UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: COVID-19 OHCHR - WMO

06-03-2020 | Edited NewsCOVID-19

Shotlist

2. Wide shot: medium shot, Press room III, journalists, podium speakers, UN logo.
4. SOUNDBYTE (EN) — Liz Throssell, spokesperson, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “The High Commissioner says, ‘People who are already barely surviving economically may all too easily be pushed over the edge by measures being adopted to contain the virus. Governments need to be ready to respond in a range of ways to unintended consequences of their actions aimed at the coronavirus. Businesses will also need to play a role, including responding with flexibility to the impact on their employees.’”
6. SOUNDBYTE (EN) — Liz Throssell, spokesperson, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “We’ve got lockdowns, quarantines and other such measures to contain and combat the spread of COVID-19. They should always be carried out in strict accordance with human rights standards and in a way that is necessary and proportionate to the evaluated risk.”
7. Close-up: several pairs of hands typing on laptops.
8. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** — Liz Throssell, spokesperson, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “The High Commissioner is not speaking out about specific countries, what she’s doing is making a universal call to Governments to really consider the impact on economic and social rights by the steps they take – that’s why she’s saying it’s so important for human rights to be at the front and centre.”


10. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** — Liz Throssell, spokesperson, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “There are plans in different countries to tackle crises, but I think we all would agree it is somewhat unchartered. And that’s why she’s encouraging States to share information on good practices; steps that they have taken to mitigate, to alleviate the impacts, the effects of the steps they take; steps that are in many cases extremely necessary to combat, to contain COVID-19.”

11. Medium shot: journalists working on laptops, podium speakers with UN logo to rear.

12. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** — Clare Nullis, spokesperson, World Meteorological Organization (WMO): “2020 has started out where 2019 left off, with record temperatures; January - it was the warmest January on record and a new report by the Copernicus European Union Copernicus Climate Change Service released yesterday said that Europe had the warmest winter on record.”

13. Medium shot: journalist looking down at laptop in centre of shot, other journalists behind.

14. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** — Clare Nullis, spokesperson, World Meteorological Organization (WMO): “Obviously, the impact on carbon dioxide emissions will depend on you know, the global economic slowdown as a result of the coronavirus. But it’s still, you know, it is still early days. A lot depends on, you know, the repercussions on international transport.”

15. Medium shot: journalist writing on laptop, between two other journalists in front of shot, blurred.

16. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** — Clare Nullis, spokesperson, World Meteorological Organization (WMO): “Any sort of depression in economic activity, you know, reduction in electricity production from coal-powered plants, a reduction in transport, will make a difference, but we also need to look at efficiency gains; you know, if these plants are running at half-capacity, or if you’ve got planes flying which are a quarter full, you know, that’s not really going to make a big impact.”

17. Close-up: fingers and pen, handwriting on notepad.

18. Medium shot: podium speakers in focus, top of drinks flask at bottom of shot, blurred.

19. Medium shot: journalist hunched over laptop, typing.
Story

COVID-19: countries, businesses must protect people as virus spreads, urges UN rights chief

As the COVID-19 coronavirus continues to spread globally, the UN’s top human rights official appealed on Friday to countries and businesses to put rights “front and centre” to protect their most vulnerable citizens.

Meanwhile, as record temperatures continued in the northern hemisphere, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) indicated that it was still too early to say whether the global epidemic might lead to a drop in greenhouse gas emissions.

“The High Commissioner (for Human Rights) says, ‘People who are already barely surviving economically may all too easily be pushed over the edge by measures being adopted to contain the virus,” said Liz Throssell, spokesperson from the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR).

According to World Health Organization data on Thursday, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 neared 100,000 worldwide, with some 3,300 deaths and more than 80 countries now affected.

Since the virus emerged in central China in December, WHO has urged countries repeatedly to adopt infection containment measures without delay, as these will give health services more time to prepare for a worst-case scenario. “This is not a drill…This is a time for pulling out all the stops,” Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General said on Thursday.

Echoing the need for swift action from all countries facing the global threat - based on her past experience as a medical doctor and as President of Chile - Ms. Bachelet also cautioned that Governments needed to be ready “to respond in a range of ways to unintended consequences of their actions aimed at the coronavirus. Businesses will also need to play a role, including responding with flexibility to the impact on their employees.”

The High Commissioner’s statement added: “We’ve got lockdowns, quarantines and other such measures to contain and combat the spread of COVID-19. They should always be carried out in strict accordance with human rights standards and in a way that is necessary and proportionate to the evaluated risk.”

The High Commissioner’s comments follow an earlier appeal at the Human Rights Council, now meeting in Geneva.

Then, as on Friday, she urged Member States to protect society’s most vulnerable citizens from the health threat posed by COVID-19, and also from any stigma faced by those who had contracted the respiratory disease.

The most vulnerable are those on low incomes, isolated rural populations, people with underlying health conditions, people with disabilities and older people living alone or in institutions, the High Commissioner explained.

“The High Commissioner is not speaking out about specific countries,” Ms. Throssell said. “What she’s doing is making a universal call to Governments to really consider the impact on economic and social rights by the steps they take – that’s why she’s saying it’s so important for human rights to be at the front and centre.”

Ms. Throssell added: “There are plans in different countries to tackle crises, but I think we all would agree it is somewhat unchartered. And that’s why she’s encouraging States to share information on good practices; steps that they have taken to mitigate, to alleviate the impacts, the effects of the steps they take; steps that are in many cases extremely necessary to combat, to contain COVID-19.”
In a related development, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said that although COVID-19 would likely have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions and global warming because of the expected global economic slowdown, it was too soon to say how great that impact might be.

What is clear is that “2020 has started out where 2019 left off, with record temperatures. It was the warmest January on record (in Europe),” said WMO spokesperson Clare Nullis, citing data released on Thursday by the Copernicus European Union Copernicus Climate Change Service. “Obviously, the impact on carbon dioxide emissions will depend on you know, the global economic slowdown as a result of the coronavirus,” Ms. Nullis added, noting that it was still “early days. A lot depends on…the repercussions on international transport.”

Any future assessment of the virus’s impact would have to drill down into data on global energy consumption, the WMO spokesperson explained.

“Any sort of depression in economic activity…reduction in electricity production from coal-powered plants, a reduction in transport, will make a difference,” Ms. Nullis said. “But we also need to look at efficiency gains; you know, if these plants are running at half-capacity, or if you’ve got planes flying which are a quarter full, you know, that’s not really going to make a big impact.”