

Hunger persists in chronic conflict zones despite strong global harvests – UN

2 March 2017 – Despite robust food supply conditions, droughts are worsening food security across swathes of East Africa, and access to food has been dramatically reduced in areas suffering civil conflicts, a new United Nations report has found.

“This is an unprecedented situation. Never before have we been faced with four threats of famine in multiple countries simultaneously,” Kostas Stamoulis, the Assistant Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said in a news release issued today, noting that famine has been formally declared in South Sudan, and the food security situation is of grave concern in northern Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

According to the new edition of FAO’s Crop Prospects and Food Situation report, some 37 countries require external assistance for food, 28 of them in Africa as a result of lingering effects of last year’s El Niño-triggered droughts on harvests in 2016.

In South Sudan, 100,000 people were facing famine in Leer and Mayendit Counties, part of former Unity state. Overall, about 4.9 million people across the country were classified as facing crisis, emergency or famine.

In Yemen, 17 million people, or two-thirds of the population, are estimated to be food insecure. The report notes that “the risk of famine declaration in the country is very high.”

In northern Nigeria, 8.1 million people are facing acute food insecurity conditions, and in Somalia, an estimated 2.9 million people have been severely food insecure from six months ago.

Conflicts and civil unrest in Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar and Syria are also exacerbating food insecurity conditions for millions of people as well as affecting nearby countries hosting refugees.

Global food supply conditions robust

The report says, however, global food supply conditions are robust.



Various types of rice at a market in Hissar, Tajikistan. Photo: FAO/Nozim Kalandarov

Cereal production made quite strong gains in the world overall in 2016, with

a record recovery in Central America, and larger cereal crops in Asia, Europe and North America.

Prospects are favourable for the 2017 maize crop in Brazil and Argentina and the outlook is generally positive for coarse grains throughout the Southern Hemisphere. Prospects for rice are mixed, but it is still too early to make firm predictions for many of the world's major crops.

Maize harvests in Southern Africa, slashed by El Niño, are forecast to recover this year, with South Africa's output expected to increase by more than 50 per cent from 2016.

Although FAO's first global wheat production forecast for 2017 points to a 1.8 per cent decline from last year's record level, that is due mostly to a projected 20 per cent output drop in the United States.

Health Ministry limits NEET attempts to three; NEET-2017 to be counted as the first attempt

CBSE will be conducting NEET (UG) on 07.05.2017. It was decided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in consultation with MCI that there shall be an upper age limit of 25 years as on the date of exam with 5 years relaxation for reserved categories and a maximum of 3 attempts for all candidates.

News story: Defence dialogue on our EU exit

Minister for Exiting the European Union David Jones and Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin took part in a roundtable with the UK's defence business leaders today (Thursday, 2 March) ahead of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Attendees discussed topics including: tariffs and customs arrangements; skills and movement of employees; research and development funding; and common standards – with an aim of exploiting the opportunities provided by our EU exit.

Participants were also keen to explore how we could further shape our own economy – such as delivering a bold, long term industrial strategy that builds on the UK’s strengths – and fully develop our immense trade and investment potential.

Minister for Exiting the European Union, David Jones, said:

The UK is a leader in defence technology and one of the world’s largest defence exporters. We are determined that this industry, which is worth more than nine billion pounds to the UK each year, will continue to thrive after our departure from the EU.

Today’s meeting has been an excellent opportunity to engage with some of the leading defence industry figures and to discuss opportunities, and priorities, ahead of the EU withdrawal negotiations. I look forward to continuing this dialogue throughout our negotiations.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

Supported by our rising defence budget and £178 billion Equipment Plan, defence businesses deliver highly skilled, high wage jobs and drive innovation across the UK. We are determined that the UK defence industry will continue to thrive after we leave the EU.

The event, which was organised by the ADS Group and hosted by Rolls-Royce, provided participants with the opportunity to discuss priorities for the defence sector which employs 142,000 people, is worth around £9.4 billion to the UK economy annually and exports around £7.7 billion pounds of goods and services per year.

The Ministers were joined by senior board-level executives from the following businesses and trade associations:

- ADS
- Airbus
- Babcock
- BAE Systems
- Boeing
- Leonardo MW
- Lockheed Martin UK
- Marshalls
- MBDA UK
- QinetiQ
- Raytheon
- Rolls-Royce
- Serco
- TechUK
- Thales UK

It was the latest in a series of roundtables and other engagement activities the government is having with business leaders and key stakeholders up and down the country.

By listening to industry experts' views and discussing opportunities, we are seeking to create certainty in the transition and ensure a new relationship with the EU that works for businesses and Britain.

Direct Benefit Transfer in Fertilizer Sector

Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Shipping, Road Transport & Highways, Shri Mansukh L. Mandaviya, in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today, said that the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) being implemented in fertilizer subsidy payment is slightly different from the normal DBT being implemented in LPG subsidy.

WCD Ministry holds national consultation to discuss issues related to India's accession to Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

The Ministry of Women and Child Development held a National Consultation to discuss issues related to India's accession to Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, in New Delhi today. The consultation was chaired by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi.