

News story: Priti Patel calls on international community to improve global response to humanitarian crises

The International Development Secretary has set out a five point plan to deliver a more effective global response to the unprecedented number of crises the world currently faces.

Before last month, there had been only one certified famine globally since 2000. Parts of South Sudan are now in famine and in 2017 there is a credible risk of another three famines in Yemen, North East Nigeria and Somalia.

Drought and conflict in these countries are pushing families to the brink of starvation and there is also no end in sight to the six-year conflict which has ripped Syria apart.

Ms Patel is leading the charge to improve the global aid system, challenging international organisations and donor countries to be more efficient and effective in how they respond to crises, both in terms of meeting immediate needs, but also preparing for the longer term.

□Ms Patel has also issued a call to action to the international community to step up its support for the humanitarian crises in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and North East Nigeria before it is too late.□ [The UK recently announced new packages of lifesaving support.](#)

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The world faces an unprecedented humanitarian challenge and the warnings are growing louder each day. More than 20 million men, women and children face the very real risk of dying from starvation in the next six months because of relentless war and drought.

British people can be proud that their support is saving lives by providing food, water, healthcare, protection and shelter.

The world looks to Britain in times of crises to lead the response and while we have stepped up our support, we alone cannot avert these crises. Other countries and international bodies must act now to stop innocent people dying of hunger.

The International Development Secretary's five point plan to deliver a more effective global response to the unprecedented number of humanitarian crises includes:

1. Pressing the UN, World Bank and wider humanitarian system to work smarter and harder to ensure that every dollar goes to those who need it most and ensuring the international community lives up to commitments they made at the World Humanitarian Summit last year.

Priti Patel has written to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres (21 February) and the World Bank President Jim Kim (1 March). She continually stresses that these big international organisations need to better respond to crises by managing the risk of disasters and boosting resilience of countries vulnerable to crises, ensuring the poorest people are better prepared to meet their own urgent needs. The humanitarian system needs to develop better longer-term responses to ongoing crises by investing in job creation, livelihoods, healthcare and education, and trading opportunities. This will enable people affected or displaced by crises for long periods of time to better look after themselves.

She is also calling for greater transparency on where funding is being spent, improving collaboration between humanitarian and development agencies and increasing humanitarian multi-year planning and funding so that partners can better meet both the immediate and longer-term needs of those affected by crises.

The UK's ongoing discussions with the World Bank has led to the Bank prioritising its entire support in Yemen on meeting people's basic needs such as distributing essential medical supplies and providing short-term employment to the most vulnerable. The Bank is also developing plans for new support in other affected countries.

The UN Secretary General has since written a letter to all UN member states to act on the famine. While noting the UN's call for funds, the International Development Secretary is clear the UN needs to ensure that every dollar has maximum impact. This will take increased coordination, robustly assessing and prioritising need, the deployment of quality staff and strong and effective leadership.

2. Building coalitions with donor countries to create effective emergency response plans for crises

The International Development Secretary has brought together a group of major donors to work together on driving forward much needed reform in the global aid system – including key development donors such as the US, Germany, France and others to ensure every country is meeting urgent humanitarian need as well as providing longer term economic development and resilience support.

The UK and UN OCHA also co-hosted a technical planning meeting on Somalia on (23 February). This brought together key partner countries, UN agencies and the major NGOs to identify gaps in the international response to the Somalia drought and potential famine, and develop prioritised plans for addressing these.

This includes making sure international agencies are working together and coordinating humanitarian responses effectively and urging other donors to step up and agreeing that immediate support should focus on food, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition and health to help save lives. Since this meeting, Australia has pledged AUS\$20 million towards helping people in South Sudan and Somalia suffering from critical food shortages caused by conflict and severe drought.

The International Development Secretary will be meeting key NGOs this week (6 March) to urge them to raise awareness of these crises to help encourage more support from international donors.

3. Playing a leading role in international conferences and forums to encourage other donors and governments to pledge more support

The UK is working with others, including through the UN, G7 and G20, to highlight the urgent humanitarian needs, mobilise much needed resources and keep momentum for humanitarian reform created last year by the London Syria Conference, the World Humanitarian Summit and the Leaders' Summit on refugees.

The UK also used the Oslo Conference on Nigeria (24 February) to press for greater international involvement and increased funding for humanitarian efforts – where over \$450 million was pledged for 2017.

The Nigerian government pledged to step up its efforts at the Oslo Conference, pledging \$1bn of support to the North East of the country in 2017. Their leadership and resources will be crucial to the response, and we are urging them to quickly turn that pledge into funding on the ground.

4. Urging governments to uphold International Humanitarian Law, stop wars that are killing people and allow aid to get to those who need it.

International Development Minister for Africa James Wharton met South Sudanese Government Ministers and officials where he emphasised that it is first and foremost the responsibility of the country's leaders to alleviate the pressure on its people, and to work with the UN, as well as NGOs, who are delivering vital, lifesaving aid to the South Sudanese people, and ultimately create lasting peace and stability.

A lack of respect for International Humanitarian Law exacerbates suffering and disrupts the international community's ability to respond.

The UK will do its utmost to respect and promote respect for International Humanitarian Law, and calls on parties to these conflicts to allow for access by humanitarian agencies to all areas of greatest need.

5. Ensure that UK missions and representatives around the world

are echoing the Secretary of State's call to action throughout the humanitarian system to guarantee a truly global response.

At the UN in New York, the UK's Ambassador Matthew Rycroft met both the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O'Brien (21 February) to relay key UK messages. The UN Secretary-General has set up a steering committee calling for immediate action to ensure a coordinated long-term approach, in line with the UK's reform priorities for the UN.

The UK's Presidency of the UN Security Council in March is focused on preventing conflict in Africa which is driving the humanitarian crises in South Sudan and North East Nigeria. This UK Ambassador is currently leading a Security Council visit to NE Nigeria and the neighbouring countries.