

Thousands in DR Congo's restive Kasais to benefit from UN food and nutrition efforts, but challenges remain

20 December 2017 – Against the backdrop of severe hunger as a result of conflict in central Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations emergency food relief and food security agencies are stepping up their response to assist more than 100,000 people.

“These [interventions will not only protect vulnerable people](#), but help revive agricultural production and boost social cohesion in communities affected by the crisis,” Claude Jibidar, the head of the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) operations in the country, said Wednesday.

Together with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), WFP will distribute fortified maize meal, legumes, fortified vegetable oil and iodized salt, as well as cash, 18,000 households – whether displaced, returnee or host families – across DRC's Greater Kasai province.

In particular, children aged 6-59 months, and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers will be provided with special nutrition supplement treatments for three months.

On its part, FAO will supply vegetable-growing kits – hoe, rake, spade, watering can, and vegetable and fruit seeds – to allow families to eat for two months and sell what they don't consume.

“We are able to ramp up our efforts and work closely together to prevent people, including young children, from dying of hunger and malnutrition,” added Alexis Bonte, the acting head of FAO programme in the country.

Also on the cards is trainings on raising guinea pigs as a source of protein; processing and marketing bamboo for firewood, utensils, baskets, canoes and fishing equipment; and setting up vegetable gardens near women's associations and health centres.

The programmes will be rolled out in partnership with the country's Ministry of Agriculture and local non-governmental organizations.

Resources required for the efforts have been made available through a \$10 million funding assistance provided by the Government of Belgium.

'Tragedy' felt by Congolese people 'demands' greater solidarity

However, despite the initiative, the humanitarian crisis in the region continues to grow and become more complicated.

Across the strife-torn Kasai region, formerly a rich maize-growing region, more than 3.2 million people suffer from severe hunger and there is

widespread malnutrition among children.

The conflict has also driven over a million people from their homes and farmlands.

“The tragedy experienced by the Congolese people demands greater solidarity,” said the two UN agencies, underlining the need for lasting peace that allows everyone “to grow their own food, rebuild their livelihoods and secure a more prosperous future.”

[Arctic forever changed by rapidly warming climate – UN weather agency](#)

20 December 2017 – The Arctic continued in 2017 to warm at double the rate of the global temperature increase, resulting in the second warmest air temperatures, above average ocean temperatures, loss of sea ice, and a range of human, ocean and ecosystem effects, according to the United Nations weather agency.

“While 2017 saw fewer records shattered than in 2016, the Arctic shows no sign of returning to the [reliably frozen region](#) it was decades ago,” said the Arctic Report Card, a peer-reviewed study that brings together the work of 85 scientists from 12 nations.

The UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Tuesday that the *Arctic Report Card* shows that the warming trend is continuing to drive dramatic transformation in the Arctic region.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said that the first 11 months of the year were the third warmest on record, behind 2016 and 2015, with much-warmer-than-average conditions engulfing much of the world’s land and ocean surfaces.

This means that the 2017 global land and ocean temperature will likely end among the three warmest years on record, and is expected to be the warmest year without a warming El Niño.

“What is more important than the ranking of an individual year is the overall, long-term trend of warming since the late 1970s, and especially this century,” said WMO senior scientist Omar Baddour.

“Along with rising temperatures, we are seeing more extreme weather with huge socio-economic impacts,” he said.

A separate report, published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society (BAMS), said that last year’s record global average temperatures,

extreme heat over Asia, and unusually warm waters in the Bering Sea would not have been possible without human-caused climate change.

“This report marks a fundamental change,” says Jeff Rosenfeld, editor-in-chief of BAMS. “For years scientists have known humans are changing the risk of some extremes. But finding multiple extreme events that weren’t even possible without human influence makes clear that we’re experiencing new weather, because we’ve made a new climate.”

[UN rights expert ‘disappointed’ by Myanmar’s decision to refuse visit](#)

20 December 2017 – The United Nations expert on the human rights situation in Myanmar on Wednesday expressed disappointment at the Government’s decision to deny her all access to the country and withdraw cooperation for the duration of her tenure.

“I am [puzzled and disappointed](#) by this decision by the Myanmar Government,” said UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee Ms. Lee. “This declaration of non-cooperation with my mandate can only be viewed as a strong indication that there must be something terribly awful happening in Rakhine, as well as in the rest of the country.”

Ms. Lee had been due to visit Myanmar in January to assess the state of human rights countrywide, including the human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State.

The Special Rapporteur said she hoped Myanmar would revisit the decision.

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“Only two weeks ago, Myanmar’s Permanent Representative informed the Human Rights Council of its continuing cooperation with the UN, referencing the relationship with my role as Special Rapporteur,” she said.

“Now I am being told that this decision to no longer cooperate with me is based on the statement I made after I visited the country in July.”

Ms. Lee had previously been afforded cooperation and access to Myanmar, and had maintained a relationship of mutual respect with the Government. The Government has now claimed that her end-of-mission [statement](#) in July was biased and unfair.

The Special Rapporteur's mandate requires two visits to Myanmar a year, in order to report to the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. Since taking up the mandate in June 2014, she has visited six times.

While the Government had responded positively to past requests to visit, access to some areas had been consistently refused, with the authorities citing security concerns.

The Government is also not cooperating with the Human Rights Council independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, established in March 2017.

"It is a shame that Myanmar has decided to take this route," said Ms. Lee.

"The Government has repeatedly denied violations of human rights are occurring throughout Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine state. They have said that they have nothing to hide, but their lack of cooperation with my mandate and the fact-finding mission suggests otherwise," said the expert.

[Security Council calls for efforts to ensure stability in Lebanon](#)

20 December 2017 – Welcoming the return of Prime Minister Saad Hariri to Lebanon and his decision to continue his term, the United Nations Security Council highlighted the need to protect the country from crisis that are destabilizing the Middle East.

In a [statement](#) issued Tuesday, the 15-member Council called on all regional States and organizations to work for the political, social, economic and financial stability and security of Lebanon.

The Security Council also called upon all Lebanese parties to implement a tangible policy of disassociation from any external conflicts, as an important priority.

The members of Council also reaffirmed their support for ongoing efforts of Lebanese authorities to restore normal functioning of institutions and to prepare for the holding of legislative elections by May 2018.

They also urged the Government to speed up its reform programmes to ensure political and economic stability built on a functional, transparent and democratic State.

Further in the statement, the Council commended the efforts of the people and authorities in Lebanon to host Syrian refugees and encouraged the international community to continue and increase its support to the country,

including for Lebanese host communities and refugees.

The Council also noted that any returns of refugees, when conditions allow, must be in full compliance with international law.

Also in the Statement, Security Council urged the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) to continue its work, in coordination with the office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon ([UNSCOL](#)), to seek opportunities to help address the challenges to Lebanon's security and stability.

[Two years on, Iran nuclear accord at a 'critical crossroads,' UN Security Council told](#)

19 December 2017 – The United Nations political chief told the Security Council Tuesday that the UN Secretariat is not yet in a position to confirm whether the ballistic missiles launched at the Saudi cities of Yanbu and Riyadh were Iranian Qiam-1 missiles, as assessed by Saudi authorities.

“Almost two years after Implementation Day of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we are at a [critical crossroads](#),” Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman [told](#) the Council.

On 20 July 2015, the Security Council [unanimously adopted](#) resolution 2231 (2015) endorsing the JCPOA. The action plan, between the Council's five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran, set out rigorous [mechanisms for monitoring](#) limits on Iran's nuclear programme, while paving the way for lifting UN sanctions against the country.

Mr. Feltman recalled that since January 2016 the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) had reported to the Council nine times that Iran is adhering to its nuclear-related obligations. At the same time, in October 2017 the President of the United States decided not to certify to Congress that Iran was complying with the agreement.

“This decision has regrettably created considerable uncertainty about the future of the JCPOA,” he said, noting that the UN the Secretary-General is reassured that the US, during the recent 7th meeting of the Joint Commission, together with other participants, expressed its continued adherence to its commitments.

“Today's meeting is an important opportunity to reflect carefully on what has been achieved and the challenges that lay ahead,” Mr. Feltman continued, presenting the main findings of the UN Secretary-General's fourth report on

the implementation of the provisions contained in annex B to resolution 2231.



Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey D. Feltman at the Security Council briefing on Non-proliferation. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Regarding the supply, sale or transfer to Iran of nuclear-related items undertaken in violation of the provisions of resolution 2231, Mr. Feltman said that the Secretary-General has again not received any report of such flows.

As for the implementation of ballistic missile-related provisions, Mr. Feltman said the report contained preliminary observations indicating that the two missiles launched at the Saudi cities of Yanbu and Riyadh had similar features which suggested a common origin, and are consistent with missiles of the Scud family and had features known to be consistent with the Qiam-1 missile.

One of the missiles bore castings similar to that of an Iranian entity on the list maintained pursuant to resolution 2231, he added.

In terms of restrictions on arms-related transfers, the Secretariat is confident that close to 900 of the assault rifles seized by the United States in March 2016 are identical to those seized by France also in the same month, which the Secretariat had assessed were of Iranian origin and shipped from Iran, Mr. Feltman said.

The Secretariat is also confident that half of the 200 rocket propelled grenade launchers had characteristics similar to Iranian-produced RPG launchers.

Further, the Secretariat had received information on an unmanned surface vessel (USV) laden with explosives allegedly used against the Saudi-led coalition and had the opportunity to examine parts of its guidance and detonation systems, which included a computer terminal with a dual English/Farsi keyboard and characteristics similar to those of Iranian-produced terminals.

The Secretariat was also requested to examine two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), reportedly recovered in Yemen after Implementation Day. One of the UAVs – which Saudi authorities ascertain was similar to that of the Iranian-made Ababil-II – is similar to other drones reportedly seized in Yemen brought to our attention by the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Feltman said.