

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, MARK LOWCOCK**

Statement on the humanitarian situation in the Sahel

I am increasingly concerned by the situation in the Sahel. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal, nearly 6 million people are struggling to meet their daily food needs. Severe malnutrition threatens the lives of 1.6 million children. These are levels unseen since the crisis of 2012, and the most critical months are still ahead.

Governments in the region were successful in beating back the crisis six years ago. I am encouraged by the efforts of regional partners to scale up their operations following early warning signs. But the rapid deterioration over recent months reveals an urgent need for more donor support.

The crisis was triggered by scarce and erratic rainfall in 2017, resulting in water, crop and pasture shortages and livestock losses. Pastoralists had to undertake the earliest seasonal movement of livestock in 30 years – four months earlier and much further than usual. This has also increased the likelihood of conflict with farmer communities over scarce resources, water and land.

Food security across the region has deteriorated. Food stocks have already run out for millions of people. Families are cutting down on meals, withdrawing children from school and going without essential health treatment to save money for food. Severe acute malnutrition rates in the six countries have increased by 50 per cent since last year. One child in six under the age of five now needs urgent life-saving treatment to survive.

In a severe lean season, anticipated to last until September, the number of people who need food and livelihoods support may increase to 6.5 million.

I am most concerned about Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Mauritania. In Burkina Faso, for example, the number of people facing food insecurity has already jumped nearly threefold since last year. In Mali, the number of people in ‘emergency’ conditions have increased by 120 per cent. In Mauritania, severe acute malnutrition rates are at their highest since 2008.

With support from the United Nations and partners, national authorities have developed prioritized response plans that focus on pastoral and food security needs. A scale-up in

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operations to reach 3.6 million people with food security interventions is already underway. Critical nutrition interventions are being scaled up in areas where emergency thresholds have been surpassed. Ongoing technical support to governments and regional organisations is helping mitigate conflict between farmers and herders.

While increased insecurity has complicated aid delivery in parts of the region, the humanitarian presence in the Sahel and capacity to deliver services are stronger than ever before. Regional, national and local organisations stand ready to step up assistance and help meet exceptional needs.

But UN response plans across the six affected countries are only 26 per cent funded. Last week, I released US\$30 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to help scale up relief efforts in the region. I call on donors urgently to provide further funding. We can still avert the worst.

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