



**Title:**

**High Level Event on Famine Prevention and Response**

**Time and Date: Wednesday, 21 June 2017, 13.00–14.45**

**Room XXVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**Purpose:** The United Nations, partners and Member States will take stock of their collective response to the Secretary-General's call to action to respond to and prevent famine in North-East Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. Participants will provide reflections on key accomplishments of the response over the past four months, ongoing challenges and constraints, and actions required to strengthen the response, including closing funding gaps.

- a. Take stock of key accomplishments of the response, both operationally and in terms of system-wide coherence across pillars and organizations;
- b. Propose solutions aimed at addressing constraints and bottlenecks that are hindering the immediate- and medium-term response, including access;
- c. Identify lessons learned from the New Way of Working (NWoW) at the field level and propose strategies to strengthen collaboration between development and humanitarian actors;
- d. Further mobilize the international community to resolve the root cause of the crises, protracted conflict and lack of respect for international humanitarian law;
- e. Identify funding gaps and underscore remaining requirements.

**Format:** A moderated discussion with UN agencies and partners will be followed by interventions from the floor.

- a. Welcome and opening remarks by the H.E. Ms. Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of Germany;
- b. Opening statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien;
- c. Panel discussion with key UN agencies in famine response and prevention (WFP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP), the World Bank and NGO partners (IFRC and OXFAM), moderated by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator;
- d. Interventions from the floor;
- e. Chair's summary by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator;

**Background:** On 22 February 2017, the United Nations Secretary-General issued an urgent call to action to the international community: famine had been declared in two counties of Unity State in South Sudan, and 20 million people were at risk of famine across North-East Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. People were dying from violence, hunger and disease. Protracted conflict had stripped away access to food and basic services, reduced agricultural productivity, disrupted critical supply chains, and greatly hindered access to people in need.

Partners acted swiftly, scaling up the delivery of assistance in challenging and oftentimes dangerous environments. In South Sudan, over 3 million people have been reached with life-saving assistance this year, including 340,000 people in Unity State who have received emergency food assistance. In Somalia, partners scaled up already robust humanitarian operations and have reached over 2.7 million people with food assistance, and 1.2 million people with access to safe water. In North-East Nigeria, over 2 million people receive emergency food assistance each month and 750,000 people have been reached with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance since the beginning of 2017. Humanitarian partners in Yemen have reached 5.8 million people with some form of assistance this year, and provide emergency assistance to 3.5 million people each month.

Simultaneously, efforts are underway to address the underlying drivers of food insecurity and scale up country-level initiatives aimed at stemming the advance of famine. In Nigeria, support is being provided to the Government of Nigeria's Buhari Plan for Rebuilding the North-East aimed at linking humanitarian, recovery and economic development efforts to respond to the protracted crisis and lay the foundation for self-reliance. In South Sudan, a UN inter-agency recovery and stabilization programme is helping to build people's resilience to food insecurity, respond to malnutrition and strengthen the region's local economy. In Somalia, the UN is supporting the new federal authorities to better fulfil their coordination, monitoring and information management functions. In Yemen, the UN is working with the World Bank to preserve public institutions for essential services.

Despite the significant scale-up of humanitarian activities across all four countries, and the success of efforts to prevent the spread of famine in South Sudan and avert famine in North-East Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen, the number of people on the brink of famine remains severe. Humanitarian response alone cannot reduce needs or address underlying vulnerabilities. Longer-term action is needed to help lift people out of vulnerability and build people's resilience to future shocks, and political solutions are needed to end conflict. To do this requires more risk tolerance, and more flexible and context-adaptable funding and programming. Lasting political solutions, facilitated by the international community, are needed to restore peace and break the cycle of violence and humanitarian need.

Linked to lasting political solutions is the need for sustained and unhindered humanitarian access. Insecurity and compromised humanitarian access continue to undermine the delivery of aid in all four countries. In South Sudan, for example, more than 100 aid workers were forced to relocate in April due to active hostilities, hampering the delivery of assistance to 180,000 people. In North-East Nigeria, an estimated 700,000 people remain extremely difficult for humanitarian partners to reach due to Boko Haram attacks, general insecurity, and the presence of mines and improvised explosive devices. Despite these challenges, humanitarians continue to deliver life-saving assistance through a variety of modalities. Where roads cannot

be used, life-saving supplies are airdropped. Rapid response teams are also deployed, whenever feasible, in areas where permanent humanitarian presence cannot be established.

**Funding:**

Humanitarian donors have contributed \$1.9 billion to the famine response in North-East Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. This is approximately 38 per cent of the total amount required, and an additional \$3 billion is needed this year to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs across all four countries.

Additional support for recovery, community security, durable solutions and building national capacity to respond to the crisis is also needed which will require that flexible funding is made available.