



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: Somalia COVID-19 Preparedness OCHA - WFP

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Shotlist

1. Wide shot, outside UN Palais with broken chair
2. **SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):** *“Somalia has so far recorded seven confirmed cases according to WHO and no deaths and has closed schools, banned large gatherings and suspended international and domestic passenger flights”.*
3. Medium shot: UN Palais with closed entry
4. **SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):** *“Agencies are working with the Government to train health workers, establish isolation centres, deploy health personnel at key entry points, and ramp up hygiene responses. Health workers have been deployed to all 23 officially designated points of entry into Somalia, including the four international airports at Mogadishu, Garowe, Bossaso and Hargeisa.”*
5. Close up: UN Palais
6. **SOUNDBITE (EN) :** Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): *“Of concern is the fact that the number of health workers in parts of the country is two per 100,000 people compared to the global standard of 25 per 100,000 people. Less than 20 per cent of health facilities have the required equipment and supplies to manage epidemics”.*

7. Close up: UN Palais
8. **SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):** *“There are 2.6 million internally displaced people in Somalia who have limited or no access to health services, and 4.1 million food insecure people, and also people living in locust-infested or flood-prone areas”.*
9. Wide shot: Flag alley in front of UN Palais
10. **SOUNDBITE (EN): Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):** *“Covid 19 outbreak in Somalia can easily exacerbate the fragile food security situation in the country and it could also roll back our efforts to build resilience of families. Somalia is among the countries in the world with consistent indicator with poor nutrition and help and a Covid 19 outbreak would devastate the already fragile health care system.”*
11. Close up: UN Palais with flags
12. **SOUNDBITE (EN): Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):** *“WFP in April will provide 2 months ration of the equivalent of 2 months of cash-based transfer to over 1 million severely food insecure people across Somalia. We will continue giving nutrition assistance to over 500 000 pregnant and nursing mothers and young children to treat and prevent malnutrition”.*
13. Wide shot: UN Palais with flags
14. **SOUNDBITE (FR): Elisabeth Byrs, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):** *“Nous assistons 160 000 enfants dans 650 écoles à travers toute la Somalie, et bien sûr, étant donné que les écoles sont fermés, nous devons trouver des moyens de continuer à aider ces familles et à aider ces enfants par le biais de rations qui sont distribuées dans des conditions sanitaires les meilleures possible ».*

“We are assisting 160,000 children in 650 schools across Somalia, and of course, since the schools are closed, we need to find ways to continue helping these families and helping these children with rations that are distributed under the best possible sanitary conditions”.

15. Wide shot, UN entry, Pregny Gate

Story

With seven confirmed COVID-19 cases in Somalia, the United Nations and their humanitarian partners in the country are urgently reprioritizing activities to help prepare the response to the pandemic.

“Somalia has so far recorded seven confirmed cases - according to WHO - and no deaths, and has closed schools, banned large gatherings and suspended international and domestic passenger flights,” said Jens Laerke, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) at a virtual press conference today in Geneva.

Limiting the spread of the virus and preventing any new infections are the focus of the humanitarian response and efforts currently underway to enhance surveillance, rapid response and testing -- as well as diagnosis and tracing -- of all suspected cases.

“Agencies are working with the Government to train health workers, establish isolation centres, deploy health personnel at key entry points, and ramp up hygiene responses”, explained OCHA’s Jens Laerke. ***”Health workers have been deployed to all 23 officially designated points of entry into Somalia, including the four international airports at Mogadishu, Garowe, Bossaso and Hargeisa”***.

The risk of COVID-19 spreading in communities remains high because of crowded living conditions in urban centres, combined with inadequate hygiene practices.

“Of concern is the fact that the number of health workers in parts of the country is two per 100,000 people compared to the global standard of 25 per 100,000 people”, Laerke said. ***“Less than 20 per cent of health facilities have the required equipment and supplies to manage epidemics”***.

The OCHA spokesperson emphasized that while responding to COVID-19, it remains necessary to maintain critical humanitarian programs already ongoing and mitigate the impact of the virus on the livelihoods of vulnerable populations.

“There are 2.6 million internally displaced people in Somalia who have limited or no access to health services, and 4.1 million food insecure people, and also people living in locust-infested or flood-prone areas”, he said.

The UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) has scaled up its activities in Somalia due to the registered COVID-19 cases.

WFP spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs said today that ***“the COVID- 19 outbreak in Somalia can easily exacerbate the fragile food security situation in the country and it could also roll back our efforts to build resilience of families”***.

She added that ***“Somalia is among the countries in the world with consistent indicator with poor nutrition and help and a COVID-19 outbreak would devastate the already fragile health care system.”***

The WFP-managed United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has airlifted testing kits and masks donated by the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Group across the country. WFP needs to ensure its equipment and staff can rapidly reach the areas where mostly needed.

“WFP in April will provide 2 months ration of the equivalent of 2 months of cash-based transfer to over 1 million severely food insecure people across Somalia”, Byrs said. “We will continue giving nutrition assistance to over 500 000 pregnant and nursing mothers and young children to treat and prevent malnutrition”.

As usual routes for humanitarian and health workers are disrupted, WFP is expanding its logistic and planning services to support humanitarian aid. It has been setting up hubs in Shanghai (China), Liège (Belgium) and Atlanta (USA) to the already existing one in Dubai (UAE) to be able to bring supplies from where they are being manufactured directly to the countries in need.

WFP is also looking into ways how they can continue feeding children since school meals are not any longer possible with Somalia’s schools’ closures. ***“We are assisting 160,000 children in 650 schools across Somalia, and of course, since the schools are closed, we need to find ways to continue helping these families and helping these children with rations that are distributed under the best possible sanitary conditions”***, Byrs said.