

Ukraine crisis 'forgotten by the world,' senior UN relief official says, urging greater global support

With 4.4 million people in Ukraine soon to enter a fifth year of conflict, the international community has an important role to play in supporting conflict resolution and bringing about lasting peace – the only durable humanitarian solution for the affected population, a senior United Nations official has said.

“This crisis is happening in [Europe’s backyard](#), yet it is largely forgotten by the world,” UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller told a European conference on the humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine and the way forward, held on Wednesday in Brussels, Belgium.

“We must do better at communicating the daily violence and intensifying deprivation in eastern Ukraine affecting millions of people,” added Ms. Mueller, who is also Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

She noted that the human toll of the armed conflict is appalling, with over 2,530 civilians killed and 9,000 injured. Thousands of homes, hundreds of hospitals, schools, and water and electricity facilities have been damaged due to the hostilities.

“Countless ceasefire agreements have failed to stick, and it is this political failure to bring about a definitive end to the conflict that continues to force 4.4 million conflict-affected Ukrainians to endure daily suffering and to make impossible choices,” she warned.

Hostilities aside, hundreds of lives have been lost due to mines and explosive remnants. eastern Ukraine is rapidly becoming “one of the most mined areas in the world,” which, if not addressed, will stall reconstruction and development for many years to come, she said, noting that mine clearance and risk education is urgently needed in all conflict-affected areas, particularly along the “contact line,” including the checkpoints.

With one million crossings each month across the 457-km “contact line,” thousands of people face delays and obstacles in accessing basic services, pensions, social benefits, and markets every day.

Last December, humanitarians in Ukraine consolidated a comprehensive and prioritized \$187 million Humanitarian Response Plan that sets out the urgent need to reach vulnerable Ukrainians with assistance and protection throughout 2018.

“It is sobering to note that four years ago, Ukraine had no need of a humanitarian appeal,” Ms. Mueller said.

It is clear from a 2018 assessment that needs across all sectors continue to rise, particularly in non-Government controlled areas and across the “contact line,” she said, urging the de facto authorities to facilitate the resumption of the activities of all humanitarian actors’ programmes, and appealing to the Government of Ukraine to do all it can to ensure freedom of movement of civilians, and to end the commercial ban across the contact line.