

UN Member States urged to 'dig deep' into reserves of common humanity to aid 20 million people now facing famine

13 April 2017 – Senior United Nations officials today refocused the spotlight on [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres mid-February 'call to action' on behalf of some 20 million people across four countries that now face famine of the risk of famine.

"The crises in these four countries are protracted and complex – and the impacts will be felt for years," said Stephen O'Brien, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, warning that [the numbers are staggering](#) as millions in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and north-east Nigeria are slipping deeper into crisis.

"Some 1.4 million children are severely malnourished. Over 21 million people lack sufficient access to health care, at a time when three out of the four countries are experiencing cholera outbreaks. And more than 20 million people lack clean water and sanitation," said Mr. O'Brien in a statement delivered by Reena Ghelani, Deputy Director, of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) Coordination and Response Division.

"Around eighty per cent of affected populations live in rural areas and a combination of hunger and conflict is forcing people to be displaced, both internally and as refugees. Those who were forced from their homes in past years by conflict are being hit particularly hard as a consequence of this current crisis," added the humanitarian coordinator.

He pointed out that the impacts of the protracted and complex crises in these four countries would be felt for years, citing broken communities, families torn apart and preventable deaths from disease.

"Famine," Mr. O'Brien explained "is about much more than food insecurity. It is about compounding vulnerabilities that leave millions of people without basic human dignity, without hope for the future. It leaves children stunted and out of school. Development gains are stalled or reversed. People abandon their homes, and are robbed of their livelihoods, exacerbating instability across entire regions."



A young child suffering from malnutrition clings to her mother as she and other mothers queue to receive therapeutic milk to help treat their children's malnutrition in Al Sabbah Children's Hospital in Juba, South Sudan. Photo: UNICEF/Mackenzie Knowles-Coursin

He pointed out that while all four countries have unique contexts, they share the common component of protracted conflicts. Likewise, all four countries are marked by severe access constraints due to insecurity and some have costly bureaucratic impediments that impede the reach of life saving aid, and exacerbate the suffering of civilians.

He said that humanitarian operations in these four countries require more than \$5.6 billion this year.

Underscoring the urgency, he added, “we need this funding now – especially for the priority sectors to respond and prevent famine in the four critical sectors of food security, nutrition, water and sanitation, and health.”

While humanitarians continue to deliver and scale-up where they are able, Mr. O’Brien listed four requirements to effectively reverse these crises: more political will to end the conflicts that have caused these crises; unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to assist those in need; further funding to back a robust humanitarian response; and a more comprehensive approach.

The President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson, who convened the meeting, [briefed](#) on his recent visit to Senegal, Ethiopia and Egypt, underscoring how the respective leaders expressed grave concern over the humanitarian situation affecting some African countries, particularly in North-East Nigeria, South Sudan and Somalia, as well as neighbouring Yemen.

“They implored me on my return to United Nations Headquarters to help raise international awareness of the gravity of the situation, and to seek your assistance in helping the affected people and nations during their hour of greatest need,” he said.

“It is disturbing to note that children, women and the elderly are being disproportionately affected by the crisis,” continued Mr. Thomson, adding that “1.4 million children are estimated to be at imminent risk of death from severe acute malnutrition.”

In February, the Secretary-General launched a [call to action](#). To date, this has resulted in donors providing around 21 per cent of the \$4.4 billion required, he said.

“Today I wish to follow up that appeal to the international community. I urge Member States to dig deep into reserves of our empathy and common humanity,” he said, seizing the opportunity to call on Member States to scale-up their efforts to implement the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, as part of the international community’s longer-term efforts to prevent the conflict, extreme weather and inequality which is at the root of so much of the despair we are witnessing.

“To effectively respond to the crisis, all partners – across the peace, humanitarian and development pillars – will need to coordinate closely on the ground to save lives and build the resilience required to avoid such shocks in the future,” Mr. Thomson said.

Cameroon: UN envoy encourages authorities to restore the Internet in country's English-speaking regions

13 April 2017 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, urged today Cameroonian authorities to examine with diligence the difficulties of the populations and entrepreneurs of the English-speaking regions of the north-west and south-west, which have been deprived of Internet since mid-January 2017.

“This is a deplorable situation. But I am convinced that this important tool for development, communication and collective development will be gradually re-established throughout Cameroon,” he said before leaving Cameroon on 13 April after a visit four-day official visit.

During the visit, Mr. Fall, who also heads the UN Regional Office for Central Africa ([UNOCA](#)), reviewed the state of affairs and assessed the impact of recent measures taken by the Government to address the concerns of English-speaking lawyers and teachers, UNOCA said in a press release.

“I had fruitful and hopeful exchanges with all the stakeholders,” the Special Representative said at a press conference in Yaoundé on 12 April. He met with Government officials, members of civil society, opposition leaders, members of the diplomatic corps and the UN system.

He also met with people arrested and detained in connection with the situation in the north-west and south-west, including Felix Nkongho Agbor Balla and radio broadcaster Mancho Bibixy.

“I encourage the Cameroonian Government to take all the measures it deems appropriate, as soon as possible and within the framework of the law, in order to create conditions conducive to building the confidence needed to end the crisis,” noted Mr. Fall.

With this in mind, he stressed that “the pursuit of a sincere and constructive dialogue taking into account the achievements is paramount.” He added that, where appropriate, the UN remains ready to continue “to accompany this dynamic in order to contribute to the efforts of the authorities and their partners in the search for consensual and lasting solutions to this situation.”

Mr. Fall reiterated the UN’s call to all parties to address the current situation through peaceful and legal means. He welcomed the Government’s announced intention to restore Internet services in Bamenda for hospitals, universities and banks, as part of a package of measures announced on 30 March by the Minister of Justice.

He encouraged the Government to consider additional confidence-building measures to appease tensions, including the release of the Anglophone leaders, and the full restoration of internet services in the two regions.

Mr. Fall also called on the leaders of the Anglophone movement to engage with the Government in a constructive manner to find a consensual and lasting solution to the situation in the south-west and north-west regions. He reaffirmed the willingness of the UN to continue to accompany the two parties in their dialogue efforts.

Mr. Fall will return to Cameroon on the occasion of the 44th ministerial meeting of the UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and that's at the end of May, beginning of June of this year.

[PODCAST: Biking from India to Sweden for love – a tale of happiness](#)

13 April 2017 – Love at first sight. An inevitable separation. A seemingly impossible journey for love mixed with a dash of art and late 1970s 'hippie culture.' This is the amazing true story of an Indian man who cycled across eight countries to be reunited with his sweetheart.

Pradyumna Kumar Mahanandia, known as 'PK,' made this incredible journey some 40 years ago. Born in a poor family in a village in eastern India, PK met Charlotte von Schedvin a Swedish girl who had heard of him and had come to India to get her portrait drawn.

They fell in love and were married, but in 1975, Charlotte had to return to school in Sweden. PK wanted to finish his studies as well, and could not accompany her. For some time after, he tried to figure out a way to get to her until finally, in 1978, he decided to sell all his belongings and set out on an impossible overland journey.

He biked for four months, through Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, (former) Yugoslavia, Germany, Austria and Denmark to be reunited with the love of his life in Sweden.

He and Charlotte, known as 'Lotte,' have been together ever since.

Their story is told in the book *The Amazing Story of the Man Who Cycled from India to Europe for Love* by Swedish journalist and travel writer, Per J. Andersson.

All three sat down with *UN News* and United Nations Headquarters in New York, to record a truly heart-warming episode of our podcast series [The Lid is On](#).

UN staff and visitors got to meet PK, Lotte and Per during a book signing held at UN Headquarters to mark the [International Day of Happiness](#), observed annually on 20 March.

AUDIO: The Lid is On – Dianne Penn talks with Pradyumna, Charlotte and Per at UN Headquarters in New York, on a wide-ranging conversation about love, life and happiness.

The UN has [celebrated](#) the International Day since 2013 as a way to recognize the importance of happiness in the lives of people everywhere.

At the book signing, PK wore a pin promoting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) which seek to end poverty, reduce inequality and protect the planet.

The UN believes these are three key aspects that contribute to well-being and happiness.

“We love to share our love, but the story has its own life and energy,” PK told *UN News*, adding that the UN is the ideal platform as it brings the world’s people together.

[State of emergency should not overshadow rights protection, UN experts stress ahead of Turkey referendum](#)

13 April 2017 – Ahead of this Sunday’s plebiscite on proposed constitutional amendments in Turkey that would, among other things, empower the President alone to declare states of emergency and determine the measures to be taken, a group of United Nations human rights experts have reiterated that even under such circumstances, protection of human rights must not be compromised.

In a [news release](#) today, the UN Special Rapporteurs on [extreme poverty and human rights](#); the [right to freedom of opinion and expression](#); the [rights to freedom of peaceful assembly](#) and of association; and the [right to education](#) also voiced concern over closure of some 200 media outlets in the country and said that the move not only caused thousands of journalists to lose their jobs and livelihoods, it also undermined the possibility of an informed debate over the referendum proposals.

Moreover, around 1,000 schools and 15 universities are estimated to have been

closed by emergency decrees issued since July 2016, the release added.

Underlining that even under a state of emergency, economic, social and cultural rights can only be limited in ways that respect the basic rights themselves and are 'solely for the purpose of promoting the general welfare in a democratic society,' the experts said: "But there has been no attempt to show that these blanket measures, which have destroyed the careers and livelihoods of tens of thousands of persons, satisfy such criteria in each case."

"The dismissal of up to 134,000 public servants, without due process, compensation, or access to a proper remedy, for alleged links with organizations that the Government has chosen to proscribe, cannot be justified by reference to Turkey's longstanding international human rights obligations," they added.

The experts also said that given the arbitrary and sweeping nature of the emergency decrees since July last year, "there is serious concern that such powers might be used in ways that exacerbate the existing major violations of economic, social and cultural rights."

In the release, the UN Special Rapporteurs also noted that they in contact with the Turkish Government over the issues.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

[Security Council decides UN Mission in Haiti will close by October; approves smaller follow-on operation](#)

13 April 2017 – Recognizing the "major milestone" Haiti has achieved toward stabilization following recent elections, the Security Council today extended mandate of the United Nations mission in the island nation for a final six-month period and authorized a smaller successor peacekeeping mission.

Unanimously adopting a new resolution, the Council decided that, after over 13 years operating in its current form, the UN Stabilization Mission, known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH, would gradually draw down its military component during the next six months, finally withdrawing from Haiti by 15 October 2017.

Acting on the [recommendations](#) of the Secretary-General, the Council also

decided to establish a successor operation, the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), which would be mandated to assist the Haitian Government to strengthen rule of law institutions; further support and develop the National Police; and engage in human rights monitoring, reporting, and analysis.

Further to the resolution, MINUJUSTH would be composed of up to seven Formed Police Units – or 980 FPU personnel – and 295 Individual Police Officers for an initial period of six months from 16 October 2017 until 15 April 2018, and emphasized the importance of reaching those levels. The current Mission has just over 1,000 individual police and 11 police units.

The new Mission was also authorized to “protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, as needed.”

Briefing the Security Council early last week, MINUSTAH chief Sandra Honoré said Haiti had made [significant progress](#) in consolidating democracy and maintaining security and stability with the inauguration of Jovenel Moïse as President on 7 February, marking the restoration of constitutional order. Yet, in spite of these gains, pockets of fragility persisted and political challenges remained.

It is time, she said, to reshape the partnership among the international community, the United Nations and Haiti, with a view to monitoring concerns such as human rights issues and ensuring that progress made since MINUSTAH’s 2004 establishment endure.

With the Council’s support, said Ms. Honoré, the joint transition plan would guide the handover, underpinning the gradual transfer of tasks to the Government, the international presence and the United Nations Country Team, thereby allowing Haiti to seize the opportunity to “begin a new chapter in [its] history as the Mission transitions.”