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Story

War in Ukraine

Tarik Jašarević, for the World Health Organization (WHO), connecting from Lviv in Ukraine, said that the previous night Dr. Tedros had addressed the Security Council session on the situation in Ukraine. “Peace was the most life-saving medicine right now,” stressed Dr. Tedros in his [remarks](#). USD 57 million were now needed to reach six million people in need both in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Dr. Tedros had also pleaded with the Security Council that other health emergencies in the world, such as Yemen and Syria, ought not be forgotten.

Dr. Jarno Habicht, WHO representative in Ukraine, stated that as of today, 44 attacks on health had been recorded, which had led to 12 deaths and dozens of injuries. The situation was not improving. Up to 100 metric tons had been made available for Ukraine; at least one third was on its way to different health care warehouses and facilities, including hard-to-reach areas. Discussions were held with the Ukrainian Ministry of Health to identify where the needs were the highest. Dr. Habicht further said that the continuity of care was a matter of concern, given that more than ten percent of Ukrainians were currently on the move. Non-communicable diseases should not be forgotten, including high-blood pressure and diabetes; those needs were increasing. People living with HIV/AIDS also needed to have their access to antiretroviral medicines secured. Dr. Habicht noted that the provision of primary health care was also affected by the ongoing hostilities. Many adults and children needed continuous cancer care and dialysis. Finally, Dr. Habicht stressed that emergency medical teams from a number of countries were serving in difficult circumstances,

in coordination with the WHO, the regional health authorities and other humanitarian actors on the ground, such as the Red Cross.

Responding to questions, Mr. Habicht said that over the past month there had been no convoys going from government to non-government-controlled areas, across the contact line, in eastern Ukraine. The warehouse in Lviv was still functional and the WHO convoys in the country were still moving, but the risks were being reassessed in the aftermath of the attacks on the Lviv airport.

Jakob Kern, the World Food Programme (WFP) Emergency Coordinator for Ukraine, connecting from Krakow in Poland, stated that the WFP was deeply concerned for families affected by the rapidly evolving humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The ongoing conflict had not only forced millions of people to flee their homes and brought many more to the brink of hunger, but it was also threatening food security globally, especially in hunger hotspots. The consequences of this conflict were triggering a wave of collateral hunger across the globe.

Ukraine's food supply chain was falling apart; trucks and trains were being destroyed, airports bombed, many bridges had fallen, supermarkets emptied, and warehouses drained. WFP had prepositioned bulk food, wheat flour for bakeries and food rations near the encircled cities for distribution by partners and city administration. Inside Ukraine, WFP's job was to replace broken commercial food supply chains. Given the complexity of the situation on the ground and the security challenges, this was a mammoth task that took time. Particular concern was expressed about Mariupol, which was besieged, and the food reserves in the city were rapidly dwindling. Mr. Kern informed that USD 590 million was needed for the WFP's operations in Ukraine; only ten percent of it had been funded thus far.

Mr. Kern stressed that, with global food prices at an all-time high, the WFP was also concerned about the impact of the Ukraine crisis on food security globally, especially hunger hotspots.

Mr. Kern explained, responding to questions, that the WFP was not replacing the entire global supply chain, but was adjusting to the current situation and building up its own supply chain within Ukraine. Ukraine was a major food producer country, which was why the WFP had not been present there in recent years. The speed at which the current crisis had evolved surprised everybody, including the WFP, and the food prices were being affected by the more complicated supply routes and overall amount of food available.

Matthew Saltmarsh, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), connecting from Rzeszów in Poland, stated that, with more than 3.2 million refugees forced to flee Ukraine over the past three weeks, and millions internally displaced within the country, UNHCR was warning that humanitarian needs were increasing exponentially. In addition to those who had had to flee, around 13 million people had been affected in the areas hardest hit by the war within Ukraine and needed humanitarian and protection assistance.

Mr. Saltmarsh emphasized that the humanitarian situations in cities such as Mariupol and Sumy were extremely dire, with residents facing critical and potentially fatal shortages of food, water, and medicines. UNHCR was closely tracking negotiations for safe passage and already had humanitarian cargo pre-positioned. UNHCR was ready to send critical supplies into Sumy as soon as conditions allowed.

Full briefing note can be read [here](#).

Mr. Saltmarsh, replying to numerous questions, said that Lviv used to be among the calmer parts of the country. If there was to be an escalation around and in the city, there could be a further exodus of people from Lviv towards Poland. A renewed appeal was made to provide a safe passage for civilians out of the besieged cities. Mr. Saltmarsh confirmed that the numbers of daily entries into Poland had been declining in recent days, perhaps because western Ukraine had been considered relatively safe, and many people had been recuperating there and deciding whether to cross the border or not. UNHCR was ready for an increase in arrivals if that were to happen. Inside the country, there were at least two million IDPs, but the number

was considered to be much higher.

Mr. Saltmarsh said that the Polish authorities made sure that all individuals collecting and driving refugees away from the border areas had to be properly registered, all with the view of eliminating chances of abuse and human trafficking. Refugees were also being instructed to go only with accredited organizations. At least 300,000 Ukrainians were known to have moved to Western Europe. Some Ukrainian refugees were crossing back into Ukraine to support their loved ones. How many Ukrainians would eventually become refugees depended on how long the conflict would last.

Paul Dillon, for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), added that there was a concern whenever there were mass movements like the one currently underway. IOM's hotlines had received thousands of calls related to trafficking. IOM had issued a [statement](#) on this topic. The data the IOM published was finalized at 09:30 am and included figures for third-country nationals; 162,000 third-country nationals among refugees had been registered so far.

Shabia Mantoo, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), said that [UNHCR figures](#) were updated at noon daily, and right now the figure of Ukrainian refugees stood at 3,270,662. There were 184,563 Ukrainian refugees in Russia as of today. Regarding Ukrainian nationals trying to enter the United States from Mexico, Ms. Mantoo said that they needed to have their asylum requests assessed. Making family reunification possible was of great importance, stressed Ms. Mantoo.

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), reminded that within Ukraine, USD 1.1 billion were needed to meet the escalating humanitarian needs of more than six million people affected and displaced by military operations over the next three months. As of 17 March, the appeal was 39 percent funded.

She also informed that today 3 pm Geneva time, there would be a virtual briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and neighboring countries, to be chaired by Martin Griffiths, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (at [UNTV](#)).

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in a response to a question, said that OCHA had deployed to Moscow some time ago a team of civil-military coordination experts, to liaise with the Ministry of Defense with the purpose of establishing and applying a humanitarian notification system to secure safe move of civilians and humanitarian supplies in Ukraine. The two sides of the conflict needed to agree with each other how such safe passages could be established. Similar teams had been dispatched in different contexts, including Yemen, Afghanistan, and Syria. Humanitarian deconfliction and so-called "windows of silence" were closely interlinked, explained Mr. Laerke. Such pauses needed clear agreements by parties with unambiguous understandings of what exactly would take place during those periods. Communication lines between commanders on the ground was also necessary.

USD 1.2 billion needed to address Africa's largest refugee crisis

Matthew Saltmarsh, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), connecting from Rzeszów in Poland, informed that the UNHCR, together with 102 humanitarian and development partners, was appealing for USD 1.2 billion to deliver much-needed humanitarian assistance and protection to 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees and local communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda.

After nearly a decade of conflict and despite efforts toward implementing the peace agreement, South Sudan continues to grapple with sporadic violence, chronic food insecurity and the devastating impact of major flooding. The COVID-19 pandemic has also strained people's resources, significantly reducing their ability to sustainably meet their needs. Asylum countries were facing similar challenges from the climate crisis and the pandemic but had continued to keep their doors open for refugees. Funding was urgently needed to help these host countries to provide food, shelter, and access to essential services such as education and health

care.

Full press release is available [here](#).

International Day of Forests and report “Forest products in the global bioeconomy”

Ewald Rametsteiner, Deputy Director, Forestry Division, at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), connecting from Rome in Italy, said that the International Day of Forests was celebrated on 21 March. This year, the Day was being held under the theme ‘Forests and sustainable production and consumption’. For the day, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is launching a new report, *Forest products in the global bioeconomy*, which highlighted how switching from fossil-based products to wood-based products could help combat climate change and achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Around 74 percent of all consumption was currently based on non-renewable natural resources, but there was a growing number of fields where, thanks to science and innovation, wood-based products could offer a greener alternative. Mr. Rametsteiner reminded that wood was renewable and stores carbon for its lifetime, helping to keep carbon locked away from the atmosphere. If buildings were made from wood, we could create cities that would store carbon, taking a step towards carbon neutrality. Wood-based products were also increasingly being used to make textiles, cosmetics, biochemicals, bioplastics and medicines. While forests covered 31 percent of the Earth’s land area (over 4 billion hectares), at a global level they were continuing to shrink, due largely to agricultural expansion.

Long lasting HIV prevention innovations in South Africa and Brazil

Hervé Verhoosel, for Unitaid, announced large-scale implementation in South Africa and Brazil of the latest innovation in HIV prevention. A new long-lasting injection that lasted eight weeks would provide users with an alternative to daily oral pills (oral PrEP). The expanded prevention options were expected to improve coverage for those at greatest risk of HIV infection.

Despite the high protection oral PrEP could provide, uptake had been slow. UN targets to increase PrEP coverage and reduce new HIV infections by 2020 had been both missed by two-thirds. In Brazil, the new programmes funded by Unitaid aimed to reach two groups with the highest rates of HIV prevalence: an estimated 30 percent of transgender people and 18 percent of men who had sex with men were living with HIV. In South Africa, adolescent girls and young women, who would be the target of the Unitaid-funded efforts were infected at a disproportionately high rate. In sub-Saharan Africa, six in seven new HIV infections in adolescents occurred among girls, and young women were twice as likely to be living with HIV as their male peers.

Long-acting PrEP could have a game-changing impact, improving choice and making HIV prevention a more viable option for more people, stressed Mr. Verhoosel. The new products significantly expanded the choices afforded to users, empowering people to take control of their health and select the method that was best suited to their preferences and lifestyle. While oral PrEP cost about USD 50 per year in low and middle-income countries, the price of the long-lasting injection in those countries was still not known, said Mr. Verhoosel responding to questions.

Announcements

Margaret Harris, for the World Health Organization (WHO), informed that today at 2 pm, there would be social media live discussion on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and humanitarian crises, such as Ukraine, on mental health with: Fahmy Hanna, Expert in mental health in emergencies, WHO HQ; Brandon Gray, Expert in mental health in emergencies, WHO HQ; and Selma Sevkli, Expert in mental health in emergencies, WHO Regional Office for Europe. The conversation can be followed on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#). Ms. Harris stressed that the pandemic was regrettably far from over, and there were still over 60,000 officially recorded deaths per week. WHO recommended that everyone take preventive measures in line with the epidemiological situation in their particular regions.

Ms. Harris also informed that public health situation analysis on refugee-hosting countries was regularly updated at this [page](#).

Adriano Timossi, for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ahead of the French Language Day, said that every year FAO published over 1,000 publications in French. FAO invited all to subscribe to its monthly newsletter of publications in French ([here](#)) and to visit the French version of FAO's [website](#).

Andrej Mahevi?, for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said that the approval session for the Working Group 3 report, looking into mitigation of climate change, would start on 21 March at 10 am; it would be livestreamed. The session was scheduled to run until 1 April. A press conference was planned for 9 April at 10 am Geneva time; registration was now open. Embargoed materials would become available once the report was gavelled down.

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), informed that on Sunday, 20 March at 4:30 pm, there would be a hybrid press conference by the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, on the occasion of the seventh session of the small body of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. Geir O. Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria, would speak to the media.

On 21 March at 2:30 pm, there would be a hybrid press conference by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in DPRK, Tomás Ojea Quintana.

The World Health Organization's briefing on tuberculosis would be held on 21 March at 3:30 pm (time to be confirmed).

Finally, on 23 March at 10:30 am, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) would publish its Trade and Development Report: Update on the Global Economy. Speakers would be Rebeca Grynspan, UNCTAD Secretary-General, and Richard Kozul-Wright, Director, UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies.

Ms. Vellucci also said that the Human Rights Council would hear this afternoon from the Independent Commission on the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Human Rights Committee would meet in public this afternoon, at 3 pm, to review follow-up reports on concluding observations to State Parties and on views (individual complaints).

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was continuing this afternoon, at 3 pm, its review of the report of Mexico.

The Conference on Disarmament would hold its next public plenary meeting on 22 March, at 10 am, in room XVII, under the presidency of Ambassador Juan Antonio Quintanilla Román of Cuba.