

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller – Remarks at Member States Briefing on the Humanitarian Situation in Burkina Faso

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As delivered

Madame la Ministre, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us for this briefing on Burkina Faso. I am delighted to be on this panel with H.E. Ms. Helene Marie Laurence Ilboudo Marchal, Minister of Women, National Solidarity, Family and Humanitarian Action. We are also joined by Ms. Metsi Makhetha, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burkina Faso, who joins us via VTC. I also wish to welcome the Delegation of Burkina Faso, particularly the Permanent Secretary of CONASUR.

This past week, I was in Burkina Faso and I want to express my deep appreciation to the Government of Burkina Faso, to Metsi Makhetha and her team, to the humanitarian and development organizations, and to the people of Burkina Faso for their warm welcome and support during my visit.

An unprecedented humanitarian emergency is unfolding in Burkina Faso where armed violence and insecurity have sparked massive displacement of populations and heightened adversity among some of the country's most vulnerable communities.

My mission focused on two issues. First, to raise awareness of the worsening humanitarian situation in the Sahel, North, Centre-North and Eastern regions of Burkina Faso. And second, to discuss with partners on how to scale up the response amid growing insecurity.

Since January 2018, at least 364 people were killed and 186 injured in more than 300 security incidents recorded in these regions. The violence has displaced more than 115,000 people, more than half of them in the first two months of this year.

While I was in Burkina Faso, I saw uprooted families in two sites for the internally displaced people in Foubé and Barsalogo in the Centre-North region. I met many mothers who had fled their homes in fear for their children's safety.

The families told me they needed food, water and education, but above all security, so that they could return to their areas of origin and resume their lives. About 670,000 people are at risk of food insecurity, and 130,000 children could become severely malnourished this year.

Some 1,200 schools were closed due to the attacks, which the Minister mentioned, depriving 169,000 children of school education, and about 120,000 people do not have access to medical care in the violence-affected regions.

In Foubé, I met Fatoumata, a 13-year-old who, along with 120 girls and boys, is being taught by only one teacher in a tent. Like other teenagers, Fatoumata hopes to get an education, which will help build her future and bring stability to her life.

To discuss ways to scale up response, I met with officials from the Government, UN agencies and NGOs in Ouagadougou and in the Centre-North region.

In my discussions with the President, Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, he underlined three actions needed for an effective response to help the displaced people. The first action would be to secure the affected areas; second, to strengthen the response to humanitarian needs; and third, to support the return of the displaced people. In addition, I had the privilege to meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Christophe Joseph Marie Dabiré, together with five Ministers. Both President Kaboré and Prime Minister Dabiré stressed the need for international partners to accompany the Government in its efforts to respond to the humanitarian and development crisis in Burkina Faso.

International partners raised concerns that increasing violence, criminality and military operations have had an impact on access in conflict-affected areas in Burkina Faso. However, despite these significant challenges, I was impressed by the efforts of NGOs in maintaining access to most of the country. Humanitarians and the Government are making a major difference in people's lives, preventing an even deeper crisis from taking hold.

All our partners, donors and the Government highlighted the urgent need for a fast and efficient scale-up of the response. But they all emphasized that to do that would require mobilization of resources at national, regional and global levels for a focused effort.

Last month, the United Nations and the Government launched an Emergency Response Plan appealing for US\$100 million and targeting 900,000 affected people. This plan is the result of a coordinated and collaborative process, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, in close consultation with the authorities in Burkina Faso and the UN Country Team.

During my visit, I announced an allocation of \$4 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to help scale up urgent assistance in support for the emergency plan. I

want to take this opportunity to thank all the donors who contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund. This allocation will help 25,000 internally displaced persons, and 5,000 people in host communities in the Centre-North and Sahel regions, as well as provide services to 15,500 women and girls.

I urge donors to step up and generously fund the 2019 plan, so that we can urgently scale up life-saving activities.

Madame la Ministre, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The mounting crisis in Burkina Faso needs to be understood within the broader context of the Sahel. Burkina Faso is situated in the centre of this region, parts of which are experiencing growing insecurity, particularly north and central Mali, western Niger and the Lake Chad Basin.

A growing number of armed groups, operating in the cross-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, are fighting. These conflicts have led to increased intercommunity clashes and displaced more than 200,000 people, heightening their humanitarian needs.

We need sustainable peace in this region. During my mission, I drew attention to the need to view the response in Burkina Faso primarily from a “prevention scope”. This means ensuring that all the interventions help to prevent the situation in Burkina Faso from deteriorating and eroding any development gains made by the country.

Indeed, considering the insecurity in the country, additional efforts should be made to link the humanitarian and development nexus to the agenda of sustaining peace. We must make sure that reducing humanitarian need is part of a longer-term prevention vision.

Burkina Faso was one of the first countries to adopt the New Way of Working – which I refer to as “the way of working”. Burkina Faso has set an example for other countries on how coherence between the Government, humanitarian and development actors can be achieved and financed by donors.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe northern and eastern Burkina Faso can emerge from crisis and build a more peaceful and prosperous future. This requires urgent action from all of us. I look to you for your continued support to ensure that we do not neglect this crisis or Burkina Faso’s people and its future, which lies in the hands of the young such as Fatoumata.

Thank you very much.