

# Speech: Call for Humanitarian Aid and Government Accountability in DRC

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you to our briefers for their clear and detailed accounts of why there has been such a rapid increase in humanitarian need in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As Undersecretary General Lowcock reported, the number of people needing aid in the DRC has doubled in the past year. Today 13.1 million people need humanitarian assistance, the same number as in Syria. The United Nations has declared the worst level of humanitarian crisis – “Level 3” – in certain provinces, putting DRC alongside only Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Yet it is often absent from our screens and daily briefings. We must not let it fall down our agenda.

Mr President,

We are particularly concerned about the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, the disabled and children. The United Nation’s Joint Human Rights Office reported that there has been a 53% increase in victims of sexual violence in 2017.

Now, the Representative of EFIM gave us a powerful testimony and I’m grateful to her.

Hope, is a woman from Masisi in the east of the country, where 90% of the women have been raped. Four men in military uniforms raped her as she collected firewood for her family. The attack left her pregnant and HIV positive. She has since fled to a temporary camp in Goma and can no longer feed her eight children. They rely on humanitarian aid, like 8 million other Congolese children. 2 million children currently face starvation. Hope is one of 4.5 million internally displaced people in the DRC – the highest number in Africa. Over 2 million people have been displaced in the past year alone, so just in the last year, an equivalent number to the total number of IDPs in South Sudan has been displaced in DRC. There are a further 740,000 refugees from the DRC in neighbouring countries as a result of ongoing hostilities.

Mr President,

International support is vital to address the crisis and the United Kingdom will continue to play a key role. We have committed to spending \$285 million on humanitarian aid between 2017 and 2022. This support will provide over 3 million people with lifesaving support, including food, clean drinking water and essential health care.

To improve the challenging and limited access for humanitarian actors, DRC Government support is crucial. While we welcome the commitments made to facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations and reduce tariffs for

humanitarian imports including medicines and food, this Council, and the people of the DRC, need to see concrete and sustained action.

In particular, we urge the Government to take the following three steps:

First, improve the administrative and financial registration procedures required for international NGOs to operate lawfully in-country, through consultations with NGOs themselves.

Second, reduce the bureaucracy for humanitarian workers to get visas and for essential relief items to get through customs.

And finally, ensure security across the country is maintained so that humanitarian organisations have sufficient access to those most in need.

The upcoming donor conference on 13th April is an opportunity for the Government of the Congo to demonstrate the progress they have made against their commitments to facilitate the improvement of the humanitarian situation.

It is also an opportunity for the international community to pledge our support to the people of the DRC and to show them that the World remembers Africa's "forgotten" crisis.

Mr President,

Let me be clear, humanitarian aid will only ever provide temporary relief in this crisis. The key root cause is political instability, which drives the deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. Too often, peaceful protesters are met with violence for speaking out about their political rights, in violation of their human rights. A number of people have been killed in church-led protests this year which we all must condemn.

Free, fair and transparent elections must be held on 23 December. With an estimated 46 million voters, spread over the world's eleventh largest country, this is no easy task. For the elections to be successful, the right conditions need to be created now.

The international community must remain focussed and united in our support for the people of DRC, and we must remain united in our expectations of its government, and our insistence on accountability and progress. We in the Security Council need to work with the region and sub-region to do so.

Mr President,

Finally, it is with great sadness that we remember the horrific, tragic murders of the UN experts Zaida Catalan and Michael Sharp, killed just over one year ago in the Kasai region of DRC. This Council must continue to push for accountability for their deaths and we call on the Democratic Republic of Congo to ensure that their investigation is thorough and transparent and to ensure that all those responsible are held to account. We should have a full update on the progress of that investigation soon.

Thank you Mr President.

---

## [Press release: New funding scheme to improve lakes and rivers in England](#)

A new £27 million scheme to improve the water environment across England has been jointly launched today by Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

The [Water Environment Grant scheme](#) will provide £9 million each year over the next three years to applicants applying for funding to restore local eco-systems and deliver substantial benefits to people and the environment.

Potential projects could include river restoration activities, removal of obstacles to help fish moving along rivers and streams or actions to improve the water quality.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

The Water Environment Grant scheme offers a fantastic opportunity for applicants from across the country to secure funding for projects to enhance the environment, boost wildlife and benefit their rural community.

This project will help us to deliver a balanced programme of environmental improvements across England and I am looking forward to seeing the creative and innovative projects of the applicants.

The scheme, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, will award grants to non-profit ventures with greater support for projects which enhance water eco-systems.

WEG is now open to eligible applicants until 11 May 2018. Grants will be determined by the Environment Agency and Natural England and funding will be awarded in August 2018.

Successful applicants will be expected to start their projects before March 2019, with completion dates of March 2021.

[Apply for the Water Environment Grant now](#)

---

## Lands Department follows up on the telephone exchanges in breach of uses specified in land lease

In response to media reports on HKT Limited's seven telephone exchanges in suspected breach of uses specified in the land lease, a spokesman for the Lands Department (LandsD) said today (March 20) that relevant District Lands Offices (DLOs) have already checked the lease conditions and inspected six of the telephone exchanges. Specific details are as follows.

Parts of the seven telephone exchanges in question are:

1. G/F, Tsuen Wan Telephone Exchange, No. 303 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories
2. G/F, Yuen Long Telephone Exchange, Nos. 170-184 Kau Yuk Road, Yuen Long, New Territories
3. 9/F, Mong Kok Telephone Exchange, No. 37 Bute Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon
4. G/F, Lai Chi Kok Telephone Exchange, No. 2 Yuet Lun Street, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon
5. 10/F, East Telephone Exchange Tower, No. 38 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
6. 24/F, West Exchange Tower, No. 322 Des Voeux Road Central, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
7. Basement, Lockhart Telephone Exchange Tower, No. 3 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Except with the telephone exchange numbered (5) above, the DLOs concerned have discovered that the remaining six telephone exchanges have been converted to customer service centres suspected in breach of lease conditions. After considering legal advice, the DLOs are in the process of issuing warning letters to the owners requiring them to rectify the breach, otherwise the department will take further lease enforcement actions. As for the one remaining (i.e. No. (5) mentioned above), the DLO concerned expects to complete inspections in the near future.

On media reports that DLOs had notified the owner before conducting an inspection, the spokesman responded that DLOs will send their staff to conduct inspections upon receipt of complaints or referrals and, depending on the circumstances, owners will normally not be notified in advance. However, as the LandsD acts in accordance with the land lease conditions and there is no legislation empowering its staff to enter private premises to conduct inspections without permission, if they cannot enter the premises for site inspection and investigation, they will normally leave a contact slip at the premises or take the initiative to liaise with the owner, so as to arrange a

date and time slot for entering the premises as soon as possible. Besides, LandsD's staff will collect relevant information or evidence outside the premises or through other means and seek legal advice to confirm whether the land lease conditions have been breached.

The LandsD reiterates that the owner has the responsibility to rectify breaches found at its premises. Failure of rectification within a specified period will result in registration of the warning letter, issued by the LandsD, at the Land Registry, commonly known as "imposing an encumbrance"; and the LandsD reserves the right to take further lease enforcement actions. Even if the breaches were rectified, if the concerned use in breach of the land lease is repeated in future, the LandsD will consider taking further action after seeking legal advice, including re-entry of the land or vesting the property in the Government, or taking civil action according to legal advice.

As far as the seven telephone exchanges are concerned, relevant DLOs have been advised that applications for temporary waivers/permission in respect of four cases will be submitted by the owner to permit use other than those allowed under the lease. The applications, once received, will be processed in accordance with the established mechanism, and if approved, will be subject to an administrative fee and a waiver fee. A retrospective fee to be assessed at market rental dated back to the period from identification of the breaches to the grant of the waiver will also be charged.

The LandsD stresses that it is the responsibility of the owner to comply with lease conditions. Even when the owner submits application for temporary waiver/permission to the LandsD in respect of the lease breaches, the department would still consider taking parallel action to register the warning letter at the Land Registry (commonly known as "imposing an encumbrance") so to allow members of the public and creditors (if any) of the owner knowledge of the lease breaches. If a case does not meet the prescribed criteria or the regularisation application is rejected, the LandsD will take lease enforcement actions against the breaches as soon as possible.

---

## **Press Release: EU Public Private Partnerships suffer from widespread shortcomings and limited benefits, say Auditors**

[Download PDF](#)

---

**Pressemitteilung: Öffentlich-private Partnerschaften in der EU werden von weitverbreiteten Defiziten beeinträchtigt und bieten nur begrenzte Vorteile, so das Fazit der EU-Prüfer**

[Download PDF](#)