



Bi-Weekly Press Briefing 26 April 2022

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Story

Ukraine

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), recalled that UN Secretary-General António Guterres was in Moscow for a working meeting and lunch with Foreign Minister Lavrov and would also be meeting with President Putin. Mr. Guterres would then travel to Ukraine, where he was expected to hold a working session with Foreign Minister Kuleba and meet with President Zelenskyy and on 28 April.

Bhanu Bhatnagar, for the World Health Organization (WHO), speaking from Rivne Oblast near the border with Belarus, said that a technical college had been repurposed to provide services, including immunizations, to internally displaced persons (IDPs). WHO was supporting the Ministry of Health in rolling out routine and catch-up immunizations for diseases including measles, polio, tetanus and coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Health needs did not stop in times of war, which was why it was important to maintain immunization activities beyond World Immunization Week. As the past two years of pandemic had shown, leaving anyone behind meant leaving everyone behind.

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that the worsening situation in Ukraine had prompted a revision of the Humanitarian Flash Appeal. Over US\$ 2.25 billion were now required for needs inside Ukraine, more than double the amount requested when the appeal had been launched on 1 March. The appeal had also been extended from the original three months to six months.

Furthermore, the estimated number of people in need of humanitarian aid inside the country had risen from 12 million to 15.7 million. The revised appeal aimed to help 8.7 million of the worst affected across the country and covered support ranging from cash assistance, food security, health and shelter to water, sanitation and hygiene. So far, US\$ 980 million in donor support – or 44 per cent of the revised appeal – had enabled the United Nations and partners to reach 3.4 million people inside Ukraine.

Shabia Mantoo, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), said that in response to the growing Ukrainian refugee crisis, UNHCR and humanitarian partners were appealing for increased financial support to help refugees and the neighbouring countries generously hosting them. Through the updated Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine situation, UNHCR was seeking US\$ 1.85 billion to support a projected 8.3 million refugees in neighbouring countries. So far, the war had uprooted more than 12.7 million people, of whom more than 5 million had fled as refugees and 7.7 million remained displaced inside the country. Almost 13 million more people were also estimated to be stranded in affected areas or unable to leave due to security risks.

Since the onset of the war, countries in the region had continued to keep their borders open and to welcome refugees. The remarkable mobilization of national authorities, host communities, grassroots organizations and tens of thousands of volunteers across neighbouring countries and beyond showed what could be achieved with a whole-of-society approach.

The Regional Refugee Response Plan focused on key sectors, including protection, food security, health, education, basic needs, water, sanitation, hygiene, livelihoods, resilience, energy, environment, and logistics, and on the promotion of social and economic opportunities. Transitional cash assistance, which had already benefited tens of thousands of refugees in neighbouring countries, was a key priority. The Plan aimed to ensure that all refugees fleeing Ukraine, including third-country nationals, had access to safety and international protection.

The full briefing note is available [here](#).

Replying to journalists, Mr. Bhatnagar, for WHO, said that as of 25 April, there had been a total of 164 attacks on health care, in which 73 people had been killed and 52 injured. The state of the health system in many parts of the country's east, including Mariupol, was unknown. Prior to the war, Ukraine had doubled measles vaccination coverage in four years, but had still fallen short of the 95 per cent coverage recommended to maintain herd immunity. In addition, the roll-out of the polio vaccination in response to an outbreak just before the war had been disrupted: only 44 per cent of targeted children had been reached. Though COVID-19 vaccine coverage was only 40 per cent, so far the conflict had not triggered a massive resurgence, thanks in part to the mobile vaccination clinics set up by the Ministry of Health.

In response to questions, Ms. Mantoo, for UNHCR, said that the figure of 8.3 million refugees was a planning figure based on population movements and possible scenarios depending on the dynamics of the conflict. The Regional Refugee Response Plan ran until the end of 2022. While a detailed breakdown of the origin of the refugees was not available because the data was compiled by host country authorities, refugees were coming from all parts of the country. Nearly 1.7 million people had entered Ukraine since 28 February, but those were unlikely to be sustainable returns. Although other conflicts, such as those in Syria, Venezuela and Afghanistan, had generated large refugee flows, the scale and speed of the Ukrainian refugee crisis was unprecedented in recent times. UNHCR was still in the emergency phase of the crisis and was not yet involved in resettlement efforts. Most of the refugees were expected to remain in their first country of refuge. According to figures provided by the Russian authorities, some 105,000 Ukrainians had fled to the Russian Federation.

Also in response to questions, Paul Dillon, for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said that the figure of 7.7 million IDPs represented 17 per cent of the pre-war population and was an increase of 1.2 million since the third week of March. In addition to cash-based interventions, which had so far reached 15,000 people of the targeted 40,000, IOM and partners had launched the first phase of a programme to

rehabilitate student dormitories and hotels that had been damaged in order to provide safe accommodation to 1 million IDPs. The immediate focus was on the most vulnerable, namely, single-parent households, persons with disabilities and their carers. A quarter of survey respondents had indicated that their top priority was basic food.

Ebola outbreak

In response to a question, Margaret Harris, for the World Health Organization (WHO), said that there had been a new outbreak of Ebola in north-western Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a few cases identified. Genomic sequencing had indicated that the outbreak was a new event. The authorities had swung into action, mobilizing experienced teams and setting up treatment centres and case tracing.

UNEP Report on Sand and Sustainability

Pascal Peduzzi, Director of GRID-Geneva with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said that UNEP had launched the 2022 report “Sand and Sustainability: 10 strategic recommendations to avoid a crisis”. The world used 50 billion tons of sand a year, enough to build a wall 27 metres wide and 27 metres high around the planet. Sand was critical to economic development and was needed to build vital infrastructure. However, extracting sand from places where it played an active role, such as rivers and coastal or marine ecosystems, could lead to erosion, the salination of aquifers, loss of protection against storm surges and impacts on biodiversity. Sand must be recognized as a strategic resource and, to achieve sustainable development, drastic changes had to be made to the way products, infrastructure and services were produced, built and consumed.

Announcements

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), on behalf of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, announced that United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Geir O. Pedersen would be briefing the Security Council at 9 p.m. A transcript would be circulated after the briefing.

On behalf of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Ms. Vellucci said that the theme for World Intellectual Property Day was “IP and Youth Innovating for a Better Future”. The first-ever youth video contest had attracted 142 entries from 63 countries, and 36,819 votes had been cast for the shortlist. The winning video had been submitted by a young woman from Syria who had created a device to help her sister overcome mobility issues stemming from a shrapnel injury. The second- and third-place prizes had gone to entries from Ghana and China. In addition, an event, called Innovating for Better Health: Supporting Young Innovators Through IP, was being held that day at WIPO. Panelists would include young medical innovators from Asia, Africa and elsewhere.

Ms. Vellucci also said that the Committee Against Torture would be reviewing the report of Iraq on the morning of 26 April and the afternoon of 27 April, as well as the reports of Montenegro (27 April a.m. and 28 April p.m.), Cuba (29 April a.m. (conclusion of the review begun on 21 April)), Kenya (4 May a.m. and 5 May p.m.) and Uruguay (5 May a.m. and 6 May p.m.).

The 106th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination would conclude on 29 April, with the Committee issuing its concluding observations on the reports of Cameroon, Luxembourg, Estonia and Kazakhstan.

On Tuesday, 26 April, at 2 p.m., the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) would hold a hybrid press conference to launch the 2022 Global Assessment Report (GAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction, entitled “Our World at Risk: Transforming Governance for a Resilient Future”.

Lastly, the UN Library & Archives Geneva had just released a French language publication entitled *Genève, berceau de la Société des Nations*, of which Palais-accredited journalists could retrieve a copy at the library.