UNOG bi-weekly press briefing: Sudan at a tipping point because of the COVID-19 pandemic - OHCHR

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Shotlist

1. Medium shot of Jeremy Laurence
Location: Geneva

Subject: Sudan at a tipping point because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on Tuesday expressed serious concerns about the crisis facing Sudan’s transition in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, saying that untold suffering awaits unless donors act fast.

Briefing journalists Jeremy Laurence spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated:

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “We are seriously concerned about the crisis facing Sudan’s transition in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and believe untold suffering awaits unless donors act fast.”

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Barely a year after the removal from power of long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir, the promise of economic and social development, democracy, justice and peace is now being threatened by acute resource constraints on the Transitional Government of Sudan. These are being exacerbated by a combination of the practical effects of ongoing unilateral sanctions, the failure of international institutions to provide debt-relief, and a deficit of international support.”

In a letter to the UN Secretary-General on 8 April 2020, Sudan’s Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok acknowledged that COVID-19 poses profound challenges to his country’s health system, economy, and society as a whole, and he sought financial and other technical support to tackle the pandemic.

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “The tipping point could be COVID-19. Medical sources have warned there is a serious shortage of equipment and protective gear. As of 27 April, 275 people had been tested positive with COVID-19, 22 of whom have died.”

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Sudan’s health system is simply not equipped to handle an outbreak on the scale we have seen elsewhere in the world. There is only one way to prevent a humanitarian disaster, and that is for the donors to step up and extend a helping hand to Sudan.”

Of Sudan’s population of 43 million people, nearly 2 million remain internally displaced as a result of conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile state. Most face dire conditions, living in camps or settlements, unable to meet their basic needs. Sudan also hosts more than 1.1 million refugees and migrants from other countries.

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “These issues have been compounded by the effects of Sudan still being on the US list of States sponsoring terrorism. In addition, Sudan is currently among the countries not eligible to access the US$50-billion Trust Fund of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to assist countries to fight COVID-19. The UN Secretary-General has urged the international community to do all it can to support the country in its transition, and during this time of serious need.”

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):
“We believe Sudan will not be able to break out of this cycle of poverty and desperation unless it is freed from the impediments of sanctions which were imposed at the time of the previous government. This would enable Sudan to attract investment for its much-needed economic reforms, and to fully access funds available from the international financial institutions.”

SOUNDBITE (English)—Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Inequality, and economic and social grievances, were the main triggers of Sudan’s revolution last year. If these and other root causes are not addressed as a matter of priority, Sudan’s successful transition to achieving a durable peace remains a distant prospect.”