

[Sri Lanka: UN agency deploys rapid assessment teams to assist in wake of monsoon floods, landslides](#)

30 May 2017 – According to Sri Lanka’s Disaster Management Centre (DMC), the South Asian country is combatting floods and mudslides in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Mora, while the United Nations Migration Agency ([IOM](#)) today deployed three rapid assessment teams to the most affected districts, where some 177 people have died and 109 remain missing.

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres [said](#) he was “deeply concerned by the devastating impact caused by Cyclone Mora on Sri Lanka and Bangladesh,” adding that the UN stood “ready to scale up its support to the government-led response efforts in both countries.”

Since heavy rains on Friday, most of the deaths were caused by landslides.

In a press [statement](#), IOM maintained that while its teams travel to the four worst-hit districts of Ratnapura, Galle, Matara and Kalutara – in the south and centre of the country – the Government indicated that over 768 houses have been destroyed and 5,869 partially damaged while 80,409 people were temporarily displaced to 361 safe locations. More than half the displaced are located in Rathnapura district, where more rain is forecast today.

Sri Lanka’s National Building Research Organization also issued warnings of further landslides in a number of districts, including Kegalle and Ratnapura, where IOM provided shelter assistance to flood and landslide-affected communities last year.

In recent weeks, over half a million people in 15 districts of the country’s south and central regions have been affected by abnormally heavy monsoon rains.

The flooding is believed to be the worst since May 2003, when a similarly powerful monsoon from the southwest destroyed 10,000 homes and killed 250 people, according to IOM.

“When the rain has eased on Sunday and Monday, rescue workers used the break in the weather to deliver much-needed aid to the worst-hit areas. But many villages remain inundated and cut off from basic services,” said the UN’s migration agency.

Rescue operations led by the Sri Lankan military are continuing and the DMC has already identified an urgent need for drinking water and non-food relief items, including shelter.

Sri Lanka’s Health Ministry is also deploying mobile health units and will introduce vector control measures to combat expected outbreaks of mosquito-borne dengue fever, which often follows flooding. Displaced people living in

emergency shelters are particularly vulnerable.

The Sri Lankan Government has appealed for international assistance and, according to media reports, three Indian naval ships carrying relief supplies arrived in Sri Lanka on Saturday and Sunday. China, the United States and Pakistan have also provided assistance.

[‘We are not close’ to urgently needed peace deal in Yemen, UN envoy tells Security Council](#)

30 May 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Yemen today stressed an urgent need for a peace agreement by the warring sides in the country, but confessed that “we are not close” to such an accord due to the failure of the key parties to compromise.

“The reluctance of the key parties to embrace the concessions needed for peace, or even discuss them, remains extremely troubling,” said Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Yemen, at a Security Council [briefing](#) on the situation in the country. “Yemenis are paying a price for their needless delay.”

The envoy updated the Council on his recent efforts to broker an agreement that would avert a possible attack by the pro-Government forces on the critical port city of Hodeidah, controlled by the rebel Houthis.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed warned that the spread of fighting to the city would lead to a devastating loss of civilian life and infrastructure, and threaten the flow of food and medical supplies through the port and bring further suffering to the Yemeni people.

“So far, we managed to avert military action in Al Hodeidah,” he said, but expressed regret that the Ansarallah – General People’s Congress delegation in the capital, Sana’a, did not meet him to discuss the framework for such an agreement.

Civil society’s calls for peace “falling on deaf ears”

“I very much regret to inform this Council that the call for peace from Yemeni women and civil society and the international community is still falling on deaf ears,” he said.

He said he has proposed an agreement which avoid military clashes in Hodeida that should be negotiated in parallel with an agreement to ensure the resumption of salary payments nationally to all civil servants.

“An agreement on Hodeida and salaries should be just a first step towards a national cessation of hostilities and renewed discussion of a comprehensive agreement. Yet even serious negotiations of these first steps have been slow to start,” he said.

The envoy said that pro-Government forces are attempting to make progress on the western coastline of Taiz governorate – from Al-Dhubab and Al-Mokha towards Al-Hodeidah port and inland towards Taiz city.

An assessment mission carried out by humanitarian agencies in early April found that Al-Dhubab was largely empty due to widespread destruction of infrastructure and contamination by unexploded ordnance and landmines. In Al-Mokha, an estimated 40 per cent of houses and infrastructure have been damaged by the fighting.

Violence has also continued in Hajjah governorate and the border area between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

The persistent military action is leading to an increased militarization of the Yemeni population, extensive proliferation of weapons, and widespread use of deadly landmines, the envoy warned.

On the humanitarian front, he said seven million Yemenis are at risk of famine, and half of Yemen’s population lacks access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene services. The latest outbreak of cholera has led to more than 500 deaths and over 60,000 suspected cases in 19 governorates.

Less than 45 per cent of medical facilities are functioning and medicines for diabetes, hypertension, cancer and other chronic diseases are in short supply.

“I urge the Council to strongly convey to the parties that they need to engage immediately with the United Nations to agree on steps to avoid further bloodshed, to halt the slide towards famine and to re-commit to a peaceful end to the war,” he said.

Situation in Yemen a result of international community’s inaction

Also speaking at the Council meeting today was Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O’Brien, who said that the people of Yemen are being subjected to deprivation, disease and death as the world watches.



Stephen O’Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefs the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

He stressed that “this is not an unforeseen or coincidental result of forces beyond our control” but rather it is a direct consequence of actions of the parties and supporters of the conflict and “sadly, a result of inaction –

whether due to inability or indifference – by the international community.”

In just the last month, twice as many people were suffering from suspected cholera cases compared to those in the last six months combined. According to estimates, 150,000 cases are projected for the next six months, in addition to the broadly 60,000 current suspected cases since late April, with 500 associated deaths.

The UN and partners urgently scaled up assistance, quadrupling the number of diarrhoea treatment centres in the last month and established 136 oral rehydration corners, he said, also noting that synchronised efforts in water, sanitation and health are in place to ensure a comprehensive and holistic response, including a nationwide awareness campaign.

On Hudaydah Port, Mr. O’Brien said it is a lifeline for Yemen, being the primary point of entry for commercial and humanitarian imports into the country, which historically is 80 to 90 per cent dependent on imported food staples.

“It is also the only port in Yemen that can handle fuel, and bulk and containerized cargo at scale,” he said, appealing to Member States to ensure that all efforts are made to keep the port open and operating.

“An attack on Hudaydah is not in the interest of any party, as it will directly and irrevocably drive the Yemeni population further into starvation and famine,” he said.

DR Congo approves use of Ebola vaccine to counter outbreak; UN-trained volunteers to educate local populations

30 May 2017 – To contain the latest outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) provided technical support to 145 volunteers of the Congolese Red Cross and community health workers to deliver lifesaving information to local populations in remote areas along the Central African Republic border.

“Working in close collaboration with health workers and communities was the best way to inform the public quickly about protection measures against Ebola, and to prevent propagation of the disease,” said Christophe Boulierac, UNICEF spokesperson, during a regular briefing in Geneva.

Under the coordination of national health authorities, and in collaboration

with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), UNICEF trained on how to chlorinate water and disinfect homes to avoid the spread of the disease, as well as on the importance of hand washing and ways to adapt local burial practices to reduce contamination risks.

Encouraging people to visit their local health centre in case of illness during the epidemic, the DRC Government decided to make the health services available free of charge in the affected health zone of Likati.

In addition, a European Union-funded flight helped UNICEF send supplies and medicines to health facilities in the Likati area.

“It was a very hard-to-reach area and teams could only access it by motorcycle and on foot. This limited propagation of the disease, but also presented an additional challenge for bringing in medical supplies,” Mr. Boulierac elaborated.

“As of 29 May, there were 19 Ebola cases, out of which two were laboratory-confirmed, four were probable and 13 suspected,” said WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier. “Out of those 19 cases, there were four deaths, out of which only one was laboratory-confirmed and one was probable.”

He also stated that as of that same time, there were still 294 contacts under follow-up, and as many cases had already been dismissed, it was important to look into various other options.

“A number of diseases could be responsible, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, hepatitis E, yellow fever, shigella, typhoid, dengue, and salmonella. Individual cases in the different villages could have different pathogens,” he explained.

Asked about vaccination, Mr. Lindmeier said the protocol for the possible ring vaccination had been formally approved by the national regulatory authorities and the DRC Government with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) along with WHO support.

He added that other partners were working on detailed readiness planning for experimental vaccine use, to deploy as soon as possible, if needed.

The international vaccine deployment and cold chain shipment to DRC was not advised at this point, as there were only two confirmed Ebola cases and no new cases had been seen for a while now, he pointed out.

“There is no automatic trigger point for the ring vaccination, but the moment there would be a new case it would be looked at very carefully,” he said.

The authorities, MSF and WHO and partners were in constant contact on this.

[Perpetrators of attack in Baghdad during Ramadan must be held accountable – UN chief](#)

30 May 2017 – Condemning “in the strongest terms” recent terrorist attacks in Iraqi capital, Baghdad, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today underscored the need to swiftly apprehend and prosecute its perpetrators.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, Secretary-General Guterres also “reiterated that the United Nations will continue to stand by the Government and people of Iraq in their efforts to fight terrorism.”

The attacks come in the midst of the holy month of Ramadan, a period marked with fasting, charity and prayers.

Also in the statement, Mr. Guterres expressed his deepest sympathies to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

According to reports, at least 26 people were killed and many more wounded in two explosions that tore through two locations in the Iraqi capital.

[Libya: UN ramps up cooperation to help hundreds of thousands of desperate refugees and migrants](#)

30 May 2017 – Two United Nations agencies today pledged to join forces and “go the extra mile” by expanding operations in Libya and enhancing their support to migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and Libyans affected by the ongoing conflict.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, joined William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), at a senior-level briefing at IOM’s Geneva headquarters where they briefed member States on their recent missions to Libya and called for support to broader stabilization efforts in the country.

The High Commissioner’s Office ([UNHCR](#)) issued today a Supplementary Appeal for \$75.5 million to meet the increased humanitarian and protection needs of people in Libya – including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

The appeal includes protection monitoring and interventions, as well as advocacy on issues related to respect for human rights, access to basic services, asylum procedures and freedom of movement.

“We have [urgent work to do in Libya](#) and can only do it together,” said Mr. Grandi, adding: “We are going the extra mile in trying to make a difference for hundreds of thousands of people.”

Last week, UNHCR warned that hundreds of thousands of people in the crisis-gripped North African country have been affected by the collapse of law and order, absent or insufficient health care assistance, essential medicines, food, safe drinking water, shelter and education.

RELATED: [UN refugee agency ramps up response as Libya’s humanitarian crisis deepens](#)

For its part, IOM in April launched a three-year Action Plan for Libya with two key objectives. The first is to provide evidence based humanitarian assistance and protection to both displaced Libyans and migrants. The second objective is to stabilize Libyan communities, as well as to build Libyan capacities in migration management. That appeal is for in excess of \$180 million, lasting for a total of 36 months.

“While IOM has already started to implement the Action Plan, thanks to funding from some donors, [greater financial support](#) is needed in order to urgently assist and protect migrants and conflict affected populations in Libya,” Director General Swing said. He emphasized all IOM activities are coordinated and implemented in cooperation with the Libyan authorities and UNHCR.