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## UN officials urge global focus on new challenges to peace and security



Security Council

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Senior United Nations officials today cited organized crime, pandemics and the effects of climate change as daunting challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security and called for regional and global multi-disciplinary cooperation to tackle the threats.

“None of these challenges is new. What is new, however, is that they are increasingly transnational, increasingly acute, and have ever greater implications for human, State, regional

and international security,” [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon [told](#) the Security Council debate on new challenges to international peace and security.

“They are increasingly transnational because of the growing ease with which people, goods and money can cross borders,” Mr. Ban told the [debate](#), presided over by Paulo Portas, the Foreign Minister of Portugal, which holds the presidency of the Council this month.

“The combined stresses of crime, pandemics and climate change are pushing many poor and fragile countries close to the breaking point.”

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres warned that climate change and its interaction with other triggers of mass displacement of people constituted a growing threat to international peace and security.

Climate change cannot be viewed in isolation from other global trends such as population growth, urbanization, and growing food, water and energy insecurity.

“There is little value in posing the simplistic question, ‘how many people are going to be displaced by climate change,’ he said. “Instead, we should be addressing the more complex issue of the way in which global warming, rising sea levels, changing weather patterns and other manifestations of climate change are interacting with, and reinforcing, other global imbalances, so as to produce some very powerful drivers of instability, conflict and displacement.”

Scarce resources, including water and agricultural land, as well as declining farming opportunities in developing countries, are also potential causes of both displacement and conflict, Mr. Guterres pointed out.

He highlighted risks to citizenship among people who may be forced to abandon small island States due to rising sea levels and floods. Mr. Guterres urged the international community to prepare guiding principles on helping people forced to leave their countries as a result of catastrophic environmental events who may not qualify as refugees under international law.

“Providing such support is a humanitarian imperative. But it is also our common interest,” said Mr. Guterres. “If climate change goes unchecked, and if we fail to find sustainable solutions for displaced populations, we will be creating the conditions in which further breaches of international peace and security are certain to take place.”

Margaret Chan, Director-General of the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), briefed the Council on the procedures it has in place to ensure effective responses to acute threats to global health.

“WHO and its partners undertake multiple preparedness activities aimed at strengthening surveillance, reporting, and response capacities, particularly in those developing or least-developed countries where most new disease emerge,” she said.

“While the fear of another pandemic gives these activities great urgency, they serve a dual purpose, as they strengthen the world’s collective capacity to respond to all health emergencies, regardless of their potential to spread internationally.”

Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)), said transnational organized crime and drug trafficking are undermining security in many regions and evolving into major threats to political and social stability, the rule of law, human rights and economic development.

He said UNODC is raising awareness and mobilizing multilateral actions against drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime in all regions of the world, in partnership with other UN entities and international bodies.

“Our comprehensive and concerted approach is underpinned by UNODC’s guardianship of the UN Conventions on corruption, drug control and transnational organized crime,” said Mr. Fedotov.

“At the core of our multilateral response must be a policy to help build the capacities of fragile or weak States, while assisting with the defences of neighbouring countries and the long-term development of criminal justice systems,” he added.

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