

Statement by the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria, Peter Lundberg

Press Conference, 12 August 2017

As all those present are aware, yesterday was a day of tumultuous events that generated significant media coverage from you all and therefore today is extremely helpful – for us and also for you I hope - to provide some clarity as there has been a great deal of confusion and misinformation.

I am not here to elaborate on the incident, as His Excellency has already done this. I and the Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Edward Kallon, have been working with the Government of Nigeria, our hosts, to resolve the issue.

I am very pleased to report that our relationship of collaboration and trust is intact, and at this stage we are focused on the work ahead to ensure that the millions of vulnerable people in the northeast are supported with life-saving humanitarian aid.

Responding to the humanitarian needs of millions of people in the northeast remains our priority and our focus, each and every day. The fact remains that the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's north-east and the Lake Chad region – now in its eighth year - is one of the most severe in the world today, with 8.5m people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2017 in the worst-affected states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, and 6.9m targeted for humanitarian assistance in these three states.

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of a conflict that has resulted in widespread forced displacement – today more than 1.8 million are internally displaced – and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, severe protection concerns and a food and nutrition crisis of massive proportions. Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by this.

And what is the UN doing about all of these problems?

Again I reiterate we are here in support of the Government of Nigeria. The United Nations agencies and over 60 non-governmental organisations – about half Nigerian and half international - are working to provide much needed food, shelter, safe water, latrines and medicine, to name just a few items, to the millions of people in need across the northeast - people who have fled conflict, people who have lost everything, people who have endured tremendous loss, pain and suffering and yet stand tall. I am constantly struck, whenever I travel to remote locations in the northeast or visit IDPs here in Maiduguri, or Damaturu, by the families displaying incredible strength and resourcefulness.

For the United Nations, the food security situation is one of the major issues. This means that hundreds and thousands of people do not have enough to eat, as a result of the lean season – which is currently at its peak, and compounded by insecurity which means people cannot farm like they used to before. The UN and its partners are currently providing food to about 1.3 million people every month, among whom 1.2 million have also received seeds, tools and fertilizers for this year's planting season.

Millions of people are suffering with health problems, and the living conditions of many increase the risk of some diseases like meningitis and cholera. This year so far we have treated nearly 2 million people for health problems, and rehabilitated over 60 health facilities that were destroyed in the conflict.

Malnutrition, education, safe drinking water, access to latrines – all of these remain major priorities for us, and in support of the Government we are all working to improve the situation for the displaced and also for those returning to their homes. Saving lives remains of course our number one priority but we have a moral imperative to help the thousands who are returning home to stand on their own feet and get their lives going again.

Our work – like that of everyone working in the area – is often impeded or restricted as a result of insecurity and over 80 per cent of Borno State is considered high or very high risk for humanitarians, (often) constraining access to desperately vulnerable communities. The ongoing rainy season is also creating challenges to humanitarian access in some areas.

Our work is funded by international donors. In 2017 we, the United Nations and our partners, appealed for over \$1 billion. As of today this is only 45 per cent funded, which means we have received \$470m. This is for funds received against the appeal – what we call the Humanitarian Response Plan. So we need more money to be able to achieve what we set out to do at the start of the year.

The international community has been very generous, and we hope that this will continue. The vulnerable people of Nigeria need humanitarian assistance and we, the United Nations, are committed to providing this in support of the government. As a result, we call upon all parties to allow the safe, timely and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to all areas so that we can reach those who most need our help.

Thank you.

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