

South Sudan, Africa's largest refugee crisis, needs urgent response – UN agency

10 February 2017 – With already more than 3.5 million displaced within and outside the borders of South Sudan and thousands more driven to neighbouring countries every day, the United Nations refugee agency has appealed for an urgent peaceful resolution to what has now become Africa's worst refugee crisis.

Recent new arrivals report suffering inside South Sudan with intense fighting, kidnappings, rape, fears of armed groups and threats to life, as well as acute food shortage, William Spindler, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told the media at a regular briefing in Geneva.

More than 60 per cent of the refugees are children, many arriving with alarming levels of malnutrition enduring devastating impact of the brutalities of the ongoing conflict, he added.

However the crisis, third only to the displacements in Syria and Afghanistan and now in its fourth year, has received less attention and is plagued by chronic levels of underfunding.

UNHCR said that its response capacities are overstretched in the countries hosting the refugees and the lack of funds is affecting critical and life-saving efforts such as providing clean, drinking water, food, health and sanitation.

Last month, the agency revised upwards its funding requirements for 2017 to \$781.8 million (some \$297.9 million or 61 per cent higher than the earlier budget) in light of new needs of those who have been displaced due to renewed fighting, increased violence and resulting food insecurity since July last year.

The agency's last year funding appeal of \$649 million received only 33 per cent of the amount needed.

500,000 displaced in four months and more than 4,000 every day

The period between September and December 2016 saw almost half a million South Sudanese seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and an average of almost 4,100 people every day for four months.

According to Mr. Spindler, as the global displacement trends reflect, those fleeing South Sudan are being hosted by the poorest communities in the neighbouring countries, under immense pressure with scarce resources.

Noting that the welcome South Sudan refugees received in the neighbouring

countries is encouraging he cautioned that the lack of resources to respond is also extremely worrying.

The majority of the refugees are being hosted by Uganda (about 698,000), followed by Ethiopia (about 342,000), Sudan (305,000), Kenya (89,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (68,000) and the Central African Republic (4,900).

We are working with authorities in South Sudan's neighbouring countries to provide life-saving support and look after the basic needs of those arriving in desperate conditions, the UNHCR spokesperson said, renewing a call on donor countries to step up support to the humanitarian efforts for the South Sudan situation.

South Sudan has faced ongoing challenges since a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar erupted into full blown conflict between forces loyal to each in December 2013. The crisis has produced one of the world's worst displacement situations with immense suffering for civilians.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement that formally ended the war, conflict and instability have also spread to previously unaffected areas.

[‘Year of Pulses’ closes with call to build on strong momentum among farmers, private sector – UN](#)

10 February 2017 – Although the International Year of Pulses has helped raise awareness globally of the many benefits of pulses, such as beans, lentils and chickpeas, gains must be further strengthened to achieve the international community's new development goals, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said today.

It is essential to maintain the momentum, FAO's Deputy Director-General Maria-Helena Semedo told the Year's official closing ceremony today, which was hosted by Burkina Faso, according to a news release.

Realizing that pulses defined as edible dried seeds of plants in the legume family are small but powerful allies in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN General Assembly designated 2016 as the International Year and nominated FAO to lead implementation.

Since the Year's launch, connections have been fostered among key actors from farmers' organizations to the private sector to facilitate information exchange and policy dialogue on the production, trade and consumption of

pulses.

Leaders in policy and research have tackled the top pulse issues at several international forums, and national committees have been established. A technical pulses database was created, a cookbook featuring recipes from international chefs was published, and the official multilingual website, with over half a million visits, promoted a rich array of information on pulses.

Though the Year has now officially closed, there has been a sound call to keep the momentum alive and continue activities beyond 2016.

Training programmes on the value of pulses should be supported, particularly for schoolchildren, farmers and extension workers. Policies and programmes should focus more on pulse producers, particularly small-holder farmers and young people, Ms. Semedo said, noting that FAO will carry on working with stakeholders from governments to family farmers to promote pulses.

Pulses are packed with minerals such as iron, zinc and folate and have been an important part of diets around the world for centuries.

Pulses are a valuable ingredient in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

The plants contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. They add large amounts of beneficial nitrogen to the soil and require little fertilizer. Growing pulses with other crops enhances soil fertility, improves both crops' yields, and contributes to a more sustainable food system.

In addition, pulses have a very low water footprint compared to other protein sources, can be grown in very poor soils, and help reduce the risk of soil erosion and depletion. For poor farmers, growing pulses contributes to stable livelihoods, additional income and improved nutrition.

Burkina Faso's President, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, said: "To better cope with the triple problem of soil fertility management, reducing the adverse effects of climate change and the issue of food security, producing and consuming pulses is a great opportunity, especially for the most vulnerable people."

Overall, global pulse production has been slowly but steadily increasing. In 2014, global production reached 77 million tonnes, up 21 million metric tonnes since 2001.

Senior UN officials call for close cooperation to address migrant, refugee flows in Libya

10 February 2017 – The heads of the United Nations agencies for human rights, migrants, and refugees, and the UN envoy for Libya, today met in Geneva calling for international solidarity to address the flows of migrants and refugees in the North African country.

The senior UN officials stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to address the situation of migrants and refugees in Libya as well as to assist the hundreds of thousands of Libyans displaced and impacted by the crisis, according to a press release.

The meeting was between the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), William Lacy Swing; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi; the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein; and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Libya, Martin Kobler.

They called for close cooperation at the regional and international levels, and highlighted the need to protect and rights of migrants and refugees.

Along with many Libyans, migrants and refugees are heavily impacted by ongoing conflicts and the breakdown in law and order in Libya, the four senior UN officials said.

They noted that untold numbers of people particularly those smuggled or trafficked, and those in detention outside of any legal process face grave human rights abuses and violations.

Migrants and refugees are also exposed to malnutrition, extortion, torture, sexual violence and other abuses, according to the joint press release.

Haiti: Peacekeeping chief points to changes in mandate of UN mission

10 February 2017 – While the security situation in Haiti is not perfect, solid progress has been made over the past few years, the head of United Nations peacekeeping operations has said, stressing that the Organization is considering a change in the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in the island nation, known as MINUSTAH.

Wrapping up a week-long visit during which he attended the swearing in of the new Haitian President, Jovenel Moïse, and carried out an out an evaluation of Mission, Hervé Ladsous, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told reporters yesterday in Port-au-Prince: “The military component of MINUSTAH is likely to disappear in the relatively near future. We are looking at the modalities.”

At the heart of the Mission’s work is ensuring stability, he continued, noting that the recent elections had gone off with few incidents, thanks to MINUSTAH and particularly the Haitian National Police, and the Provision Electoral Council. “I think this is something to be noted,” he said.

He recalled that in October 2016, when the UN Security Council renewed MINUSTAH’s mandate, it had expressed its wish to examine the mandate of the Mission in mid-April. The Secretary-General is to make recommendations to the Security Council on 15 March.

“I think that when we look at the situation in this country compared to what it was a few years ago, we have made a lot of progress,” Ladsous said. “Security is not perfect, but I think it is much better.”

Mr. Ladsous went on to note that the regular strength of the Haitian National Police is set to reach 15,000 and that efforts will continue to strengthen the capacities of this police.

[UN calls for 50 per cent increase in funding for mine action in 2017](#)

9 February 2017 – The United Nations has launched a \$511 million international appeal for humanitarian mine action in conflict and post-conflict settings for 2017, a 50 per cent increase from last year’s \$347 million consolidated appeal.

“Across the world, the conflicts tearing countries, communities and lives apart cause a tragic increase in the number of casualties due to landmines and other explosive hazards,” said the Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Agnès Marcaillou, in a press release issued earlier this week.

“There is an absolute necessity for a humanitarian mine action response. The knowledge and willingness to help are there – it is adequate funding that is missing,” added Ms. Marcaillou, who also chairs the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action.

According to the Portfolio of Mine Action Projects 2017, an online resource

for information on such projects, there is a sharp increase in the need for humanitarian mine action, including landmine clearance, risk education and victim assistance.

The Portfolio covers over 200 projects and presents a consolidated picture of the needs and strategies of 22 countries and territories contaminated with landmines and other explosive hazards such as unexploded cluster munitions, rockets and improvised explosive devices across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South America.

Needs are the greatest in active conflict zones, with Afghanistan requiring \$124 million; Iraq \$75 million; Syria \$52 million; and Yemen \$17 million. In addition, countries which have extensive residual contamination also need substantial support, with Cambodia requiring \$23 million and the Lao People's Democratic Republic \$26 million, according to UNMAS.