



United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

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Note

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. As we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the world's leading instrument of shared progress, our common purposes and principles remain as important as ever. The Organization, and its ethos of international cooperation, have yielded great and wide-ranging benefits to humankind, lifting millions out of poverty, upholding human rights and helping to forge peace in troubled lands. In today's rapidly changing world, our enduring and Charter-driven duty is to build on those achievements and ensure that all people can enjoy safety, prosperity and dignity. In that spirit, I offer my third report on the work of the Organization concerned about the state of our world – but also encouraged by what I know we can deliver for the people we serve.

Deepening challenges that transcend borders

2. The world continues to face grave global challenges that no single Member State or organization can address alone. The existential threat posed by climate change is paramount among those perils. Climate change-related disasters affect an average of 350 million people every year, and every day global warming is reversing hard-won development gains and exacerbating poverty. Biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate.

3. In 2019, nearly 142 million people will need humanitarian assistance. Armed conflicts and violence continue to destroy lives and communities. Conflicts have become more complex and interlinked. Violent extremism and terrorism continue to destabilize countries and entire regions.

4. Pervasive poverty and rising inequality across and especially within countries are of significant concern, as are the worrying trends of shrinking democratic and civic space, often affecting human rights defenders, health workers and journalists first. Violence against women and girls and renewed pushback against women's rights and gender equality remain pervasive across the world.

5. Those factors, among others, have contributed to increasing levels of displacement, which expose vulnerable populations on the move to human rights violations and create complex challenges in transit and destination countries. As these and other problems persist and proliferate, we see growing fear, uncertainty and frustration undermining public trust in institutions and political establishments and providing a breeding ground for hate speech, xenophobia and other divisive and dangerous narratives.

6. My profound concern about this alarming trajectory – including hate-driven violence and atrocious attacks on places of worship – led me to launch a strategy to combat hate speech and to explore how the United Nations can support the protection of holy sites around the world.

Multilateralism matters

7. In 2018, the United Nations system demonstrated what we can accomplish when we work together, and what we need to do to generate further progress.

8. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, encapsulated in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, continues to provide a clear and universal road map for building a fair globalization and transforming economies and societies to ensure

that no one is left behind. Much progress has been achieved. Yet, at the current pace, we will not reach our targets. We need to bring much greater urgency and ambition to this work, through enhanced international cooperation, private-public partnerships, adequate financing and innovative solutions. We also need to empower young people as partners and leaders, as envisaged in Youth 2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth.

9. Despite hurdles, the climate change conference held in Katowice, Poland, in December agreed on a work programme to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, a notable step forward. The climate summit to be held in September 2019 will be an opportunity to accelerate the global response towards the goal of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5°C and to meet other climate targets for 2020 and beyond.

10. In December 2018, the agreement by Member States on a landmark Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration provided a voluntary platform for countries of origin, transit and destination to maximize the benefits of migration and tackle its associated challenges. Along with the global compact on refugees, affirmed that same month, the world now has far-reaching pathways to ensure that human mobility works for all.

11. Our peace operations continue to be vital. Through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, we have strengthened our partnership with troop- and police-contributing countries, Security Council members and host countries. Since the launch of this effort in March 2018, more than 150 Member States and 4 international and regional organizations have endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

12. We have conducted independent reviews of our operations to assess how we can better deliver on our mandates, and have prioritized efforts to increase the number of female uniformed personnel. We are also promoting women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes, given that experience shows that this produces more robust and sustainable agreements.

13. I have proposed a new disarmament agenda to address weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons and to ensure that wondrous new technologies do not spark a horrendous new arms race. Our aim is threefold: disarmament to save humanity, disarmament to save lives and disarmament to safeguard our future.

14. While the United Nations continues to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and strengthen peace operations, we are all keenly aware that ending wars and violence is the only real and long-term solution to the destruction and human suffering they cause. This is why, since taking office, I have placed an emphasis on prevention, mediation and a surge in peacemaking and diplomacy.

15. Recent months have seen progress in addressing volatile situations, resolving conflicts and restoring hope to those affected by years of war, violence and instability, for example by ensuring peaceful and democratic elections in Madagascar. In February 2019, Greece and North Macedonia settled their long-standing "name" dispute, showing that even seemingly intractable issues can be resolved through dialogue and political will. Close cooperation with regional organizations has been essential. However, in the face of complex conflicts, this work is difficult and requires patience and persistence, as we have seen in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In Yemen, the United Nations-brokered Stockholm Agreement, reached in December 2018, represented welcome progress, although there are still many obstacles, and more needs to be done to ensure that the parties live up to their commitments and that a true political process finally leads to peace. Across these and other situations, I continue to offer my good offices and

personal engagement wherever they can add value, alongside my envoys and special representatives, drawing on the experience of the United Nations and those in the broader mediation community.

16. At the same time, we are committed to a collective system-wide approach to addressing such challenges as the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which continues to unfold in a challenging environment marked by conflict and insecurity. I urge Member States and partner organizations to ensure that the responding agencies have the resources they need to succeed.

Becoming more fit for purpose

17. To meet current and emerging global challenges, we have embarked on major reforms of the Organization. We have transformed the United Nations development system and rolled out a new generation of country teams and resident coordinators. We have strengthened and streamlined our peace and security architecture to better integrate prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We have created new management structures at Headquarters to provide better policy advice and operational support to the rest of the Secretariat, in particular in the field. We have decentralized decision-making authority to ensure that managers have the means at their disposal to deliver their programmes, while at the same time being held accountable for the use of their resources and the performance of their entities. We have adopted new management practices and developed new capacities.

18. Reform is ultimately about ensuring that we are best positioned to serve people – people suffering in poverty or exclusion, victimized by conflict, those whose rights and dignity are being denied, and so many millions with ideas and dreams who need a helping hand.

19. To fulfil our mandates more efficiently and effectively, our actions must be rooted in transparency, coordination and accountability. We must break silos and bring the pillars of our work together so that efforts to advance peace, sustainable development and human rights are mutually reinforcing.

20. We also continue to make significant progress towards gender parity: for the first time in the Organization's history, we have achieved parity in the Senior Management Group and among resident coordinators, and are almost at parity among the senior leadership ranks across the Organization, well ahead of my target date of 2021. This is not just an exercise in numbers; it is about creating an inclusive workforce. With respect to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, our focus remains on prevention, responding rapidly to allegations, supporting victims through their trauma and ensuring accountability. Towards that end, we have established a helpline for staff, strengthened our investigative capacity and established a screening database to prevent perpetrators from moving undetected from one part of the United Nations system to another. Those three challenges together – achieving gender parity, preventing sexual harassment and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse – are critical to my overall reform initiatives and for taking the Organization forward.

Addressing the budget crisis

21. Success in reform also rests on sufficient and predictable financial contributions from Member States. Yet regular budget operations face severe cash shortfalls and deficits that are happening earlier, going deeper and lasting longer. In addition, structural weaknesses in the budget methodology can cause expenditures to outpace the approved budget level and the collection of contributions. The peacekeeping budget faces similar problems. More than one third of our peacekeeping missions do not have cash resources to cover their costs, which creates delays in making payments to troop- and police-contributing countries. I have done everything within my power

to persuade Governments to pay on time, and I thank those – the vast majority – that have done so. But we are still nowhere near where we need to be. We are at a tipping point, and what we do next will matter for years to come. That is why I put forward a set of concrete, common-sense proposals to squarely address the deteriorating and unsustainable financial situation. The proposals were aimed at preventing any disruption to our activities and ensuring that our work is guided by prioritized mandates.

22. I appreciate the General Assembly's positive response in July to some of the proposals. Those actions will not entirely solve the problem, but will at least enable us to reimburse troop- and police-contributing countries in a more timely manner. Unfortunately, we have not yet resolved the crisis facing our regular budget operations, which, if left unaddressed, will undermine our ability to implement mandates and the approved programme of work. I urge Governments to find common ground to address this crisis and put the Organization on a solid financial footing.

Harnessing new technologies

23. Transformational technologies and scientific advances will continue to bring change at a rapid pace, outstripping the capacity of Governments and multilateral institutions to respond appropriately. Strong international cooperation, as well as inclusive processes open to all relevant stakeholders, are critical if we want to grasp the opportunities created by new technologies to reduce poverty, reverse climate change, fight hate speech, expand opportunities for young people and address other pressing global challenges. The debate initiated by the report of the independent High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation will continue in the coming months. The United Nations stands ready to serve as a platform for a discussion of how these new technologies can serve as a force for good and help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Looking forward

24. I have had countless memorable encounters in the first half of my mandate, and witnessed and heard vivid testimony from people who are counting on us to deliver – from families in the Pacific fearing the inundation of their countries by rising seas, to Rohingya refugees seeking their rights, to civil society activists in communities and conference rooms mobilizing behind our shared work.

25. I have visited the Central African Republic and mourned fallen peacekeepers in Bangassou who gave everything for the cause of peace; met with courageous human rights defenders in Colombia and elsewhere; been inspired by the passion of young students for education in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; journeyed to central Mali and heard the profound determination of local leaders to fight for peace and reconciliation; and travelled to the front lines of the world's climate emergency and seen the devastation resulting from extreme weather disasters, such as those in Mozambique and the Caribbean – places that have done little to contribute to the climate crisis yet are often its first victims.

26. Across these diverse circumstances and many more, I have seen a common thread: a deep conviction by people all over the world that the United Nations must live up to its ideals. I take that duty to heart and am strongly committed to pushing Member States to do their part while I do mine – to build an effective and responsive agent of progress for all.

27. There is no other way to address global challenges but to act collectively. But in today's difficult context, it is not enough to proclaim the virtue of multilateralism; we must prove its added value. On the eve of the Organization's seventy-fifth

anniversary, the Charter of the United Nations points the way, with its hope for a future in which people and countries live together as good neighbours, defending universal values and shaping our common future. Commitment to this vision is needed now more than ever.

Chapter II

The work of the Organization

A. Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development

Context

28. As the world faces mounting challenges, including protracted conflicts, inequality, persistent pockets of poverty and hunger and a fast-changing climate, international cooperation is essential if no one is to be left behind. The work of the United Nations is focused increasingly on prevention and on taking an integrated approach to development, peace and security and human rights. The United Nations system continues to support the efforts of Member States to implement transformative agendas and fulfil the promises made under the Sustainable Development Goals, including by addressing cross-sectoral and cross-border issues and leveraging innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships.

29. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a blueprint for action for Member States and all stakeholders in areas of critical importance for humanity. Significant progress has been made. Extreme poverty and maternal and child mortality rates continue to fall, and the prevalence of HIV has been reduced. Several countries have made significant gains in advancing women's political representation and have continued to strengthen laws and policies to address discrimination. Millions more people in the poorest countries have access to electricity. Globally, labour productivity has increased, and unemployment is back to pre-financial crisis levels.

30. But much more remains to be done. While global poverty rates have decreased by more than half since 2000, more than 731 million people – 10 per cent of the world's population – still live in extreme poverty and struggle to meet their most essential needs, such as health care, education, water and sanitation. The population of the working poor has increased, with the precariousness of their condition leaving them vulnerable to shocks. Global unemployment levels have dropped since 2015, yet wage growth has stagnated. Some 30 per cent of young women and 13 per cent of young men are not in education, employment or training. Alarming, in 2018, world hunger rose after a prolonged decline. No country has yet achieved gender equality.

31. Today, 55 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 68 per cent by 2050.¹ Sustainable development will depend increasingly on the successful management of urban growth, especially in low- and lower-middle-income countries, where the pace of urbanization is projected to be the fastest. With rapid population growth in cities and continuing vulnerability in rural areas, some 60 million people were directly affected by extreme weather and climate events around the globe in 2018. Earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanos took thousands of lives, and millions more people were displaced by floods, droughts and storms. People living in extreme poverty are often those who are the most exposed to climate shocks and the least able to manage them. Without drastic action to reduce risk today, global warming will lead to unprecedented economic and social destabilization.

32. Addressing poverty, vulnerability and inequality under the framework of the 2030 Agenda contributes to reducing human suffering and sustaining peace. In countries where conflict has resulted in dire humanitarian and human rights

¹ *World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Highlights* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.XIII.6).

situations, sustaining peace depends on sustainable development but, equally, progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires lasting peace.

33. The United Nations is working to promote greater coherence of humanitarian and development action, both in crises and in the transition to sustainable development, as well as to build the resilience of communities and institutions. The Organization is developing a new generation of partnerships – one that truly enables all relevant stakeholders to engage in meaningful participation and strategically leverages the collective insights, networks, resources and capacities of the global community – to implement transformative agendas. Only through collective action and a global movement can the ambitions of leaving no one behind and ensuring a healthy planet for all be realized.

Key objectives

34. The United Nations provides a range of solutions to help foster international cooperation and partnerships in the follow-up to transformative agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. Member States with specific needs receive support in accordance with the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. Various units of the Organization provide strategy, policy and operational support on many issues, including multidimensional poverty and inequality, social cohesion, demographics, economic governance and planning, international trade, fiscal and macroeconomic sustainability and transitioning from situations of instability to long-term sustainable development.

35. The Organization’s regional engagement is spearheaded by the regional commissions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Western Asia. They provide normative, analytical, planning and capacity support to national Governments, regional organizations and other stakeholders, with a focus on macroeconomics; financing for development; social policy; regional integration and connectivity, including trade, transport and energy; innovation; technology; management of natural resources; disaster risk reduction; statistics; gender, women and development; institution-building; and development policy.

Key global outcomes

Stocktaking and acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals

36. Four years into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, countries have created a global movement for action and a learning and sharing platform for the Goals. As the main platform for taking stock of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Goals, the high-level political forum on sustainable development meets yearly under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly. In July 2018, with the support of the United Nations, more than 125 Heads and Deputy Heads of State and Government, ministers, vice-ministers and other ministerial-level officials and more than 2,000 representatives of Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector gathered to discuss the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.

37. At the 2018 meeting, 46 countries presented voluntary national reviews on their respective efforts in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, an increase from 43 reviews in 2017 and 22 in 2016. Some 47 voluntary national reviews are scheduled for 2019. With the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and

equality”, the 2019 forum will conclude the first review cycle. By then, 142 countries will have presented their first set of progress reports on all 17 Goals.

Global climate action

38. Through multilateral efforts, a “rulebook” on how to implement the Paris Agreement was adopted at the twenty-fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 2018 in Katowice, Poland, accompanied by initiatives from the private sector and local governments and actors. The Paris Agreement is aimed at maintaining the average global temperature rise to well below 2°C in this century and limiting the rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

39. Supported by the Climate Change secretariat, the rulebook, known as the Katowice climate package, establishes how Member States will provide information on their nationally determined contributions, including how they will measure, report and verify their emissions reductions. One of the key components is a detailed transparency framework to promote trust among nations on their actions to address climate change.

40. In 2018, the United Nations also introduced the online Sendai Framework monitor, which allows Member States to track progress towards achieving the Sendai Framework targets for disaster risk reduction. The entire United Nations system is supporting many countries in the development of disaster risk reduction strategies in alignment with their climate change adaptation plans.

Other results highlights

Scaling up financing for development

41. In 2018, the United Nations continued to help advance progress on financing for the sustainable development agenda (see [E/FFDF/2018/3](#)). Facilitated by the Organization, the 2018 Development Cooperation Forum produced concrete policy guidance on the strategic role of development cooperation in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Drawing on recommendations set out in the report entitled *Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects 2018*,² the United Nations also participated in designing an agenda for global action.

42. In addition, the Secretary-General launched his Strategy for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which he sets out actions to better align global economic policies and financial systems and to enhance sustainable financing strategies at the regional and national levels. Looking ahead, the United Nations will help build consensus on defining sustainable investing and measuring its impact.

43. The United Nations intensified its partnership with the World Bank Group in 2018, signing a Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda to consolidate joint commitments on cooperation in four key areas: finance and implementation support for the Sustainable Development Goals; decisive global action on climate change; joint work in post-crisis and humanitarian settings; and the harnessing of data to improve development outcomes.

Enabling sustainable development and sustaining peace

44. Member States approved a landmark decision to reposition the United Nations development system to enhance support for the 2030 Agenda through more effective, accountable and cohesive country teams, as well as empowered resident coordinators. Working hand in hand, the United Nations development system entities laid the

² United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.I.5.

groundwork in 2018 to ensure the successful transition of the resident coordinator system and the establishment of a new stand-alone Development Coordination Office within the United Nations Secretariat. Institutional partnerships for implementing the 2030 Agenda and supporting Member States have been prioritized through the formation of strategic partnership frameworks with key development actors, including the African Union, the European Commission and others.

45. The repositioning of the development system will reduce the fragmentation of the United Nations system response on the ground. It will strengthen accountability and foster coherence. Improved context-specific coordination in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian actions presents opportunities to better mitigate risk, foster more sustainable outcomes and ensure that no one is left behind.

46. The Organization is driving a shift in mindset, working across and dismantling silos to address the humanitarian-development nexus and its linkages to peace in a synergetic way through a coherent whole-of-system approach. The Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration was established as a critical problem-solving mechanism in support of field efforts and to strengthen coordination across humanitarian, development and peace activities.

Ensuring availability of data on the Sustainable Development Goals

47. In close collaboration with development partners, regional development banks and the private sector, the United Nations strengthened its advocacy for the use of new data sources and innovative technologies to improve the availability of high-quality statistics, geospatial data and evidence to inform decision-making and enhance collective accountability for results in accordance with the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.

48. The Organization also established a coordinated and coherent approach to ensuring legal identities for all to help close the global identity gap affecting an estimated 1 billion people. Through this unified approach, the United Nations is supporting Member States in building holistic, country-owned and sustainable civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems, and is able to also provide the information and data needed to enhance socioeconomic gains, improve public administration, strengthen the planning and targeting of development support and monitor its progress and impact.

49. In addition, the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics is working to build and enhance national capacities for the collection, analysis and dissemination of migration data in support of countries' efforts to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Addressing climate change with United Nations support

50. Solving climate change is fundamental for achieving sustainable development and realizing the 2030 Agenda. The world is far off track to reach the Paris Agreement targets, careening towards an increase of 3–5°C in global temperatures compared with pre-industrial levels, which is potentially catastrophic for any development gains achieved thus far.

51. Throughout 2018, the United Nations system came together to highlight the impending climate crisis. It collaborated with the United Nations-affiliated Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on a groundbreaking special report outlining the pathways to limiting the global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C. In response, the United Nations system prioritized support for Member States in developing ambitious national plans and long-term decarbonization strategies. United Nations entities responded to the Secretary-General's call for a climate summit to be

held in September 2019 to help enhance national commitments on greenhouse gas reductions and strengthen adaptation measures, while showcasing transformations in the most high-emitting industries.

Leaving no one behind, inclusion and empowerment

52. To assist Member States in “leaving no one behind”, work on a United Nations system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) was focused on accelerating global actions for a world without poverty. The United Nations supported legal reforms and gender-responsive planning and budgeting and, in partnership with the European Union, launched an unprecedented initiative to end violence against women and girls. The United Nations Youth Strategy was designed to scale up global, regional and national actions to realize the rights of the 1.8 billion young people worldwide and tap into their potential as agents of change. The first-ever flagship *Disability and Development Report*³ described progress made with respect to disability in the context of the 2030 Agenda and found that much more needed to be done to empower the 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide.

Supporting small island developing States

53. In 2018, the United Nations provided support to small island developing States in preparing a high-level midterm review of the SAMOA Pathway, to be convened by the General Assembly in September 2019. The Organization also advised small island developing States on how to meet their obligations under the Paris Agreement, including by designing strategies for lowering greenhouse gas emissions, building capacity for adaptation, gaining access to climate finance and enhancing resilience.

Assessing sustainable development trends and harnessing technology and data

54. To strengthen the science-policy interface, the United Nations began to work in 2018 with an independent group of scientists that will prepare the first global sustainable development report. The report, to be launched at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in September 2019, will provide an analysis of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and identify key areas in which policy interventions can set the world on a more sustainable path.

55. In response to the unprecedented change brought about by digital technologies and their potential impact on the 2030 Agenda, the Secretary-General convened a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation in 2018. The Panel’s report⁴ includes pragmatic proposals on how to strengthen cooperation in the digital space. Stronger global cooperation will be critical in realizing the full potential of digital technologies, mitigating risks and curtailing unintended consequences.

56. In addition, the Organization advanced a broad range of technology initiatives related to sustainable development. This included facilitating the annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation; the Access to Space for All initiative; a public-private partnership on the open data hub for the Sustainable Development Goals; and collaborative data projects under the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

³ *Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.IV.4).

⁴ United Nations, “The age of digital interdependence”, 2019.

Outlook

57. Building on its work in 2018, the Organization will continue to enhance its strategic and substantive support for the reinvigorated resident coordinator system and the new generation of United Nations country teams to maximize impact on the ground.

58. The repositioning of the United Nations development system will strengthen accountability for results and increase coherence within the United Nations system. To help sustain peace, accompany transitions from instability and establish environments conducive to sustainable development, the United Nations will continue to prioritize prevention and focus on the root causes of vulnerability. The Organization is committed to shedding new light on frontier and emerging topics and to taking an approach that brings the benefits of digital progress to sustainable development, while countering the pitfalls.

B. Maintenance of international peace and security

Context

59. During 2018, challenging global trends underscored the need for multilateral action to prevent conflict and to keep and sustain peace. After decades of decline, the resurgence of conflict continued. Wars, violence and persecution uprooted nearly 71 million people. An increased number of locations experienced violence, and the number of conflict actors proliferated, with dire implications for civilians. Conflicts were often regional and, despite some progress, terrorism and violent extremism persisted.

60. More generally, poor governance and unequal access to opportunity continued to fuel discontent in societies. Hard-earned governance gains are put at risk and the space for inclusive politics continues to shrink, creating the potential for instability. Elections, if not inclusive and peaceful, sometimes served as triggers for violence. While technological progress brought about benefits, it also created disruptions.

61. The year also marked the seventieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping. The context in which peacekeeping operates today has changed dramatically since 1948. Many locations in which the Security Council now mandates peacekeeping missions face protracted crises with multiple adversaries, stalled peace processes, organized crime and attacks from violent extremists or terrorists.

62. To successfully respond to such complex trends, the world needs inclusive political processes, coordinated global responses and effective multilateral institutions.

63. In the challenging environment of 2018, the global community also made progress. The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia transformed political dynamics in the Horn of Africa. The ceasefire agreement for Hudaydah port gave new impetus to ending the crisis in Yemen. A peace agreement brought renewed hope to South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Iraq and its partners completed operations against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Many electoral processes, from Madagascar to Maldives, resulted in peaceful transfers of power. The agreement between Greece and North Macedonia reaffirmed optimism that protracted conflicts and disputes can be resolved.

64. In support of multilateral action, Member States also agreed to reform the Secretariat's peace and security pillar.⁵ And more than 150 States endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations as part of the Initiative on Action for Peacekeeping.⁶ This multi-year initiative now constitutes the United Nations core agenda for fostering peacekeeping as one of the most effective tools for maintaining international peace and security.

Key objectives

65. Based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the mandates of the Security Council and General Assembly, the United Nations supports Member States through major programmes on international peace and security. Through its political affairs, peacebuilding and peacekeeping programmes, the United Nations assists in the prevention, management and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Following recent reforms, those programmes are now more closely integrated to deliver an effective "whole-of-pillar" approach. In partnership with national stakeholders, regional organizations and contributors, the Organization also provides a range of other solutions to help foster international peace and security.

⁵ See reform.un.org/content/peace-and-security-reform.

⁶ See www.un.org/a4p.

66. In addition, the United Nations pursues dedicated programmes to tackle violence against children, address sexual violence in conflict, protect children in armed conflict and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in the Organization. It also maintains a programme on the prevention of genocide.

Key outcomes and results

Prevention, management and resolution of conflicts

67. In several situations during the year, the United Nations helped to prevent conflict or defuse tension. In Madagascar, for example, it worked in coordination with the African Union and other partners to help resolve disagreements ahead of the presidential election. Collective engagement contributed to the formation of a consensus Government and a largely peaceful presidential election and subsequent handover of power. In Somalia, the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development worked to contain tensions between Puntland and “Somaliland”. In Mali, United Nations good offices – in collaboration with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States – were instrumental in preventing escalation during the first presidential election held since the signing of the 2015 peace agreement. To help resolve the protracted situation in Western Sahara, the United Nations helped to convene the first meeting of the parties in six years. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the stabilizing influence of the peacekeeping mission contributed to presidential elections that led to the country’s first peaceful transfer of power.

68. The United Nations helped to broker several other agreements to foster peace. In Yemen, United Nations-led talks resulted in a ceasefire agreement for Hudaydah port, which created hope for alleviating the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Following long-standing United Nations mediation, Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed a historic agreement to resolve a dispute on the name of the latter country, which is now known as North Macedonia. In the Central African Republic, the leadership of the African Union and the support of the United Nations mission were essential for a peace agreement with armed groups. In South Sudan, the peacekeeping mission provided critical support in the conclusion of a revitalized peace agreement between the parties. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations continued to call for the implementation of the

Highlight: cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations in peace and security

In December 2018, the African Union and the United Nations signed a joint declaration^a outlining the guiding principles for their cooperation in responding to conflict and crisis situations in Africa, including collaboration with African Union peace support operations. The agreement is part of increasing collaboration between the two organizations.

^a Joint Declaration of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations of 6 December 2018.

Highlight: innovation and a surge of diplomacy

In 2018, the United Nations collaborated with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue on a toolkit for digital technologies and mediation in armed conflict, which helps United Nations teams to explore the risks and benefits of digital technologies in conflict analysis, engagement with the parties, inclusivity and strategic communications.

September 2018 memorandum of understanding on Idlib to protect civilians and facilitate a credible political process.

69. In all of those settings, the United Nations political presence on the ground has been instrumental in gaining hard-won progress. The Organization deployed more than 30 special political missions, offices or envoys in countries and regions of concern during the year, including large political missions in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the Middle East. In total, the United Nations engaged in more than 90 situations with early warning, analysis, good offices and mediation services to support Member States in preventing conflict and consolidating peace.

70. In support of Security Council mandates, the United Nations also maintained 14 peacekeeping operations in 2018/19, in addition to its support office in Somalia. In total, Member States asked the United Nations to deploy or support 118,000 uniformed and 17,000 civilian personnel (A/73/776), a 10 per cent reduction from 2017/18 following the completion of the mission in Liberia and the transition to new configurations in the Darfur region of the Sudan and in Haiti.

71. Peacekeeping continued to represent the Organization's largest investment of resources. In 2018/19, peacekeeping operations accounted for \$7 billion in expenditure (or about half of the United Nations Secretariat's total spending), nearly \$1 billion less than in 2016/17. Every second civilian staff member served in peacekeeping operations, including in some of the world's most difficult environments, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan. Nearly 100 peacekeepers gave their lives in the line of duty in 2018.

Peacebuilding support

72. Following the adoption of two landmark resolutions in 2016, the United Nations has focused on better serving nations in the goal of sustaining peace. In that context, it assists the Peacebuilding Commission and manages the Peacebuilding Fund to foster support for national efforts and enhance system-wide partnerships, including with the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

73. For example, the United Nations worked with the Peacebuilding Commission to advance a revised strategy for addressing the root causes of the Sahel crisis, where terrorism and violent extremism have made it difficult to focus international attention on such core conflict drivers as weak development indicators, conflict over land and climate change. The Peacebuilding Fund invested more than \$60 million to kick-start the strategy's implementation. In total, the Fund approved \$183 million in 2018 for projects in 40 countries to foster stability and sustain peace.

Highlight: youth, peace and security

The issuance of "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security" (see [A/72/761-S/2018/86](#)) marked a milestone for the youth, peace and security agenda. Underscoring the positive contribution of youth to sustaining peace, the study led to the adoption by the Security Council of resolution [2419 \(2018\)](#). A dedicated team will coordinate the inclusion of youth in policies and programmes across the United Nations system.

Protection of civilians

74. The protection of civilians is at the heart of many United Nations mandates. In 2018/19, eight peacekeeping missions had a specific civilian protection task. To that end, civilian, military and police personnel collaborated, based on integrated strategies. In South Sudan, for example, they provided physical protection to 190,000

women, children and men at United Nations protection sites. Peacekeepers also helped to establish protective environments for many people elsewhere, including through the provision of assistance to authorities in Mali. In the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations support led to a sustained reduction in threats against civilians. There, peacekeepers helped to capture 57 commanders of armed groups, hold 287 perpetrators of violence accountable and confirm more than 5,400 human rights violations. The United Nations mission also supported health workers in containing the spread of the Ebola virus.

75. To help fill protection gaps across its missions, the United Nations worked with Member States to increase the pool of military personnel and equipment available for deployment. By the end of 2018, 270 pledges had been registered for more than 20 types of such capabilities from 86 Member States. For the first time, nine military units from five contributing countries reached the highest level of rapid deployment. Up to 2,300 of their troops are now available to deploy within 60 days.

Electoral assistance

76. About 70 national elections and referendums were held across the globe in 2018. The United Nations provided capacity-development support to more than 50 Member States and 5 regional organizations on electoral processes and institutions. United Nations teams conducted more than 90 needs assessment and advisory missions. The Organization also directly assisted in the conduct of 18 elections. In Iraq, for example, it supported election preparations and provided advice on the recounting of votes. In Madagascar, United Nations and international engagement was instrumental in supporting electoral institutions. In Cameroon, the Organization assisted national institutions in organizing presidential elections, and in Armenia it supported the conduct of parliamentary elections.

Rule of law and security sector institutions

77. United Nations support for rule of law and security institutions was integral to the mandates of 20 peacekeeping or political missions and in non-mission settings. A disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the Republic of the Congo, for example, contributed to a successful ceasefire agreement. In Burkina Faso and the Gambia, the United Nations provided advice on how to develop national security policies. In 18 countries and territories, United Nations support for the removal of mines and other explosive hazards helped to increase safety and facilitate aid efforts. In the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations also continued to support national authorities in investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of serious crimes. Across all field missions, more than 10,000 United Nations police officers helped to protect civilians, prevent crime and build local policing capacity with community-oriented approaches.

Policy, evaluation and training

78. In the past year, the United Nations put significant effort into policy development, evaluation and training. Since late 2017, for example, the Organization completed eight independent and externally led reviews of peacekeeping missions. Those top-to-bottom reviews examined all aspects of field operations and focused on ways to better deliver on mandates. Together with the report of Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, who was tasked with inspecting peacekeeping fatalities and injuries due to violent acts, the reviews helped to advance action. For example, United Nations teams developed and piloted a comprehensive performance assessment system, which will be fully rolled out by 2020.

Security Council affairs

79. The Security Council held more than 400 meetings and consultations, considered 1,200 documents and adopted 54 resolutions and more than 200 decisions in 2018. United Nations teams provided Secretariat services for the Council, supported its subsidiary bodies (including 14 sanctions committees) and contributed research and training. The Organization also began tracking women's participation in Council meetings to help advance female voices in global decision-making.

Violence against children, children and armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict and victims' rights

80. To drive global action on human rights violations often associated with conflict, the United Nations has three high-level representatives and advocates who in 2018 continued to build awareness, provide leadership, pursue advocacy, collect data and work with partners to facilitate action. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict worked with authorities on a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence in the armed forces. In South Sudan, more than 900 children were released from armed groups, following advocacy on the part of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and system-wide collaboration. In support of children's rights, the Special Representative on Violence against Children prepared a new report on protecting children from bullying to create a unique global platform for children's voices. Furthermore, the Victims' Rights Advocate helped to unite the leaders of more than 70 United Nations system entities and Governments in reaffirming measures to combat sexual exploitation and abuse in the Organization.

Outlook

81. In 2020, the ambitious reform of the United Nations peace and security pillar will enter its second year. The creation of a single regional structure at Headquarters for better internal collaboration on strategy and operations, as well as the Action for Peacekeeping agenda, are already bearing fruit. In the year ahead, the United Nations expects to address the full spectrum of peace and security matters, from conflict prevention to conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, in an even more coordinated, coherent and effective way.

C. Development of Africa

Context

82. While Africa's economies continue to recover, challenges to inclusive growth remain, such as unemployment and lack of access to essential services and rights. The United Nations is firmly committed to supporting Africa in reducing poverty, empowering people, increasing the engagement of women and youth, pursuing transformative action and investments in climate change mitigation and fostering inclusive development.

Key objectives

83. The United Nations Secretariat maintains two significant programmes in support of Africa's development. Through the Special Adviser on Africa, the United Nations helps to raise international awareness on issues affecting Africa and strengthens the coherence of the Organization's work across the peace, security and development nexus. Through the work of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations promotes economic and social development on the continent, helps to foster intraregional integration and promotes international cooperation.

Key outcomes and results

84. Over the course of 2018, the United Nations and the African Union further deepened their partnership. Most importantly, a new sustainable development framework between the two organizations, signed in January, envisions stronger coordination to ensure that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 are mainstreamed and integrated in national development plans and that they contribute positively to people-centred and planet-sensitive structural transformation in Africa.

85. In support of the global and regional development agendas, ECA, for example, created a toolkit that facilitates streamlined planning and reporting by African Governments on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. To help boost regional integration, the United Nations and the new African Union Development Agency collaborated in supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area. The United Nations also continued to support efforts by the African Union Commission to enhance preparedness and resilience-building through disaster risk reduction frameworks.

86. The United Nations worked with the African Union to maximize the positive contribution of migration on the continent and address the related challenges. In that context, United Nations support has been focused on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees.

Outlook

87. The United Nations will continue to provide sustained global advocacy on African issues and generate cutting-edge policy research on key priorities while providing policy advice at the regional and country levels. In that context, the Organization will advocate and support the African Union's efforts to help "silence the guns" by 2020, advance the African Continental Free Trade Area and implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (resolution [69/313](#), annex) and the Paris Agreement ([FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21, annex). Those efforts will feed into the broader support of the United Nations for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

D. Promotion and protection of human rights

Context

88. Seventy years ago, with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly in its resolution 217 (III), Member States proclaimed the articles of the Declaration to be the common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations. They committed to striving to secure the universal and effective recognition and observance of those rights and freedoms.

89. Over the past seven decades, there have been encouraging gains in the mission to promote and protect all human rights for everyone. However, the global march for equal rights has left many people behind. People continue to bear the brunt of the turmoil and suffering in conflicts, resulting in displacement on an unprecedented scale, while all of humanity is confronted with the urgent existential threat of climate change. Outside of conflict, rising inequality and unresolved grievances are fuelling resentment, hatred and violence. The values and progress universalized and promoted through the multilateral system are being tested.

Key objectives

90. In response to those challenges, the United Nations and its relevant subsidiary organs promote and encourage respect for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. In accordance with its mandate, the Organization focuses on mainstreaming human rights, promoting the right to development and conducting research and analysis aimed at the further integration of all human rights in the work, programmes and activities of the United Nations system, as well as enhancing the national capacity of Member States. The Organization supports human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council and provides advisory services to enhance the capacity of Member States, stakeholders and partners on the ground in advancing human rights for all, including in crisis situations.

Key outcomes and results

Increasing implementation of outcomes of international human rights mechanisms

91. As in prior years, United Nations-supported special procedures of the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions generated information to help Member States make informed decisions and address concerns in a timely manner. Through its technical cooperation projects, the United Nations enhanced the capacity of more than 50 Member States in 2018.

Strengthening rule of law and accountability for human rights violations

92. The United Nations helped to strengthen the rule of law capacities of Member States, at their request, and supported them in establishing and enhancing accountability mechanisms. Accountability is essential for resolving past conflicts and grievances, while also contributing to the prevention of violations and abuses. The United Nations provided expertise on the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms and supported their daily work, as well as the work of judicial and civil society actors, including by contributing to the protection and participation of victims.

Preventing violations and strengthening protection of human rights

93. Promoting the human rights agenda is a key tool for preventing human rights violations. The United Nations continued to engage in alternative dispute-resolution measures to ensure that the rights of vulnerable persons were protected, for example in land disputes and in cases involving tensions between internally displaced persons,

refugees and host communities in West Africa. The Organization developed human rights-based early warning tools, which help to protect civilians and prevent the emergence of new tensions by allowing stakeholders to be better prepared and intervene earlier.

Enhancing equality and countering discrimination

94. Climate change is at the origin of an increasing number of migratory flows, posing existential threats and deepening inequality. Through in-depth research on climate change and human rights protection for cross-border migrants (see [A/HRC/38/21](#) and [A/HRC/37/35](#)), the United Nations contributed to the development of a rights-based approach to climate-related migration.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

95. The pledge to “leave no one behind” places the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. The Secretariat worked with United Nations system agencies to bring about a change in understanding regarding a human rights-based approach to disability. Progress has been made in moving from a medical to a social and on to a human rights-based approach to disability in United Nations system policies, which now better reflect human rights principles and standards.

Enhancing participation and protecting civic space

96. In its *World Development Report 2017*,⁷ the World Bank estimated that, after continual expansion over the past decades, civic space is shrinking globally. Amid a crisis of youth unemployment and marginalization, young people are becoming one of the most vulnerable groups in society, at risk of exploitation, violence and insecurity. Making the voices of youth and children heard in the work of the United Nations is a matter of the utmost priority. In 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child led by example and broke with tradition by directly involving children and young people in its negotiations.

Outlook

97. The United Nations will continue to assist Member States in implementing their human rights obligations. The Organization will persist in amplifying the voices of victims, demanding redress with impartiality and being a catalyst for change to prevent further violations and abuse. This will include advocating the recommendations of human rights mechanisms to help strengthen institutions, improve legislation and save lives. The Organization will achieve this by making tools available and facilitating dialogue, advocacy and technical cooperation to ensure the effective application of international human rights standards.

⁷ World Bank, *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law* (Washington, D.C., 2017).

E. Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts

Context

98. Today, humanitarian crises last longer and affect more people than ever before. Complex interconnected challenges – including armed conflicts, the adverse impact of climate change, natural hazards, environmental degradation, epidemics, food and energy insecurity, water scarcity and financial and economic pressures – are increasing the vulnerability of people while reducing their ability to cope. During the year, more than 132 million women, men and children⁸ needed humanitarian aid and protection. Nearly 71 million people remained forcibly displaced because of conflict, violence and human rights violations – the highest figure ever recorded. More than 60 million people were directly affected by natural disasters, including 17 million who were displaced as a result.

Key objectives

99. Based on Member States' mandates, the United Nations humanitarian programme is designed to ensure a coherent, effective and timely response on the part of the international community to disasters and emergencies. The United Nations advocates humanitarian principles, promotes knowledge-sharing in crises, helps to expedite assistance and develops policies for greater coherence. It also works with all stakeholders to reduce the risk and impact of natural hazards.

100. In the long term, the United Nations aims to support Member States in addressing the root causes of risk and vulnerability and emphasizes the need to “leave no one behind” in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda. Humanitarian aid cannot replace political and development solutions. That is why the United Nations is focused on mobilizing the will, skills and creativity of the global community to help end crises and promote development, so that people become more resilient to disasters that cannot be avoided.

Key outcomes and results

101. To help the international community coordinate the response to disasters and emergencies, the United Nations worked with partners to formulate 30 humanitarian response plans and appeals in 2018, targeting 98 million people to receive aid across 41 countries. In Yemen, for example, the United Nations collaborated with 254 humanitarian partners to agree on priorities and a coherent strategy to meet the needs of 13 million people. Around the world, United Nations humanitarian response plans and appeals helped to consolidate financial needs totalling more than \$25 billion and succeeded in mobilizing a record \$15 billion in donor contributions.⁹

Highlight: improving access to avert famine in Yemen

After more than four years of conflict, Yemen – the site of the world's most severe humanitarian crisis – continues to grapple with economic decline, institutional collapse, massive displacement, cholera and food insecurity. The United Nations advocated the improvement of humanitarian access across the country. As a result, by the end of the year, 45 out of 107 local districts that were facing extreme food insecurity were no longer in a pre-famine phase.

⁸ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Global humanitarian overview 2019”.

⁹ See www.hpc.tools/home/2018.

102. The Central Emergency Response Fund, which provides funding at the onset of a crisis and for underfunded emergencies, allocated over \$500 million to 48 countries/territories in 2018.¹⁰ This included \$180 million for 18 chronically underfunded emergencies, the Fund's largest allocation ever for forgotten crises. The United Nations country-based pooled funds channelled a record amount of \$836 million to 686 humanitarian partners in 20 countries/territories during the year, with national and local organizations receiving a quarter of those funds.¹¹

103. The United Nations also worked to promote effective knowledge-sharing and advocacy. For example, more than 9 million people visited reliefweb.org, the world's largest humanitarian information site, an increase of 31 per cent compared with 2017. In total, 16 million stakeholders consulted United Nations humanitarian web platforms.

104. On many issues, the United Nations worked to advance policy dialogue. With his report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2018/462), for example, the Secretary-General brought increased attention to conflict-driven food insecurity. Nearly 80 per cent of the world's stunted children now live in conflict-affected countries. The Security Council, in its resolution 2417 (2018), subsequently recognized the link between armed conflict and violence, conflict-induced food insecurity and the threat of famine.

105. To help reduce vulnerability to natural hazards, the United Nations continued to assist Member States in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. In March 2018, the United Nations launched the Sendai Framework monitor, a global online tool, to monitor its implementation. By the end of the year, 88 countries were reporting data to track progress, enhance knowledge and promote accountability, and 87 countries had either completed or were developing national strategies for disaster risk reduction with United Nations support.

Outlook

106. In 2019, nearly 142 million people¹² will need humanitarian assistance and protection, the majority because of the impact of conflicts. Many of those crises are compounded by underdevelopment, fragile institutions and environmental degradation linked to climate change. The implementation of reform initiatives will offer a unique opportunity to increase the effectiveness of the Organization and make it even more fit to help reduce the underlying drivers of crises. Increasingly, the United Nations and its partners will seek to meet humanitarian needs and to strengthen collaboration with development partners in accordance with their mandates.

Highlight: compacts on refugees and migration

After two years of consultations, in December the General Assembly affirmed the global compact on refugees, which provides guidance on measures to better assist refugees and support host countries. More than 160 Governments adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which aims to enhance cooperation in the management of international migration, including in the context of natural disasters, the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

¹⁰ See 2018 data at cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country.

¹¹ See 2018 data at gms.unocha.org/content/cbpf-allocations.

¹² See 2019 data at www.hpc.tools.

F. Promotion of justice and international law

107. The first substantive session of the intergovernmental conference to draft an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction was held in 2018. The deliberations, which were assisted by a president's aid to negotiations that was prepared to facilitate focused and text-based negotiations, provided a good basis for the future work of the conference.

108. At the request of the Security Council, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) – one of the first international accountability mechanisms of its kind – was established. The United Nations legal team helped to prepare its terms of reference, which were approved by the Council in February 2018. UNITAD will support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed by ISIL in Iraq.

109. Following the decision of the Human Rights Council in 2018 to establish an independent mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed by Myanmar and the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution [73/264](#), in which it called for the mechanism's expeditious entry into operation, United Nations legal teams helped to establish and operationalize the mechanism, including by preparing the terms of reference, which were distributed to the Assembly in January 2019.

110. The International Court of Justice considered many high-profile cases in 2018, including one request from the General Assembly for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. On 25 February 2019, the Court issued its advisory opinion, in which it concluded, *inter alia*, that the process of decolonization of Mauritius had not been lawfully completed when that country acceded to independence in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago.

111. In November, the Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia issued its judgment in case 002/02, convicting former senior Khmer Rouge leaders Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan of genocide, crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. The judgment demonstrates that perpetrators of the most heinous crimes can be held accountable, even decades after the fact.

G. Disarmament

Context

112. With protracted conflicts causing large-scale human suffering, the international security environment continues to deteriorate. Armed groups are proliferating, equipped with a vast array of weapons. Global military spending and arms competition are increasing, and the tensions of the cold war have returned to a world that has grown more complex. New threats are beginning to shape the lives of future generations, including the possible weaponization of artificial intelligence, cyberspace and outer space. In today's multipolar environment, the mechanisms for contact and dialogue between super-Powers that once helped to defuse tensions are eroding. This new reality demands that disarmament and non-proliferation be put at the centre of the work of the United Nations.

Key objectives

113. In that context, the United Nations strives to help Member States to reconcile disparate positions on disarmament, share expertise, create space for dialogue and advance solutions. The Organization's disarmament programme focuses on supporting multilateral negotiations, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, regional disarmament efforts and public awareness efforts.

Key outcomes and results

114. In 2018, the United Nations supported the ongoing preparations for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a framework that has become vital in the light of increased competition between nuclear-armed States and the erosion of the nuclear arms control regime.

115. The United Nations also provided substantive and procedural support to the Conference on Disarmament. Despite heightened tensions at the international level, the Conference was able to establish five subsidiary bodies on all substantive agenda items and issued four reports.

116. In the area of conventional arms, the United Nations continued to support Member States in developing a political declaration and practical measures to mitigate the humanitarian harm and devastation caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. It also assisted in preparing the successful outcome of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. For the first time, Member States reached a consensus to recognize ammunition as part of the challenge.

Highlight: United Nations agenda for disarmament

In 2018, the Secretary-General launched *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*^a to better integrate disarmament into the priorities of the United Nations system, build better partnerships in support of disarmament, peace and security, and the 2030 Agenda, and advance more practical measures for better Member State support.

^a United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.IX.6.

117. To advance the dialogue on the security impact of new science and technology, the United Nations issued a report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology, space-based and electromagnetic technologies (A/73/177). To ensure human control over the use of force, the Organization also assisted an expert group, which adopted a set of proposed guiding principles.

Highlight: reaching out to young people

In 2018, the United Nations stepped up its outreach regarding how disarmament affects ordinary citizens, especially young people. The High Representative spoke to students, delivered video messages to young disarmament advocates and released opinion pieces in several prominent publications to advocate a renewed push on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

118. In support of regional disarmament, the United Nations accelerated its work with partners. In 2018, more than 25 cooperation projects were active. For example, the Organization helped countries in the Sahel region in reducing the risk that small arms, light weapons and ammunition would be diverted. As a result, six countries in the region now have legislative norms on arms security and stockpile management.

119. As in previous years, the United Nations fostered the accumulation of knowledge on disarmament. For example, it published a new handbook entitled *Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Context*.¹³ In addition, the Organization adopted an internal action plan to better align its activities with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Outlook

120. Reinvigorated disarmament dialogue can help to advance many global objectives, including sustainable development, humanitarian action, human rights, gender equality and peace and security. In the year ahead, disarmament solutions that carry wide and consensual support will likely remain difficult to find. New threats and weaponry, however, will make the disarmament dialogue more urgent than ever.

¹³ United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018.

H. Drug control, crime prevention and combating terrorism

Context

121. Transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism continue to pose major threats to security, development and good governance around the world. Drugs create risks for millions of people, lead to the loss of life and seriously deplete social cohesion and capital. According to the United Nations *World Drug Report 2018*,¹⁴ more than 31 million people suffer from drug-use disorders.

122. Organized crime, including cybercrime, trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants and environmental crime, undermine the rule of law. Cybercrime is estimated to generate some \$1.5 trillion in revenue each year. Profits accruing to globally operating migrant-smuggling networks total at least \$5.5 billion. Moreover, homicides and other types of organized crime-related violence remain high across many regions of the world. Corruption adversely affects the rule of law, security and governance, denying many people access to adequate services and opportunities.

Key objectives

123. In this context, the work of the United Nations is grounded in a series of international instruments: the 3 international drug control conventions, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, the 19 international conventions and protocols against terrorism and the United Nations standards and norms on crime prevention and criminal justice. The United Nations works to support Member States in their efforts to make the world safer from drugs, crime and terrorism, while promoting security and justice for all. It provides advice and technical assistance in areas ranging from transnational organized crime to illicit trafficking, from drug prevention and treatment and alternative development to corruption, from criminal justice reform to terrorism prevention and from research to policy support.

Key outcomes and results

Drug control

124. To assist Member States in implementing international drug control treaties and the operational recommendations of the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, the United Nations undertook several initiatives in 2018. For example, the Organization helped to develop drug abuse prevention programmes focused on strengthening families and social structures, which supported more than 38,000 parents and children in 23 countries in East Africa, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. It also supported 58 high-priority countries in developing and implementing comprehensive evidence-based gender- and age-responsive policies on HIV prevention and treatment of and care for people who inject drugs.

125. The United Nations supported Member States in their implementation of sustainable strategies for controlling illicit crops and fostering alternative livelihoods, as well as in enhancing law enforcement capacity. United Nations assistance resulted in seizures of heroin, opium and other illicit substances, including in challenging regions where capacity is inadequate and the trafficking of such commodities fuels regional instability. Most notably, in Afghanistan, mobile detection teams supported by the United Nations conducted more than 3,500 operations, resulting in significant

¹⁴ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.XI.9.

seizures of heroin, opium and other illicit substances, as well as the arrest of nearly 1,000 suspects in those cases.

Crime prevention

126. In assisting Member States with the development of crime prevention policies, the United Nations promoted the use of such tools as the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes and integrated monitoring systems, which help countries to collect information and produce high-quality data on such topics as illicit crops, emerging crime dynamics and victimization.

127. The United Nations provided capacity-building assistance to law enforcement agencies in Africa, Latin America and Asia and the Pacific and enhanced the capacity of more than 30 countries to effectively address wildlife, forest and fisheries crime. In the area of human trafficking, Member States received support in better understanding “dark figures” on trafficking in persons. The United Nations “multiple systems estimation methodology” makes it possible to calculate overall as well as disaggregated victimization rates, giving a clearer indication of where national victim identification efforts might need to be stepped up. In addition, the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018*¹⁵ provided evidence of how armed conflict contributes directly to trafficking in persons, increasing the vulnerability of displaced persons and providing greater opportunities for criminal activity.

128. A landmark achievement in the area of crime prevention in 2018 was the adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime at its ninth session of a mechanism for the review of the implementation of the Convention, in which Member States are encouraged to share experiences and lessons learned. The United Nations will support those exchange efforts and provide expert support on crime prevention matters. Furthermore, the Organization contributed to target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals by helping Member States to counter illicit financial and arms flows through such evidence-based approaches as criminal intelligence-led policing, profiling and the use of special investigative techniques, cross-border cooperation on judicial and financial intelligence matters and the identification and monitoring of illicit trafficking in firearms.

Combating terrorism

129. The threat of terrorism remained acute and was exacerbated by such emerging challenges as suspected foreign terrorist fighters returning or relocating, as well as the growing nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime.

130. The United Nations helped to convene the first High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States to promote and enhance international counter-terrorism cooperation. It also launched the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact and its first consolidated multi-year donor appeal to improve system-wide coordination, resource mobilization and assistance delivery. Those efforts enhanced practical cooperation between the Secretariat and Security Council-mandated bodies in line with Council resolution [2395 \(2017\)](#).

131. The United Nations also supported Member States in implementing counter-terrorism strategies in Central Asia, East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa. More than 90 countries received support for their efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism where it could be conducive to terrorism.

¹⁵ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.IV.2.

132. The Organization strengthened its efforts to address the situation of women and children having links to United Nations-listed terrorist groups and to provide guidance to Member States with regard to the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters. In addition, the United Nations enhanced its support for Member States in financing counter-terrorism activities and its assistance to victims of terrorism, including by commemorating the first International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism.

Outlook

133. Looking ahead, the United Nations will continue to provide multidimensional assistance in response to General Assembly and Security Council calls for strengthening international cooperation on countering terrorism. The Organization will also seek to strengthen its projects and programmes on drugs and crime as part of its efforts to change people's lives for the better. This will include strengthening support for farmers seeking to escape illicit economies, assisting countries in combating piracy, illegal fishing and smuggling, supporting efforts to combat wildlife crime and protect precious flora and fauna and supporting improved safety and governance in urban areas. In that context, the fourteenth session of the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, to be held in 2020, and the special session of the General Assembly against corruption, scheduled for 2021, will help to enhance the work of the United Nations and Member States.

Chapter III

Effective functioning of the Organization

Key workstreams

134. Several operational processes underpin the functioning of the United Nations Secretariat, with its annual resources of about \$13 billion and more than 37,000 civilian staff in 450 duty stations. Many of those processes are being substantially overhauled in 2018/19 as a result of the Secretary-General's management reform initiative. They include the management of finance, human resources, information and communications technology, supply chains, facilities, conference services, and security and safety operations, as well as the communication of the Organization's work and the strengthening of relations with the principal organs of the United Nations, Member States and other stakeholders.

Highlight: environmental sustainability

“Walking the talk” on environmental sustainability is a key priority for United Nations operations. Building on its environmental strategy, the United Nations established a performance and risk framework that increases accountability for the environmental footprint of its field missions. Those missions – which deploy more than 100,000 people in fragile settings – reported to the General Assembly on their environmental scorecards for the first time in the context of their budget performance reports for 2017/18.

Key outcomes and results

135. In 2018, the United Nations laid the foundation for an ambitious management reform initiative that became effective in 2019. In shifting its management paradigm, the United Nations is putting the strongest emphasis on transparency, accountability and better implementation of mandates. Effective 1 January 2019, the Office of the Secretary-General launched a simplified and streamlined framework for the delegation of managerial authority to more than 200 heads of United Nations entities to cut through bureaucracy and bring decision-making closer to the point of delivery. The Organization began to simplify administrative policies and strengthened its internal accountability framework. It also put in place dashboards to convey performance and compliance data to managers in more timely, reliable and user-friendly ways. Furthermore, the Organization improved its formal programme and performance documentation to present a better overview of results to the General Assembly, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. For the first time in its history, the United Nations achieved gender parity among senior management.

Highlight: combating harassment and abuse

The United Nations continued to advance its victim-centred, zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct. It approved a system-wide model policy on sexual harassment, informed by the first-ever staff survey on the issue. A 24-hour “Speak up” helpline was set up in 2018, and a new Clear Check database now makes it possible to vet job candidates across all United Nations system entities to prevent the rehiring of perpetrators of sexual misconduct. The Organization also introduced a database to better assist victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Victims' rights advocates began to deploy to the field, and a new group of sexual misconduct investigators was set up.

136. To facilitate multilateral dialogue and decision-making of Member States, the Secretariat continued to provide conference services, with multilingual support whenever mandated. The Organization serviced more than 35,000 intergovernmental meetings or conferences in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and provided more than 4,500 documents and other materials. To strengthen inclusive multilingualism, the Organization also expanded its pool of conference interpreters and translators from traditionally underrepresented regions.

137. To keep staff and visitors safe, the United Nations worked with more than 1,400 security officers across its 11 major non-field locations. Across the world, United Nations security officers not only helped to protect staff and their dependants, but also kept 3 million visitors, Heads of State and Government representatives safe as they passed through Secretariat premises.

138. In 2018, the United Nations Secretariat also strove to better communicate its work to global audiences. By the end of the year, for example, the United Nations had put in place partnerships for broadcasting its content with 1,100 media entities in 153 countries and territories. More than 46 million unique users visited the [un.org](https://www.un.org) website, more than 60 per cent of whom were 18–34 years old. Nearly 16 million users consulted the dedicated website on the Sustainable Development Goals. In just one of many global campaigns, some 2,000 people from more than 120 countries shared videos of themselves reading an article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in one of 80 native languages.

Highlight: ethics and integrity

In 2018, the United Nations responded to a higher number of internal requests for confidential ethics advice and guidance on whistle-blower protection. Responsiveness improved, as the average number of days for preliminary reviews dropped by 50 per cent, to 13 days. More than 31,000 staff participated in leadership dialogues on whistle-blowing and a stronger policy against retaliation for reporting wrongdoing. The number of tips on potential wrongdoing increased, suggesting greater awareness of reporting options and increased confidence in the system. To help improve the work environment, the United Nations Ombudsman launched a civility campaign and assisted more than 2,700 staff with a safe space, a confidential ear and independent advice on workplace challenges.