

UN Security Council condemns latest terrorist attack in Mogadishu

20 February 2017 – Strongly condemning the latest deadly terrorist attack in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, the United Nations Security Council today reiterated that its determination to support peace, security and development in the long-troubled country would not be swayed by this, or any other such attack.

In a press statement that follows yesterday's terrorist attack at a market in Mogadishu that killed at least 39 people and injured many more, the members of the Council expressed their deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the people and Government of Somalia. They also wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

The Council went on to commend the swift response of Somalia's security and first responders.

It also reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice, as well as reaffirmed the need to combat the scourges in accordance with international law.

Further to the statement, the Security Council paid tribute to all Somali and international actors working to bring peace and stability in Somalia. The 15-nation body reiterated its determination to support peace, stability and development in Somalia and underlined that "neither this nor any other terrorist attack would weaken that determination."

Famine declared in region of South Sudan – UN

20 February 2017 – Famine has been formally declared in parts of South Sudan, the United Nations said today, warning that war and a collapsing economy have left some 100,000 people facing starvation there and a further 1 million people are classified as being on the brink of famine.

"Famine has become a tragic reality in parts of South Sudan and our worst fears have been realised," said Serge Tissot, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Representative in South Sudan, in a news release issued jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and

the World Food Programme (WFP).

“Many families have exhausted every means they have to survive,” he stated, explaining that these people are predominantly farmers who have lost their livestock, even their farming tools.

Famine is currently affecting parts of Unity State in the northern-central part of the country. A formal famine declaration means people have already started dying of hunger.

Famine has become a tragic reality in parts of South Sudan

The situation is the worst hunger catastrophe since fighting erupted more than three years ago between rival forces – the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA in Opposition backing First Vice-President Riek Machar.

The three UN agencies warned that urgent action is needed to prevent more people from dying of hunger.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) update released today by the government, the three agencies and other humanitarian partners, 4.9 million people – more than 40 percent of South Sudan's population – are in need of urgent food, agriculture and nutrition assistance.

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.

“More than one million children are currently estimated to be acutely malnourished across South Sudan; over a quarter of a million children are already severely malnourished. If we do not reach these children with urgent aid many of them will die,” said Jeremy Hopkins, UNICEF Representative a.i in South Sudan.

“We have also warned that there is only so much that humanitarian assistance can achieve in the absence of meaningful peace and security, both for relief workers and the crisis-affected people they serve,” said WFP Country Director Joyce Luma.

UN, international organizations condemn attacks on civilians in parts

of Central African Republic

19 February 2017 – Voicing deep concern over the security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR), in particular in the Ouaka and Haute-Kotto prefectures, the United Nations together with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union (AU), the Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) and the European Union (EU) have commended the acts of violence that have exasperated an already alarming humanitarian situation.

According to a joint statement issued by the five organizations, violence perpetrated by the *Front populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique* and its allies, as well as *Mouvement pour l'Unité et la Paix en Centrafrique* caused heavy civilian casualties as well as significant population displacement, adding to the humanitarian woes in the region.

Demanding that the belligerents cease the hostilities immediately, the organizations emphasized that “all attacks against the civilian population, UN and humanitarian personnel may be subject to judicial prosecution, in line with the [national] legislation and international law.”

They also expressed their deep appreciation for “robust action” undertaken by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR, popularly known by its French acronym – MINUSCA – to protect civilians and help put an end to violence in the areas threatened by the belligerents and encouraged the mission to continue its efforts.

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In the joint statement, the organizations also welcomed the measures put in place for the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court.

They also underlined that only dialogue, in strict adherence with the constitutional and democratic order, will allow the concerned Central African actors to find the appropriate and sustainable responses to their legitimate grievances.

“In this regard, they reiterate the importance of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation led by the AU, ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and supported by Angola, the Republic of Congo and Chad,” noted the joint statement.

In addition, expressing their commitment to work together for the success of the Initiative, in support of the efforts of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra aimed at sustainably promoting reconciliation and inclusive governance in line with the conclusions of the Bangui Forum, the five partner organizations underscored that those armed groups that engage in new violent acts run the risk of excluding themselves from the African Initiative and expose themselves to additional international sanctions.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

At Munich Security Conference, UN chief Guterres highlights need for ‘a surge in diplomacy for peace’

18 February 2017 – Highlighting the complex and interlinked challenges confronting the global community that also compound the suffering of the most vulnerable, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for a boost in preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts, as well as for a strategy to address root causes of such conflicts in the world.

“There are things that are obvious: the alignment of the sustainable and inclusive development with the sustaining peace agenda,” said Mr. Guterres in his remarks to the Munich Security Conference, noting also their importance in preventing conflicts.

He also drew attention to the need to address the fragility of states and to support states, institutions and civil societies to become stronger and more resilient to diminish the tendency for states to be involved in conflict situations.

Noting the centrality of climate change and strain on resources in increasing the probability of conflicts and dramatic humanitarian crises, Secretary-General Guterres called on the international community to rally behind the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as to focus attention on population growth, especially in Africa.

“And for me, a key condition to address it is the combination of education and the empowerment of women and girls,” he said, noting: “This is probably the best way to be able to address the problems of excessive population growth that is impacting dramatically in some parts of the world.”

Further in his remarks, the UN chief noted the need for strengthened global multilateralism and the need for responsive reform to enhance confidence and capacity of multilateral institutions to better respond to global challenges and to meet the expectations of the world’s peoples.

In the case of the UN, the Secretary-General noted that the organization has been engaged in reforms to its peace and security strategy, operational setup

and architecture; its development system; and its management.

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Also in his address, Mr. Guterres noted that while the world prepares for responding to the crises it faces today, it is equally important to consider that the problems of peace and security in the future will have new dimensions for which we need to be prepared.

Noting the already existing challenges related to cyberspace and lack of instruments to address those, Mr. Guterres highlighted that developing a capacity of analysis, discussion, and to be able to think about models of governance for new areas of scientific and technological development, such as artificial and intelligence genetic engineering will be crucial in the near future.

"I believe that when people will meet herein 10 or 20 years' time in Munich, we will probably be discussing other things in relation to the priorities of today, but I hope we don't get to those discussions too late and [having done] too little," he said.

Iraq: UN aid agencies preparing for 'all scenarios' as western Mosul military operations set to begin

18 February 2017 – With military operations to retake western Mosul starting, United Nations humanitarian agencies in Iraq are rushing to prepare for the humanitarian impact of the fighting amid grave concerns that tens of thousands of families are at extreme risks.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the country, food and fuel supplies are dwindling, markets and shops have closed, running water is scarce and electricity in many neighborhoods is either intermittent or cut off.

"The situation is distressing. People, right now, are in trouble. We are hearing reports of parents struggling to feed their children and to heat their homes," said Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

According to estimates, between 750,000 and 800,000 civilians reside in the western section of Mosul.

However, few if any commercial supplies have reached the city in the past three months since the main road to Syria was cut-off.

Sources in the city also reported that nearly half of all food shops have closed and bakeries throughout the area have run out of fuel and many can no longer afford to purchase costly flour.

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Prices of fuel such as kerosene and cooking gas have skyrocketed and many of the most destitute families are burning wood, furniture, plastic or garbage for cooking and heating.

Families, children face critical shortage of drinking water, do not have enough to eat

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) there are critical shortages of food and safe drinking water.

Three out of five people now depend on untreated waterUNICEF Representative in Iraq Peter Hawkins

“Three out of five people now depend on untreated water from wells for cooking and drinking as water systems and treatment plants have been damaged by fighting or run out of chlorine,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

“Food prices in western Mosul are almost double than in eastern Mosul,” added Sally Haydock, the WFP Representative in the country, noting that many families do not have enough to eat.

Preparing to aid as many as 400,000 fleeing civilians

According to OCHA, UN and humanitarian partners are rushing to prepare for the humanitarian impact of the military operation.

“We don’t know what will happen during the military campaign but we have to be ready for all scenarios. Tens of thousands of people may flee or be forced to leave the city. Hundreds of thousands of civilians might be trapped – maybe for weeks, maybe for months,“ said Ms. Grande.

Emergency sites are being constructed south of the city and stocks of life-saving supplies are being pre-positioned for the 250,000-400,000 civilians who may flee.

“Protecting civilians is the highest priority in a situation like this – nothing is more important [...] The battle hasn’t started but already there is a humanitarian crisis,“ the UN humanitarian official added.