

Suspected cholera cases complicate already complex crisis in northeast Nigeria – UN relief wing

6 September 2017 – Over 530 suspected cases of cholera, claiming some 23 lives, have been registered in Nigeria's Borno state, the United Nations humanitarian wing reported today.

According to a [flash update](#) issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), most of the cases are in the Muna Garage camp for internally displaced persons, located on the outskirts of the state capital, Maiduguri, hosting approximately 20,000 individuals.

"Although an outbreak has not yet been declared officially, humanitarian partners have started taking the appropriate action," read the update.

"A CTC [cholera treatment centre] has been setup [at Dikwa General Hospital, where at least 103 suspected cases have been reported] and an ORP [oral rehydration point] will be set up in coming days," it added.

The number of suspected cases complicates the already complex and challenging humanitarian emergency in the province that has been plagued by persistent violence by the Boko Haram terrorist group.

In addition to poor quality and quantity of safe water and very poor sanitation and waste management conditions, the region also suffers from high rates of malnutrition, especially among children – who are amongst the most vulnerable to the deadly disease.

International community cannot afford to ignore this problem – WFP chief

UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley, who is currently visiting the country [highlighted the urgency of sustained humanitarian action amid the complex and challenging emergency](#).

"The power of humanitarian assistance [...] has changed the lives of malnourished children whose mothers once worried about whether they would survive," he said.

"It is giving hope to many displaced and hungry people, and to others who are now returning home. Together, we are making a difference, but we must build on these fragile successes."

Mr. Beasley's two-day visit to Nigeria – his first since being appointed the WFP chief in March – included meetings with senior Government officials as well as with community leaders and young mothers at a camp in Maiduguri.

In addition to Nigeria, other countries in the Lake Chad Basin region also have been suffering the impact of the violence and the crisis.

Underscoring the importance of continued attention to the crisis, Mr. Beasley added: “[It] needs a security, humanitarian and development component – these are key to resolving it in the short and long term [...] the international community cannot afford to ignore this problem, or it risks getting much worse.”

[UN summit spotlights financial need to combat land degradation](#)

6 September 2017 – The head of the United Nations body tasked with addressing desertification today stressed the importance of financing for national commitments to combat land degradation, as a global summit on the issue got underway in China.

“It would be [intolerable for me](#) that we have invested so much time and effort into getting to this point and you, dear Parties, did not see the real benefit,” said Monique Barbut, the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in her remarks to the 13th session of the Conference of the Parties.

“Much of the work needs to continue to be done by your own governments, of course,” she added, announcing the launch of the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Fund – the first fund dedicated to rehabilitating degraded land. It will be managed by the private sector.

Ms. Barbut told participants at the meeting, being held in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, that 110 countries have set voluntary national LDN targets to drive their national action plans.

Once an increasing amount of public and private financial resources is made available, she said, “the missing piece is now a pipeline of technically sound projects.”

Ms. Barbut also stressed the need to take decisions on issues that have not yet been dealt with, particularly droughts or sand dust storms, while also underscoring the special importance of making projects more gender sensitive and responsive to the heavy daily workload of rural women.

The 196 country Parties attending the session, which runs through 16 September, are expected to agree on a 12-year strategy to contain runaway land degradation that is threatening global food and water supply.

“The end goal is to protect our land, from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide us all with food, water and energy,” said Ms. Barbut.

The UNCCD is the only legally binding international agreement on land issues.

[World needs to move beyond 'conceptual debate' and improve protection from atrocities, urges Guterres](#)

6 September 2017 – Highlighting increased atrocity crimes – genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – in many parts of the world, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today called for concrete action to protect the vulnerable and to reverse such negative trends.

“All of us are well aware of the grim human reality that lies behind the words, ‘war crimes’, ‘crimes against humanity’, ‘ethnic cleansing’, and ‘genocide’,” Mr. Guterres said at a dialogue held at UN Headquarters on the responsibility to protect, commonly referred to as ‘R2P’.

[“It is time to move beyond the conceptual debate towards improved protection of people from atrocity crimes.”](#)

Referring to his [report on responsibility to protect](#), the UN chief also stressed that the Organization must give far greater attention to address the challenges before they spiral out of control.

In particular, he underscored the need for practical steps, noting that his report includes options that can be taken in a relatively short time, without major operational or institutional requirements.

He also urged the [Human Rights Council](#) (the highest UN intergovernmental forum on human rights) as well as the Security Council to further strengthen their capacity to address the risks of atrocity crimes and other violations of the responsibility to protect, and called for improving the use of all three UN pillars – peace and security, development, and human rights – for better early warning and prevention, as envisaged in the Human Rights Up Front action plan.

Noting that the responsibility to protect agenda generates some discomfort for a number of UN Member States, with the primary concern that it will be used to “impose” international approaches that may harm national sovereignty, Mr. Guterres said that the success of the UN implementing its mandates depended on national actors being able to deliver on their sovereign responsibilities.

“Our shared challenge is to use the principle of the responsibility to protect to achieve the goals that were originally envisaged. I am convinced that open and constructive discussion among concerned States can overcome any

remaining differences,” he added.

Further, the Secretary-General recalled the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit, which was adopted unanimously and which reinforced that States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from atrocity crimes as well as assist States if they do not possess the necessary capacity to prevent crimes in their territory.

“But should national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, then we must be prepared to take collective action, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis,” he stated.

[Syria: UN probe documents use of chemical weapons and other crimes against civilians](#)

6 September 2017 – Despite reduced violence in some places in Syria, warring parties continued to perpetrate unthinkable crimes against civilians, including the use of chemical weapons by Government forces, a group of United Nations investigators said today as they released a new report.

“It underscores once more how Syrian men, women, and children throughout the country remain the primary victims of violence perpetrated by the pro-Government forces, anti-Government armed groups, terrorist organisations and their affiliates,” Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the [UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria](#), told a press conference in Geneva, launching the report.

In its fourteenth report to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, covering the period between March and July this year, the Commission noted that the Syrian air force used sarin in opposition-held Khan Shaykhun on 4 April, killing over 80 people, most of whom were women and children.

A [press release](#) issued by the Commission noted that such attacks constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law and the Convention on Chemical Weapons, which Syria ratified in 2013 following a previous sarin attack.

“Reporting on such heinous crimes and violations is the core of our work,” said the Commission Chair, adding that the panel has a duty to attribute responsibility accordingly, regardless of the perpetrator.

Mr. Pinheiro said that most incidents in which civilians are killed and maimed involve the unlawful use of conventional weapons, such as cluster munitions and explosive weapons in civilian populated areas.

The report also examined local truces. The so-called “Four Towns Agreement” incorporated evacuation agreements which resulted in the forced displacement of civilians, a war crime.

“Civilians did not leave these locations voluntarily,” Mr. Pinheiro said, explaining that most were never consulted and they felt they had no other choice, fearing such reprisals as arrests and forced conscription if they stayed.

The report also documented several incidents perpetrated by the terrorist groups Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra) and ISIL, and by armed group fighters.

Terrorist and other armed groups targeted religious minorities through car and suicide bombings, the use of snipers and hostage-taking, including in areas controlled by the Syrian Government. In al-Rashidin (Aleppo), a single car bombing killed 96 people, including 68 internally displaced children, from previously besieged Fu’ah and Kafraya (Idlib).

The report also found that US forces failed to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects when attacking alleged terrorists and destroying part of a mosque complex in al-Jinah, Aleppo, in March, in violation of international humanitarian law.

Investigations are ongoing into allegations that international coalition airstrikes, carried out as part of the ongoing offensive to repel ISIL from Raqqa, have resulted in increasingly alarming numbers of civilian casualties.

The Commission is gravely concerned that this offensive has led to the internal displacement of some 190,000 people, with the fate of some 20,000 others precarious as they remain trapped in Raqqa.

Investigations also continue into allegations that before fleeing Syria, ISIL fighters are trying to sell enslaved Yazidi women and girls – victims of the ongoing and largely unaddressed genocide, according to the Commission.

The other Commission members are Karen AbuZayd and Carla Del Ponte.

[Mali: UN chief condemns latest attack on peacekeepers](#)

6 September 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has condemned an attack against a United Nations convoy in the Kidal region of Mali that left two peacekeepers dead and two others seriously injured.

In a [statement](#) issued last night, the Secretary-General extended his

condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims and wished a speedy recovery for the injured personnel serving with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)).

“The Secretary-General recalls that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law,” the statement added.

Established by the Security Council in April 2013, MINUSMA supports the political process in Mali and carries out a number of security-related stabilization tasks, including protecting civilians, human rights monitoring, and the creation of conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance.