

Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region

24 February 2017

Chair's Outcome Statement

Germany, Nigeria, Norway and the United Nations today hosted the “Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region”, which brought together 24 countries, 20 international and regional organisations, and representatives of local and international civil society. At the Oslo Conference we heard the voices of people affected by the conflict, and participants committed to urgently strengthen the principled humanitarian response to the crisis in north-eastern Nigeria and other affected countries in the Lake Chad Region. We agreed to address medium- and long-term development needs and identify durable solutions for the affected people, to avoid escalating the crisis further. We agreed to consult on a wider range of preventive and stabilisation measures aiming to enable development. The Oslo Conference noted the substantive progress in the scale-up of the humanitarian response, and generated strong support for the UN-coordinated Humanitarian Response Plans and appeals for the respective countries. In total, pledges for financial support surpassed USD 672 million.

The Conference has achieved its objective – to draw political and public attention to the serious humanitarian crisis in the region. We also increased awareness of the complexity of the crisis and the urgent need for principled humanitarian assistance and medium- to long-term development solutions, including prevention and stabilisation efforts. To achieve the latter, the co-organizers and the affected countries in the region (Cameroon, Chad and Niger) have formed a Consultative Group on preventive action and stabilization measures for the region, and hope to be joined by others. We have demonstrated political and financial commitment to the crisis, contributing over USD 458 million for the humanitarian response in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region for 2017. This is a very good start, as we are only in February. Although much remains, pledges made will make great impact as they are timely, and allow for vital investments in the agricultural sector ahead of the planting season. We noted the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund, launched by the UN to support NGO participation in the immediate response. This is consistent with the “Grand Bargain” made at the World Humanitarian Summit.

The Conference welcomed multiyear pledges announced by several governments. This provides greater predictability, enables a more efficient response and demonstrates a commitment to a new and comprehensive approach that both addresses the immediate humanitarian needs and identifies durable solutions for those affected by the crisis.

In recent months, we have made progress in scaling up the response. Over 2.1 million people have been reached with food and at least 1.4 million farmers received support to resume their livelihoods. 300 000 children and nursing mothers have been treated for malnutrition. 4.4 million people have accessed primary health care, and close to 2.3 million people benefitted from safe water. More than 400 000 children affected by the crisis have received learning materials. But this is still not enough. Serious protection concerns remain, access to education is inadequate and the food security situation continues to be critical.

In addition to the urgent provision of lifesaving assistance to those in need, we must also address major factors leading to this crisis - most importantly poverty, high population pressure and environmental degradation. These need to be addressed through long-term and well-coordinated assistance, supporting the sustained efforts of the governments of the affected countries. Special attention needs to be directed to protection against gender based sexual violence, and to the leadership role of women in identifying long-term solutions. The needs of women and men, girls and boys respectively must be met with adequate response. Their voices must be heard and their rights respected and protected.

The Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 and the imperative of 'leaving no one behind' require that the most vulnerable, including those affected by crisis and forced displacement, are moved onto the path of development. Efforts by affected governments, the UN, international and national NGOs, multilateral development banks and donors to increase people's self-reliance while reducing their needs and vulnerabilities, must be further supported.

The civil society conference on 23 February gave a voice to the people of the region, drew attention to the situation and mobilized additional support. Civil society made an indispensable contribution to the Oslo Conference.

Central messages from the thematic sessions and side events

The Conference included thematic sessions and side events, each of which provided input to the deliberations.

The thematic session on food security identified the timely provision of food assistance to affected people as an urgent priority. Participants called upon humanitarian partners to scale up their response to reach the most vulnerable groups threatened by famine, including children with severe acute malnutrition. The session also underlined the importance of supporting the resumption of agriculture ahead of the forthcoming planting season. Special attention must be given to the needs of women, children and youth. They are especially vulnerable groups, but also important actors in the response and recovery phase.

The thematic session on protection and access underlined the need for upholding International Humanitarian Law and as such stressed the centrality of protection in the

humanitarian response, in particular with regard to ensuring the voluntariness of return in safety and dignity. We committed to apply a comprehensive response to the protection and identification of durable solutions for the affected people as agreed upon in the Abuja Action Statement.

The thematic session on education in emergencies underlined the essential role of education in promoting peace and development. It emphasized the critical role schools play in providing safe environments and psychosocial support in the midst of crisis. Participants agreed that accelerated education, safe schools and expanded services must be prioritised to ensure that all girls and boys can realize their right to quality education.

The side event on health response in emergencies highlighted the potential for joint action and interventions. It is vital to step up efforts to address the needs of women and children. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights must be at the heart of our shared development and humanitarian objectives. Both short- and long-term access to health services, family planning, as well as protection of health workers, are of crucial importance for recovery in the region.

The side event on response and recovery pointed out the need to move from providing assistance to reducing needs, risks and vulnerabilities, including a reduction in long-term displacement, in safety and dignity. Recommendations from the UNHCR-World Bank collaboration on forced displacement in the Lake Chad Region and the New Way of Working framework were highlighted as important factors to accelerate this change of focus.

Final consideration

We have to act now to address this crisis in a concerted manner. We all realise that a protracted situation of human suffering and extreme poverty in North-East Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, Chad and Niger will have far-reaching consequences, in and beyond the region. Now is the time to muster our action, our political engagement, and sustained assistance to end the suffering and pave the way for long-term development for the people of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.