

**HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY AT UNPRECEDENTED LEVEL IN SAHEL**

**Dakar, 27 June 2019** - UN aid agencies and NGOs warned today that surging armed violence in the Sahel has propelled forced displacement and humanitarian emergency to unprecedented levels. They called for stepped-up support and greater efforts to address the causes of the region's crises.

In the past year, around 1 million people had to flee their homes due to insecurity and violence. In Burkina Faso, Mali and western Niger displacement has increased five-fold, and the Lake Chad Basin is witnessing a new spike in displacement and attacks. Across the Sahel, 4.2 million people are uprooted.

“The impact of the crisis, in one of the world's most vulnerable regions, is dramatic. The extent and intensity of the attacks have left communities suffering untold devastation,” said Chris Nikoi, Regional Director of the World Food Programme. “Millions of people have yet to recover from last year's food and nutrition crisis. With the lean season underway, we must provide quick and sustained help to save lives and avert a deeper crisis.”

The violence is disrupting livelihoods and deepening the impact of chronic vulnerabilities such as food insecurity, malnutrition and epidemics in affected communities in Burkina Faso, Cameroon (Far North), Chad, Mali, Niger and north-east Nigeria. More than 7 million people are struggling with food insecurity. Malnutrition is threatening the lives of 5 million children. Education has been significantly hit, with more than 4,000 schools closed or not functional and 900,000 pupils affected.

“With armed violence comes destitution and deprivation. We must safeguard the dignity of people affected by conflict and ensure their protection from threats, exploitation and abuse,” said Liz Ahua, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Regional Representative for West Africa. “Beyond the humanitarian response, the Sahel needs support to tackle the root causes of the recurrent crises besetting the region. Crucially, the Sahel needs more robust investment in public services, infrastructure and economic development to bring about lasting solutions for all its people.”

Although conflict and its devastating impact have plagued the Sahel for many years, insecurity has never spread so fast, in such vast areas and affected as many people. The risk of spill-over beyond the Sahel and into coastal countries is growing.

“Humanitarian access continues to be under threat. Insecurity and restrictions imposed during military operations hinder the delivery of aid. Faced with these difficulties, we must insist on humanitarian principles. We are there to stay and assist the affected communities wherever they are,” said Marianne Irion, Regional Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

“If we want to reverse the trend in the Sahel, the security-centric focus must change,” said Mamadou Diop, Regional Director of Action Contre la Faim. “We must ensure people's access to basic services, especially in the conflict-affected areas, where needs are outpacing available resources. And we need flexible funding to build resilience and address the root causes of the crises.”

The humanitarian community has requested for US\$ 2.4 billion to assist 15.3 million people in the Sahel this year. As of June, less than a quarter of the funds had been received.

For further information, please contact:

**Eve Sabbagh**, OCHA, [sabbaghe@un.org](mailto:sabbaghe@un.org), Tel.: +221 77 569 96 54

[www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org)

The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.