



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

30 March, 2016

Excellency,

The world is witnessing levels of human suffering unseen in generations. More than 120 million women, men and children worldwide are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2016.

Human suffering from the impacts of armed conflicts and natural disasters has reached staggering levels. Nearly 60 million people, half of them children, have been forced from their homes due to conflict and violence. Between 2008 and 2014, a total of 184 million people were displaced by natural disasters, an average of 26.4 million each year.

Millions of refugees in Africa are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and regrettably they have not received the required attention and support from the international community. The severe effect of El Nino has resulted in drought conditions across eastern, southern and the Horn of Africa and putting further pressure on refugee hosting countries.

I will organize an informal meeting of the General Assembly titled "*Humanitarian Response in Africa: The Urgency to Act*" to be held in the Trusteeship Council on 8 April 2016 between 3-6 pm. The meeting will provide an opportunity to timely engage on and effectively assist with addressing the humanitarian needs in Africa, particularly the needs of refugees.

The informal meeting will consist of interventions from a number of panelists, followed by an interactive discussion between Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders. The concept note and draft programme of the meeting are attached.

Please note that there will be no list of speakers for the informal meeting and Member States are encouraged to engage in an interactive discussion with the panelists.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft', written in dark ink on a white background.

Mogens Lykketoft

To All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York

**Concept Note**  
**Informal Meeting of the General Assembly**  
**Humanitarian Response in Africa: The Urgency to Act**

The President of the General Assembly will convene an informal meeting of the General Assembly to consider the actions required to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees and investments required to support and build resilience in Africa.

**The Humanitarian Response in Africa**

Millions of people in Africa, are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, yet regrettably many have not received the required attention and support from the international community.

Displacement remains a major challenge across the Continent. There are almost 17 million refugees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern in sub-Saharan Africa, including an estimated 4.5 million refugees and at least 12 million internally displaced persons.

Converging challenges continue to compound human suffering. Many parts of Africa are also highly vulnerable to the increasing effects of climate change.

The severe effect of El Nino, for example, has resulted in drought conditions across eastern, southern and the Horn of Africa. As a consequence, an estimated 20 million people are food insecure in eastern Africa and nearly 16 million people will need food assistance in southern Africa.

Rising food insecurity and malnutrition remains a serious concern for millions in Africa. For instance, in the Sahel region, some 23.5 million people—one in six—are food insecure, and 7.7 million of these people require emergency food assistance. Also, acute malnutrition threatens the lives and development of 5.9 million children under five; each year, 600,000 of them die from malnutrition-related causes.

In 2015, 76 per cent of refugees in the region were impacted by ration cuts, and further reductions are planned for 2016. In many of the areas affected, food insecurity has caused refugees to adopt negative coping strategies. Food ration cuts and increasing food insecurity come on top of an often very fragile nutrition situation.

African States have been doing their best to cope with the challenges posed by conflict, poverty, hunger, diseases, climate change and natural hazards. Many of them have been hosting millions of refugees for years and decades. The African Union displayed political leadership by adopting the Kampala Convention which is the world's first continental instrument that legally binds governments to protect the rights and wellbeing of people forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence and disasters. The adoption of the African Union Common Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness is another important step in this context.

Failure by the international community to timely engage and effectively assist with addressing the humanitarian crises in Africa, particularly the needs of refugees, will constitute not only a moral failure but also a major setback for hard-won development gains in recent years.

This failure is reflected in massive funding shortfalls for life-saving assistance, despite efforts by humanitarian organizations to maximize efficiency and prioritize those in greatest need of help. So far, \$269 million has been contributed against the five largest 2016 Humanitarian Response Plans currently published for countries in Africa (South Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, and Chad) representing just over 7 per cent of the funds needed to carry out core humanitarian programming in these five countries alone.

The magnitude of the challenge requires the mobilization of resources from a broad range of sources- international and domestic, public and private- as well as the development of innovative financial solutions.

### **Objectives:**

The commitment of the international community to leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first represents a fundamental principle of Agenda 2030. The United Nations Secretary General's Report on the World Humanitarian Summit reaffirms the need to meet the needs of populations affected by conflict and natural disasters and ensure that the most vulnerable benefit from sustainable long-term development.

The international community should take steps to fulfil commitments in an integrated way made in the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement to increase support to vulnerable countries to reduce disaster risks, adapt to the negative consequences of climate change and prevent humanitarian crises. With targeted multi-year concerted action, we can ensure hundreds of millions of people, and those most susceptible to climate shocks and crisis will not be left behind.

In this context, the informal meeting of the General Assembly will provide an opportunity for Member States to exchange views on the following:

- Humanitarian situation in Africa and priority actions required to meet immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, including renewed political and financial support for life-saving humanitarian action.
- Supporting refugee receiving countries in Africa that host significant numbers of displaced persons
- Food security and strategic investments required to support and build resilience in Africa.
- Opportunities for scaling up investments to reduce and manage disaster risk and mitigate the impact of climate change and natural disasters
- Innovative financing mechanisms to improve the capacity of the international community to support humanitarian response and recovery efforts in natural disasters.

### **Overview of Global Humanitarian Situation**

The world is witnessing levels of human suffering unseen in generations. More than 120 million women, men and children worldwide are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2016.

Human suffering from the impacts of armed conflicts and natural disasters has reached staggering levels. Globally, nearly 60 million people have been forced from their homes due to conflict and violence. This includes 19,5 million refugees, 38,2 million internally displaced persons and 1,8 million asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup> Between 2008 and 2014, a total of 184 million people worldwide were displaced by natural disasters, an average of 26.4 million each year<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit

<sup>2</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2015/global-estimates-2015-people-displaced-by-disasters/>

Women and children are the primary victims of emergencies. Women and children worldwide are up to 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster. In 2014, children constituted 51 per cent of the refugee population, the highest percentage in more than a decade.<sup>3</sup>

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of natural disasters, primarily droughts, storms and floods. This year, El Nino severely affected millions of people in Africa, Asia and South America. Climate change has a disproportionately negative impact on food-insecure people, 80 percent of whom live in countries that are prone to natural disasters and face high levels of environmental degradation. Climate change will likely increase the risk of hunger and malnutrition by up to 20 percent by 2050, and reduce potential agricultural output by up to 30 percent in Africa and up to 21 percent in Asia. By all the global trends, the impacts of climate change may cause the greatest humanitarian stress in the coming years.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, Africa is seen to be one of most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Despite a significant increase in humanitarian assistance and the tireless efforts of humanitarian actors, the global humanitarian system simply cannot keep pace with growing needs. In 2015, donors provided \$9.7 billion to support the coordinated humanitarian response by the UN and its partners but the funding gap was \$10.2 billion dollars by the end of the year. This is particularly the case of UN response to assisting refugees in Africa.

This global humanitarian crisis calls for an urgent and comprehensive response from the international community, including both humanitarian and development actors. The response requires short, medium and long-term action across a number of areas including:

- Intensifying efforts to find political solutions to conflicts and violence and addressing other root causes and drivers of forced displacement
- Providing protection for refugees and asylum-seekers including through third-country resettlement programs;
- Ensuring protection and durable solutions for internally displaced persons;
- Ensuring adequate and predictable financing for humanitarian action;
- Supporting refugee receiving countries that are bearing the greatest burden;
- Increasing the impact and effectiveness of the humanitarian response;
- Enhancing coordination between humanitarian and development communities, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016 will be an important opportunity to address this crisis in a comprehensive manner and set a new agenda for humanitarian action.

#### **Format:**

In addition to remarks from the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, a number of panelists will be invited to share their views on the issue. Member States, the UN system, other stakeholders and civil society will engage in an interactive discussion.

#### **Outcome:**

A short summary of proceedings shall be prepared by the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit

<sup>4</sup> Synthesis Report of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit

**Informal Meeting of the General Assembly**  
**Humanitarian Response in Africa: The Urgency to Act**  
**8 April 2015, 3-6 pm, Trusteeship Council**

**DRAFT PROGRAMME**

**15.00-15.25    Opening Remarks**

**Interactive Panel discussion**

**15.25-15.30    Remarks by the Moderator**

**15.30-16.45    Priority Actions to Meet Immediate Humanitarian Needs of Refugees**

*Presentation by panellists followed by interactive discussions with Member States and other stakeholders.*

**16.45-18.00    Building Resilience and Achieving Food Security**

*Presentation by panellists followed by interactive discussions with Member States and other stakeholders*

**18.00    Closing Remarks**