

Donors pledge \$670 million at UN-backed conference to support aid operations in Lake Chad region

24 February 2017 – Giving voice to people affected by conflict and complex crises in Africa's Lake Chad region, a United Nations-supported conference in Oslo today generated more than \$670 million in pledges that will sustain critical relief operations over the next two years and beyond.

Officially known as the Humanitarian Conference in Oslo for Nigeria and Lake Chad region, the donors event also agreed on addressing longer-term development needs and to seek durable solutions to crises in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon – which together make the Lake Chad region.

"Without our increased support, affected communities will face a life of hunger, disease, gender-based violence and continued displacement," said the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien.

"But there is another future within grasp: as the international community scales up support, we can stop a further descent into an ever-deepening crisis with unimaginable consequences for millions of people," he added.

According to estimates, about 17 million people are living in the most affected areas across the four countries. Of them some 10.7 million people are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, with 8.5 million in north-eastern Nigeria alone, having been made witness to years of violence as a result of Boko Haram militancy.

More to follow...

UN reports more than 300 migrant deaths on Mediterranean crossing in first two months of 2017

24 February 2017 – An estimated 366 migrants died at sea during their Mediterranean journey to Europe in the first 53 days of 2017, down from 425 of the comparable period of last year, the United Nations migration agency said today.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported that 13,924

migrants entered Europe by sea through 22 February, sharply down from 105,427 a year earlier.

These data include the death toll reported this week from a boat with as many as 133 passengers on board that foundered off Az Zawiyah, near Tripoli on this past Sunday.

According to an IOM source at the scene, the human smugglers stole the craft's engine and left the vessel drifting, telling passengers that authorities were *en route* to rescue them. "This is becoming a common tactic," said IOM Rome spokesman Flavio Di Giacomo. "But when you take an engine from a boat like this, you can no longer treat it as an 'incident.' It is homicide."

This year so far, Italy accounted for 10,701 arrivals, Greece 2,223 and Spain 1,000. In the comparable period last year, Greece recorded 97,325 arrivals and Italy 8,102.

To date in 2017, an estimated 326 migrants died during their deadly journey on the Mediterranean's central route linking Libya to Italy, compared with only two deaths on the Mediterranean's east corridor to Greece.

[At global UN consultation, health leaders underline need for action on migrant health](#)

24 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of health systems struggling to adapt to the growing needs of migrants around the world, health leaders from over forty countries, meeting at a United Nations consultation underscored the call for international collaboration to improve the health and well-being of migrants and their families.

The 'Colombo Statement,' adopted yesterday at the second Global Consultation on Migrant Health, aims to address the health challenges of increasingly mobile populations, now numbering about one billion – one in seven people on the planet.

"Protecting the health of mobile populations is a public health and human rights imperative," said the South-East Asia Regional Director at the UN World Health Organization (WHO), Poonam Khetrpal Singh.

Highlighting the importance of the issue, Davide Mosca, the Director of Migration Health Division at the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), added: "This can only be realized through the implementation of well-managed and coordinated migration policies, which include financial risk

protection and equal access to quality health services.”

The Colombo Statement also calls for mainstreaming migrant health into key national, regional and international agendas and promotes international solidarity for equitable migrant health policies, a shared research agenda and the development of global frameworks to ensure migrant health is protected.

Furthermore, ensuring the highest standard of health for all, including for migrants and refugees are also a key component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pledge to leave no one behind.

SEE ALSO: World leaders at UN summit adopt ‘bold’ plan to enhance protections for refugees and migrants

This health issue most directly linked to targets 10.7 on facilitating safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people; and 3.8 on achieving universal health coverage under Goals 10 and 3, respectively.

There is also an anticipation that the momentum generated by the Global Consultation will carry into the World Health Assembly – WHO’s governing body – where its member States will deliberate, among other health issues, priority actions to protect migrants’ right to health.

The Global Consultation was organized in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, by IOM, WHO and the Government of Sri Lanka.

UN rights experts urge action to curb ‘invisible threat’ of toxic air

24 February 2017 – United Nations human rights experts are calling for strong, urgent action by States to ensure that people around the world can enjoy the human right to live in environments free from contamination.

“Air pollution is a major threat to human rights worldwide and toxic air pollutants are associated with an increased risk of disease from stroke, heart disease, cancer and respiratory diseases, including asthma,” the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and hazardous substances and wastes, Baskut Tuncak, said in a news release issued today by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Three million deaths each year are linked to exposure to outdoor air pollution, according to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO). There is also growing research evidence indicating that air pollution has become the leading environmental cause of death in the world.

Joining Mr. Tuncak in the appeal are Dainius Puras, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and John H. Knox, the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Silent pandemic

Children and people in vulnerable situations, including women of reproductive age, the elderly, those in poor health and those living in less wealthy communities remain the most vulnerable, the experts warned.

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), 300 million children almost one in seven of the world's total, live in areas with the most toxic levels of outdoor air pollution, a situation paediatricians describe as a 'silent pandemic.'

A threat like this can no longer be ignored

A threat like this can no longer be ignored, they said. States have a duty to prevent and control exposure to toxic air pollution and to protect against its adverse effects on human rights.

The experts said that impunity for those responsible for air pollution is rampant today, with recent reports of environmental ministers even denying its effects, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

They stressed the need for cross-border cooperation to promote the adoption of preventive and control measures in the energy, industrial and transportation sectors, as well as the need for investment in infrastructures and long-term incentives.

Improving the regulation of toxic emissions from industrial sources and vehicles, strengthening waste management and recycling practices, and promoting renewable energies are crucial steps to effectively address air quality issues and public health, the experts concluded.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts 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.

[Perpetrators of recent terrorist](#)

attack in Iraq must be held accountable – UN Security Council

23 February 2017 – Condemning, in the strongest terms, the terrorist attack on 16 February in Iraq's capital, Baghdad, the United Nations Security Council underlined the need to bring the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of such reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.

The attack killed at least 50 people and injured many more.

In a statement, the 15-member Security Council "reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security."

Further, stressing that those responsible for these killings should be held accountable, the Security Council urged all UN Members States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Iraqi Government and all other relevant authorities in this regard.

Council members also reiterated that "any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed," and reaffirmed the need for all UN Member States to combat by all means, in accordance with the UN Charter and other obligations under international law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

Also in the statement, the Council welcomed the efforts of the Iraqi Government and its partners to defeat Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and to return stability to the country.