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9 November – One out of every four people in Central African Republic (CAR) is either displaced or living as a refugee in another country, a senior United Nations official said Thursday, urging the international community to provide more resources for a humanitarian plan that up to now is only partially funded.

“The aid community has very limited capacities and is struggling to provide basic services” outside of the main two cities, Najat Rochdi, told journalists in New York, saying the situation hinders on “life and death.”

Briefing on the latest humanitarian developments in CAR – where she is the Deputy Special Representative for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) and UN Resident Coordinator – Ms. Rochdi said the nearly \$500 million Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017 is only about 39 per cent funded.



The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has provided resources to address immediate needs in Central African Republic, but more is urgently needed to meet the scale of the challenge. Photo: MINUSCA/Nektarios Markogiannis

“This is not the time to give up on the people of CAR,” Ms. Rochdi said, highlighting “unprecedented levels of hunger” in a country where people are dependent on agriculture, and where women and children are particularly vulnerable.

In addition to food, one of the main concerns in CAR is the lack of medicines and access to healthcare. Some 60 per cent of the health structures are managed by international organizations and non-governmental organizations, according to today’s briefing.

“Underfunding hampers the ability to respond,” said Ms. Rochdi. “Failing to address the current needs will hamper all;”

affecting not only the country but the entire central African region.

She pleaded for the international community to “leave no stone unturned and leave no one behind.”

The security situation continued to deteriorate since May 2017, relapsing into violence that could lead to peak levels not seen since 2014, “some along ethnic lines”, said Ms. Rochdi.

She warned that the high number of people displaced from their homes renders reconciliation between the predominantly Muslim and the predominantly Catholic communities, as well as rebuilding services and homes destroyed in the fighting, extremely difficult.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited CAR last month, highlighting a crisis that he said had been largely forgotten by the international community. During the visit, he travelled to the PK5 area, a traditionally Muslim section of the capital Bangui, that had been the site of violence. He also met with local Christian leaders who spoke of reconciliation.

Peacekeepers from MINUSCA are working to protect people from communal tensions and stabilize areas where fighting had taken place.

Syrian conflict has now lasted longer than World War II – UN humanitarian envoy



A child carries a bag of firewood she bought for her family in besieged east Ghouta, Syria. Photo: UNICEF/AI Shami

9 November – While there had been a period of de-escalation in many areas of war-riven Syria – reducing human suffering to some extent – the fighting now seems to be returning to some of the “bleakest days” of the conflict, a senior United Nations official warned Thursday.

The situation is particularly concerning in eastern Ghouta, near the capital Damascus, where some 400,000 men, women and children are living in besieged towns and villages, and extremely high prices have put food and basic supplies beyond reach. There are fears that conditions could get much worse as winter closes in and temperatures could plummet to freezing.

“[They have been through] a seven-year war, longer than the second World War,” Jan Egeland, the Special Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, told journalists after a meeting of the Humanitarian

Task Force in Geneva.

“With little, if any, reserves, no heat in their houses and living amid ruin, [for them] it will be a horrific winter,” he warned.

Since September, eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of the capital, Damascus, has been completely cut off and the sole life-line for those still there are humanitarian convoys which, when successful in getting to the location, brings in food and medical supplies.

There are also growing numbers of acutely malnourished children, noted Mr. Egeland, calling on the parties to the conflict to allow medical evacuation urgently.

An estimated 400 patients – about three quarters of whom are women and children – need to be evacuated.

“We have confirmation that seven patients died because they were not evacuated and a list of 29 critical cases [...] including 18 children, among them young Hala, Khadiga, Mounir and Bassem [...] they all have a name, they all have a story, they all have to be evacuated now,” stressed the Senior Advisor.

Evacuation, is however, not the solution, he stressed, calling for the fighting and shelling to stop.

Further, the UN envoy informed that the situation is equally dire in Berm, a desolate area in south-east Syria, where as many as 55,000 civilians are in need of assistance but the last time relief was able to reach them was in June.

Also in his remarks, Mr. Egeland also said that a trilateral mechanism, initiated by Russia, and having the UN and Syria onboard, offers hope to help address problems.

“[The mechanism] had its first meetings. It still hasn’t produced the results needed, but it is our strong feeling that Russia wants us to get the access and wants to help us, so we are hopeful that this trilateral mechanism will yield results soon,” he added.

Bonn: At UN climate conference, Congo Basin youth spotlight their work protecting fragile forest ecosystem

9 November – Youth groups working in Africa’s Congo Basin countries are supporting economic progress in isolated rural communities while protecting the forest, and it is high time their voices were heard, a young woman at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP23) in Bonn, Germany, said Thursday.

“Young people in the Congo Basin have been doing things on the ground that often go ignored,” explained Marie Tamoifo, President of the Cameroon Green Youth Association (Association de la Jeunesse verte du Cameroun – AJVC) and Regional Coordinator of the Youth Network for sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa (Réseau des jeunes pour la gestion durable des écosystèmes forestiers d’Afrique centrale - REJEFAC) in an interview with *UN News*.



The Congo Basin harbours the world’s second largest tropical forest. It is also a key resource for stabilizing the global climate. Photo: FAO/Giulio Napolitano

REJEFAC brings together youth organizations from 10 Congo Basin countries – Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad).

Its aim is to promote the effective participation of young environmental actors in decision-making in the Congo Basin and “to contribute to the emergence in the region of a new type of leadership, more sensitive and open to the requirements of sustainable development.”

“[As for] actions on the ground, there are reforestation, awareness and education programmes for young people. It’s about strengthening the work that is done by governments,” said Ms. Tamoifo.

A solar panel programme in isolated communities

For several years, AJVC has been developing a programme in Cameroon for the electrification of isolated rural areas with solar panels. The programme started in 15 pilot communities in the east, in the center and in the far north of the country with the installation of solar panels in homes and schools. A contribution is made by the community itself, representing 25 to 30 per cent of the cost.

“In these 15 communities, we trained 85 young people in solar installation techniques but also in psycho-socio-organizational methodology,” explained Ms Tamoifo. “When we arrive in a community, we first hold a discussion with that community. We try to see with [them] what the glaring problems are.”

The youth participating in this programme are from the community. They are trained and they provide maintenance for the



solar panels that have already been installed. “For now, they are not really paid. They receive a small allowance,” added Ms. Tamoifo.

The association needs more financial support to maintain and expand this programme. “We have received more than 100 requests from villages and we cannot answer them given [our] modest means. And young people who are trained today also need to make a living to be able to continue this work,” she said.

A ‘climate caravan’ in Cameroon

Among other actions carried out by young people in the Congo Basin region, the REJEFAC Coordinator mentioned a tree planting initiative by volunteers in the Republic of Congo, and a programme focusing on handicrafts and conservation of natural resources in Rwanda.

Before coming to COP 23, the network organized a ‘climate caravan’ in Cameroon with the participation of young people from the ten countries of the Congo Basin to show what youth organizations are doing in terms of sustainable development and protection of the planet.

“We organized this caravan which was named ‘the COP at home,’” said the Coordinator of REJEFAC. Young people have been designated as climate ambassadors.

The ‘climate caravan’ travelled in the Douala region, coastal areas and went to Equatorial Guinea. “It showed how we could talk about the theoretical aspect and go on the ground to experience the realities of conservation parks and conflicts between humans and elephants,” concluded Ms. Tamoifo.

Yemen facing largest famine the world has seen for decades, warns UN aid chief



An internally displaced woman and her daughter look over the city of Sana'a, Yemen, from the roof of this dilapidated building they call their new home. Photo: Giles Clarke/UN OCHA

9 November – Yemen will be gripped by famine – one the likes of which the world has not seen in years – if the blockade on basic supplies into the country imposed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition is not lifted immediately, the top United Nations humanitarian official has warned.

“It will be the largest famine the world has seen for many decades,” Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, told the media late Wednesday, after briefing the Security Council.

Three years into a brutal conflict, Yemen depends on imports – amounting to up to 90 per cent of its daily needs – and millions in the country are being kept alive by humanitarian aid.

The fighting has also all but collapsed the country's health, and water and sanitation systems. Combined with the lack of food, millions of lives – including those of children – will be lost as their bodies will simply not have the strength to fight off disease.

“What kills people in famine is infections [...] because their bodies have consumed themselves, reducing totally the ability to fight off things which a healthy person can,” added Mr. Lowcock.

Underscoring that an immediate resumption of regular UN and relief organizations' air services to the capital, Sana'a, and Aden are critical to save lives, Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that a clear and immediate assurance is also urgently needed that those services will not be disrupted.

Furthermore, all vessels that have passed inspection by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism should not be

subjected to interference, delays to or blockages so that they can proceed to port as rapidly as possible, he added.

“This is really important because humanitarian access through the ports was inadequate even before the measures that were announced on 6 November,” said the senior UN official.

He also called for an immediate agreement to the repositioning of the World Food Programme (WFP) – the UN's emergency food relief agency – vessel in the waters off Aden, assurances that there will be no further disruption to the functions the vessel supports, as well as resumption of humanitarian and commercial access to all the seaports of Yemen.

At the stakeout, Mr. Lowcock, also underscored the Organization's condemnation of the missile attack on the Saudi capital, Riyadh, over the weekend, terming it an outrageous act.

The coalition imposed the restrictions following the attack, effectively closing air, sea and land access to the war-torn country.

Vaccines will run out in a month – humanitarian group

Meanwhile, the humanitarian community in Yemen also warned that the current stock of vaccines in the country will only last one month and if not replenished, outbreaks of communicable diseases are to be expected with fatal consequences, particularly for children under five and those already suffering from malnutrition.

“The humanitarian situation in Yemen is extremely fragile and any disruption in the pipeline of critical supplies such as food, fuel and medicines has the potential to bring millions of people closer to starvation and death,” said humanitarian organizations, including the UN, working in Yemen in a joint statement Thursday.

“The continued closure of borders will only bring additional hardship and deprivation with deadly consequences to an entire population suffering from a conflict that it is not of their own making,” they added.

Calling for the immediate opening of all air and seaports to ensure the entry of food, fuel and medicines into the country, the humanitarian community ask the Saudi-led Coalition to facilitate unhindered access of aid workers to people in need, in compliance with international law, by ensuring the resumption of all humanitarian flights.

“We reiterate that humanitarian aid is not the solution to Yemen’s humanitarian catastrophe. Only a peace process will halt the horrendous suffering of millions of innocent civilians,” they stressed.

Global food import bill rising despite robust output in 2017 – UN



Women process cassava for food preparation in Mbaiki, Central African Republic. \$6.2 million is urgently needed to prevent further worsening of the food security situation. Photo: FAO/Riccardo Gangale

9 November – The cost of importing food is rising in 2017, driven by increased international demand for most food stuffs, as well as higher freight charges, the United Nations agriculture agency said Thursday.

While food commodity prices have been generally stable, the cost of importing food is forecast to rise six per cent in 2017 to \$1.413 trillion, making it the second highest bill on record, according to the latest Food Outlook published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), expressing concern about the economic and social impact of this trend on poor countries.

The food import bills are set to increase by double-digit rates for least-developed countries (LDCs) and low-income food-deficit countries.

In the livestock and dairy sectors, the meat import bill is set to reach a record \$176 billion this year, up 22 per cent from 2016, and the FAO

Butter Price Index has risen 41 per cent so far in 2017.

The prices of a popular high-quality variety of wheat, 'US Hard Red Spring,' with enough protein content to make noodles and pasta, was 40 per cent higher in July 2017 than a year ago.

Aromatic rice varieties have risen eight times faster than the FAO All Rice Index, which is up four per cent on the year.

However, the higher import costs come at a time when inventories are robust, harvest forecasts are strong and food commodity markets remain well supplied.

Export of tropical fruits is promising for poverty relief and rural development as almost all production takes place in developing countries.

Export volumes of mango, pineapple, avocado and papayas are on course to achieve a total combined value of \$10 billion this year, according to the Food Outlook.

Currently 95 per cent of output is consumed locally, but rising incomes and changing consumer preferences will likely boost export volumes, especially if freer trade and better market access stimulates further technological gains in distribution.

In sub-Saharan Africa, production of cassava – one of the fastest-expanding staple crops at the global level and the third most important source of calories in the tropics, after rice and maize – may reach a record high this year of 156 million metric tonnes.

Victims can help shape effective counter-terrorism strategies, says senior UN official

9 November – Surviving victims can help shape effective strategies to counter terrorism, a senior United Nations counter-terrorism official said on Thursday, pledging to provide practical, pragmatic and realistic support to victims.

“Victims are powerful and credible messengers,” the Under-Secretary-General of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office, Vladimir Voronkov, at a roundtable discussion on victims’ resiliency in New York.

“And I promise that we will continue to make victims our priority,” he added.

To rectify a deficit of information on and for victims, the UN Victims of Terrorism Support Portal was created in June 2014. It has grown in strength, attracting more and more users to its site, he said.

The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism has also commissioned a series of documentaries on victims of terrorism. Created together with the Department of Public Information (DPI), the series provides a platform to give victims a voice on a variety of issues.

At Thursday’s event, the documentary *Surviving Terrorism: Victims’ Voices from Norway*, offered an intimate portrayal of two victims of the July 2011 mass killings by Anders Breivik.

The film showed the lives of Ms. Kamzy Gunaratnam and Mr. Viljar Hanssen as they recover from the attack and turn their experiences into something positive.

“Building a resilient society is a powerful tool in the fight against terrorism,” Mr. Voronkov said at the earlier discussion. “A society that is resilient is more likely to uphold human rights and the rule of law, and not give into the grievances of terrorists.”



Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism briefs the Security Council Meeting on Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas