

Amid unprecedented needs, UN and partners launch \$1.6 billion aid appeal for South Sudan

13 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan due to a combination of conflict, economic decline and climatic shocks, the United Nations together with relief partners have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 5.8 million people across the country.

“We are facing unprecedented needs, in an unprecedented number of locations, and these needs will increase during the upcoming lean season,” said Eugene Owusu, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in a news release issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Humanitarian organizations estimate that some 7.5 million people across South Sudan are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including some 3.4 million people who had been forced to flee their homes since conflict began in December 2013.

While disturbing accounts of violence and atrocities, including sexual violence, continue to be reported, food insecurity and malnutrition have skyrocketed. Furthermore, the risk of famine looms over thousands of people in conflict-affected communities and food deficit areas.

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“With needs rising rapidly, we have rigorously prioritized the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan to target those who most urgently require assistance and protection,” added Mr. Owusu.

Under the Plan, 137 aid organizations, including 62 non-governmental organizations (an increase of 55 per cent over the number in 2016) aim to respond to the most urgent life-threatening needs of the target population. The objectives include:

- Saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those most in need of assistance and protection
- Protecting the rights and upholding the dignity of the most vulnerable
- Supporting at-risk communities to sustain their capacity to cope with significant threats

Swift action during the dry season essential

According to OCHA, delivering supplies in the country depends, in a large

part, on good weather conditions.

Humanitarian organizations strive to maximize the window of opportunity provided by the dry season to deliver supplies by road. Once rain set in – usually in May – most roads become impassable and supplies must be delivered by air, multiplying the cost of the humanitarian operation, which is one of the largest and most complex in the world.

“It is imperative that this appeal is funded early, and funded fully, so that the aid workers deployed across South Sudan can respond robustly and rapidly,” said Mr. Owusu.

“I appeal to the international community, which has given so generously to this young country, to support us now. If we fail to act swiftly, lives may be lost.”

[UN and partners launch multimillion dollar appeal for DR Congo](#)

13 February 2017 – The United Nations and humanitarian partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have appealed for nearly \$750 million to aid 6.7 million people this year.

“It is vital that the world does not forget the urgent and massive humanitarian needs,” said Rein Paulsen, Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the country.

The 2017 appeal is for \$748 million, as part of a new three-year action plan “to respond to the humanitarian needs of millions of civilians affected by one of the world’s most acute and protracted crises,” according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The three-year strategy aligns with development plans created by national authorities, the United Nations system, the World Bank and other bilateral partners.

The appeal also targets the needs of more than 2.1 million displaced people, including half-a-million of children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition, according to OCHA. Hundreds of thousands of people are also facing measles, cholera and other diseases.

“While over 60 per cent of the humanitarian needs are located in the eastern part of the country, western and central provinces suffer from generalized poverty that calls for solutions that go beyond humanitarian assistance,” OCHA said.

In addition to the needs of the Congolese, violence in the country is also affecting refugees from South Sudan living the north-eastern part of the country.

PM extends greetings on World Radio Day

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1,000 drones perform spectacular formations in Guangzhou



Drones get ready to take off for a performance in Guangzhou, capital city of south China's Guangdong Province, on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017. [Photo: ycwb.com]

A record number of 1,000 Chinese drones performed stunning formations in Guangzhou of south China's Guangdong Province on Saturday night to celebrate the Lantern Festival, the last day of the Chinese New Year holiday.

According to local news portal ycwb.com, the drones formed six different formations during a 15-minute performance against the night sky near Guangzhou's landmark Canton Tower. The performance was held concurrently with a concert.

All the drones were made by Chinese producer EHang and controlled by only one computer.

China's medical robots take on foreign rivals



A doctor uses Phecda, a surgical robot developed by Tinavi, to do orthopedic surgery in Beijing Jishuitan Hospital in 2016. [Provided to China DAily]

Surgeon Tian Wei came across one of the most challenging orthopedic surgeries in his 30-year career in 2015. A 43-year-old patient had complained of progressive numbness in the limbs on his right side for 14 months, caused by a deformity in his upper cervical vertebrae.

The patient was in dire need of surgery to implant a screw to help support his neck bone, but the operation was risky. Any minor mistake could lead to paralysis or a life-threatening hemorrhage. Many hospitals were unwilling to treat him.

But Tian, who also is president of Beijing Jishuitan Hospital, decided to do the surgery – with a little help from another “surgeon”.

The operation was completed in an hour with help from Phecda, a surgery robot with a 3-D high-definition visual system that can “see” the internal orthopedic structure and a “hand” that can guide medical tools to the proper location within 0.8 millimeters.

Developed by Beijing Tinavi Medical Technology Co with the help of Jishuitan Hospital, Phecda is part of the broad effort by Chinese companies to outcompete foreign rivals just as the country’s use of medical robots is set to take off, thanks in part to an aging population.

Medical robots are highlighted in the country’s Made in China 2025 strategy, which was designed to promote high-end manufacturing.

“That was the world’s first robot-assisted surgery on upper cervical vertebrae,” Tian said, describing the 2015 clinical trial. “Phecda is more precise than foreign products and its cost is lower.”

Phecda, which is the third-generation surgery robot developed by Tinavi, is ready to be commercialized this year after obtaining approval from the China Food and Drug Administration in July.

Chinese medical robot-makers like Tinavi are working hard to outshine foreign companies in both price and quality as they benefit from ample demand, strong policy support and manufacturing prowess, company executives and experts said.

By 2050, more than 400 million Chinese will be over 60 years old, accounting for more than 30 percent of the population, up from about 11 percent now, official data show.

“The growing number of senior citizens will offer a sizable quantity of clinical cases, and enterprises can leverage a huge database to accelerate research and development,” said Zhang Songgen, chairman of Tinavi.

In April, China unveiled its plan to sell more than 30 billion yuan (\$4.4 billion) worth of domestic service robots by 2020. Medical robots are an important part of the ambitious goal, Zhang said.