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## SDGs for All - February 2019 In Retrospect

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can also be found on our news website [IDN-InDepthNews](#).

## Powerful Grassroots Movements Boost Hope for Human Rights, Says UN Chief



By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) – People’s rights are under fire “in many parts of the globe,” but there is no need to lose hope, because powerful grassroots movements for social justice have made great strides, according to UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

While the [Human Rights Council](#) was the “epicentre” for dialogue and cooperation on all human rights issues such as civil, political, economic, social and cultural, beyond its doors, other key voices were also demanding their rights and making their voices heard, particularly “youth, indigenous people, migrants and refugees”.

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## UN Acclaims European Support for Implementation of Biological Weapons Convention



By Ronald Joshua

GENEVA (IDN) – The activities funded by the European Union are making a difference on the ground and are helping countries to develop their capacities against the threat of proliferation of biological weapons by States or non-States actors.

This was one of the conclusions at an EU side event that was organised in the margins of the annual meeting of the [Biological Weapons Convention \(BWC\)](#) in Geneva in December 2018 to present project activities under the EU Council [Decision 2016/51](#) in support of the Convention.

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## Shrinking Biodiversity of Plants Cultivated for Food Poses Severe Threat



By Jaya Ramachandran

ROME (IDN) – In the first-ever report of its kind [FAO](#), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, has presented surging and perturbing evidence that the biodiversity that underpins our food systems is disappearing – putting the global population's health, livelihoods and environment under severe threat.

FAO's *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* report, launched on February 22 warns that once lost, biodiversity for food and agriculture cannot be recovered.

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## Experts Discuss Prospects of Peace on The Korean Peninsula



By Katsuhiro Asagiri

TOKYO (IDN) – Nearly 66 years have passed since the Armistice Agreement formally brought about "a complete cessation of hostilities" of the Korean War. One year later, Chinese Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai proposed a peace treaty. But U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, refused – leaving a final peace settlement on the Korean Peninsula hanging in the air.

The signed Armistice established the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the de facto new border between the two nations, put into force a cease-fire, and finalized repatriation of prisoners of war. The DMZ runs close to the 38th parallel and has separated North and South Korea since the Armistice Agreement was signed in 1953.

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## Women and Girls Can Help Tackle Some of The World's Biggest Challenges



By Caroline Mwangi

NEW YORK (IDN) – Nearly 90 per cent of future jobs will require some form of ICT (information and communication technology) skills, according to a new [World Economic Forum](#) report, 'The Future of Jobs'. The fastest growing job categories are related to STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), and recent studies indicate 58 million net new jobs, in areas such as data analysis, software development and data visualization.

The United Nations is concerned that women and girls will not be in a position to benefit from emerging opportunities because too many of them are being discouraged from the sciences.

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## African Villagers Tortured for ‘Blood Rubies’ Worn by Stars



By Lisa Vives, Global Information Network

NEW YORK (IDN) – A British mining company has agreed to pay over \$7 million to settle claims including allegations of torture and murder at ruby mines in the northeast of Mozambique. The brilliant red stones, worth millions, have been worn by international actresses Mila Kunis, Bel

Powley, and Sophie Cookson, among others.

The company, [Gemfields](#), chose to pay community members living near its Montepuez ruby mine on a “no admission of liability” basis that settles a claim of human rights abuses over a decade brought against it by local villagers.

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## Rohingya Refugees Remain in a Perilous Situation



Viewpoint by Vincent Auger\*

*United Nations aid agencies and partners launched an appeal on February 15 to raise \$920 million to assist more than 900,000 refugees from Myanmar and the more than 330,000 vulnerable Bangladeshis hosting*

*them.*

MACOMB, Illinois, USA (IDN) – Eighteen months after being driven from their homes in Myanmar by what [UN officials described as](#) a campaign of [genocidal violence by the military](#), the situation facing Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh remains perilous. Hundreds of thousands of people [live in camps](#) (the camp in [Kutupalong](#) alone houses more than 600,000 people), relying on aid from the World Food Program and help from the government of Bangladesh.

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## Europe’s Invisible Wall Whets Human Trafficking



By Klara Smits

BRUSSELS (IDN) – After his visit to Austria, Libya’s foreign minister Mohammed Sayala [told](#) the Kuwaiti News Agency on January 31 that Libya’s southern borders have now become Europe’s borders. Illegal migration could not be stopped at the Mediterranean Sea, he argued. Therefore, he promised that on the February 20, Libya will present

the EU with a policy to cooperate on ‘protecting’ those southern borders. The plan will also include border agreements with Chad, Niger and Sudan.

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## Africa's First Ladies Launch Strategy to Promote Health



By Ronald Joshua

ADDIS ABABA (IDN) – The Organization of African First Ladies for Development and



African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD) has launched a New Strategic Plan (2019-2023) which envisions “a developed Africa with healthy and empowered children, youth and women”.

The plan will make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of children, youth and women in Africa.

OAFLAD, which traces its roots to the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA), has officially announced its new name – OAFLAD – during the 22nd Ordinary General Assembly in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia.

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## African Leaders Put Rich Nations on Notice That Days of Cheap Resources are Ending



By Lisa Vives, Global Information Network

NEW YORK | CAPE TOWN (IDN) – African leaders had a new message for foreign companies seeking the diamonds, gold, rubies and emeralds so plentiful in desperate dirt-poor countries and so pricey when polished and sold in New York, Paris and Switzerland.

We’re no longer a cheap date. That message – in so many words – was heard again and again at this year’s posh [African Mining Indaba](#) (February 3-6) – a glittering conference in Cape Town, South Africa, that unites investors, mining companies, governments and stakeholders from around the world with the single goal of advancing mining on the African continent.

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## Bangkok Meeting Reviews Programme of Action for LLDCs



By Santo D. Banerjee

NEW YORK | BANGKOK (IDN) – Lack of territorial access to the sea, isolation and remoteness from world markets impose constraints on trade competitiveness of the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and their overall socio-economic development.

In addition to the geographical impediments, LLDCs face challenges linked to high trade and transport costs, limited or low-quality infrastructure, delays at borders, bottlenecks related to customs procedures and border crossing regulations, and productivity constraints.

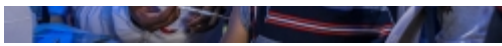
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## UN Committed to Providing Humanitarian Aid to Venezuelans



By J Nastranis

NEW YORK (IDN) – In view of the increasingly critical situation for ordinary Venezuelans, the United Nations remains committed to providing humanitarian



committed to providing humanitarian support, based on “need, and need alone”,

according to a senior aid official.

But the oil-rich country is not only suffering from food and medical shortages. The [Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#) noted that dozens of opposition politicians continue to face ongoing harassment in the South American country.

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## Morocco's Indigenous People Cry for Sustainable Development

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By Peter J. Jacques\*

ORLANDO (IDN) – Life and death for whole communities hang in the balance of achieving the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) that include eliminating poverty, conserving forests, and addressing climate change, passed by the United Nations unanimously in 2015. Take for example, the Indigenous Amazigh people

who live in the mountains around Marrakech. They are representative of people who need to be served first by sustainable development.

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## Democracy Under Threat from Corruption

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By Sean Buchanan

LONDON (IDN) – Amid a deterioration of trust in democracy, people around the world clearly disillusioned with formal political institutions are turning their anger into protest.

Besides being self-seeking, the political class is seen as riddled with corruption, leading to a situation where democratic progress has slowed to a near halt. Indeed, even some countries which had been demonstrating robust and open governance systems are now starting to backslide with democratic norms, while their institutions are under threat.

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## Year of The Youth 2019 Stirs Up Kazakhs

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By Radwan Jakeem

NEW YORK | ASTANA (IDN) – "Today, there are about 300 million young people aged 18 to 30 years in the world who do not have a permanent job or are unemployed," said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev officially launching in Astana, the capital city, '2019 the Year of the Youth'

that focuses on housing, employment and adequate education for young people.

Similar to the '[Youth 2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy](#)', initiated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres at a high-level event of the 73rd session of the General Assembly in September 2018, the Year of the Youth aims at meeting young people's needs, and recognises their positive contributions as agents of

change.

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## Mercenaries Undermine Rule of Law, Perpetuate Impunity

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Viewpoint by António Guterres, UN Secretary-General\*

NEW YORK (IDN) – The use of mercenaries dates back through the ages. From antiquity to the medieval era to the present day, those who fight for financial reward or other material compensation have been a near constant on the battlefield. The shadowy nature of the practice makes data

hard to come by. Reports suggest a surge in the use of mercenaries and other foreign fighters. While the numerical picture may be murky, the impacts of mercenaries today are all too clear.

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## Global Prosperity Rises, Inequality Haunts The U.S.

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Viewpoint by Jonathan Power

LUND, Sweden (IDN) – Every so often reports emerge that attempt to measure which are the best countries to live in. The Nordic countries plus New Zealand, Holland and Switzerland, usually come out on top. Sweden is number one just for the sheer stability of life and security. Denmark is

seen as the most agreeable place to live. The highest rate of longevity is found in Japan. The best schools are in Finland, New Zealand and Canada. Political and press freedom put the Nordics at the top of the league.

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