

Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Humanitarian Country Team expresses grave concern for spike in killings, population displacement and humanitarian need in Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Ituri, 13 August 2021- The Humanitarian Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, David McLachlan-Karr, led a mission to Ituri Province from 11-13 August 2021. The humanitarian mission comprised the country representatives of UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Women, FAO, UNFPA and OCHA, a senior official from WFP, and a representative of the International NGO Forum.

On arrival at Bunia, the mission was received by the acting governor and senior government officials for a briefing on the situation in the province. The Humanitarian Country Team urged the military authorities to continue to work with MONUSCO and other parties to ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law, guarantee the protection of civilians and social infrastructures and provide secure access for humanitarian actors to assist the victims of conflict. The mission was apprised of a sharp rise in displacement caused by the actions of illegal armed groups and associated community auto-defense militias, adding to an already existing caseload of IDPs. The total number of displaced in the province is estimated to now number 1.7 million people, including a disproportionately high number of women and children.

The humanitarian team undertook a mission to Komanda in Irumu Territory to inspect IDP camps. It was observed that many of the displaced had sought shelter and safety within local communities, thereby stretching social coping mechanisms to the limit. In particular, schools, religious sites and local medical services were being overwhelmed.

“Newly arrived populations, including of the indigenous pygmy community, have fled attacks with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and many have related horrific stories of targeted killings, rape and torture” said the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Priority sectoral needs were identified by the team as medical attention, food, shelter, water, sanitation services and the provision of household items.

At least 59 IDP camps and concentration sites have been registered by humanitarian agencies in the province and the number is likely to increase with renewed fighting. Humanitarian operations in the province are complicated by scarce resources, limited partnerships, difficult terrain and logistics, and insecurity. Attacks against humanitarian agencies have also been increasing, sometimes as a result of inter-communal and inter-ethnic tensions.

“Durable solutions must be found to allow displaced populations to return to their homes in peace as soon as possible; the creation of a multiplicity of IDP camps is not only undesirable and a vector for conflict with host communities, but is also untenable” said Mr. McLachlan-Karr. “The conditions for peace and building bridges across warring communities must be promoted in the province and

accompanied by platforms to promote dialogue, justice and the fight against impunity for crimes committed in the conflict. The UN and our partners stand ready to support with activities to facilitate community reconciliation and peace-building”.

At the conclusion of the visit, the HC announced an agreement to provide up to US\$ 7 million in emergency financing from the Humanitarian Fund to scale-up humanitarian action in the province and bordering areas in North Kivu, and to reinforce humanitarian teams on the ground. “The allocation is a start but is a drop in the bucket; we call on our donors and the government to increase support to the population, including for community resilience, as quickly as possible” concluded the Humanitarian Coordinator.

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