased stability in the region and enhanced prosperity for the Lebanese and Israeli peoples.

Mr. Zaccheo said some hybrid briefings were being organised out of New York at 7pm Geneva time, including with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing.