

Guinea Bissau: Security Council 'ready to act' if political crisis worsens

12 May 2017 – Expressing deep concern over the protracted political and institutional crisis in Guinea Bissau, the United Nations Security Council has said it is ready to take necessary measures if the situation further deteriorates.

“The members of the Security Council reiterated their commitment to continue to monitor the current political crisis and expressed their readiness to take necessary measures to respond to further worsening of the situation in Guinea Bissau,” said a [statement](#) to the press issued yesterday by the 15-member body after a closed-door briefing on the situation.

In the statement, the Council reaffirmed that the Conakry Agreement of 14 October 2016, which was brokered by the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)), is a primary framework for resolving the political crisis, calling upon the Bissau-Guinean stakeholders to strictly comply with the accord and the ECOWAS road map in addressing their differences and the country’s challenges.

Regarding the planned withdrawal of the regional body’s 500-strong force that has been deployed to the country since the April 2012 coup, the Council urged the international community to give all necessary support to ensure a complete and seamless transition of security architecture to the national defence and security forces.

The Council also expressed concern about the situation of the civilian population in the country, and urged all political actors to put the interest of the people of Guinea Bissau above all other considerations.

The Council welcomed the active engagement of the UN Peacebuilding Commission with relevant stakeholders on the ground as well as with regional organizations to support efforts towards a political solution.

UK’s Mark Lowcock appointed to head up UN relief wing

12 May 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today appointed Mark Lowcock, a national of the United Kingdom, as the United Nation’s highest official on humanitarian assistance and aid coordination, the UN Spokesperson’s office announced today.

As the head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), Mr. Lowcock will take on a dual role: Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Lowcock will succeed Stephen O'Brien, who will remain in his current role until the end of August "to conclude a [number of initiatives and reforms](#) he has been leading at OCHA," it was announced.

The Secretary-General commended Mr. O'Brien, who took on the role in 2015, for his "excellent work, dedication and commitment to the United Nations and global humanitarian action."

With 30 years of experience leading and managing response to humanitarian crises, Mr. Lowcock has worked in Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, among other locations.

He is currently the Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development (DFID), which leads the UK's work to end extreme poverty.

[UN report assesses 'huge benefits' and challenges of green energy revolution](#)

12 May 2017 – The latest United Nations report on energy-efficiency technologies shows that low-carbon technologies apparently aid clean air, save water and cut land use, and could reduce 25 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and 17 million tonnes of particulates a year.

"We are on the right track. We know that cleaning up the air we breathe gives rise to huge benefits to both human and environmental health, and we know, too, that low-carbon energy efficiency technologies can help us reduce damaging climate change," said Erik Solheim, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) in a [press release](#) on the new report.

At the same time, the UN Environment chief said: "[We are] also clear on the need for greater action on building a circular economy that cuts waste, and on production innovations that could also create new, green jobs."

Entitled "[Green Technology Choices](#): The Environmental and Resource Implications of Low-Carbon Technologies," the report, released today at the Vienna Energy Forum, was compiled by a group of eminent experts in natural resource management hosted by UN Environment.

The panel examined eight energy efficiency technologies and 36 sub-technologies across buildings, industry and transportation and provided a global assessment of the benefits, risks and trade-offs encountered when energy efficiency technologies are deployed alongside low-carbon electricity

supply technologies.

Among its findings, the report notes that research confirms that demand-side technologies reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as many other environmental impacts. However, the magnitude of those improvements varies widely among technologies and regions.

Indeed, in some cases, say the experts, demand-side technologies may increase resource consumption and even greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, it is crucial to understand where, when, and with which technology investment should be placed to maximize benefits.

The report compared two scenarios – one for a global temperature rise of 6 degrees Celsius and the other assuming that the global target of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels is achieved.

Key findings of the analysis include:

- Under the 2-degree scenario, low-carbon energy production and energy efficiency technologies have the potential to cut about 25 billion tonnes a year of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, which is about 34 per cent lower than the emissions under business-as-usual.
- under the 2-degree scenario more than 17 million tonnes per year of particulate matter and over 3 billion tonnes of emissions toxic to humans could be avoided through the use of low-carbon energy technologies
- Low-carbon energy technologies could save more than 200 billion cubic metres of water a year and nearly 150,000 square kilometres of land occupation by 2050.
- Transformation to low-carbon energy technologies will require over 600 million tonnes of metal resources by 2050 for additional infrastructure and wiring needs.

[UN agency appeals for support as refugees, fleeing violence in DR Congo, continue to arrive in Angola](#)

12 May 2017 – With violence and insecurity continuing to force people to flee Democratic Republic of Congo's Kasai region and seek refuge in neighbouring Angola, the United Nations refugee agency has called for a suitable place to shelter them as well as additional resources to support those in urgent need.

[According](#) to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)),

more than 20,000 new arrivals have been recorded since early April, with nearly 3,000 over the past few days.

“[We] continue provide food and relief items to those arriving [and our] partners are pitching tents and distributing plastic sheeting to provide adequate shelter, prioritizing the most vulnerable people,” Andrej Mahecic, a spokesperson for the UN agency, told journalists today at a regular [media briefing](#) at UN Office at Geneva (UNOG).

UNHCR is also supporting Angolan authorities identify a suitable site to relocate refugees from temporary reception centres that have become overcrowded as the number of arrivals increase.

However, there are particular concerns for women and girls – who form about 70 per cent of new arrivals – as well as for a number of children who arrived unaccompanied and separated.

Furthermore, many people the recent arrivals included those with severe wounds and burn injuries, who had been transferred to a local hospital to receive urgent medical attention. About 70 are receiving treatment at local hospitals.

However, detailed information on the injuries was difficult to ascertain as the situation was unfolding in a very remote area, the north-eastern part of Angola, with people fleeing from the Kasai region also from a very remote area, explained Mr. Mahecic.

Also in its response to the situation, the UN agency has airlifted first-aid kits, solar lanterns, tents, and plastic sheets and rolls.

However, as the influx continues, more resources are needed to cope with the demand. In particular, UNHCR has made an appeal for \$6.5 million to provide immediate lifesaving assistance, including food, nutrition, health and relief items for refugees.

[Amid widening needs for displaced Somalis, UN refugee agency revises funding appeal](#)

12 May 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency has increased its funding appeal by \$91 million to meet the humanitarian needs of Somali refugees in the region and the people displaced inside the Horn of Africa country.

“We are seeking some \$488 million to provide continued support to displaced Somalis in 2017,” [said](#) Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson of the Office of the UN

High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), at the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva.

The update includes an additional requirement of \$91 million for Somali refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen and those displaced inside Somalia, he added.

“Insecurity, capacity of Government institutions, curtailed humanitarian access, limited livelihood opportunities, lack of basic services and poor infrastructure are some of the key challenges in Somalia,” added Mr. Mahecic, and the current risk of famine with reports of deaths and illnesses caused by drought-related factors is further complicating daily lives of Somalis.

More than two million Somalis are currently displaced by conflict, which has lasted for more than two decades. Some 1.5 million people are internally displaced and nearly 900,000 have crossed the national borders to Kenya, Yemen, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

RELATED: [International support for Somalia must focus on rebuilding security, averting famine – UN chief](#)

The ongoing drought also increases risk of famine-induced displacement in the region. Since November 2016, more than 683,000 people in Somalia have been internally displaced by drought, including more than 377,000 displaced during the first quarter of 2017.

UNHCR also needs resources to address return and reintegration of 50,000 returnees from Kenya and 10,000 from Yemen.