UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: DR Congo Flooding UNHCR

21-04-2020 | Edited News

Shotlist

2. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR): “Initial reports suggest that more than 25 people have died because of the floods with more than 40 injured with fears of many others swept away by the floodwaters.”
3. Medium wide shot: main entrance to UN Geneva, Pregny Gate.
4. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR): “A health clinic in one of Uvira’s poorer neighbourhoods was destroyed and water and sanitation facilities in the overcrowded town are also damaged.”
6. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR): “We are rushing initial supplies of relief items to local warehouses in Uvira, including badly needed shelter materials to provide needed shelter as well as mats, kitchen sets, buckets and mosquito nets.”
7. Medium shot: main entrance to UN Geneva, Pregny Gate, panning out.
8. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR): “UNHCR is concerned over the large number of people left homeless by the flooding and exposed to sickness and disease. While no cases of COVID-19 have reached Uvira so far, the risk of cholera has heightened, as it is endemic to this area.”
Massive floods in DRC’s South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens

Aid is being rushed to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where deadly flooding has swept away people and homes and affected tens of thousands more, including many displaced by violence, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said on Tuesday.

Announcing assistance measures for South Kivu province in coordination with local partners, UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic said that torrential rainfall in Uvira town in recent days had led to heavy flooding of the Mulongwe river, impacting 80,000 people.

“Initial reports suggest more than 25 people have died because of the floods and more than 40 injured with fears of many others swept away by the floodwaters,” he said. “A health clinic in one of Uvira’s poorer neighbourhoods was destroyed and water and sanitation facilities in the overcrowded town were also damaged.”

The UNHCR official added: “We are rushing initial supplies of relief items from its local warehouse in Uvira, including badly needed tarpaulins to provide immediate shelter, as well as mats, kitchen sets, buckets and mosquito nets.”

The aid effort complements support provided by UN peacekeepers in the country, MONUSCO, who have provided initial support to Uvira – home to nearly one million people.

The blue helmets have prioritized rescuing survivors from destroyed houses, providing drinking water and assessing damage to roads and bridges, the UN Mission said in a statement.

“The victims lived in densely populated areas of the town and surrounding villages that are hosting displaced people, including refugees,” Mr Mahecic explained.

With more than 15,000 homes damaged, UNHCR has warned that reports of further devastation “are still coming in from this region, already the hardest hit by years of insecurity and conflict”.

The development comes as residents brace for the expected imminent arrival of the new coronavirus, which has so far claimed 25 lives in DRC.

In its latest update on Monday, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 18 new cases of COVID-19 in the capital, Kinshasa, bringing the total number of infections in the country to 350.

“UNHCR is concerned over the large number of people left homeless by the flooding and exposed to sickness and disease,” said Mr Mahecic. “While no cases of COVID-19 have reached Uvira so far, the risk of cholera has heightened, as it is endemic to the area.”