

Relief aid is saving lives, but world must tackle root causes of famine: conflict – UN chief

12 October 2017 – Until fighting stops and development takes root, communities and entire regions will continue to face hunger, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told the Security Council on Thursday, underscoring the link between conflict and famine.

“Conflict in one country creates [demands on its neighbours](#) to provide food and basic services to refugees. This can lead to further instability, affecting the security of an entire region and beyond,” said Mr. Guterres.

Today’s briefing was in response to the [request made by the Council in August](#) for an analysis on country-specific impediments to an effective response to the risk of famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-east Nigeria.

“Prevention, as always, must be our watchword,” he said, noting that early famine warning mechanisms have worked well in these places, given that the international community responded quickly to his appeals nine months ago with donors coming forward to provide nearly 70 per cent of funds needed.

“But while we have succeeded in keeping famine at bay, we have not kept suffering at bay,” the UN chief said, adding that while humanitarian aid is saving lives, “we have not dealt with the one major root cause of these food crises: conflict.”

Some 80 per cent of the World Food Programme’s ([WFP](#)) funding is going to areas affected by conflict. Around 60 per cent of the 815 million people suffering from hunger today live in the shadow of conflict. Three-quarters of the stunted children in the world are in countries affected by conflict.

The parties to conflict in the four countries have stated their commitment to humanitarian and human rights law – but most of them have not followed through.

Specifically, Mr. Guterres asked the Council to continue to engage in and support the political process in Somalia, and encourage the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to stabilize their relationship.



Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the Security Council meeting on Maintenance of international peace and security. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

In Nigeria, where aid agencies face obstacles because of ongoing attacks by Boko Haram, he encouraged the Government and its counterparts in the Lake

Chad Basin to develop a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis.

In Yemen, he said, what is needed most is for the parties to return to the negotiation table and focus on agreement.

As for South Sudan, he urged parties to the conflict to come to terms urgently, to prevent increased food insecurity, refugee movements that threaten to destabilize the region, and continued human suffering and misery.

Calling for a system-wide approach which addresses the humanitarian-development nexus and its link to peace, Mr. Guterres appealed for an urgent commitment to scaling up aid funding and said: "In the long term, we must focus on what communities and countries need to emerge from protracted conflict and instability. We must help people not just to survive, but to thrive."