



Bi-Weekly Press Briefing 02 August 2022

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Story

PRESS BRIEFING BY THE UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SERVICE

02 August 2022

Appeal for the Horn of Africa

Ibrahima Soce Fall, World Health Organization (WHO) Assistant Director General for Emergencies Response, joining the press briefing from Dakar, said that more than 80 million people in the greater Horn of Africa were facing food insecurity not seen in decades, with millions at risk of starvation. The combination of increased food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition were causing a complex and underrecognized health emergency, as health risks had increased yet access to health care was more restricted. Accordingly, WHO had intensified the response in seven affected countries – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. Its main focus was to ensure that severely malnourished children who were sick got the care they needed, that life-saving supplies of drugs and equipment were available, that outbreaks of diseases such as measles, cholera and meningitis were detected and respond to promptly and that gaps in access to health care were identified so that WHO could coordinate with partners to address them.

To that end, WHO was launching an appeal for USD 123.7 million to cover the response until December

2022. In the meantime, it had already released USD 16.5 million from the contingency fund for emergencies. WHO needed to act now to prevent people from dying from hunger and disease but could not do so alone.

Sophie Maes, WHO Incident Manager, Drought and food insecurity crisis in the greater Horn of Africa, joining the press briefing from Nairobi, said that a small unit in Nairobi was in place to ensure that the response in the seven countries was well supported and consistent.

Replying to questions from journalists, Dr. Fall said that, due to the war in Ukraine, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022 already exceeded projections. It was vital not to overfund some crises while underfunding others. The situation in the Horn of Africa was already the worst in 70 years, with several countries also reporting measles and cholera outbreaks. In Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia alone, 7 million children were facing acute malnutrition and, in Somalia, routine DTP3 and measles vaccination coverage was less than half the 95 per cent target. It was a vicious cycle between malnutrition and disease. Inaction was not option; otherwise, as many as 20 million people could die.

Regarding those same questions, Dr. Maes said that the situation was worsening. In the seven countries mentioned above, 37 to 50 million people were at IPC3 or above, meaning that they were depleting their resources in order to survive. Contrary to previous crises, food insecurity prevention, including blanket supplementary feeding, was underfunded due to competing crises. For example, the World Food Programme had had to cut rations and the number of beneficiaries. The health risks were compounded by four consecutive failed rainy seasons in some areas, with a fifth expected, and serious flooding in others, a lack of clean water, a heightened risk of gender-based violence and local conflict.

Monkeypox and Marburg virus

In response to questions, Ibrahima Soce Fall, World Health Organization (WHO) Assistant Director General for Emergencies Response, joining the press briefing from Dakar, said that the delay in updating the dashboard following the reports of deaths from monkeypox outside Africa was due to fact-checking and coordination with the relevant national authorities. Unfortunately, like with zika, it had taken the emergence of cases in the Global North for attention to be paid to monkeypox. Discrimination of that kind must stop, and research must be stepped up to help the most vulnerable countries and populations respond to the disease. The next monkeypox report would be released the following week.

Also replying to question, Dr Fall said that the two additional cases of Marburg virus detected in Ghana were the wife and child of the index case; regrettably, the child had passed away. Confirmation of other suspected cases remained pending.

Looming cuts to vital programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Dominique Hyde, United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Director of External Relations, said that her recent visit to Ituri Province in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo had shown that the Agency did not have the funds to do even the bare minimum. The contrast and inequities between the situations there and in Geneva were jarring, despite the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and climate shocks, which should have brought the world closer together.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted half a million refugees and more than 5.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The security situation was deteriorating on a daily basis, especially since a spike in violence caused by a number of armed groups had begun in April, leading to the death of more than 800 civilians and the displacement of nearly 21,000 others. Yet, the country effort was the fifth most underfunded in the world, having received only 19 per cent of the USD 225 million required for the Agency to carry out the work it was being requested to do. The underfunding meant that the Agency's ability to respond was not keeping pace with the growing needs. For example, 82 per cent of IDPs would not receive adequate shelter, placing them at greater risk of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. Only 16 per cent of South Sudanese refugee children would be able to attend primary school and none would

attend secondary school. While there were some positives, such as an agroforestry project that generated livelihoods and helped refugees integrate into their host communities, those too were at risk of being cut.

Regardless of where they were from, all refugees and displaced persons felt the same fear and had the same goal – safety. UNHCR urgently appealed the international community to act now.

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

Replying to a journalist, Ms. Hyde said that cuts would have to be made not only to shelter and education services, but also to water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, support for victims of sexual violence and accompaniment of voluntary returns. Social unrest tended to impede the Agency's access to refugee camps.

In response to a question on the shooting incident in Kasindi, North Kivu, involving members of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Alessandra Vellucci, for the [United Nations Information Service](#), recalled the [statement by the Secretary-General](#) in which he had welcomed the decision of his Special Representative to detain the MONUSCO personnel involved in the incident and immediately open an investigation, and had also noted that contact with the country of origin of the personnel concerned had been established with a view to urgently initiating judicial proceedings.

Announcements

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service, announced that on Wednesday, 3 August, at 6.15 p.m., United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan would launch the latest brief of the [Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance](#). The event would be webcast on [UN Web TV](#). As the world struggled to respond to the once-in-a-generation cost of living crisis, including extremely volatile energy prices, the brief would focus on ways to address the global energy crisis, providing specific policy recommendations to address skyrocketing prices and growing social discontent. UNCTAD, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, was leading the work of the Group.

Ms. Vellucci recalled that accredited journalists were invited to visit the GeniLac installations, an enormous environmentally friendly thermal heating network to which the Palais des Nations was now connected, on 4 August. To register, journalists could contact Rhéal LeBlanc or Solange Behoteguy Cortes.