

In Niger, Security Council links aid and development in fight against Boko Haram

5 March 2017 – The Security Council which is in the Lake Chad Basin to draw attention to the humanitarian and development needs of a region grappling with Boko Haram's terror visited for the first time Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world.

Addressing media in Niamey, Ambassador Matthew Rycroft of the United Kingdom, who is leading the Council visit as president of the Security Council for the month of March, pledged solidarity with the people who the Council had met.

"We have demonstrated our commitment to further support Niger in its remarkable efforts to restore the security stability of the localities in the Lake Chad basin but also to provide the necessary protection and assistance to the populations affected by the crisis," Mr. Rycroft told journalists.

Earlier, the Council members had met with President Mahamadou Issoufou.

They also heard from UN agencies and partners about the dire situation in the region of Diffa along Niger's border with Nigeria. Last summer, tens of thousands of people fled Diffa as Boko Haram flooded the desert town from Nigeria.

In addition to insecurity, Niger is plagued by drought, desertification and a lack of jobs and schools for its young people, who make up two-thirds of the population. The country ranks 188th out of 188 countries on the 2015 UN Development Programme's Human Development Index.

Speaking to the Council during its visit, the UNDP Resident Representative and Resident Coordinator, Fodé Ndiaye, said survivors of Boko Haram violence are being hosted by other poor and vulnerable communities.

"But they are showing humanity," Mr. Ndiaye stressed.

One of the main observations from the visit, according to Mr. Rycroft, was the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 16. That Goal aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

"You can't come to a place like the Lake Chad Basin without seeing the value of Goal 16," Mr. Rycroft said.

The Security Council next heads to Maiduguri, Borno, in north-eastern Nigeria, known since 2009 as the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency. The Council members are meeting with local officials and civil society

organisations before they are scheduled to visit a camp for internally displaced persons.

The Council members will also visit Abuja, where they will meet with acting President Yemi Osinbajo.