

Secretary-General asks Member States to express intention on financing UN plan to tackle cholera in Haiti

24 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has asked Member States to inform him by 6 March if they intend to make voluntary financial contributions to the implementation of the new UN plan to counter cholera in Haiti, his spokesman said today.

“Earlier this week the Secretary-General sent a letter to all Member States” in that regard, Stéphane Dujarric told reporters at the regular daily briefing at UN Headquarters in New York.

“As you are aware, under the new approach, the UN is intensifying support to the Haitian government in building sound water, sanitation and health systems – the best long-term defence against cholera and other water-borne diseases – and also developing a support package to provide material assistance and support to Haitians most directly affected by cholera,” the Spokesman said.

In his letter, the Secretary-General recalled that the UN bears a moral responsibility for ensuring that the new approach – launched in a report to UN Member States on 1 December 2016 – is implemented, Mr. Dujarric added.

RELATED: UN outlines new plan to fight cholera epidemic and help communities

Costing around \$400 million over the next two years, the proposed UN package under the new approach will centre on two different elements, known as ‘Track One’ and ‘Track Two.’

Track 1 – reducing incidence of cholera

The former consists of a greatly intensified and better-resourced effort to respond to and reduce the incidence of cholera, through addressing Haiti’s short- and longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health systems and improved access to care and treatment.

This is expected to involve intensifying efforts to mobilize adequate funding for an increased number of rapid response teams; strengthened epidemiological surveillance; the rapid detection, reporting and treatment of cases; the combined use of cholera vaccinations with targeted water and sanitation interventions; more focused geographical targeting; improved communication and behavioural change strategies; and strengthened support to longer-term water and sanitation services.

Track 2 – a community approach

The second track of the UN response is the development of a package of material assistance and support to those Haitians most directly affected by cholera, centred on the victims and their families and communities. It is

expected that it will also involve affected individuals and communities in the development of the package.

Haiti has been dealing with a cholera outbreak since October 2010, some nine months after it suffered a devastating earthquake. The outbreak has affected an estimated 788,000 people and claimed the lives of more than 9,000. Concerted national and international efforts, backed by the United Nations, have resulted in a 90 per cent reduction in the number of suspected cases.

While the number of those affected remains high, and recent outbreaks – partly heightened by the impact of Hurricane Matthew – show the continued vulnerability of the population to the disease, UN officials have said the challenge is not insurmountable.

[UN envoy and Church leaders in DR Congo condemn attacks against Catholic facilities](#)

24 February 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the National Episcopal Conference of Congo, known as CENCO have called for an immediate end to the spate of violent attacks against Catholic facilities in several parts of the country.

The UN Organization Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO) and CENCO, along with the Apostolic Nunciature said they are “deeply concerned” about recent attacks on parishes and other Catholic facilities. According to the Mission, the attacks were particularly violent in the provinces of Kinshasa, Haut-Katanga, Kasai-Central and Kasai-Oriental.

MONUSCO chief Maman Sidikou, Monsignor Marcel Utembi, Archbishop of Kisangani and President of CENCO, and Monsignor Luis Mariano Montemayor, Apostolic Nuncio in the DRC, “strongly condemned” the violence, which they noted are punishable in Congolese criminal law.

They also reiterated that “places of worship belong to all, and as such, are supposed to be apolitical; Churches are also places of contemplation for the people and must be respected and protected. By attacking them, their perpetrators and/or sponsors are harming a common good of all Congolese.”

Call for the immediate cessation of these “deplorable acts,” MONUSCO, CENCO and the Apostolic Nunciature called on Congolese political actors to condemn them “just as firmly,” in order to frustrate any attempt to manipulate the implementation of the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement of 31 December 2016, which set out, among others, a timeframe for elections.

[Donors pledge \\$670 million at UN-backed conference to support aid operations in Lake Chad region](#)

24 February 2017 – Giving voice to people affected by conflict and complex crises in Africa’s Lake Chad region, a United Nations-supported conference in Oslo today generated more than \$670 million in pledges that will sustain critical relief operations over the next two years and beyond.

Officially known as the Humanitarian Conference in Oslo for Nigeria and Lake Chad region, the donors event also agreed on addressing longer-term development needs and to seek durable solutions to crises in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon – which together make the Lake Chad region.

“Without our increased support, affected communities will face a life of hunger, disease, gender-based violence and continued displacement,” said the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O’Brien.

“But there is another future within grasp: as the international community scales up support, we can stop a further descent into an ever-deepening crisis with unimaginable consequences for millions of people,” he added.

According to estimates, about 17 million people are living in the most affected areas across the four countries. Of them some 10.7 million people are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, with 8.5 million in north-eastern Nigeria alone, having been made witness to years of violence as a result of Boko Haram militancy.

More to follow...

[UN reports more than 300 migrant deaths on Mediterranean crossing in first two months of 2017](#)

24 February 2017 – An estimated 366 migrants died at sea during their Mediterranean journey to Europe in the first 53 days of 2017, down from 425 of the comparable period of last year, the United Nations migration agency said today.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported that 13,924 migrants entered Europe by sea through 22 February, sharply down from 105,427 a year earlier.

These data include the death toll reported this week from a boat with as many as 133 passengers on board that foundered off Az Zawiyah, near Tripoli on this past Sunday.

According to an IOM source at the scene, the human smugglers stole the craft's engine and left the vessel drifting, telling passengers that authorities were *en route* to rescue them. "This is becoming a common tactic," said IOM Rome spokesman Flavio Di Giacomo. "But when you take an engine from a boat like this, you can no longer treat it as an 'incident.' It is homicide."

This year so far, Italy accounted for 10,701 arrivals, Greece 2,223 and Spain 1,000. In the comparable period last year, Greece recorded 97,325 arrivals and Italy 8,102.

To date in 2017, an estimated 326 migrants died during their deadly journey on the Mediterranean's central route linking Libya to Italy, compared with only two deaths on the Mediterranean's east corridor to Greece.

[At global UN consultation, health leaders underline need for action on migrant health](#)

24 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of health systems struggling to adapt to the growing needs of migrants around the world, health leaders from over forty countries, meeting at a United Nations consultation underscored the call for international collaboration to improve the health and well-being of migrants and their families.

The 'Colombo Statement,' adopted yesterday at the second Global Consultation on Migrant Health, aims to address the health challenges of increasingly mobile populations, now numbering about one billion – one in seven people on the planet.

"Protecting the health of mobile populations is a public health and human rights imperative," said the South-East Asia Regional Director at the UN World Health Organization (WHO), Poonam Khetrpal Singh.

Highlighting the importance of the issue, Davide Mosca, the Director of Migration Health Division at the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), added: "This can only be realized through the implementation of well-

managed and coordinated migration policies, which include financial risk protection and equal access to quality health services.”

The Colombo Statement also calls for mainstreaming migrant health into key national, regional and international agendas and promotes international solidarity for equitable migrant health policies, a shared research agenda and the development of global frameworks to ensure migrant health is protected.

Furthermore, ensuring the highest standard of health for all, including for migrants and refugees are also a key component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pledge to leave no one behind.

SEE ALSO: World leaders at UN summit adopt ‘bold’ plan to enhance protections for refugees and migrants

This health issue most directly linked to targets 10.7 on facilitating safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people; and 3.8 on achieving universal health coverage under Goals 10 and 3, respectively.

There is also an anticipation that the momentum generated by the Global Consultation will carry into the World Health Assembly – WHO’s governing body – where its member States will deliberate, among other health issues, priority actions to protect migrants’ right to health.

The Global Consultation was organized in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, by IOM, WHO and the Government of Sri Lanka.