



## Press Release

# With Central Sahel at ‘breaking point’, donors announce \$1.7 billion to scale up aid

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(Copenhagen, 20 October 2020): Donors today announced more than US\$1.7 billion to scale up life-saving humanitarian aid to millions of people in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, and to help stem what could otherwise become one of the world’s biggest humanitarian crises.

Violence has forced more than 1.5 million people in the Central Sahel region from their homes—a twentyfold increase in two years. Gender-based violence has spiked, millions of children are out of school, and basic health and social services are lacking. There are three times more acutely food insecure people today compared to one year ago.

Poverty and climate change are threatening people’s traditional way of life, and more than 13 million people need humanitarian assistance. This includes 7 million children caught in the surge of armed violence and the socioeconomic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of the crisis in Central Sahel, and their needs and rights must be prioritized.

"The Central Sahel region is at a breaking point," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. "We need to reverse this downward spiral with a renewed push for peace and reconciliation. We also need much more humanitarian aid. UN agencies and NGOs are on the ground to complement national humanitarian response efforts. With better funding, we can do much more."

Twenty-four Governments and institutional donors announced financial support at the virtual conference co-hosted by Denmark, Germany, the European Union and the United Nations.

Once released, the funds will help some 10 million people for the remainder of 2020 and through 2021 with nutrition and food, health services, water and sanitation, shelter, education and protection, and provide support to survivors of gender-based violence.

Policy commitments were also made at the conference, focusing on addressing this crisis in a manner that respects international humanitarian law and human rights, and addresses the root causes of the crisis. The three affected countries were represented by H.E. Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Burkina Faso; H.E. Mr. Zeïni Moulaye, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mali; and H.E. Ms. Aïchatou Boulama Kané, Minister for Planning, Niger. NGO representatives also addressed the conference.

Rasmus Prehn, Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, said: "Right now, more and more people in Central Sahel are caught in a vicious cycle of insecurity, displacement and lack of food. We must act and extend our solidarity to all those suffering, in particular women and children. More funding for sustained humanitarian support is essential. At the same time, we must focus much more on long-term solutions to the challenges that drive the crisis."



Heiko Maas, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Germany, said: “All indicators are dark red. Sixteen million children, women and men could be facing hunger. We all need to recommit to principled humanitarian action. And we must ensure that all parties to the conflict uphold their obligations under international law and protect humanitarian personnel.”

Janez Lenarčič, the EU’s Commissioner for Crisis Management, said: “The international community must act immediately in face of the dramatically worsening humanitarian situation in the Central Sahel region – together, we must do better, we must do more and we must act fast. The EU remains committed to these efforts, to help provide a prospect for a better life to the people caught up in the crises afflicting the region.”

Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator said: “There's enormous potential in the Central Sahel, but people and progress are held back by conflict, climate change, weak governance and gender inequality. We can help turn this around with more international support, which is better balanced between security, emergency relief and longer-term development. And investing in women and girls is the best thing we can do to move forward.”

[Pledge result table in separate document]

### Media contacts

Denmark:

- Thorleif Ravnbak, [thorab@um.dk](mailto:thorab@um.dk)

Germany:

- [presse@diplo.de](mailto:presse@diplo.de), (+49 30 5000 2056)

EU, Humanitarian aid and Crisis Management:

- [Balazs UJVARI](mailto:Balazs.UJVARI@europa.eu) (+32 2 296 53 22)
- [Daniel PUGLISI](mailto:Daniel.PUGLISI@europa.eu) (+32 2 296 91 40)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

- Vanessa Huguenin, Geneva, [huguenin@un.org](mailto:huguenin@un.org)
- Zoe Paxton, New York, [zoe.paxton@un.org](mailto:zoe.paxton@un.org)