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Story

Northern Mozambique

Manuel Fontaine, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Director of Emergencies, speaking from Pembo, Mazambique, said that he had been in Cabo Delgado for the past three to four days, meeting with the authorities and people concerned. The area was facing a large and likely long-lasting humanitarian situation. A third of the population was displaced and putting a heavy burden on host localities. There was concern about the rising rate of malnutrition. As much as 3.8 per cent of the population had severe acute malnutrition. There was also concern about cholera, which was not yet under control and was spreading to other provinces. This was also a protection crisis, with family separation, kidnappings and gender-based violence. UNICEF had identified 220 children so far who had been separated from their parents. There were nonetheless incredible stories of resilience and solidarity, and the people did not want charity but, rather, help getting back on their feet. The appeal was insufficiently funded, and humanitarian agencies needed access.

Tomson Phiri, for the World Food Programme (WFP), said that WFP was appealing for USD 82 million to ramp up its response in northern Mozambique as conflict deepened and humanitarian needs grew. More than 950,000 in northern Mozambique were facing severe hunger. WFP planned to assist 750,000 internally displaced persons and vulnerable members of host communities, of which 50,000 people displaced from Palma. It was organizing emergency food distributions for families who had fled the violence in Palma and was providing high-energy biscuits and ready-to-eat immediate response rations comprised of rice, pulses,

vegetable oil, canned foods, biscuits and water enough to last two weeks. Thereafter, beneficiaries would be included in WFP's regular monthly unconditional food assistance programme.

In response to journalists, Mr. Fontaine said that, while there were certain places humanitarian workers could access, the security situation was not good enough to travel to Palma and was expected to remain intermittently difficult for several months to come. UNICEF's appeal for USD 52 million, including USD 30 million for Cabo Delgado, was only 37 per cent funded and was likely to be reassessed according to increasing needs. Longer-term, flexible funding was needed.

Also in response to journalists, Marixie Mercado, for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said that the International Organization for Migration had registered 16,500 people in the four districts of Cabo Delgado and thousands of people in another location. Lots of people remained on the move. UNICEF urgently needed USD 1 million for nutrition to keep a stock of ready-to-eat food for children, as well as funds to prevent another cholera outbreak. Although UNICEF had been working with the authorities since 2017 to build child protection systems, a recent government survey in Cabo Delgado had uncovered alarming rates of malnutrition, including 33,000 children in need of immediate life-saving specialized support.

The text of what was said by Mr. Fontaine on the situation of children in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, can be found [here](#)

Latest violence in Myanmar

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged States to take immediate, decisive and impactful measures to push Myanmar's military leadership into halting its campaign of repression and slaughter of its people. Ms. Bachelet warned that there were clear echoes of Syria in 2011, noting that the past ten years had shown just how horrific the consequences had been for millions of civilians. She feared that the situation in Myanmar was heading towards a full-blown conflict.

Security forces were reportedly preventing medical personnel from helping the wounded, as well as charging relatives a "fine" to claim the bodies of those who were killed. Some individuals were now resorting to the use of makeshift or primitive weapons in self-defence. Clashes between the military and ethnic armed groups had intensified in several locations in Kachin, Shan and Kayin states, where the military had employed airstrikes. As arrests continued, there were reports that 23 people had been sentenced to death following secret trials. The mass arrests had forced hundreds of people to go into hiding, and reports suggested that many journalists, civil society activists, celebrities and other public figures were being sought.

The High Commissioner called on the Myanmar military and neighbouring States to facilitate humanitarian access to populations in need. She urged neighbouring States to give temporary protection to people fleeing the violence and to refrain from returning people fleeing Myanmar. Statements of condemnation and limited targeted sanctions were clearly not enough, and States with influence should refer to the clear recommendations for impactful action contained in the [report](#) of the fact-finding mission on Myanmar.

The full text of the press release can be found [here](#).

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), recalled that the Secretary-General had reiterated his deep concern at the appalling reports of violence and killings and that the Special Envoy was currently meeting with key interlocutors in the region to promote a unified regional response to the crisis.

Replying to questions, Ms. Shamdasani said that the vast majority of the protests were peaceful, yet the military continued to crack down on them. While there were important differences between Syria and Myanmar, the escalation in violence in some areas did give rise to fears of all-out conflict. There had been some limited targeted sanctions and diplomatic pressure, including based on the recommendations in the fact-

finding mission's report, but they had not been enough, and the international community had to speak with one voice. ASEAN countries in particular had to step up diplomatic pressure. The responsibility to protect, which was being strongly invoked on the ground, was a holistic concept and was not limited to military intervention. OHCHR had had no communication with the military leadership in Myanmar since the coup.

Mounting asylum applications in Mexico

Aikaterini Kitidi, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), said that UNHCR was supporting Mexico to strengthen and expand its asylum procedures amid a sharp increase in the number of people seeking asylum in the country. In the first quarter of 2021, Mexico's Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) had registered 22,606 new asylum applications – a 31 per cent increase over the same quarter of 2020 and a 77 per cent increase over 2019. March 2021 had marked an all-time high for monthly asylum claims, with 9,076, and continued a pre-pandemic upward trend as the country expanded its capacity to process asylum claims and integrate refugees.

There had been a 3,000 per cent increase in the number of claims between 2014 and 2019. Most asylum applications stemmed from the violence in parts of Central America, including threats, forced recruitment, extortion, sexual violence and murder. UNHCR had been helping to boost COMAR's registration and case processing capacity since 2018, including through the secondment of contractors and support for a new processing centre in Chiapas, and was offering assistance to increase the capacity of more than 30 civil society shelters in the north and south alike. It had also scaled up its own programmes to assist asylum seekers while their claims were being considered and to help recognized refugees integrate into their host communities.

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

In response to journalists, Ms. Kitidi said that a backlog of claims remained but that some 73,400 claims had been adjudicated since 2013. The overall claim acceptance rate was 79 per cent. UNHCR had been urging Governments not to use the pandemic as a pretext to push migrants back. It was possible to protect public health and respect migration norms. Moreover, any person fleeing violence and persecution had to have access to humane asylum procedures. The new United States Administration had requested the UN Refugee Agency's help in terminating the Remain in Mexico programme. In that context, the registration of 17,248 claims had been completed between February and early April 2021.

West Darfur refugees in Chad

Babar Baloch, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), said that recent intercommunal clashes in El Geneina had forced 1,860 refugees, mostly women, children and the elderly, to cross into neighbouring Chad in the past week. The resurging violence had reportedly left 144 people dead and more than 230 injured. In the meantime, humanitarian agencies were trying to establish the exact number of newly displaced people within West Darfur, which was estimated to be in the thousands.

UNHCR teams from the nearby office in Farchana had rushed to receive refugees and reported dire conditions on the ground. Food and water were also urgently needed. UNHCR, with its government counterpart and humanitarian partners, was on the ground coordinating the humanitarian response. The priority was to relocate the refugees to a safer location, where essential assistance and health care could be provided and COVID-19 quarantine measures could be implemented.

Ouaddai province, where the new arrivals were crossing, already hosted 145,000 Darfurian refugees, and UNHCR expected the influx to continue if security was not quickly restored in Darfur.

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

Improving tobacco taxation policies

Jeremias N. Paul Jr., Coordinator, Tobacco Control Economics Unit, Department of the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases for the World Health Organization (WHO), said that a technical manual on tobacco taxation was being launched at what was a critical time in efforts to reduce health-care costs. Research had shown that taxing tobacco products was highly effective at reducing health-care costs and raising revenues and was the best intervention in order to save lives from noncommunicable diseases. The manual consisted of three parts on policy, tax administration and the political economy of reform. It was important to address health inequities and to encourage policymakers to be bold and not be influenced by the industry's scare tactics.

Replying to questions, Mr. Paul said that the Gambia had increased its revenues per shipment container more than tenfold by shifting its tax from weight to number of sticks. Countries at highest level of implementation would have a tax on the order of 75 per cent. The pandemic had seen a rise in tobacco use but also a significant number of people wishing to quit smoking.

Interim guidance on the sale of wild animals in traditional markets

In response to journalists, Fadela Chaib, for the World Health Organization (WHO), said that WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme had issued [interim guidance](#) on reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild mammals in traditional food markets around the world. It was a very important emergency precautionary measure given that 70 per cent of pathogens, including hitherto unknown pathogens, came from the animal world. Journalists had the opportunity to hold one-on-one interviews with the top WHO expert in that domain, Dr. Francesco Branca.

While WHO worked closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FAO had not been associated with that interim guidance, which had been developed according to the One Health approach that brought together human health, food safety, veterinary health, and wildlife and environmental agencies. WHO had issued considerable guidance since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this was just another in that series intended to help countries understand the importance of suspending the sale of live wild animals in traditional markets as an emergency measure that would also lessen the chances of virus spillover in the future.

Ethiopian migrants arrive home safely from Yemen

Angela Wells, for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said that 160 Ethiopian migrants were returning home safely from Yemen today with IOM's assistance, just one day after a perilous journey across the Gulf of Aden had claimed the lives of dozens of people. More than 32,000 migrants, predominantly from Ethiopia, remained stranded across Yemen, many of them in precarious situations, in detention or being held by smugglers. Since May 2020, over 11,000 migrants had returned to the Horn of Africa on dangerous boat journeys, aided by smugglers.

IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme provided a lifeline for those stranded in Yemen. IOM called on all Governments along the route to come together in support of its efforts to allow migrants safe and dignified opportunities to travel home. Since October 2020, IOM had registered over 6,000 migrants in Aden who needed support to safely return home. Today's flight to Addis Ababa was the second flight transporting an initial group of 1,100 Ethiopians who had been approved for VHR to Ethiopia. Thousands of other undocumented migrants are waiting for their nationality to be verified and for travel documents.

The full press release is available [here](#).

Announcements

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that the annual Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW) would begin on 19 April. It was the largest event

of its kind and brought together thousands of global professionals and experts working in humanitarian preparedness and response. This seventh edition, to last three weeks, would include over 250, mostly open sessions on a wide range of topics, and its virtual format provided a unique opportunity for broader, more inclusive participation from around the world.

Sarah Bel, for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said that, on 14 April, UNDP, together with the UN Secretary-General's Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance (GISD), was launching the SDG Investor Platform, an innovative tool to facilitate private sector investments that contributed to furthering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Platform provided private sector investors with access to country-level market intelligence, including investment opportunity maps in developing countries. A discussion with the biggest bank in Colombia and Calvert Investment would be held at 1.30 p.m. ([Register here](#))

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), said that the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, whose twentieth session opened on 12 April, would be reviewing the report of Switzerland on 13-15 April (at 4 p.m. today and 12.30 p.m. the two other days). It would also be reviewing the reports of Colombia (19-20 April at 4 p.m.) and Mongolia (21-23 April at noon).

She also said that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) would be holding a hybrid conference on 14 April, at 10 a.m., to present the State of the World Population 2021 "My body is my own: claiming the right to autonomy and self-determination". The speaker was Monica Ferro, Director, UNFPA Geneva Office