

**Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock,  
Remarks at Ministerial Roundtable on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region in the  
Margins of the General Assembly**

*UN Headquarters, New York, 21 September 2017, 08:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.*

*As Delivered*

Excellencies, Ministers, Distinguished Guests,

Welcome to this high-level event on the humanitarian situation in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region.

Last week, immediately on starting this job, I visited Diffa in Niger and Borno in Nigeria: two areas that have been severely impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency.

I went there to meet people affected by the crisis, and to bring their voices to you here today.



This picture I'm going to show you is Fatima. She has a great smile. Fatima is nine years old. She fled with her family to Gwoza in Nigeria's Borno State, four years ago, only to be trapped there when Boko Haram overran the town in 2015. Fatima told me that she wants to go home, but conditions in the rural area she comes from are still too dangerous.



Aichatou fled from Nigeria to a small village in Niger's Diffa region. She is grateful for the help she receives, but she remains terrified that armed groups in the area will attack her. She spends many of her nights hiding in the bush with her children, where they risk disease and snakebites but feel safer there than in the IDP camp where they worry about in order to avoid attacks and abduction.



Ibrahim is a leader in Wege Camp in Borno. He said most people there had fled with only the clothes on their backs after Boko Haram destroyed their homes and killed their livestock. Many of the shelters in the camp have leaky roofs, and there is a desperate need for food, schools and other assistance.



And then there was Boulama, he is the Chief of Banda village in Bosso district in Niger. He told me one thing that still rings in my ears: “The international community can help us.”

Boulama is right. We can and must help the millions of people displaced by the crisis as well as those hosting the displaced across the beleaguered Lake Chad region.

As we move forward in this collective mission, we must answer three questions:

Firstly, how do Governments in the region and the international community sustain the ongoing humanitarian response? Together, we have managed to avert famine, but we cannot pause or slow down. We must continue to step up so that the millions of people who are still just a step away from starvation are not allowed to perish.

Secondly, how do we protect the vulnerable, including displaced people, from the dangers they face? Nobody should have to live in fear of the horrors that continue to take place, including sexual slavery, gender-based violence, abduction, the atrocity of human bombs, and other cruel acts of violence.



Third, how do we work together towards durable solutions, so that Fatima, Aichatou, Ibrahim, Boulama and millions of people just like them can return home and rebuild their lives in peace? Only peace and development will provide the long-term solutions to this crisis.

I am confident we can find answers to these questions.

Thank you, to the Governments of the region, to the host communities, to the donors, and to the thousands of brave aid workers, for your efforts and your generosity so far. But the job is not yet done.

I now turn to my co-host, Commissioner, Christos Syliianides for his remarks.