

For immediate release

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocates US \$ 3.5 million to help 40,000 people in the Lac region in Chad

(N'djamena, 19 May 2017): The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, has approved the allocation of US \$ 3.5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for rapid response in the Lake Chad region. These funds will help provide vital humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of 40,000 people, largely former internally displaced people returning to their villages of origin, in island areas and villages south of Bol canton.

The crisis in the Lake Chad basin affects nearly 345,000 people in the Lac region, including 127,000 displaced people. These displacements have negatively impacted the livelihoods of host populations and the already limited access to essential basic services. The closure of the border with Nigeria from the start of the crisis in 2015 and the continued implementation of emergency measures have affected the livelihoods of populations already facing poor regional development, thus aggravating their vulnerability. For several months, return dynamics of displaced populations have been observed south of Bol canton in the Lac region. These areas were previously considered empty following evacuations due to military operations. Following a needs assessment in the area, a response plan was developed by the humanitarian community to respond specifically to the needs of the 40,000 people in these return areas. Implementing this plan requires \$ 16.6 million, of which \$ 495,400 is already mobilized, and \$ 3.5 million is now funded by CERF, leaving a funding gap of \$ 12.6 million.

According to humanitarian partners, it is essential to support these voluntary returns in order to facilitate the returnees' reintegration and livelihoods reconstruction in dignified and safe conditions. The situation is worrisome because of the total lack of infrastructure in these return areas while the lean season and the beginning of the rainy season could further exacerbate vulnerabilities.

Faced with this situation, Florent Méhaule, Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Chad, said: "With these CERF funds, our priority is to provide emergency assistance to returnees whose subsistence activities - fisheries, agriculture and livestock - have been affected by insecurity and displacement. Beyond returnees, and more than two years after the beginning of the crisis in the Lac region, it is also important to promote self-sufficiency and strengthen local capacities and basic services through our interventions, in order to counter the deterioration of humanitarian indicators in areas of return and displacement".

The four projects approved by CERF will be implemented in the next six months by UN agencies in partnership with NGOs and state services and will help improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable. Emergency multi-sectoral assistance will enhance food security and livelihoods, access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and hygiene services, access to emergency healthcare, and the care of victims of protection incidents. The recipient agencies, working jointly with operational partners, are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program (WFP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

According to Stephen Tull, Humanitarian Coordinator in Chad, "the Lac Region is an area affected by multiple vulnerabilities that require an integrated humanitarian-development approach. It is essential that other donors get involved, especially development donors, because this CERF funding will cover only a fraction of the vast needs

in the region. In the context of these return dynamics, it is key to encourage projects that strengthen the resilience of populations, to propose durable solutions and to promote local development in return areas. Beyond this CERF funding, it is also imperative to consolidate the response in displacement areas for those who do not yet wish to return. Lastly, it should not be overlooked that humanitarian needs go well beyond the Lac region: in Chad, 4.7 million people, namely one in three persons, are in need of humanitarian assistance."

In 2017, humanitarian partners in Chad need US \$ 121 million to save and improve the lives of the 233,000 most vulnerable people in the Lac region. So far, less than three per cent of these funds have been received. In 2016, only half of the funding needs were covered.

Note to editors: Created by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, CERF is a humanitarian funding mechanism managed by OCHA, which enables a faster and more effective response to vital needs of people affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, or under-funded crises.

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