

From drought to floods in Somalia; displacement and hunger worsen, says UN

After four consecutive poor rainy seasons that brought Somalia to the brink of famine, the country is now seeing near-record rainfall, and with it, flooding that has already displaced hundreds of thousands of people, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said on Friday.

According to the agency, about 230,000 people, over half of whom are estimated to be children, have been displaced since April due to flooding. They join around 2.6 million people across the country who have already been affected by drought and conflict.

"The rains signal the end of the drought for some areas of the country but they also sharpen the risks faced by acutely malnourished children, and particularly those who have been displaced," Christophe Boulierac, UNICEF spokesperson, told reporters in Geneva.

The rains spread diseases that are particularly deadly for malnourished children whose immune systems are fragile and exhausted.

While there has not yet been a notable spike, the risk of further outbreaks is high and compounded by flooding, Mr. Boulierac said.

The flooding has also damaged water sources, sanitation facilities and other critical infrastructure, and 22 nutrition centres treating over 6,000 acutely malnourished children in areas hosting the displaced, have had to shut down.

Many of the flood-impacted areas are in the path of an ongoing measles outbreak, and a spike in acute watery diarrhoea, or cholera, is a major threat, he said.

Children displaced from their homes are most likely to be malnourished.

About half of children under 5 – more than 1.25 million – are expected to be acutely malnourished this year, including up to 232,000 children who could suffer the harshest form of malnutrition that requires specialized lifesaving care.

UNICEF is still \$110.3 million short of the \$154.9 million in funding needed to support relief programmes in Somalia.

Germany, Indonesia, South Africa, Dominican Republic, Belgium, elected to Security Council

In a single round of voting on Friday, the United Nations General Assembly elected five new non-permanent Members of the Security Council, who will each serve two-year terms on the body that sets the UN's whole peace and security agenda.

Germany, Indonesia, South Africa, the Dominican Republic and Belgium, will take up their seats from 1 January 2019.

They will fill the seats being vacated by Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Netherlands and Sweden at the end of this year, having each served two-year terms on the [15-member](#) Security Council.

Under the [UN Charter](#), the Security Council has the primary [responsibility](#) for international peace and security, with all UN Member States required to comply with Council decisions.

The Council's ten non-permanent seats, are allocated according to a rotation pattern set by the Assembly in 1963, to ensure fair regional representation on the Council: five from African and Asian and Pacific States; one from Eastern Europe; two from Latin American States; and two from Western European and Other States (WEOG).

Belgium and Germany; the Dominican Republic, and South Africa, ran unopposed from their respective regional groups, while Indonesia secured its place following a run-off with the Maldives for the Asia-Pacific Group seat.

This will be the Dominican Republic's first time on the Security Council with the other four countries having [previously served](#) on the body.

The other five seats on the Council – known as permanent seats – are held by China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

World must unite against 'preventable tragedy' of ocean pollution: UN chief

From carrying your own water bottle, to volunteering for a local clean-up, everybody needs to do something to stop plastic pollution from getting into

the world's oceans, said UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his message for [World Oceans Day](#).

Marking the day on Friday, the UN chief reminded everyone of the major role the oceans have in everyday life, as the lungs of the planet, providing most of the oxygen that we breathe.

"The oceans make our blue planet unique in our solar system – and not just visually," he [said](#) adding that they help regulate "the global climate and are the ultimate source of the water that sustains all life on Earth, from coral reefs to snow-covered mountains, from tropical rain forests to mighty rivers, and even deserts."

"However," he continued "the ability of the oceans to provide their essential services is being threatened by climate change, pollution and unsustainable use."

Plastic pollution alone is reeking tremendous havoc on the marine resources of the world, he said, highlighting the problem of plastic pollution in particular.

Eighty per cent of all pollution in the sea comes from land, including some eight million tons of plastic waste each year, that have cost the lives of one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals. Moreover, it causes \$8 billion in damage annually to marine ecosystems.

Pollution, said Mr. Guterres, "chokes waterways, harms communities that depend on fishing and tourism, kills turtles and birds, whales and dolphins, and finds its way to the most remote areas of the planet and throughout the food chain on which we ultimately rely."

"Unless we change course, plastic waste could soon outweigh all the fish in the oceans," Mr. Guterres added.

The UN chief urged everyone to work individually and collectively to "stop this preventable tragedy" and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds.

"Action starts at home, and speaks louder than words," he said. "The United Nations aims to lead by example, and more than 30 of our agencies have now begun working to end the use of single-use plastic."

But everyone needs to play a part by taking simple actions like carrying your own water bottle, coffee cup and shopping bags; recycling plastic, said Mr. Guterres; avoiding products that contain microplastics; and volunteering for a local clean-ups.

"If we all do a little, our combined actions can be massive," he added.

"On this World Oceans Day, I urge governments, communities and individuals alike to celebrate our oceans by helping clear them of pollution and ensure they remain vibrant for generations to come," concluded the Secretary-

General.

[250,000 people 'may lose everything – even their lives' in assault on key Yemeni port city: UN humanitarian coordinator](#)

Any attack on the key port city of Hodeidah in Yemen “will impact hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians” and would entail around 250,000 civilians losing everything – “even their lives” – the [UN Humanitarian Coordinator](#) for the war-torn country said on Friday.

Lise Grande’s statement comes amid ongoing fighting in the Arabian peninsula State, where 22 million people are in need of aid and protection; three-quarters of the entire population.

Around 8.4 million of this number are severely food insecure and at risk of starvation, according to UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#).

OCHA has warned repeatedly of the risks to ordinary Yemenis of being caught up in crossfire, since a military campaign intensified, involving a Saudi-backed international coalition and Houthi opposition forces which escalated in March 2015.

Across the country, people are desperate for food, medical help and protection – *Jens Laerke (OCHA)*

Speaking to journalists in Geneva on behalf of Ms Grande, Jens Laerke said that in a “prolonged worst case (scenario), we fear that as many as 250,000 people may lose everything – even their lives”.

In response to the threat of military attack, humanitarian agencies had developed “contingency plans”, he added.

Since then, according to the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), 6,439 civilians have been killed and more than 10,000 have been injured.

The country’s already weak infrastructure has also suffered tremendous damage, including to massive portside cranes in Hodeidah; a city which is “the single most important point of entry for food and basic supplies” for the whole country, Laerke told reporters.

Close to 70 per cent of Yemen's imports, including commercial and humanitarian goods, enter through Hodeidah and Saleef to the north.

As many as 600,000 people live in and around Hodeidah, Mr Laerke continued, before repeating the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's comments that the Red Sea port city needed to stay open to prevent famine and "a recurrence of the cholera epidemic", that began in October 2016.

By the end of January 2018, the number of suspected cases had risen to more than one million, according to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO).

In addition to concerns for civilians around Hodeidah, needs in Yemen remain massive, said Laerke who described ongoing emergency as "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world".

"Across the country, people are desperate for food, medical help and protection," he explained. "This is why humanitarian organizations have dramatically ramped up the amount of assistance we are providing."

[From the field: Plastic pollution choking world's oceans](#)

An underwater photographer's chance encounter with a starving turtle led to a personal "awakening" about the dangers discarded plastic poses to sea life in the world's oceans.

In November 2017, Saeed Rashid from the United Kingdom was taking photos during a dive on a reef in the Egyptian Red Sea when he came across a female hawksbill turtle that had swallowed a plastic bag and was, as a result, unable to eat.

The turtle probably mistook the floating plastic bag for a jellyfish which hawksbills typically eat.

It is just one example of how discarded plastic items are choking the marine ecosystem.

On [World Oceans Day](#), marked annually on 8 June, the UN and its partners are raising awareness about the destructive force of plastic pollution across the globe.

To read more about Saeed Rashid's turtle rescue exploits and his awakening, as well the global fight against plastic pollution go to:

<https://unworldoceansday.org/spotlight-article/plastic-planet>.