

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and  
Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock**

*Opening remarks at the High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region*

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*As delivered*

I was in Oslo last year to the first effort we made, really, internationally, to bring the conversation on the region together with the international community to tackle all these underlying causes. The Oslo meeting was a big success, thank you again for that.

It is already clear to me that we have an opportunity, and a probability I think, building on that success in Oslo, here in Berlin. Thank you very much to all the co-hosts for the work that has put us in that position.

I find myself now in a position that I am always in when I am asked to speak after my friend Achim [Steiner]. Because he has said on behalf of the United Nations really all the important things that needs to be said in a characteristically eloquent and persuasive way. One of the things that I really enjoy about my job is the ability to work with the development system in the UN and beyond to move towards solutions, as well as to reduce peoples' immediate suffering. That is what we are focused on in the approach Achim and I bring to this meeting.

I don't want to repeat what Achim has said, I just want to complement it by making four points:

Firstly, the humanitarian situation is still bad, but it is better. It is better because of the steps the governments of the region have taken to improve access and because you, the international community, have financed the humanitarian agencies to reach 6 million people and reduce their suffering over the last year. A year ago, we were all worrying about a real prospect of a famine in northeast Nigeria - we have averted it.

Secondly though, there is still a big humanitarian crisis. The humanitarian knows these crises are not over despite the progress we have made. There is more than 10 million people across the four countries who still today, every day, need lifesaving assistance and it is an uphill struggle, still, to reach some of the most inaccessible areas because of the behaviour of the Boko Haram insurgents. We need to keep our eyes focused on the people we are not yet able to reach. We need your continued support for that. The appeal we had on the humanitarian response plan this year has been generously financed but not to the degree where any of us can be comfortable that we can meet the needs of the people we can reach, still less of those we are still trying to reach. And we are asking you

today to be generous again for those people, not least so we avoid losing the progress we've made the last year or so.

Thirdly, at the heart of this crisis, it is a crisis of protection, and like Minister [Heiko] Maas, I think it is really important that we keep in our minds the people who are suffering in this crises. I thought the video did a terrific job in allowing Hawa and Halima and people like them the opportunity to tell their story. We will do the best job in responding to the needs if we listen to those people and what they are saying: they are talking about insecurity and abductions, killings and the forced use of children as human bombs, sexual and gender-based violence, all these things continuing at an alarming rate. We need to address this as a protection crisis if we are going to be really effective and dealing with the problems that those people are telling us are their biggest problems.

Last point is to build again on what Achim has said: we know that although the humanitarian response is essential, it is not going to be the way in which we provide lasting solutions to this crisis. We have to overcome the perpetual cycle of urgent needs and lifesaving responses and address the underlying cause, and that does mean scaling up longer-term resilience and development assistance and concurrently promoting stabilization. And one of the things I think we are going to see as a success from Berlin, is a greater focus on these longer term issues, especially involving some of the development players. It is great that we have the World Bank and other international financial institutions in Berlin today, because if we can make more progress with peace building, good governance, the creation of jobs and education opportunities - and the respect of human rights - we work indeed with the underlying issues and this is what we need to do.

Achim and I will be going ourselves to this region, together, a few weeks from now and we hope that we will be able to take with us the success of Berlin both in terms of stronger actions to deal with the emergency and humanitarian life-saving issues, but also crucially to get into that longer-terms set of solution.

Thank you.