

UN refugee agency seeks \$9.5 million to assist self-organized Nigerian returnees from Cameroon

26 July 2017 – The UN refugee agency is seeking an additional \$9.5 million to scale up its activities in northeast Nigeria, as a result of an unexpected surge in self-organized returns of Nigerian refugees mainly from Cameroon since the beginning of the year.

“This is a new emergency, which requires urgent attention,” said Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in a press release.

Between January and June 2017, nearly 135,000 refugees returned to Nigeria, mainly women and children. The majority left Minawao and Kolofata refugee settlements, in the Far North Region of Cameroon.

“Many of these returnees are unable to go back to their homes due to security concerns and end up being displaced again, in dire humanitarian conditions,” he added.

The situation is particularly difficult in the town of Banki, where many are forced to live outdoors and have limited access to drinking water, food and medicine.

“During my recent visit to the region, I was not only appalled by the scale of the humanitarian needs, but also deeply shocked at the level of trauma, social division and distrust,” said Mr. Türk, who visited both Nigeria and Cameroon over the past three weeks.

“We urge the international community to pay more attention to this highly complex and challenging humanitarian and security situation,” he added.

As vulnerabilities increase over time, funding is, unfortunately, lagging behind needs. So far, UNHCR has received \$41.1 million from donors out of a total funding requirement of \$179.5 million for 2017 for Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad.

Additional funding would allow UNHCR to increase its presence in border locations and improve border and protection monitoring. The agency also plans to expand reception facilities and launch mass information campaigns to ensure that Nigerian refugees in Cameroon’s Far North have accurate and updated information on the situation prevailing in areas of return in Nigeria.

Mr. Türk said that the Governments of both countries gave him assurances that action has been taken to stop involuntary returns.

The first meeting of the Tripartite Commission, comprising representatives from UNHCR, Nigeria and Cameroon, is expected to take place early August. The Commission was set up after the signature, last March, of a tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees.

It will be a positive step forward, Mr. Türk said.

Amid rising tensions in Jerusalem, UN envoy warns of 'grave risk' of escalation in Middle East

25 July 2017 – The United Nations envoy on Middle East peace has warned that developments over the past 11 days at holy sites in the Old City in Jerusalem have demonstrated the "grave risk" that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could become a religious conflict that could ultimately engulf the rest of the region.

While recognizing that Israelis and Palestinians fortunately "have not succumbed to the torrent of violent upheaval that has engulfed the region in recent years," Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, nevertheless told an [open debate](#) in the UN Security Council that: "For nearly a century, despite myriad peace efforts, one conflict has evaded solution."

His briefing highlighted the [latest clashes](#) and rising tensions over the past two weeks in the Old City in Jerusalem. Violence has resulted in deaths on both sides.

These developments "demonstrated the grave risk of dangerous escalation that exists, a risk of turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one and dragging both sides into the vortex of violence with the rest of the region," Mr. Mladenov said, stressing the need for all parties to show restraint and promptly end this crisis.

Noting that the final status issue concerning Jerusalem needs to be negotiated and decided by the two sides, he urged Israel to fulfill the responsibility to uphold its obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law. He also urged Palestinian leaders to avoid provocative statements that further aggravate an already tense environment.

The latest incidents have taken place against a backdrop of other developments, the envoy stressed.

Throughout the month, Israel continued to advance its plans to construct settlements in East Jerusalem. "I must once again emphasize that

settlement activity in occupied territory is illegal under international law, and undermines the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution,” he warned.

On a positive note, an interim power purchasing agreement between the two sides was signed on 10 July, which set the stage to negotiate a more comprehensive power purchasing agreement towards Palestinian energy independence. In addition, an agreement was reached to increase water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he reiterated that the political standoff between two Palestinian factions – Fatah and Hamas – has taken the two million people living in the tiny enclave “hostage.”

Since violently seizing control of Gaza, Hamas has tightened its grip on power and suppressed dissent, he explained.

The “punishing measures” taken against Hamas, including electricity cuts, have worsened the humanitarian situation in Gaza. “Whatever the political differences between the Palestinian factions, it is not the people of Gaza who should pay the price,” Mr. Mladenov underscored, calling on Palestinian leaders to address the destructive consequences of the split.

Finally, he said recent events are a reminder of how easy it could be to reach a dangerous escalation, and he, expressed hope that Israel's agreement with Jordan and positive engagement with religious authorities would result in actions that would circumvent violence in the future.

“We must not lose focus on the need to restore a political perspective, on the need to bring Palestinians and Israelis back into an environment that is conducive to negotiations on a final status arrangement and avoids turning the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one,” he emphasized.

Majority of children fleeing to Europe just want to get away, UNICEF reports

25 July 2017 – Facing violence and trauma in Libya and other countries, thousands of children decided to flee by themselves, seeking to get away but not necessarily aiming for Europe, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today reported.

A new study of push-pull factors on child marriage showed that 75 per cent of children on the move decided to leave unaccompanied and that initially, they had no intention to come to Europe, UNICEF spokesperson Sarah Crowe told journalists in Geneva.

What was striking in the new findings was that there were far more push factors, pushing children away from home – conflicts or violence at home – than there were pull factors [that lure them to Europe], and this went against the current narrative, Ms. Crowe said.

She noted that of the children who arrived in Libya, 63 per cent of young people left the country because of the generalized violence and trauma they suffered or witnessed, making them more willing to take terrifying sea journeys.

As one young Gambian boy said, ‘if you have a lion behind your back and a sea in front of you, you take the sea,’ said Ms. Crowe.

Among girls interviewed, one in five left because of forced child marriage at home.

For the first six months of the year, a total of 12,239 children had arrived to Italy, and 93 per cent were travelling alone – the majority of them teenage boys, according to UNICEF figures.

In Greece, however, the majority of children were actually being sent on the voyage by their parents, or were accompanied by their parents.

UNICEF said the study is important for policymakers to understand why the children are making the voyage and how best to help them once they arrive in Europe.

Deadly voyages increasingly expensive

Voyages through the so-called Eastern Mediterranean route and into the European Union now cost \$5,000 or more, according to the UN Migration Agency ([IOM](#)).

With increased border controls, it has become harder to reach Europe, noted Livia Styp-Rekowska, IOM’s Border Management Specialist in Vienna. One constant, however, is the increase in sums demanded.

She noted new data released today that shows the cost of getting into Europe [has increased significantly](#) when compared to 2016, the routes have changed, and different countries of destination are being prioritized.

People arriving from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan are charged the most, [according to IOM](#).

The most popular destination up to June 2016 was overwhelmingly Germany, but migrants now seek to get to France, Sweden, Italy, Norway, Austria and Denmark as well, with Greece used as a popular transit country.

[UN chief condemns suicide attacks on camps in northeastern Nigeria](#)

25 July 2017 – Strongly condemning yesterday’s suicide attacks on the two camps for internally displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called for the perpetrators of this “heinous” act to be swiftly brought to justice.

According to a statement issued by his spokesman, the Secretary-General reiterated the UN support to the Government of Nigeria in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

“These terrorist acts are targeting people who had already fled their homes as a result of Boko Haram violence,” [said](#) Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General, in the statement.

Preliminary media reports said that at least eight people have been killed in the attacks that took place near the Borno state capital of Maiduguri.

Mr. Haq said the Secretary-General offered his condolences to the people and Government of Nigeria for the loss of life, while also wishing a quick recovery to those injured.

Borno state has been plagued by violent attacks carried out by the Boko Haram insurgents, and Maiduguri has been targeted many times.

[Latest round of UN-led global consultations spotlights migrants’ contributions to development](#)

24 July 2017 – Although the net benefits of migration far outweigh its costs, the public perception is often the opposite, a senior United Nations official pointed out today, as the latest round of consultations on a global compact for migration began in New York.

“Such public perceptions and attitudes negatively influence sound migration policy choices,” said Louise Arbour, UN Special Representative for International Migration, in her remarks to the session, which wraps up tomorrow at UN Headquarters in New York.

“This must be reversed so that policy is evidence-based and not perception-driven. Policies responding to false perceptions reinforce the apparent

validity of these erroneous stereotypes and make recourse to proper policies that much harder,” she added.

The consultation is the [fourth](#) in a series of six thematic consultations that will take place this year and feed into the drafting of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ([GCM](#)), expected to be adopted by UN Member States in 2018.

An outgrowth of the [New York Declaration](#), adopted at a 2016 UN Summit on [refugees and migrants](#), the Compact will be the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the UN, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a comprehensive manner.

The current consultation, conducted by representatives of Member States, UN agencies, civil society, migrants and diaspora, examines the challenges and opportunities in leveraging the economic and social contributions of migrants to countries of origin and destination.

Ms. Arbour pointed out that in 2016 migrants sent \$429 billion to their countries of origin – one of their most tangible contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) in developing countries.

More than three times larger than official development assistance (ODA), and more stable than other forms of private capital flows, remittances – as such transfers are known – to developing countries have lifted millions of families out of poverty, she said, while stressing the need to lower the associated transaction costs to leverage remittances for development.

Migration also provides substantial development benefits to places of destination, for both developed and developing countries, particularly through the contribution of labour migrants of all skills levels, she argued.

However, there can be upfront adjustment costs in the short term that need to be addressed, she added.

In his remarks, Director General of International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) William Lacy Swing emphasized the advantages of making sure migration is considered in development planning.

He cited the need to ensure that migration is seen as an issue affecting all aspects of human development, including human rights, and the importance of mainstreaming migration in the broader development strategy.