

# UN aid chief calls for access, funds to prevent spread of South Sudan's famine

4 March 2017 – Hundreds of thousands of people in South Sudan will starve unless relief workers gain access to needy populations and more funding is raised, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator today warned after meeting malnourished children who fled the raging conflict in the country.

Stephen O'Brien, who is also the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, travelled to Ganyiel, Southern Unity state, considered one of the most violent areas in the fight for political control of the country.

Among the people he met was a starving boy whose grandmother carried him through waist-high swamp to get away from the fighting. His parents are apparently missing.

"1000s similar. Horrendous," Mr. O'Brien wrote on social media, posting a number of photos of people who had fled the fighting and sexual violence.

Humanitarian partners, such as the International Red Cross, are setting up clinics directly in the swamps to reach more people, he noted. Some people with nothing to eat survived by chewing on water lilies.

"Millions of people prevented from receiving aid by parties to conflict. Immoral, unlawful and unacceptable. We need access now," Mr. O'Brien has said.

He is in South Sudan to see first-hand the critical humanitarian situation and the response which his agency, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is assisting.

RELATED: Famine declared in region of South Sudan & UN

The UN declared a famine in parts of South Sudan on 20 February, increasingly blaming the lack of food and the collapsing economy on the rival forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA in Opposition backing Riek Machar.

A formal declaration of famine means that people have already started dying of hunger.

About 100,000 people are facing starvation, and an additional one million are on the brink of a famine, according to the UN. The total number of food insecure people is expected to rise to 5.5 million at the height of the lean season in July if nothing is done to curb the severity and spread of the food crisis.

The situation is worsened for the 3.4 million Sudanese, some of whom Mr.

O'Brien met today, who have been displaced and separated from their families.

Humanitarian organizations have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to some 5.8 million people across South Sudan in 2017.

Mr. O'Brien came to South Sudan from Kenya and previously, from Yemen. He is next scheduled to visit Somalia.

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## [China to raise 2017 defense budget by around 7 pct: spokesperson](#)



Fu Ying, spokesperson for the fifth session of China's 12th National People's Congress (NPC), speaks during a press conference on the session at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 4, 2017. The fifth session of the 12th NPC is scheduled to open in Beijing on March 5.

China's 2017 defense budget will expand by around 7 percent, a spokesperson for the annual session of the country's top legislature said Saturday.

Fu Ying, spokesperson for the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) annual session, said the increase is in line with China's economic development and defense needs.

The country's defense budget rose by 7.6 percent in 2016.

The fresh raise could be the country's slowest defense budget rise in more

than a decade, and mark the second time that defense budget dip to single-digit increase since 2010. In 2009, the figure was about 15 percent.

U.S. President Donald Trump last month pledged to further strengthen his country's armed forces.

In his first address to Congress after taking office, Trump proposed a huge 54-billion-U.S.-dollar surge in the country's military spending, up 10 percent from the previous year.

Fu, meanwhile, noted that China's defense spending accounts for about only 1.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product, as compared with NATO members' pledge to dedicate at least 2 percent of GDP to defense.

"You should ask them what their intentions are," Fu told reporters.

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## [China's top legislature to open annual session Sunday](#)



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The annual session of China's top legislature, the National People's Congress

(NPC), is scheduled to open Sunday morning in Beijing, a spokesperson told a press conference Saturday.

The fifth session of the 12th NPC will conclude on March 15, said Fu Ying, spokeswoman for the session.

A 169-member presidium for the session has been elected at a preparatory meeting. The presidium convened its first meeting Saturday morning and adopted the session's agenda, she said.

National lawmakers will deliberate six reports including the government work report, draft general provisions of civil law, and three bills concerning the election of deputies to the 13th NPC, according to Fu.

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## [China's 1st cargo spacecraft to make three rendezvous with Tiangong-2](#)

China's first cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-1 is expected to dock with the orbiting Tiangong-2 space lab three times after its planned launch in April, sources said Saturday.

Tianzhou-1 will be sent into space from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province aboard a Long March-7 Y2 carrier rocket, according to a spokesperson of China's manned space program.

It is scheduled to refuel Tiangong-2 three times and carry out experiments and tests.

During the journey, Tianzhou-1 will orbit on its own for about three months and together with Tiangong-2 for about two months after their rendezvous.

At the end of the mission, Tianzhou-1 will leave the orbit and fall back to earth while Tiangong-2 will remain in orbit and continue its experiments.

The Tianzhou-1 mission will complete the second phase of the country's manned space program.

It will be crucial for China in achieving the final step of establishing a space station around 2022.

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# Beijing spends US\$2.3 bln in cleaning waterways

Beijing's Tongzhou district, the capital city's subcenter under construction, plans to spend 16 billion yuan (2.3 billion U.S. dollars) treating polluted waterways.

The investment will cover landscaping, pipelines, treatment of polluted creeks and wetlands, according to Tongzhou Water Authority on Friday.

About 90 percent of the funds will be raised through the public private partnership model and the rest directly comes from the government.

To address overcrowding and congestion, Beijing is building the subcenter in Tongzhou where the municipal government will move. Beijing has a population of nearly 22 million.

"The city subcenter faces big tasks in treatment of sewage, small and medium riverways," said Jin Shudong, head of the Beijing Water Authority.

Tongzhou will address the pollution of 16 rivers upstream which flow into the district and step up efforts to improve the overall water environment, he said.

This year, Tongzhou will start construction of 80 sewage treatment plants or stations and complete cleaning 53 polluted waterway stretches.

By 2020, more than 95 percent of sewage in Tongzhou will undergo treatment.

Meanwhile, Tongzhou will cover 3,466 hectares of land with grass or trees this year. In the future, the subcenter will build more than 30 parks to realize there are green belts or parks within a radius of 500 meters.