

[UN food aid to benefit 60,000 people in earthquake-hit Papua New Guinea](#)

The United Nations emergency food relief agency has airlifted over 80 metric tons of vital nutritional supplements – enough to feed approximately 60,000 people in earthquake-hit Papua New Guinea.

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the aircraft carrying the nutrient-dense, high energy biscuits, departed the UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Monday morning, and its life-saving cargo will reach those in need within days.

The plane used for the airlift was provided by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE and the Ruler of Dubai.

[“\[This\] support is crucial to deliver humanitarian assistance to those most affected by this natural disaster,”](#) said Stefano Peveri, the head of the Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai.

More than 270,000 people, including 125,000 children, remain dependent on humanitarian assistance across the Pacific island nation after it was hit by a devastating 7.5 magnitude earthquake in February.

The earthquake was followed by a series of severe aftershocks throughout March, causing widespread panic among communities.

In addition, Papua New Guinea already faced severe food insecurity and alarming malnutrition levels before the earthquake. WFP’s remote assessments estimate that approximately 37 per cent of the population, or 60,000 people, were severely food insecure before the earthquake.

The earthquake and its aftershocks have further impacted people in the most vulnerable areas of the country, destroying root crops and vegetable gardens; the primary food sources in the affected area, said the UN agency.

[Women and girls with autism must be empowered to overcome discrimination they face, says UN chief](#)

On [World Autism Awareness Day](#), United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has joined the global call to spotlight the need to empower

women and girls with autism and involving them and their advocates in policy and decision-making to address the discrimination and other challenges they face.

“They face [...] barriers to accessing education and employment on an equal footing with others, denial of their reproductive rights and the freedom to make their own choices, and a lack of involvement in policy making on matters that concern them,” said the Secretary-General in his [message](#) on the Day.

Emphasizing that “our work for gender equality and women’s empowerment must reach all the world’s women and girls,” he stressed that the international community’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) must uphold the [2030 Agenda](#)’s core promise to leave no one behind.

The Goals and the landmark framework from which they emerged were adopted by UN Member States three years ago. Together they aim to wipe out poverty and boost equality by putting the world on a more sustainable economic, social and environmental path by 2030.

“On World Autism Awareness Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to promote the full participation of all people with autism, and ensure they have the necessary support to be able to exercise their rights and fundamental freedoms,” concluded the Mr. Guterres.

Autism is a lifelong neurological condition that manifests during early childhood, irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status. The term Autism Spectrum refers to a range of characteristics.

Autism is [mainly characterized](#) by its unique social interactions, non-standard ways of learning, keen interests in specific subjects, inclination to routines, challenges in typical communications and particular ways of processing sensory information.

The rate of autism in all regions of the world is high and the lack of understanding has a tremendous impact on the individuals, their families and communities.

The World Day is marked annually on 2 April, and this year’s [official UN commemoration](#) will be on Thursday, 5 April, with a half-day programme in New York entitled *Empowering Women and Girls with Autism*, that will feature a keynote address from Julia Bascom, Executive Director, Autistic Self Advocacy Network.

[UN chief calls for probe into deadly](#)

clashes along Israel-Gaza border

Reporting that over the past three months, Israel has advanced 22 plans for some 1,200 housing units for one area of the West Bank, a United Nations envoy warned Monday that such ongoing settlement expansion is eroding the prospect of a two-state solution to the long-standing Middle East conflict.

Guterres welcomes successful wrap up of long-running UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia

Secretary-General [António Guterres](#) has welcomed the successful conclusion of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)), which officially closed its doors on Friday, and congratulated the West African country's people and Government for turning the page on crisis and conflict.

In a [statement](#) from a UN spokesman, the Secretary-General also commended the Government's ongoing efforts to keep Liberia on the path the peace and sustainable development.

The UN chief appreciated the contributions of all partners in the Liberian peace process over the years, particularly the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose green helmets laid the foundation for UN peacekeepers in Liberia ahead of UNMIL's establishment in 2003.

Mr. Guterres also expressed appreciation for the excellent leadership of his Special Representative for Liberia, Farid Zarif, and thanked all previous leaders of the Mission, and paid tribute to all uniformed and civilian personnel who served with UNMIL.

"The Secretary-General expresses his profound respect to the memory of the 202 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace during the nearly 15 years the Mission was deployed in Liberia," said the statement, adding that the UN chief also expressed his gratitude to all troop- and police-contributing countries.

Even though the peacekeeping operation has wound down, the UN family still present in Liberia will remain committed to supporting the Government-led reform process "with a view to ensuring that the hard-won peace can be sustained and the country and its people will continue to progress and thrive," the statement concluded.

Liberia, the first independent country in Africa, enjoyed nearly a century and a half of stability before falling into chaos, enduring two devastating civil wars between 1989 and 2003.

More than a quarter of a million Liberians were killed and nearly a third of the population was uprooted.

The UN Security Council established the peacekeeping mission for Liberia in October 2003, as violence lingered even after warring factions agreed to a cease-fire and a plan for political rebuilding.

Get all the facts and figures about UNMIL's operations [here](#).

[Member States' support essential for an effective UN, says outgoing political chief](#)

After nearly six years as the top United Nations political affairs official, Jeffrey Feltman on Thursday spoke to the press for the last time as the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, spotlighting the importance of multilateralism and the support of UN Member countries for the Organization's vital work.

"The list of [complex challenges](#) that Member States face today is enormous," said Mr. Feltman, noting that these challenges are addressed "much more effectively" through a multilateral system.

The support of the world body's 193 Member States is essential, "for the multilateral system, for the institution and for the Organization itself."

Mr. Feltman said he was concerned that some leaders were questioning whether a multilateral system was the right way to move forward.

"Frankly, if a leader is not committed to rule of law in his or her own country, how committed can we expect that leader to be to the United Nations itself?" he asked.

The outgoing political chief also underscored the importance of the Secretary-General's reform agenda in making the UN more effective, more transparent and "to show Member States that this Organization can evolve to address today's challenges."

Turning to Syria, which he called "the most tragic example" of the international community's failure "to address a peace and security, humanitarian, and human rights catastrophe," Mr. Feltman said he saw that

crisis as “more of a reason for us to recommit ourselves to pursue peace and justice, with even more determination and holding those responsible for crimes accountable.”

In December, Mr. Feltman’s [visited](#) the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea during a time of extremely high tension. While there, he highlighted the need to prevent miscalculations and open channels of communications to reduce risking an escalation.

“I don’t want to claim a bigger role for the United Nations than it actually had in the relative thaw since then,” Mr. Feltman told the press. “But I do think that the confidence and trust in the UN the parties have demonstrated, and all that represents, is further evidence of why we do need to keep the multilateral system strong, why we need the rules-based system.”

Earlier in the day, Secretary-General António Guterres paid tribute to Mr. Feltman’s “[extraordinary dedication](#), an enormous intelligence and a total commitment to the UN, to its values, and to peace and security in the world.”

The [Department of Political Affairs](#) monitors and assesses political developments globally to help detect and defuse crises before they happen. Its chief advises the Secretary-General on global peace and security issues, while overseeing field-based political missions carrying out peacemaking, preventive diplomacy and peace-building activities in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

Mr. Feltman’s successor, [Rosemary DiCarlo](#), appointed yesterday by the Secretary-General, will be the first woman to hold the position.