UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine Osnat Lubrani expresses concern about the operation of crossing points of the ‘contact line’

(Kyiv, 26 June 2020). After three months of closure, three of the five official crossing points at the ‘contact line’ in eastern Ukraine have partially resumed operations. The gradual re-opening will allow Ukrainians to reach essential services, care for family members, and reunite with their loved ones. Earlier this month, I called for a phased approach to the re-opening and safe operation of the entry/exit crossing points that is fully coordinated and clearly communicated to the population. Unfortunately, the operation of the crossing points has not gone as smoothly as hoped, and fast action is required to make the crossing of the ‘contact line’ safer and more predictable for those who seek to cross.

We are aware of dozens of people who became trapped at a crossing point in Donetska oblast, forced to spend nights in a tent in dire conditions between the checkpoints. Among these people were children, elderly, and other vulnerable persons who were desperate to cross the ‘contact line’ to meet their acute needs. While I am relieved that it appears an ad hoc solution for these people has been identified, I again urge all relevant actors to implement coordinated, realistic, and clearly communicated measures to ensure the safe crossing of the ‘contact line’. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, precautionary measures aligned with World Health Organization guidance need to be implemented at all operational crossing points.

The United Nations and humanitarian actors stand with the people of Ukraine who have been impacted by years of conflict in the east, the COVID-19 health crisis across the country, and also those who have been affected by the recent flooding in the west. Only by acting in solidarity can we ensure people’s safety and the protection of their basic rights.

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