

Conflict and drought deepen food insecurity in Africa, Middle East – UN agency

9 June 2017 – Protracted fighting and unrest are swelling the ranks of displaced and hungry in some parts of the world, even as large agricultural harvests in some regions are buoying global food supply conditions, according to a new report by the United Nations agriculture agency.

Civil conflict continues to be a [main driver of food insecurity](#), having triggered famine conditions in South Sudan and put populations in Yemen and northern Nigeria at high risk of localized famine, said the UN Food and Agriculture Organization on today's release its [Crop Prospects and Food Situation](#) report.

FAO also notes that adverse weather conditions are exacerbating the threat of famine in Somalia. Refugees from civil strife in countries such as Iraq, Syria and Central African Republic are putting additional pressure on local food supplies in host communities.

It also points out that some 5.5 million people are estimated to be severely food insecure in South Sudan, where maize and sorghum prices are now four times higher than in April 2016. In Somalia, about 3.2 million people need food and agricultural emergency assistance, while in Yemen the figure is as high as 17 million.

In northern Nigeria, disruption caused by conflict has left 7.1 million people facing acute food insecurity in the affected areas, with even more deemed to be in less dire but still [stressed](#) conditions, according to the report.

According to FAO, 37 countries require external assistance for food, namely Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Southern Africa rebounds, East Africa is parched

While worldwide cereal output is near record levels, production outcomes are mixed across the globe.

According to the report, South America is expected to post strong increases, led by Brazil and Argentina.

Regional production in Southern Africa is expected to jump by almost 45 per

cent compared to 2016 when crops were affected by El Niño, with record maize harvests forecast in South Africa and Zambia. This should help to reduce food insecurity in countries, such as Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

After two consecutive years of bumper crops, the report notes that the overall food supply situation in the Sahel region is satisfactory.

However, at the start of the 2017 season, East Africa has suffered insufficient rainfall, armyworm infestations and local conflicts, leaving in the sub-region a record 26.5 million people in need humanitarian assistance.

The report warns that the situation could be aggravated further as the lean season peaks, saying, "An estimated 7.8 million people are food insecure in Ethiopia, where drought has dented crop and pasture output in southern regions."

Moreover, cereal domestic prices reached exceptionally high levels in May, with the local cost of maize jumping by as much as 65 per cent this year in parts of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The report also notes that a severe drought in Sri Lanka, followed by heavy rains and local flooding in late May, will likely reduce the country's paddy production by nearly a third, compared to the average.

[Inclusive development 'best form of preventing conflict,' UN chief tells Central Asia summit](#)

9 June 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today stressed the importance of partnership between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in achieving global development goals and combating some of today's key threats to peace and security, such as terrorism.

"Looking ahead, the United Nations will continue to be your strong partner," Mr. Guterres [told](#) the SCO's Council of Heads of State being held in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The Eurasian political, economic and security union was founded in 1996 in the Chinese city of Shanghai by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan. It added Uzbekistan in 2001 and India and Pakistan today as its full members.

The UN chief said that the SCO plays a valuable role in promoting mutual

understanding, dialogue, stability and development across much of Eurasia, and its members are working together to combat some of today's key threats to peace and security, including terrorism, violent extremism, drug trafficking and organized crime.

Ultimately, inclusive and sustainable development is the best form of preventing armed conflict and violent extremism," Mr. Guterres said, asking the SCO members to show leadership in efforts to implement the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change and commitment to fight terrorism and address its root causes.

At a [press conference](#) on the same day, Mr. Guterres highlighted the important role of Kazakhstan at the regional and international level.

He said Kazakhstan can play a leading role in promoting cooperation among Central Asian countries toward peace and prosperity of the region, including ways to share water resources, combat terrorism more effectively and create a stronger solidarity in achieving sustainable development.

The Secretary-General said Kazakhstan has been a symbol of dialogue, a symbol of peace, a symbol of the promotion of contacts between cultures, religions and civilizations.

The country is serving on the Security Council and is playing an extremely important mediation role in conflict.

In its capital, Kazakhstan has been hosting the so-named Astana talks on Syria led by Russia, Turkey and Iran.

[UN migration agency launches \\$60 million appeal for famine-struck East, Horn of Africa](#)

9 June 2017 – The United Nations migration agency today appealed for some \$60 million to aid an estimated 16 million people suffering from the worst drought seen in decades in East and Horn of Africa.

"In the coming months, we are likely to see [many more needing humanitarian aid](#) and being displaced, due to the poor rains," said Jeffrey Labovitz, Regional Director for East and Horn of Africa at the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

Through the appeal, IOM said that it intends to target 2 million of the most vulnerable drought-affected people through December of this year in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

The drought is fuelling migration between these borders, particularly from Somalia, and could impact how the people who are moving and the people who are receiving them recover from the drought.

It is estimated that cross border movements may increase significantly with the predicted poor harvest as a result of below average rains during March-May and the humanitarian response is not scaled up to meet the needs of affected populations, according to the appeal.

The \$60,665,000 aid would include a [combination of lifesaving and early recover interventions](#), as well as build long-term capacity to recover. These include shelter, protection, food, water and sanitation.

Mr. Labovitz stressed that due to the impressive efforts from local and international actors, the drought has not yet led to a famine as recorded in 2011, but there is need for sustained funding and international support to mitigate what could still deteriorate.

The current drought has already shown to be different from that in 2011, which was concentrated in South Central Somalia. This year, it is affecting more parts of the country, including the north-eastern and the Somaliland regions, with a higher total number of people at risk.

The drought is affecting the region's main source of water the river basins.

Over the past six months, severe drought conditions have contributed to the displacement of more than 700,000 people within Somalia alone.

[International community must ensure 'endemic' impunity in DR Congo brought to an end – UN rights chief](#)

9 June 2017 – Voicing concern over lack of progress on the part of Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to undertake credible investigations into widespread allegations of rights violations and abuses in the Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental provinces, the top United Nations human rights official today called for setting up of an international investigation mechanism to look into the situation.

The crimes committed in the Kasais appear to be of such gravity that [they must be of concern to the international community as a whole](#), and in particular the Human Rights Council, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, urged the Council today.

“We have an obligation to the victims and a duty to send a message to the perpetrators of these crimes that we are watching and that the international community is throwing its weight behind ensuring that the endemic impunity in the DRC is brought to an end.”

According to a news release issued by the High Commissioner’s Office (OHCHR), since August last year, some 1.3 million people from the two provinces have been displaced within the country and about 30,000 forced to flee to neighbouring Angola.

The release raised particular alarm over the [presence of at least 42 mass graves](#) documented by OHCHR and reports that many of these were dug by Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) after clashes with presumed elements of the Kamuina Nsapu militia over the past several months.

The actual number of the graves are feared to be higher.

SEE ALSO: [Discovery of more mass graves reveal ‘unfolding horror’ in DR Congo](#)

In early May this year, High Commissioner Zeid urged the Government of the DRC to take a series of steps to ensure that a credible, transparent investigation, respecting international standards and with the involvement of OHCHR, be established by 8 June.

However, while the Government sought technical support and advice from OHCHR and the [UN mission in the country \(known by its French acronym, MONUSCO\)](#) the response of national authorities till date falls short, in view of the gravity and widespread nature of the violations and the need to ensure justice for victims, noted the news release.

The scale and nature of these human rights violations and abuses, and the consistently inadequate responses of the domestic authorities, oblige us to call for an international investigation to complement national efforts

High Commissioner Zeid

“It is the sovereign duty of the Government of the DRC to carry out judicial investigations into human rights violations committed on its territory and we will continue to support the Government by providing advice and support towards its fulfilment of these obligations,” noted the High Commissioner, adding: “[However,] the scale and nature of these human rights violations and abuses, and the consistently inadequate responses of the domestic authorities, oblige us to call for an international investigation to complement national efforts.”

Continued allegations of rights violations but investigations hindered by security constraints

The news release also noted that the UN [Joint Human Rights Office](#) comprising the Human Rights Division at MONUSCO and the former OHCHR presence in the country continues to receive allegations of serious rights

violations, but security constraints have hindered further investigations.

The flare-up of violence in the Kasais occurred in August 2016 when a customary chief was killed by the FARDC. The Kamuina Nsapu militia, named after the chief, sought to avenge the killing by targeting police and army personnel, state symbols and institutions, such as Government buildings, police stations and churches, it also recruited children to join its ranks.

The FARDC reportedly reacted to the attacks by launching a intense counter-attacks, including by firing indiscriminately with machine guns in towns where the militia were suspected to be as well as conducting door to door searches, shooting dead suspected militia members or sympathizers.

While a number of national investigations have been launched into the alleged crimes committed by the Kamuina Nsapu, the Government has failed to conduct meaningful investigations into the conduct of the FARDC and the Police nationale congolaise, noted the news release.

'Pervading toxic culture of impunity' for alleged war crimes at root of Darfur conflict – ICC Prosecutor

8 June 2017 – The Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court today reiterated her call for States to arrest and surrender the suspects of alleged genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Darfur region of Sudan, including President Omar Al Bashir.

“Not one of the suspects for whom warrants have been issued has been arrested and transferred to the International Criminal Court,” ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda told the United Nations Security Council, and in remarks directed at the victims and their families she said “to those who continue to long for justice in Darfur; do not despair and do not abandon hope.”

Indeed, she recalled that the international tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia were reminders that persistence and determination could result in the arrest and surrender of suspects many years after the issuance of arrest warrants.

The Court was established by the treaty known as the Rome Statute adopted at an international conference in Rome on 17 July 1998. It entered into force on 1 July 2002.

The States that form this Council have the power, independently and collectively, to positively influence and incentivize States, whether or not

parties to the Rome Statute, to assist in the efforts to arrest and surrender the Darfur suspects,” she said, adding that regional organizations can do the same.

The prosecutor said there have been alleged cases of non-compliance by the parties to the treaty.

She said a pre-trial chamber of the Court plans to decide whether South Africa acted in non-compliance with the Statute when it failed to arrest and surrender Mr. Al Bashir in June 2015. Most recently, Mr. Al Bashir travelled to Jordan on 29 March 2017, but Jordan declined to arrest and surrender him.

“Inviting, facilitating or supporting the international travel of any person subject to an ICC arrest warrant is inconsistent with a commitment to international criminal justice,” she said. “It is also an affront to the victims in the Darfur situation.”

Ms. Bensouda noted that to date, the Court has made 13 decisions on non-compliance and referred them to the Security Council. “Yet not one has been acted upon by this Council,” she said. “By failing to act in response to such Court decisions, this Council is in essence relinquishing and undermining its clear role on such matters” arising from the Rome Statute and the Council's resolution 1593 (2005), which referred the Darfur situation to the body.

In 2005, the Council asked the Hague-based Court to investigate war crimes in Darfur. ICC judges issued arrest warrants in 2009 for Mr. Al-Bashir and other top officials for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the western Darfur region, where up to 300,000 people may have died and millions have been displaced since civil war erupted in 2003 between the Government and rebels.