

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND  
DEPUTY EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, URSULA MUELLER**

**Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Somalia**

*New York, 22 May 2019*

*As delivered*

Thank you, Mr. President.

I appreciate this opportunity to brief the Security Council today on the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

Mr. President, distinguished Council members,

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains among the most protracted crises in the world. Ongoing armed conflict and violence, as well as recurrent climatic shocks continue to drive humanitarian needs. Governance challenges and underdevelopment compound fragility and make it difficult for communities to develop robust coping mechanisms. The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan, launched in January, identified 4.2 million Somalis – one third of the population – in need of life-saving assistance and protection. This shows a decline in needs from 2017, when famine was averted, raising hope that resilience activities led by the Government and development partners could make further gains.

However, current humanitarian indicators across the country are showing a deterioration. I would like to highlight three key areas of concern. First on the humanitarian impact of the ongoing drought; second on the situation of internally displaced persons; and third on protection concerns.

On my first point, the humanitarian situation is rapidly deteriorating due to severe drought conditions that have spread from northern and central areas throughout the country. Two consecutive rainy seasons have failed, resulting in critical water shortages, widespread crop failure and diminished livestock conditions. At this point in the season, any rainfall that is received will be too little and too late to reverse the impact of the drought.

Since February, acute food insecurity has already increased by ten per cent. The situation is expected to worsen. By July, 5.4 million people – including 1 million children – will be uncertain of their next meal.

This projection was made on the forecast that Gu' rains would rebound in May and June. But the rains did not rebound, and without doubt, the number of people in need will continue to rise. Severe acute malnutrition rates among children are increasing rapidly, particularly among internally displaced persons. With limited access to clean water, there is a heightened risk of outbreaks of diseases.

We must act now to avert a major humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian partners stand ready to deliver aid to those most in need and are capable of rapidly scaling up response, as was proven during famine prevention efforts in 2017. But significant funding shortfalls are constraining response and leading to a reduction in assistance in critical areas, including health, nutrition, food security, and water, sanitation and hygiene. More needs to be done.

To address needs arising from the drought, a scale-up in key life-saving areas is needed. On 20 May, the Humanitarian Country Team launched a Drought Response Plan with a requirement of US\$710 million to respond to drought-induced needs between now and December. The majority of programming in the Drought Response Plan is already included within the annual Humanitarian Response Plan. The Humanitarian Response Plan is being re-prioritized and revised to account for the additional resources required to respond to the drought.

Donors have been contributing towards the Humanitarian Response Plan, which is today 20 per cent funded. And I want to take this opportunity to thank donors for your continued support.

In April, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Somalia Humanitarian Fund allocated almost US\$ 46 million. These funds are directed toward the delivery of aid and scaling up of activities in drought-impacted areas in northern Somalia, and toward the provision of life-saving assistance and protection in southern and central regions.

I believe I was invited to brief you today to draw attention to the elevated risk of a major humanitarian crisis unfolding on the horizon. The immediate scale up of humanitarian response is essential to mitigate the impact of the drought and to prevent further breaking up of communities that continue to be fragile from the drought in 2017. I encourage the international community to urgently increase support for life-saving drought response efforts and to protect gains made in 2018. It is my hope that immediate resources will be received to help us prevent a dramatic crisis from escalating.

The repetitive nature of climatic shocks is a stark reminder that Somalia is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. To address the drivers of crisis in Somalia, greater investment is needed to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian

action and development programming. We must focus our efforts on urgent life-saving response, but we cannot lose sight that development efforts are critical to reaching the goal of ultimately bringing an end to the negative impact of these cycles.

Mr. President,

Internal displacement is the second area of concern that I would like to address. There are more than 2.6 million internally displaced persons in Somalia, ranking fourth in internal displacement globally. Displacement continues to be driven by ongoing armed conflict, climate shocks, and the search for livelihood opportunities.

As the severity of humanitarian needs is projected to worsen over the coming months, there will be a higher risk of drought-induced displacement and worsening protection challenges, particularly among women and children, as people are forced to leave home in search of aid and livelihood opportunities.

To minimise drought-related displacement, where possible, systems and structures are already in place to enable a rapid scale-up of response nearer to the hardest hit regions. Conflict-induced displacement may also increase as a result of the drought, because there is greater potential for communal and clan conflicts to arise over competition for scarce resources.

Displaced communities are among the most vulnerable. They face multiple, acute needs and are exposed to higher protection risks. Family separations make displaced women and girls particularly vulnerable and exposed to sexual and gender-based violence.

Internally displaced persons are at increased risk of being evicted by force from settlement areas by landowners. In 2018, over 300,000 displaced people were forcibly evicted, which is a 36 per cent increase from the previous year. With the trends we see so far this year, we expect the evictions to continue. The forced evictions perpetuate cycles of displacement, and consistently undermine efforts toward self-reliance and resilience.

Mr. President,

In my third and final point, I would like to highlight that the humanitarian situation in Somalia is a protection crisis.

For years, Somali civilians have borne the brunt of ongoing armed conflict and violence, which has continued to drive humanitarian needs and perpetuate internal displacement. Civilians are exposed to targeted attacks, assassinations and indiscriminate attacks. Children continue to be killed and maimed in grave violations. Mr. President, in 2018, Somalia recorded the highest number of forced child recruitment globally.

There are increased protection risks in connection with the ongoing security reforms and implementation of the Transition Plan, including risks resulting from changes to AMISOM's strength and posture. Although the aim of the Transition Plan is the transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somali authorities, the success of the transition will depend on other important factors as well. It is essential that the Government of Somalia develop sufficient capacity to address the protection of civilians, to implement appropriate governance structures and mechanisms, and to strengthen civil authorities to ensure the delivery of basic services to communities.

Somalia continues to be a challenging operational environment for humanitarian organizations. Conflict, insecurity, bureaucratic constraints and limited logistic infrastructure hamper our ability to reach those in need. Targeted violence against entities with political, development and humanitarian mandates have to stop. Mr. President, so far this year, 18 violent incidents have impacted humanitarian organizations, resulting in three deaths, two injuries and seven abductions.

I encourage the Government of Somalia, with the support of international partners, to advance efforts that facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need, especially at this critical time.

Mr. President,

Responding to the worsening humanitarian situation with life-saving interventions and protection remains a priority. But, I must stress that the chronic vulnerabilities that underpin the crisis in Somalia cannot be addressed by the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Progress in state-building and security, as well as greater investments in development initiatives aimed at building resilience, are essential to ultimately lift Somalis out of need.

Thank you.