

# Year in Review

2019



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## Making a difference



The year 2019 saw threats to international peace and security increase, with ever-more complex and enduring conflict. The world continued to experience rapidly accelerating climate change; rejection in powerful quarters of the norms developed to protect individuals, especially the most vulnerable, in times of peace and war; and growing disparity within and among societies.

Yet, over the past year, we also witnessed people around the world pouring into the streets to demand dignity, justice and equality; call for action to safeguard the planet; and express solidarity with others who are struggling, be they near or far. I will never forget the scenes of protests in Sudan and the brutal repression demonstrators often suffered. But even more vivid in my mind now is the genuine

rejoicing and palpable good will at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September when the country's new Prime Minister, appointed following the resignation of the country's military ruler last April, thanked the international community for its support as he outlined Sudan's democratic transition.

Transformations not only deeply affect our work but challenge us to do more and to do better in support of the people we serve. We remain committed to the fundamental values of the United Nations and to supporting people around the world in preventing or overcoming violent conflict. In the following pages you will read about some of the instances in which our work made a difference.

The United Nations cannot succeed alone. Partnerships and collaboration are the cornerstone

of what we do. We work with Governments, partner with regional and sub-regional organizations and cooperate with civil society. Our efforts to support countries in sustaining peace aim to enhance gender equality and empower women, ensuring that the voices of youth, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups or minorities are heard. Inclusivity will remain essential to our approach.

As the UN turns 75 this year, I look forward to strengthening the partnerships that we enjoy, including with many of you. Thank you for your continued support.

**Rosemary A. DiCarlo**

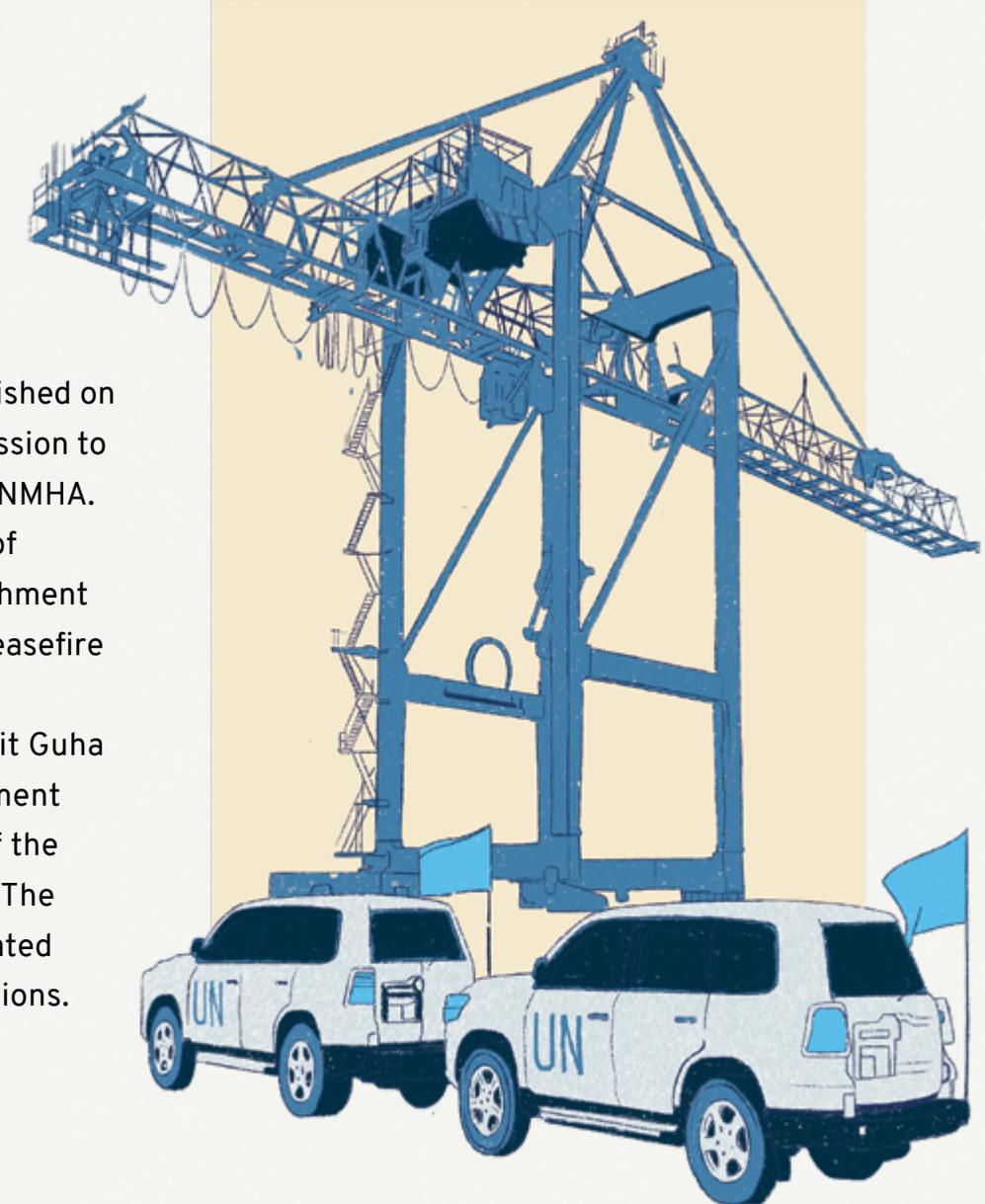
Under-Secretary-General, head of the United Nations  
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

# New political mission in Yemen

**H**udaydah is one of Yemen's largest cities and the site of its main port. Fighting over much of 2018 pitting Government and allied forces against the Houthis for control of Hudaydah imperiled the delivery of aid to millions of Yemenis. Under the auspices of UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths, the sides met in Sweden in December 2018 and reached an accord – known as the Stockholm Agreement, which included specific terms for Hudaydah with respect to a ceasefire and the redeployment of forces. Following the conclusion of the

Agreement, the Security Council established on **16 January 2019** the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement, or UNMHA. There has been a significant reduction of violence in Hudaydah since the establishment of UNMHA, although violations of the ceasefire have continued.

Lieutenant General (retired) Abhijit Guha heads UNMHA and chairs a “Redeployment Coordination Committee” consisting of the parties to the conflict and the Mission. The Committee oversees the ceasefire, related re-deployments and monitoring operations.



# Athens and Skopje resolve “name issue”



Matthew Nimetz, Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for the talks between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, speaking to journalists on the status of discussions on the “name issue” between the two nations. January 2018. UN PHOTO/MARK GARTEN

**O**n 12 February 2019, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia officially changed its name to Republic of North Macedonia, thus formally ending nearly three decades of dispute with Greece.

The dispute stretched back to 1991, when North Macedonia declared its independence from Yugoslavia and announced its intention to be named “Macedonia.” Neighboring Greece refused to recognize the name, insisting that only the northern Greek region of the same name should be called Macedonia, and arguing that Skopje’s use of the name was a challenge to Greek sovereignty. From 1993 to 2019, the

Department of Political Affairs and its successor the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) provided backstopping support and guidance to the Secretary General’s Personal Envoy for talks aimed at resolving the name dispute. From 1999 to 2018, the negotiations were convened under the auspices of Matthew Nimetz, who succeeded Cyrus Vance as Personal Envoy.

“This historic Agreement between two neighbors opens the door to a new relationship between them and to a firmer basis for peace and security in the Balkans,” Nimetz said on 11 January, after the Parliament of North Macedonia announced its decision to approve the new name.



# “New dynamic” in Western Sahara discussions

**O**n 21 and 22 March 2019, the Secretary-General’s Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, convened a second roundtable meeting in Switzerland between Morocco, the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), Algeria and Mauritania. The first roundtable meeting had taken place on 5 and 6 December 2018, the first face-to-face encounter in the context of the political process since 2012.

The meeting was the fruit of the Personal Envoy’s efforts to relaunch the negotiating

process with a new dynamic and a new spirit with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

Personal Envoy Köhler informed the Secretary-General on 20 May of his decision to step down from his role owing to health reasons. The Secretary-General expressed his profound gratitude to Mr. Köhler for his work, which laid the foundation for the new momentum in the political process.



# Efforts to curb conflict in Libya carry on

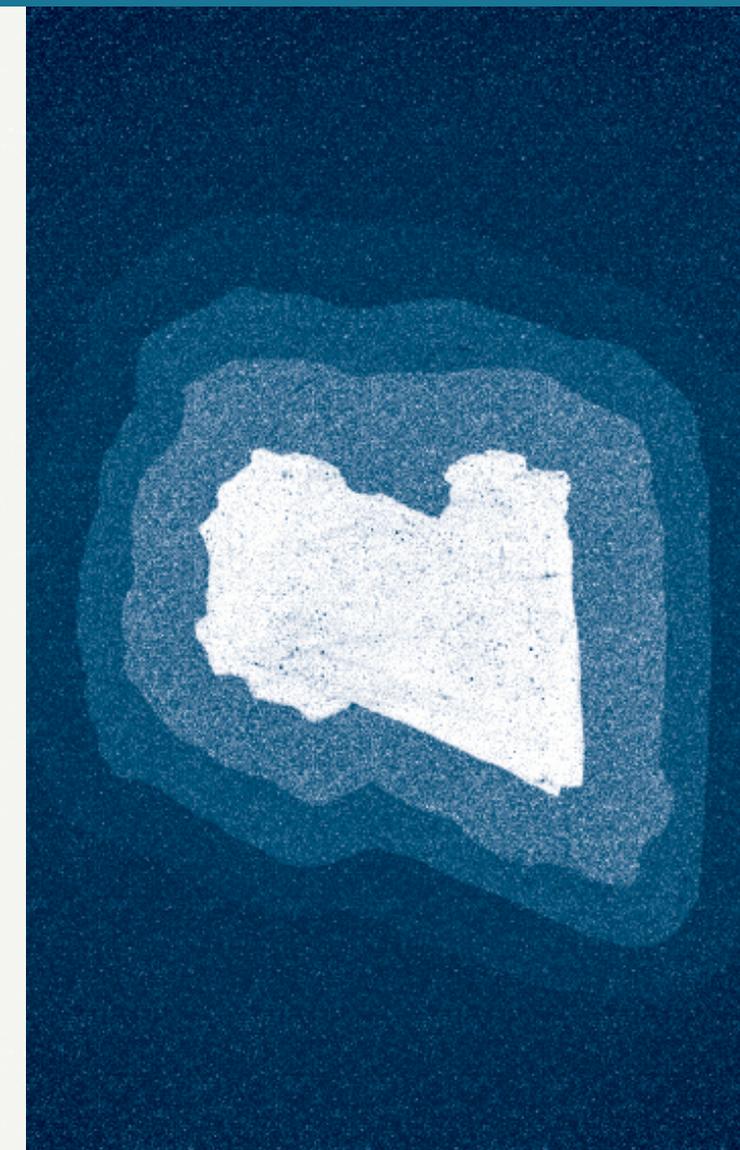


Secretary-General António Guterres (centre) visiting the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), together with (at right) Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative and Head of UNSMIL, and Nader Darwich, Chief Of Mission Support at UNSMIL. 3 April 2019, Tripoli, Libya. UN PHOTO/MOHAMED ALALEM

In 2019, fighting continued to cause much suffering in Libya and raise international concern. On 30 March, the Libya Quartet (consisting of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the European Union and the UN) met in Tunis amid final preparations for a Libyan national conference raising the prospect of a possible end to the crisis. Secretary-General António Guterres said he had hope “because I believe that it is possible to have now a Libyan-led political process aiming at the solution of the Libyan problems.” A few days later, however, the Secretary-General was in Benghazi, in Libya’s east, trying to help avert a military escalation between forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar and those loyal to the Government of National Accord in Tripoli. On **5 April**, wrapping up his visit, he tweeted: “I leave Libya with a heavy heart

and deeply concerned.” “The UN is committed to facilitating a political solution and, whatever happens, the UN is committed to supporting the Libyan people.”

Since the outbreak of conflict, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ghassan Salamé, who heads the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), has worked with the parties in Libya and partners abroad to convene an international conference that would pave the way for a return to a Libyan-led political process. Despite the intensifying conflict, UNSMIL and the UN country team remained in Libya to facilitate talks and deliver lifesaving humanitarian assistance. “I am determined to see the end of this debilitating conflict,” Salamé told the Security Council in October 2019 as he detailed preparations for the international conference.



## Multilateralism questioned



Closing session of the general debate of the 74th session of the General Assembly, New York, 30 September 2019. UN PHOTO/CIA PAK

**O**n 24 April 2019, the United Nations observed the very first International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, with the General Assembly convening a one-day high-level meeting.

It's no accident that the world body decided to declare the Day of Multilateralism in 2018, when the institutions that make up the multilateral system approached 75 years of existence. At possibly no other time has multilateralism been so openly challenged as in the last few years. As Secretary-General António Guterres said in his message for the Day, multilateralism is "under pressure from unresolved conflicts, runaway climate change, widening inequalities and other threats." He added that while new technologies are creating opportunities, they can potentially disrupt "job markets, social cohesion and the enjoyment of our rights."

"We are living with a paradox: Global challenges are more connected, but our responses are growing more fragmented," he said.

As Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo told an audience at Yale University in November, when the UN was established 74 years ago, its Member States committed to the sovereign equality of all states, to refraining from the use of force and to taking collective action regarding threats to international peace and security. "These principles are outlined in the UN Charter, to which all Member States pledge adherence," she recalled. "They were developed by the victors of the Second World War – the major powers that exist today. But there are now new and rising powers that were not part of the creation of these rules. And even those who were, interpret them differently."

Pointing to sovereignty, Ms. DiCarlo said that to many countries, this principle does not mean that a state has the absolute right to do as it chooses. It also means that a state has responsibilities – not only to its citizens but to other states. To some states, she continued, sovereignty is deemed absolute. This has limited the UN's ability to prevent

and resolve conflicts in many parts of the world, including, perhaps most obviously, Syria.

Meanwhile, she continued, many people are losing faith in the process of globalization. They feel left behind. Around the world, we see the rising appeal of nationalist and populist voices.

"Demonstrations are affecting countries from the Middle East to Latin America and the Caribbean and from Europe to Africa and Asia," she went on, citing a growing lack of trust between people and political establishments as a thread connecting different situations around the world.

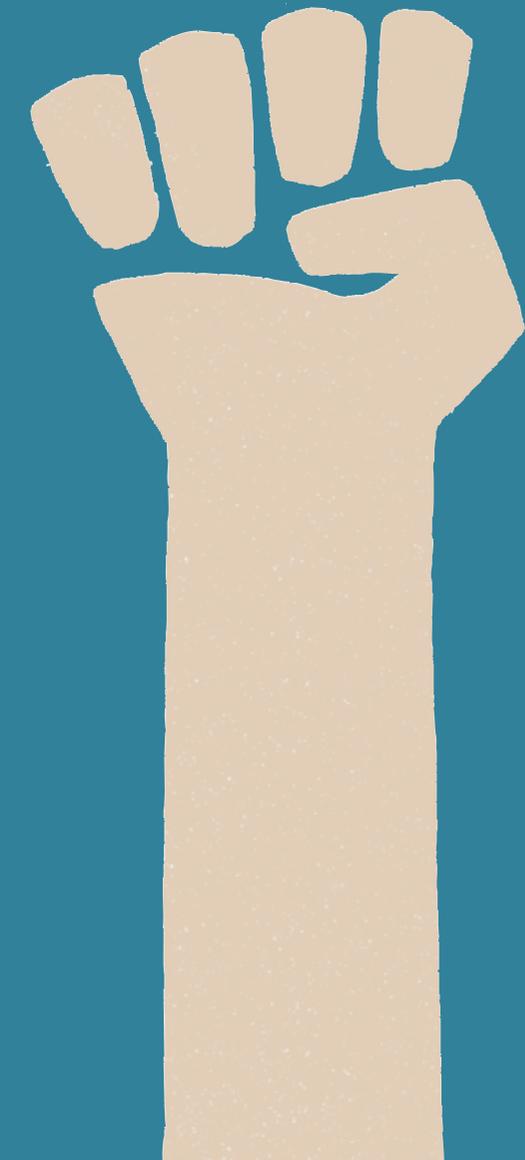
Still, the overwhelming majority of states recognize that many of today's major challenges require collective action rooted in shared understandings. Witness, for one, the importance they accord to the General Assembly and other global gatherings. Beyond the rhetoric and positioning, one fact is inescapable: For many issues, the way forward lies in more, not less, international cooperation.

# Protests rock countries around the world

**T**hroughout much of 2019 one country after another, in all regions of the world, witnessed massive and largely peaceful popular demonstrations. There was no single cause or movement, and reactions from different governments varied greatly. One thing that should prevail in all cases, the Secretary-General affirmed repeatedly, was respect for the rights of people everywhere to express themselves and gather peacefully. On 25 October, the Secretary-General said it was clear, “that there is a growing deficit of trust between people and political establishments, and rising threats to the social contract.” He called on governments to

uphold the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, and to safeguard civic space. He also urged protesters and security forces to act with maximum restraint. “There can be no excuse for violence – from any quarter,” he said.

According to the Secretary-General, economic issues – including rising prices, persistent inequality and financial systems that benefit elites – triggered some of the protests. Others stemmed from political demands. And in some cases, people were reacting to corruption or different forms of discrimination. “Our world needs action and ambition to build a fair globalization, strengthen social cohesion, and tackle the climate crisis,” the Secretary-General said.

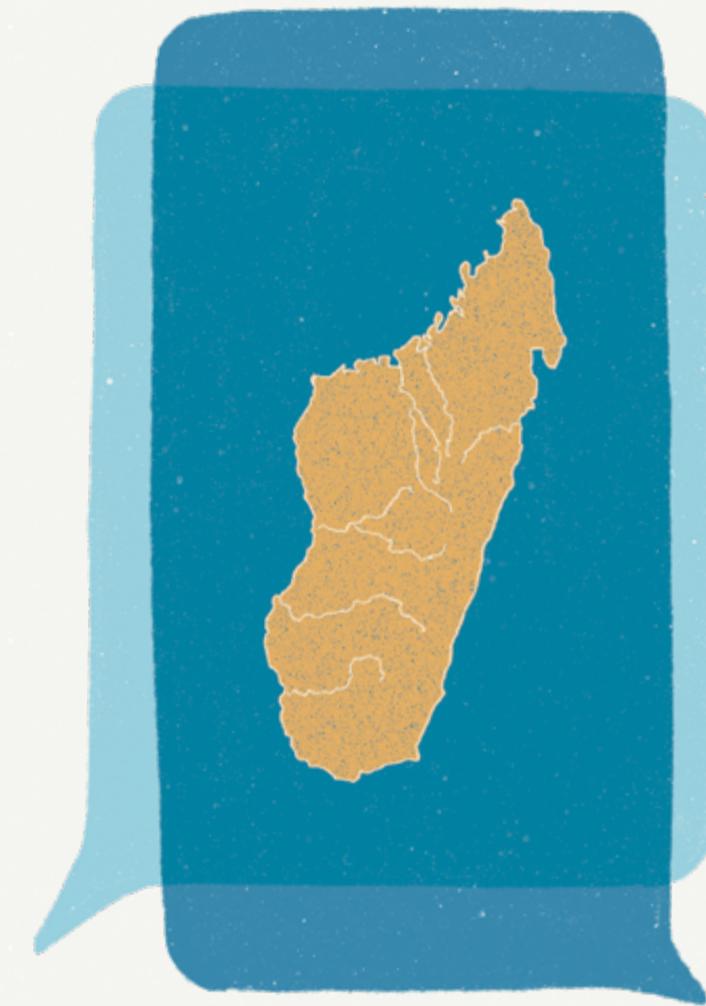


## Further consolidation of democracy in Madagascar

**M**uch of DPPA's work happens behind the scenes, or, in any case, away from the spotlight. Our preventive diplomacy efforts in Madagascar throughout 2018 are a case in point. In April of that year, and in anticipation of the country's 2018/2019 electoral cycle, the Secretary-General appointed the respected and experienced diplomat Abdoulaye Bathily of Senegal as his Special Adviser to help Madagascar overcome a longstanding political crisis and attendant instability.

Mr. Bathily, working in conjunction with national, regional and international partners,

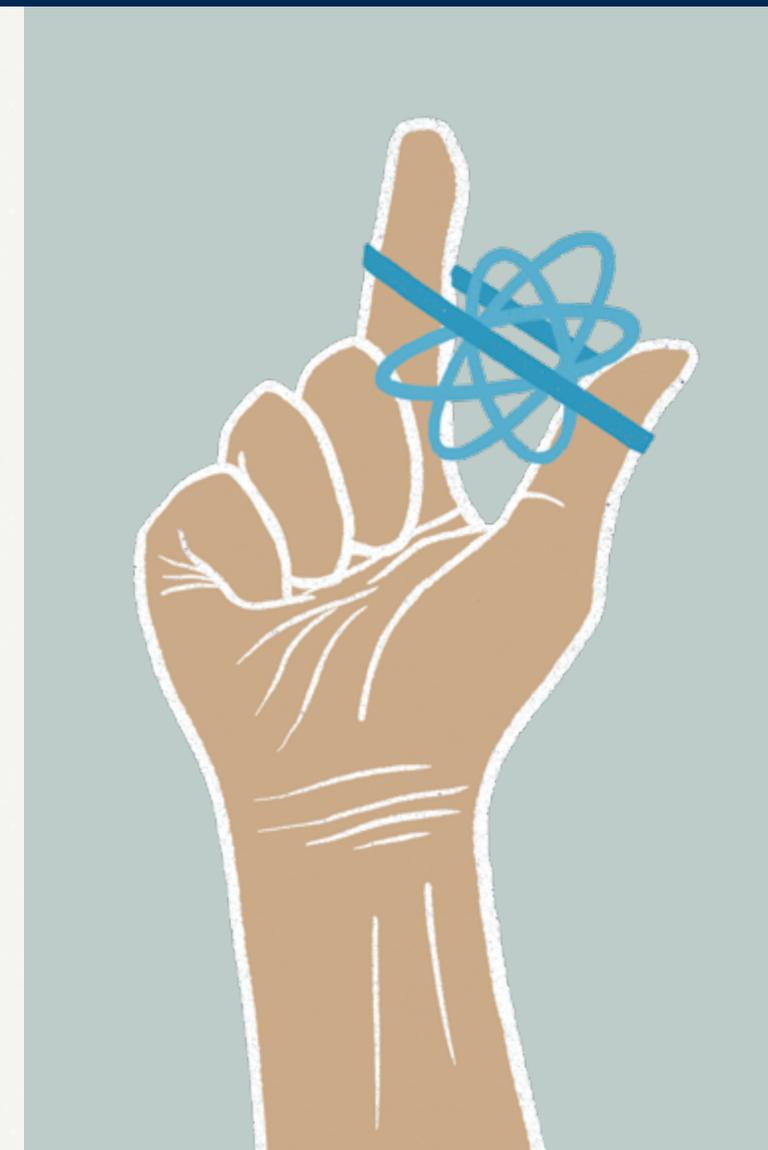
promoted a process of national dialogue and reconciliation that smoothed the way for the holding of successful Presidential elections in December 2018, with a peaceful handover of power on 19 January 2019. Mr. Bathily and counterparts in the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the International Organisation of La Francophonie and the European Union continued to follow developments in the lead up to the 27 May 2019 legislative elections, when the Malagasy people went to the polls to elect the 151 members of the country's national assembly and took another step forward in the consolidation of democracy in the country.



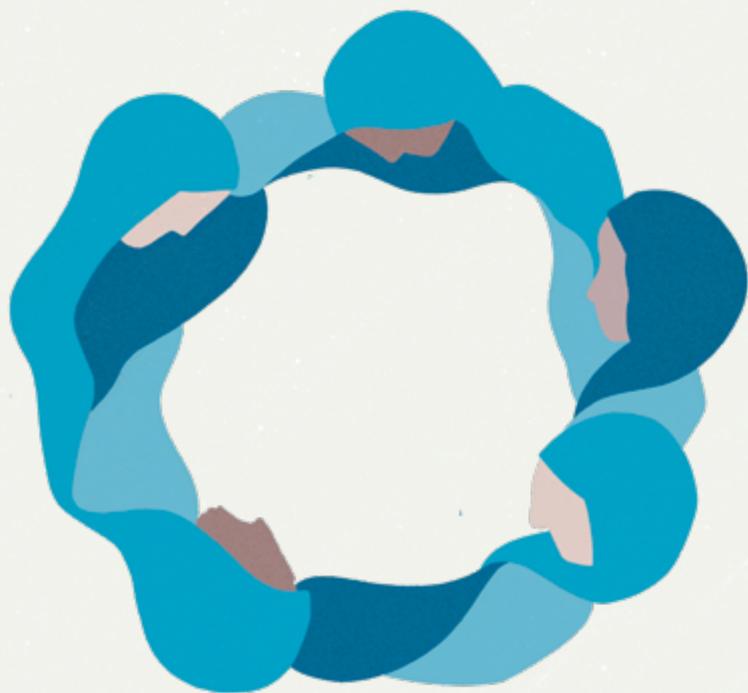
# Iran nuclear deal comes under further strain

**B**y June of 2019, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), informally known as the “Iran Nuclear Deal”, had been observed for nearly four years. The Plan, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2231 (2015), was itself the result of 12 years of intense diplomatic efforts and technical negotiations. Speaking to the Council on **26 June**, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo said the Secretary-General regarded the Plan, and Council resolution 2231, as “hard-won achievements of successful multilateralism, nuclear non-proliferation, dialogue and diplomacy.” She recalled that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had recently assessed that Iran continued to implement its nuclear-related commitments. But she went on to say that the Secretary-General regretted that

the United States had recently decided not to extend waivers with regard to trade in oil with Iran and not to fully renew waivers for non-proliferation projects in the framework of the JCPOA. “These actions may impede the ability of Iran and other Member States to implement certain of its provisions,” she stressed, adding that the Secretary-General also regretted Iran’s announcement the previous month that it would not commit itself to respecting the JCPOA limits on its enriched uranium stockpile, among other measures. Ms. DiCarlo’s briefing came only days before Iran surpassed the limit on its enriched uranium stockpile set under the JCPOA, as it had previously warned. Referring to the different developments around the Plan, Ms. DiCarlo said: “Such actions are not in the interests of the participants of the Plan and may not help preserve it.”



## Centering women in Afghan peace push



From 19 to 21 July, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo was part of an all-women UN delegation that visited Afghanistan to hold talks on how best to safeguard gains in women's rights in the country in a future peace settlement. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kamen met with national authorities and civil society representatives, particularly women officials and women's groups, and discussed inclusion in peace and political processes.

The Deputy Secretary-General stressed that an inclusive peace process means putting "women at the centre" of all efforts to forge a durable peace.

Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo highlighted that during the visit, "interlocutors stressed that peace cannot come at any cost, particularly the democratic gains of the last 18 years". She said that she "was heartened to see women, as delegates, participating in the dialogue in Doha" and emphasized that "women need to fully, effectively and directly participate in peace talks and negotiations for a peace process to be sustainable."

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, said that "ensuring women's meaningful participation in the peace and reconciliation process and in the upcoming elections is more urgent than ever. Women must be able to exercise their right to define what peace means for them, and to have a seat at the table where the future of the country is being

negotiated," she said. "Only then we will really see durable peace and democracy flourish in Afghanistan."

Afghanistan hosts the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), a special political mission. Speaking to the Security Council on 19 June, UNAMA chief Tadamichi Yamamoto had said: "Only an inclusive peace process which involves all those affected by the conflict – including women, youth, victims, business and religious leaders – can lead to sustainable peace." "Afghan society will need to confront many difficult questions in a peace process, and much is at stake: the preservation of gains over the past 18 years; the role of women; questions of accountability; and how to reintegrate those who carried arms," he added.

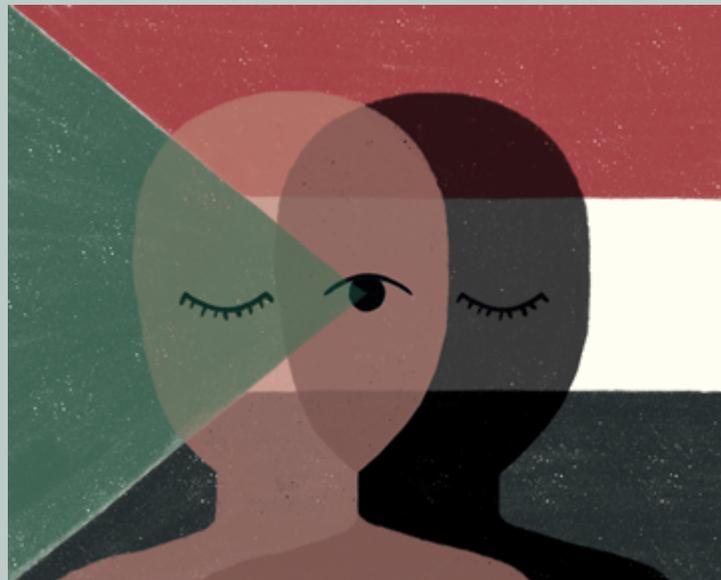
## UN workers continue to pay ultimate price

In 2019 the United Nations lost dozens of its workers to violence. By early December, just in Mali, 29 peacekeepers had been killed. On **10 August**, three UN staff of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) died and two other UN civilian staff and eight Libyan civilians were wounded in a car bomb attack in Benghazi, Libya. The Secretary-General condemned the car bomb attack “in the strongest terms,” while Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo paid tribute to Clive Peck, Hussein Abdalla Mahmoud El-Hadar and Seniloli Tabuatausole and recalled their service.

The United Nations established UNSMIL in 2011 to support the country’s transitional authorities in their post-conflict efforts. UNSMIL is primarily tasked by the Security Council with supporting an inclusive Libyan political process and security and economic dialogue through mediation and good offices. In addition, UNSMIL is mandated to conduct human rights monitoring and reporting, support key Libyan institutions and efforts to secure uncontrolled arms, the provision of essential services and delivery of humanitarian assistance, and coordination of international assistance.



## Moment of change and hope in Sudan



**I**n a year long on sobering developments globally, the remarkable changes in Sudan proved to be a welcome highlight. In April, after months of protests and unrest triggered by rising prices of bread and other basic commodities, the Sudanese Armed Forces intervened and removed President Omar al-Bashir from power, ending his 30-year rule.

Several months of negotiations between the military and the opposition on the modalities of a transition culminated on 17 August in the signing of the Constitutional Declaration, paving the way for the establishment of a civilian-led government and the launching of a peace process towards a just and comprehensive peace throughout the country after decades of armed conflict. At a high-level event on 27 September on the margins of the

UN General Assembly, the international goodwill and hopes Sudan's ongoing transformation has engendered were on display. Men and women from all sections of society risked their lives to achieve long-held aspirations for democracy and peace, and Sudan is at a "pivotal moment of change and hope," said Secretary-General António Guterres. He emphasized that the UN remained committed to supporting the new Government and the people of Sudan as they "embark on the delicate period ahead".

The Secretary-General listed some of the measures that could follow to make Sudan's political gains durable, including removing Sudan's designation from the United States state sponsor of terrorism, the lifting of economic sanctions, and massive financial support for development.

Mr. Guterres expressed optimism that, under the leadership of Abdalla Hamdok, the new Prime Minister of Sudan, the transitional government would be able to "strengthen governance and the rule of law, uphold human rights, and set the country on a path towards economic recovery."

The United Nations remains heavily invested in Sudan and the broader region, with the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, engaging on political processes; a large United Nations Country Team; two peacekeeping missions; and the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, who has a mandate for monitoring regional developments – all working together in pursuit of priority areas agreed with the government.

## Historic chapter closes in Guatemala



**T**he mandate of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) ended on **3 September**, after 12 years of operation. CICIG was established in 2007 as an independent international body that supported Guatemalan state institutions in the investigation of illegal security groups and clandestine security organizations—criminal groups believed to have infiltrated state institutions, fostering impunity and undermining democratic gains in Guatemala since the end of the country’s armed conflict in the 1990s. It represents an innovative approach by the United Nations, together with a Member State, to strengthen the rule of law in a post-conflict country.

CICIG made a decisive contribution to strengthen the rule of law as well as investigation and prosecution capacities in Guatemala. The Commission’s mandate permitted it to carry out independent investigations, act as a complementary prosecutor and recommend public policies to help fight the criminal groups that were the subject of its investigations.

In total, the mission helped identify more than 70 criminal structures, open some 120 criminal cases, prosecute more than 680 people, convict over 400 persons and put forward 34 legal reforms.

## Agreement reached on panel to work on future Syrian constitution



**O**n **23 September 2019**, Secretary-General Guterres announced the agreement of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition Syrian Negotiations Commission for a credible, balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee.

This was the first concrete political agreement between the Government and the Opposition to begin to implement a key aspect of Security Council resolution 2254. The Constitutional Committee, which was launched in Geneva on 30 October 2019, comprises representatives of the Government, the opposition and civil society, who sit together in face-to-face dialogue and negotiation, to try to agree, under the auspices of the United Nations, on new constitutional arrangements for Syria. “This can be a door opener to a wider political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people,” Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen said upon the announcement.

## New Special Political Mission in Haiti

**O**n 15 October, 15 years of United Nations peacekeeping came to an end in Haiti, to be followed by a political presence known as the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), working hand-in-hand with the UN Country team. The new special political mission started its work on 16 October amid political turmoil, triggered by dissatisfaction with the socio-economic situation in the country.

BINUH is mandated, via Security Council resolution 2476 (2019), to advise the Government of Haiti on the promotion and strengthening of political stability and good governance, as well as to support the Government in its efforts to launch an inter-Haitian national dialogue process, address

human rights abuses and strengthen the rule of law. The peace and development pillars of the United Nations in Haiti are working together to formulate and implement a common approach to support national efforts to improve the rule of law and strengthen governance institutions.

BINUH, headed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Helen Meagher La Lime, will assist in planning and executing elections; reinforcing the Haitian National Police; responding to gang violence; developing an inclusive approach with all segments of society to reduce community and gang violence; ensuring compliance with international human rights obligations; improving prison oversight; and strengthening the justice sector.



## Rapid response to crisis in Bolivia



Demonstrators protest in the streets of La Paz, Bolivia. UN PHOTO/BOLIVIA  
PATRICIA CUSICANQUI

The 2019 general elections in Bolivia were marked by strong polarization over former President Evo Morales' bid for a fourth consecutive term and questions about the impartiality of the country's electoral tribunal. When the electoral tribunal halted the transmission of preliminary results on election night on 20 October, uncertainty over the outcome grew and allegations of fraud multiplied.

The Organization of American States conducted an audit of the elections at the request of the Government and with UN support. The audit found major irregularities, and the

situation further deteriorated, leading to a political crisis and eventually the resignation of President Morales on 10 November under pressure from the security forces. Amid growing tensions, violence and the resignation of other authorities, an interim president was sworn in. Morales's supporters accused the opposition of carrying out a coup d'état.

In a bid to prevent a worsening of the crisis, the Secretary-General sent to Bolivia a personal envoy, seasoned mediator Jean Arnault, to advocate for an end to the violence and for the protection of human rights, and

to support national stakeholders in finding a peaceful solution to the situation through free, credible and inclusive elections. Mr. Arnault, who travelled to La Paz on **15 November**, assisted facilitation efforts led by the Episcopal Conference of Bolivia and accompanied by other international actors. The dialogue led to the promulgation of legislation paving the way to new elections in 2020. Mr. Arnault continues to engage with key stakeholders, to help consolidate progress made and build confidence among all political and social actors, including through strengthened UN support.

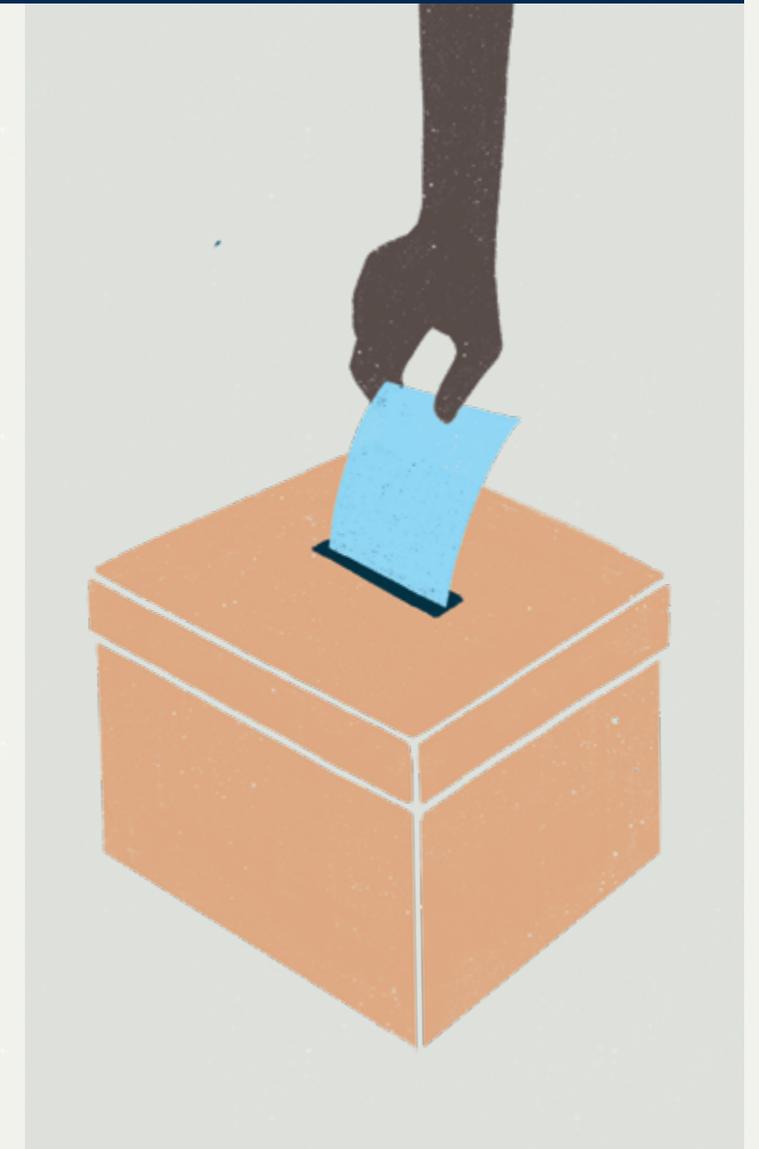
# Bougainville votes for independence

**I**n November and December 2019, the people of Bougainville voted nearly unanimously in favor of independence. The referendum on Bougainville's status, though non binding, is considered a historic step in a process that began over 20 years ago, when the conflict in that autonomous region of Papua New Guinea wound down following a decade of fighting and thousands of deaths.

Following the **11 December** announcement of the results of the referendum, to which DPPA provided critical support, the Secretary-

General congratulated the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville and all voters for their dedication and peaceful conduct of the process.

The Secretary-General encouraged the parties to continue to commit to the provisions of the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement and ensure the post-referendum consultation process is inclusive and constructive. The United Nations will continue to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement at the request of the parties.



**T**he Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) plays a central role in United Nations efforts to prevent deadly conflict and build sustainable peace around the world.

DPPA monitors and assesses global political developments with an eye to detecting potential crises and devising effective responses. The Department provides support to the Secretary-General and his envoys in their peace initiatives. It also oversees some two dozen political missions globally, helping societies overcome conflict and build sustainable peace.

DPPA is an agile platform for crisis response, capable, with the assent of countries concerned, of rapidly deploying mediators and other peacemaking expertise worldwide and cooperating closely with regional organizations on the frontlines of conflicts.

The Department also contributes directly to UN efforts to promote peace and prevent conflict by coordinating the provision of UN electoral assistance through its Electoral Assistance Division.

DPPA provides staff support to the UN Security Council, advises the UN Special Committee on Decolonization on the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories on the UN list through DPPA's Decolonization Unit and services the Secretariat of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People through its Palestinian Rights Division.

The Department was established on 1 January 2019 following the reform of the United Nations peace and security infrastructure, which brought together the former Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office. DPA and the former Department of Peacekeeping Operations (now the Department of Peace Operations, or DPO) also merged their previously parallel regional divisions to create a single structure to provide more coherent political analysis and strategic advice in the service of prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

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