

Security Council briefed on proposal to reduce number of AU-UN troops in Darfur

14 June 2017 – The African Union (AU) and the United Nations are proposing 44 per cent and 30 per cent reductions in their troop and police presence in Sudan's Darfur region as a step towards an eventual exit, a senior UN peacekeeping official told the Security Council.

The reconfiguration of UNAMID is an important milestone towards the completion of its mandate, said Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations El Ghassim Wane as he updated the 15-nation Council on the recommended changes to the Mission.

The AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur, referred to by its acronym UNAMID, was formally established by the Security Council on 31 July 2007 through the adoption of resolution 1769.

He stated that the level of armed hostilities remained significantly lower than in previous years, noting that a successful military campaign by the Government has reduced the rebellion to a small presence in Western Jebel Marra and that the number of inter-communal security incidents has decreased. Progress has been made also on the political front, he added.

Yet, given that 2.7 million people remain internally displaced, a number of crucial grievances at the origin of the conflict and key issues related to its aftermath still needed to be addressed, he said.

These circumstances require UNAMID to adjust to new realities, Mr. Wane said, explaining the proposal features a two-pronged approach combining peacebuilding and peacekeeping tasks. Most parts of Darfur require a more peacebuilding-oriented approach, while in and around the Jebel Marra, the Mission would focus on traditional peacekeeping tasks.

The reconfiguration would bring the troop ceiling down to 8 battalions from the current 16, or to 8,736 troops, and the police ceiling down to 2,360 from 3,403. It would also include the closure of 11 team sites, the opening of one temporary operating base in the Jebel Marra and the withdrawal of the military from another seven team sites.

RELATED: [Exit strategy for AU-UN mission being considered](#)

Mr. Wane that the political process should have a strong focus on the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which is now incorporated in the Constitution and contains useful provisions to address the underlying causes of conflict and to create peace dividends for the population in Darfur.

Protection of civilians activities in the greater Jebel Marra area would

revolve around physical protection and emergency relief, whereas in the rest of the Darfur states it will focus on livelihood issues and rule of law capacities.

On the issue of inter-communal conflict, the Mission should prioritize those that have the potential to cause the highest number of casualties and derail national political processes.

Mr. Wane said that the successful reconfiguration of the Mission requires the full support and cooperation of the Government of Sudan and its institutions, including to ensure that there is no "security vacuum" in areas vacated by UNAMID.

[Children hardest hit as cholera spreads in war-torn Yemen – UNICEF](#)

14 June 2017 – As the outbreak of cholera in Yemen continues to spread at an alarming rate "with terrible impact on children" the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has called for immediate support to enable the country's health workers respond or risk even more deaths from the deadly disease.

In a statement yesterday, Meritxell Relaño, the UNICEF Representative in Yemen, said that despite massive challenges, health workers "have spared no effort in responding to the emergency" even when their salaries have not been paid for nearly nine months.

"Without an [urgent solution](#) to pay health workers, more children will die "no matter how much humanitarian aid is delivered to the country," she added.

According to the UN agency, more than 124,000 cholera cases have been recorded over the past month "more than half of them children, and many who were already suffering from malnutrition.

Children, also account for nearly a quarter of the 923 deaths due to the disease, which is overwhelming what remains of a health system and sanitation system already at the verge of collapse due to the conflict, now into its third year.

Now, this outbreak has left hospitals and treatment centres are struggling to cope with the large number of patients coming in from across the country and medical supplies, including vital medicines and intravenous fluids also running out.

UN and humanitarian partners are trying to [respond and have airlifted some 67](#)

[tons medicinal supplies](#). However, the need far outpaces the supply, underscoring the need to ensure relief and health workers have safe and unrestricted access as well as resumption of imports of critical commodities, including urgently needed medicines.

With no end in sight to the conflict, the cholera outbreak and potentially other disease will continue to stalk the lives of children, warned Ms. Relaño.

[In Kabul, UN chief calls for peace and compassion](#)

14 June 2017 – Expressing solidarity with Afghan people, in the wake of recent violence in the country, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today underscored the Organization's full commitment to work with the Government and people of the country to build a sustainable and prosperous future for them.

Peace is the solution [...] the international community, the neighbouring countries [and] all those related to the Afghan crisis need to come together and understand that this is a war that has no military solution, said the Secretary-General, at a press conference in Kabul, where he arrived earlier today.

We need to have peace, he added, underscoring that at the same time, the level of humanitarian assistance to the country had to be increased and conditions needed to be created for Afghans to be able to live in dignity.

Since his time as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2005-2015), Mr. Guterres has been paying a solidarity visit to Muslim communities during the holy month of Ramadan, and his visit to Afghanistan was a continuation of his expression of solidarity with them.

While in Kabul, the UN chief met with displaced men and women from the Kapisa province, now living in a settlement on the outskirts of Kabul.

In their interaction, the displaced persons underscored that security remained the prerequisite for their return to their homes and that education, including for women and girls was critical for supporting themselves and their families. They also stressed their need for medical care.

I have an enormous admiration for the courage and the resilience of the Afghan people, and they were very eloquently demonstrated in my meeting this morning, noted the UN chief.

The Secretary-General also held bilateral meetings with Ashraf Ghani, the President of Afghanistan, as well as the country's Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Abdullah, where they discussed cooperation between the Organization and the Government of Afghanistan as well as the security situation in the country and the need to better mobilize the international community to counter terrorism.

[UN and partners in Sri Lanka appeal for resources as receding floods reveal extent of damage](#)

14 June 2017 – UN and partners in Sri Lanka appeal for resources as receding floods reveal extent of damage

Following last month's severe flooding and landslides in Sri Lanka that impacted some 630,000 people, the United Nations and humanitarian partners today launched an urgent appeal for more resources to reach those in the worst-hit parts of the country with urgent assistance.

On 25 and 26 May, heavy rains triggered floods and landslides in 15 out of the island nation's 25 districts, sweeping away homes, clinics, schools, roads and water systems. Some 212 people perished and another 79 are still missing.

Immediately after the disaster, UN agencies and relief partners responded with assistance in priority sectors identified by the Government. However, access to the most remote communities was cut off due to destroyed roads and bridges.

As flood waters recede and more areas become accessible, the extent of damage and the response needed is revealed: emergency shelter, sanitation and hygiene, and health services are high on the list. On top of this, damaged infrastructure, particularly related to water and hygiene, has increased the risk of waterborne diseases.

[According](#) to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Emergency Response Plan [amounting to \\$22.7 million](#) [launched by the Humanitarian Country Team](#) (UN as well as non-UN humanitarian actors in the country), focuses on providing immediate life-saving and protection assistance, emergency livelihood support, and access to basic services to people worst hit.

The Plan also aims to strengthen resilience of affected communities to cope with and recover from the disaster.

It targets about 374,000 people in seven districts, including the four most affected districts – Galle, Rathnapura, Kalutara and Matara.

The Humanitarian Country Team, with the support of the international community, will continue responding to the needs of those affected by the floods through the implementation of the Emergency Response Plan, paying particular attention to supporting the most vulnerable people in the affected communities, highlighted Una McCauley, UN Resident Coordinator for Sri Lanka and the Chair of the Team.

OCHA also reported that an allocation of \$4 million was made by the UN Central Emergency Response Fund to assist rapid delivery of life-saving shelter, health and food assistance, as well as provide essential non-food items.

Cash assistance will also be provided to affected people to meet their shelter and food needs, in addition to the provision temporary shelters, shelter repair kits, and emergency healthcare and reproductive healthcare support.

The recent disasters hit Sri Lanka when the country was reeling under bad drought which had affected about a million people, leaving them vulnerable to food insecurity.

The floods and landslides have washed away the crops that managed to survive the drought and further increased the urgency of more resources to ensure assistance for people who have already suffered much hardship.

[Vanuatu, UN partner to test drones for vaccines delivery to inaccessible communities](#)

14 June 2017 – The Government of Vanuatu and the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) are partnering to launch what may be the Pacific’s first-ever trial of drones to deliver life-saving vaccines to inaccessible remote communities in the island nation.

UNICEF is excited to work with the Government of Vanuatu to support this initiative, [said](#) the UN agency’s Pacific Representative, Sheldon Yett, in a news release. Ensuring vaccines are consistently available in isolated and remote communities is one of the keys to sustaining high rates of immunisation. We welcome innovative measures to ensure that every child is reached.

The Government is [inviting applications](#) from companies to test their Remotely

Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS) technology for transportation of cargo in the Pacific. Successful applicants will be assessed for a long-term engagement with the Government.

Increasing availability, performance and declining cost of drones offer innovative opportunities in challenging environments such as Vanuatu.

An archipelago of 83 islands that run 1,600 kilometres north to south, 65 of which are inhabited and around 20 of which have airfields and established roads, Vanuatu faces considerable logistical challenges to reach, engage with and support remote communities.



Aerial shot of Emae Island in Vanuatu with Cooks Reef in the foreground.
Photo:Vanuatu Helicopters/2017/Andy Martin

This initiative explores options that allow the Government to enhance service delivery and significantly reduce costs as it does not require massive investment in infrastructure and transport.

“This is a milestone for Vanuatu,” said Director General of the Ministry of Health, George Taleo. “If the trial shows that vaccine delivery using drones can work, and that it can be integrated into our existing national and provincial systems, then it will change the way we operate forever. If it works, we will allow us to better ensure availability of health supplies to our people even at community aid post levels.”