

# UN's Guterres Issues Year-End 'Red Alert' for a World Divided

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday issued a year-end "red alert" to a world he said faces the perils of inequality, nationalism, xenophobia and possibly even nuclear war unless it works to resolve its differences.

"When I took office one year ago, I appealed for 2017 to be a year for peace," he said in his New Year's message. "Unfortunately, in fundamental ways, the world has gone in reverse.

"Conflicts have deepened and new dangers have emerged. Global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the Cold War," an allusion to the crisis over North Korea's



nuclear tests and missile firings.

"Climate change is moving faster than we are. Inequalities are growing. We see horrific violations of human rights," said the former Portuguese prime minister, expressing concern as well over a rise in nationalism and xenophobia. He suggested that the international community "can settle conflicts, overcome hatred and defend shared values, but we can only do that together." Guterres urged world leaders: "Narrow the gaps. Bridge the divides. Rebuild trust by bringing people together around common goals." He concluded: "Unity is the path." (AFP)

## North Korea's Kim Says 'Open to Dialogue' with South Korea, Will Only Use Nukes if Threatened

SEOUL - Kim Jong Un on Monday warned the United States that he has a "nuclear button" on his desk ready for use if North Korea is threatened, but offered an olive branch to South Korea, saying he was "open to dialogue" with Seoul. After a year dominated by fiery rhetoric and escalating tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Kim used his televised New Year's Day speech to declare North Korea "a peace-loving and responsible nuclear power" and call for lower

military tensions on the Korean peninsula and improved ties with the South. "When it comes to North-South relations, we should lower the military tensions on the Korean Peninsula to create a peaceful environment," Kim said. "Both the North and the South should make efforts." "North Korea's participation in the Winter Games will be a good opportunity to showcase the national pride and we wish the Games will be a success. (Reuters)

## Kim Says US Should Know North Korean Nuclear Force a Reality

SEOUL, South Korea - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Monday that the United States should be aware that his country's nuclear forces are now a reality, not a threat. But he also struck a conciliatory tone in his New Year's address, wishing success for the Winter Olympics set to begin in South Korea in February and suggesting the North may send a delegation to participate. Kim, wearing a Western-style gray suit and tie, said in his customary annual address that his country

had achieved the historic feat of "completing" its nuclear forces and added that he has a nuclear button on his desk. "The U.S. should know that the button for nuclear weapons is on my table," he said during the speech, as provisionally translated by The Associated Press. The official transcript of his address was expected to be released later. "The entire area of the U.S. mainland is within our nuclear strike range. ... The United States can never start a war against me and our country,"



Kim said. He also called for improved relations with the South, an idea mentioned in speeches more often than it is met. He said the Pyeongyang Winter Olympics would

be a good opportunity to showcase the status of the Korean nation. He also said the two Koreas could meet urgently to discuss the North sending a delegation. (AP)

## France's Macron Vows to Keep up Pace of Reforms



PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron vowed on Sunday to rapidly push through economic and political changes in France over the coming months and said he would seek to jolt

Europe into reforming too. The televised New Year's speech was the 40-year-old president's first year-end address following his electoral victory in May. Macron made clear he

would tackle even potentially thorny domestic issues, like a new immigration law. Macron, who left political rivals reeling when he won power barely a year after launching a new centrist movement, has already rattled his way through an overhaul of French labor rules, in spite of street protests and a pushback from unions. "I will ensure all voices, including contrary ones, are heard. But all the same, I will not stop acting," Macron said, seated a marble table in his office at the

Elysee Palace. The formula of the speech was largely in keeping with the one favored by many of his predecessors, despite speculation Macron would seek to shake up France's New Year presidential rite of passage too. With parties to his left and right divided or scrambling to regroup under new leaders, Macron will benefit from a window of opportunity at home to push through more reforms in 2018 as the opposition flounders, analysts say. (Reuters)

## Finnish President Calls for Bigger Role of EU on World Stage

HELSINKI - Finnish President Sauli Niinisto in his New Year's address on Monday deplored the modest role of the European Union in the world decision making. He noted Finland supports the proposals of UN Secretary-General to reform the organization. "Despite its shortcomings, the UN is an irreplaceable actor in promoting international peace and security." He also described as a gloomier note the blunt U.S. criticism of this global organization. Niinisto said Finland is

active in supporting stability and dialogue in the Baltic Sea area, Arctic areas and also globally. "Finland's foreign and security policy situation is stable," he said, noting that Finland is committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and has just increased its international climate funding. Commenting on the world economy, the Finnish president said tighter monetary policy is inevitable in the world at some stage and it will lead to a more challenging situation. (Xinhua)

## Trump's Tax Cuts Will be Big Win for U.S. Economy in 2018, but Poor May Not See Benefits

WASHINGTON - 2017 will be remembered as the year that U.S. President Donald Trump passed the biggest tax overhaul in three decades. And while the cuts aren't perfect, there are a number of benefits for corporations and individuals that will boost myriad sectors of the economy in 2018.

The new tax law "offers real tax relief" to people on all rungs of the economic ladder, Gene Panasenko, a veteran financial advisor in New York City who has appeared as an expert in various TV and print media, told Xinhua.

Trump has dominated the news this year like no other president in recent memory. Before wrapping up his first calendar year in office, the president passed a major tax overhaul - the biggest change in the nation's tax system in three decades. He has claimed on various occasions that his plan, in addition to harnessing economic growth, gives incentives to U.S. corporations to return home. Supporters say it will not only lift the economy and encourage investment in the United States, but will also boost markets and spur companies to create jobs, although others believe most of the benefits will go to those at the top of the income chain.

Panasenko noted that the tax law slashes the corporate rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, and that puts the United States back on track with other industrialized countries, giving companies incentive to remain stateside instead of packing their bags and seeking a better tax environment abroad. (Xinhua)

## Don't Extinguish Migrants' Hopes, Pope Says on World Day of Peace

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis described migrants and refugees as the world's "weakest and most needy" on Monday, using his traditional New Year's address to "give voice" to people he has urged leaders to do more to help.

Francis reminded some 40,000 people who gathered in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican that he had chosen the plight of migrants and refugees as the theme for the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, which is celebrated every January 1.



"For this peace, to which everyone has a right, many of them are willing to risk their lives in a journey which is often long and dangerous, they are willing to face strain and suffering." "Please, let us not extinguish the hope in their

hearts, let us not suffocate their hopes for peace!" Across the world, the mass movement of people has shot to the top of the political agenda, and Francis has made defending those who migrate a central theme of his papacy. (Reuters)

## US, N.Korea Closer to War than Ever: Former US Military Chief

WASHINGTON - The United States is now closer than it has ever been to a nuclear war with North Korea, a former top US military officer warned Sunday, saying he saw little prospect of a diplomatic solution.

Mike Mullen, a former chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, attributed the rising danger to Donald Trump's "incredibly disruptive" presidency. "And in my view, an incredibly dangerous climate exists out there in that uncertainty with how this all ends up," he said on ABC's "This Week." "One in particu-

lar that is top of the list is North Korea." "We're actually closer, in my view, to a nuclear war with North Korea and in that region than we have ever been," he said, adding, "I don't see the opportunities to solve this diplomatically at this particular point." Mullen, who served as the top US military adviser to both presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, questioned whether Trump can be constrained by US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster or White House chief of staff John Kelly. (AFP)

## Ahead of 2018 Vote, Italy's President Asks Parties to 'Drive the Change'

ROME - Italian parties must fulfil their key responsibility and "drive the change", as the country prepares to hold general elections in March, Italy's President Sergio Mattarella said Sunday in his New Year speech.

"The speed of innovation is pressing, leading us into a new era ... Yet, changes must be governed, in order to prevent injustices and new social exclusion," Mattarella said. The true mission of politics would consist "precisely in the ability to face such innovations, and to guide the process of change".

"The responsibility to advance suitable proposals - convincing and tangible proposals - is strongly required, given the size of our country's problems," the president stressed.

Mattarella made such remarks days after dissolving the parliament on Dec. 28, paving the way to elections. In the same day, Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni's cabinet set the date for the vote on March 4, officially launching what was expected to be a harsh campaign. In his address, broadcast on TV from the presidential palace on Sunday, Mattarella said he wished "a broad participation in the vote" and especially by the younger generations. "As always, the election will open a blank page, and voters will be the first to write it, followed by parties and parliament," he said. "I am confident in the presence of the young people born in 1999, who will vote for the first time." (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### China Expects Promising 2018 for Ties with EU: Senior Diplomat

BRUSSELS - China is eyeing a promising 2018 for its relations with the European Union (EU), Ambassador Zhang Ming, head of the Chinese Mission to the EU, said Sunday in an interview with Xinhua.

Zhang, who served as China's vice foreign minister before coming to Brussels in October of 2017, reviewed China-EU relations in the outgoing 2017 and shared his expectation for 2018 in the exclusive interview. PROMISING 2018 FOR CHINA-EU RELATIONS

"In the past year, the relations between China and the EU made steady progress, marked by expanded cooperation in various fields and enhanced mutual understanding," Zhang said. Underlining that socialism with Chi-

nese characteristics has entered a "new era" after the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held in October, Zhang said major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics should take new steps accordingly.

With regards to China-EU relations, he eyed a promising 2018, stressing that it marks the first year of fully implementing "the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the CPC" and the 40th anniversary of "reform and opening-up" in the country. The year also marks the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, said Zhang. He added that 2018 is the China-EU Tourism Year, which would be launched in Venice, Italy, on Jan. 19. (Xinhua)

### Education is Key to Progress: PM

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Monday termed education the key to progress said the pursuit of knowledge must continue regardless of age. He expressed these views in a meeting with students of Rashidabad City of Education and Healthcare, here at Prime Minister's Office. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman was also present.

The Rashidabad City of Education and Healthcare, located near Tando Allahyar in Sindh, is a multi-dimensional welfare project set up by retired officers of the Air Force. It includes several schools, hospitals, housing and recreational facilities for children with special needs as well as those hailing from less-

privileged segments of society.

The meeting was part of initiative to invite students from various parts of the country, provide them with opportunity to visit the highest offices and interact with prime minister. The students were also briefed about working of the government. The children were delighted to interact with the prime minister and asked questions on various subjects. The prime minister was briefed about the Rashidabad project and its future expansion plans. He appreciated the efforts of the retired officers of Air Force who had visualized such a welfare project aimed at serving the humanity especially the underprivileged sections of society. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran's Rouhani Rejects Violence but Vows 'Space for Criticism'

TEHRAN - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said Sunday that government bodies must provide "space for criticism" as he sought to head off days of unrest, but warned protesters that violence was unacceptable.

"Criticism is different to violence and destroying public property," he said in a cabinet meeting, according to the state broadcaster. "Government bodies should provide space for legal criticism and protest," Rouhani said in his first public comments since the protests began on Thursday.

He also said US President Donald Trump had "no right" to sympathise with Iranian protesters who he has previously called terrorists. "This man who today in

America wants to sympathise with our people has forgotten that a few months ago he called the nation of Iran terrorist," Rouhani told the cabinet meeting.

"This person whose whole being is against the nation of Iran has no right to feel pity for the people of Iran."

Protests against economic conditions began in second city Mashhad on Thursday before quickly spreading across the country and turning against the Islamic regime as a whole.

"The point should be made clear to everyone that we are a free nation and according to the constitution... the people are absolutely free in expressing their criticisms and even protests," he said. (AFP)

### Tajikistan to Chair CIS as of January 1

DUSHANBE - On Monday, January 1, 2018, the presidency of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will pass from Russia to Tajikistan, reported RIA Novosti news agency of Russia.

CIS Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev has noted that Tajikistan presidency assumes measures toward deepening of cooperation and intensifying of integration processes.

Also, he expressed a conviction that the conceptual approaches will be supported and implemented with active participation of the CIS members.

In particular, Lebedev expressed the hope that a free-trade agreement on services within the framework of the CIS will be signed in 2018. Armenia is also a member in the Commonwealth of Independent States. (Agencies)