



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing 02 October 2020

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Story

Human Rights Council

Rolando Gomez, for the Human Rights Council (HRC), said that today the Council was holding a dialogue on the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the High Commissioner was presenting her report, and the Team of International Experts on the situation in Kasai had also delivered his statement today. The situation in the Central African Republic would also be on the agenda this morning, whereas in the afternoon, human rights in Sudan and Somalia would be addressed. On 5 October, in Room XIX, the Fact-Finding Mission on Libya would present an oral update. Guinea-Bissau and Guyana would be on the agenda, to be followed by Cambodia, Georgia, and Yemen. Voting on 37 draft resolutions would take place on 6 and 7 October.

More information on the HRC schedule can be found [here](#).

Situation in Sudan

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that Sudan was experiencing both catastrophic floods and surging inflation. More than 860,000 people had had their houses destroyed or damaged in the floods, while schools, health facilities had also been damaged, especially in North Darfur, Khartoum, West Darfur and Sennar. The UN and humanitarian partners continued to respond to the floods, and had so far reached more than 400,000 people with assistance, but a surging inflation, reaching nearly 170 percent in August, and the associated spike in local prices and shortages of basic commodities, was hampering the response in major ways. Mr. Laerke explained that prices of some locally produced supplies had increased by 300 to 400 percent, severely affecting procurements. Organizations providing cash transfers to vulnerable families needed to continuously adjust the amounts transferred. The price of an average family food basket had increased by over 200 percent since last year.

Migrants arriving to Europe from Libya

Elizabeth Throssell, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that the OHCHR was calling for urgent action to address the dire situation of migrants attempting to cross the central Mediterranean in search of safety in Europe and to tackle the shocking conditions they face in Libya, at sea, and frequently also upon their reception in Europe.

A team sent the previous week to monitor the situation of migrants transiting through Libya had highlighted a cycle of violence: people who had faced unimaginable horrors in Libya were left to drift for days at sea, had their boats dangerously intercepted and were returned to suffer arbitrary detention, torture and other serious human rights violations in Libya. Libya could not be considered a safe port for migrants.

Ms. Throssell stressed that the treatment of migrants in Europe was the result of a failed system of migration governance, marked by a lack of solidarity forcing frontline states such as Malta to bear the brunt of the responsibility. The High Commissioner was urging the European Union and its Member States to ensure its Pact on Migration and Asylum address those challenges head on.

OHCHR press release is available [here](#).

Sexual abuse by aid workers

Responding to questions by journalists, Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), reminded that ever since assuming office, the UN Secretary-General had implemented a zero tolerance policy towards sexual abuse and exploitation, emphasized the importance of training and education, and supported efforts to have more women working in UN field operations. There were mechanisms in place to address such a scourge, including providing support to the victims. Within the UN Secretariat there existed a database of all abuse allegations, so that they could be immediately tracked and followed, along with respective UN agencies. Ms. Vellucci also referred the media to the statements by the [World Health Organization](#) and the [International Organization for Migration](#) on the issue. Ms. Vellucci also referred the journalists to the UN [website](#) dedicated to this problem.

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), added that it was painful for everyone involved in humanitarian assistance with best intentions to see such news. Nobody receiving humanitarian assistance anywhere in the world should be subject to that. OCHA applauded the courage of the women who had stepped forward.

Sustainable Cities Week

Jean Rodriguez, for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), informed that the following week the UNECE would host its annual [Sustainable Cities Week](#), to coincide with the World Habitat Day on 5 October, celebrated this year under the motto [Housing for All: A Better Urban Future](#), an invitation to reflect on the state of cities and on the basic right to adequate shelter.

The Sustainable Cities Week would be structured around four main events:

- The Roundtable "In focus SDG11" (5 October 2020), organised in co-operation with the [Geneva Cities Hub](#) and UN-Habitat under the title *Supporting city actions for a resilient future*;
- The [Forum of Mayors](#) – a first in UNECE's history – would gather cities to share their approaches to build back better from COVID-19 and beyond;
- 81st session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, which would discuss the outcomes of the Forum of Mayors, challenges to housing affordability;
- The week would close on 9 October with the Annual meeting of the United for Sustainable Smart Cities Initiative.

Paola Deda, Director of our Forests, Land and Housing Division at UNECE, added that cities from all over the region would be participating and addressing sustainability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Norman Foster, a globally known architect, would address the Forum of Mayors. Ms. Deda emphasized the importance of the Forum specifically dedicated to mayors and hearing stories of their cities. This unique UN Forum would culminate in the endorsement of the [Geneva Declaration of Mayors](#). A penalty scoring game between mayors and ambassadors would take place on 6 October; the first team to score 17 goals would win.

Other announcements

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), informed that today at 4 p.m. Geneva time the General Assembly would hold a high-level event on nuclear arms control and disarmament. The Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly would address this plenary meeting to advocated for nuclear arms control and disarmament.

On 5 October, from 4 p.m. Geneva time, the OHCHR, UN Global Pulse, and AccessNow would be hosting a high-level side event entitled [Protecting Human Rights During the Covid-19 Crisis and Beyond: Digital Pandemic Surveillance and the Right to Privacy](#)

. The event would cover implications of increased surveillance on human rights, during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, narrowing in on contact tracing, the use of biometric and health-related data, and other technological interventions. The event could be watched live [here](#). *[Later Ms Vellucci informed that the UN Deputy Secretary-General, not the Secretary-General, was expected to address this meeting].*

Ms. Vellucci also informed about the publication of the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization 2020, available in all official languages and – for the first time – in two accessibility formats (e-books in six languages and Easy-to-Read in English).

The Annual Report showcased how the United Nations Secretariat translates resources into impact. Augmenting the traditional text-focused publications, this version of the Annual Report draws on data, infographics, maps and imagery to highlight progress of the past year through coherent and innovative “storytelling.” The report could be accessed here: www.un.org/annualreport.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which had on 30 September opened its virtual 68th session, would meet in private until the public closure of the session, on 16 October, 4 p.m.

The Committee on Enforced Disappearances would on 5 October hold its dialogue with Iraq, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m, and on 7 October from 4 to 6 p.m.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child had closed on 1 October its 85th session and had planned to hold its next session from 18 January to 6 February.

Ms. Vellucci finally informed that on 6 October, the World Trade Organization (WTO) would hold a press conference on its revised trade growth forecast on 2 pm, virtually (Webex) or in Room D. Journalists can contact pressbriefing@wto.org for more details.