Concept Note

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has quickly become one of the most complicated and urgent humanitarian crises in the world – but one also characterized by significant opportunities for early-recovery and longer-term development. This high-level Humanitarian Conference – convened by the United Nations and co-chaired by the European Union and the Netherlands – aims to raise awareness of the DRC crisis and its regional dimensions, and mobilize funding to address current prioritized needs.

Background
The DRC has tremendous natural wealth and human resilience – its people, its youth, its resources. Yet humanitarian needs have persisted for decades and, over the last year, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated at an alarming rate, leading to an increased number of people being forced to flee their homes.

The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for the DRC estimates that 13.1 million people require humanitarian protection and assistance, up from 7.3 million at the start of 2017. This interagency plan requires US$ 1.68 billion of humanitarian assistance – more than double the $812.5 million requested in the 2017 appeal. A related Regional Refugee Response Plan for Congolese refugees also requires $509 million for an anticipated 807,000 refugees in seven countries in the region plus Southern Africa. While it is the role of government to address the root causes of the humanitarian crisis and look after the needs and well-being of its people, the scale of needs in the DRC will require continued international solidarity, complementing the efforts of the Government and authorities.

The surge in needs stems from a mix of political tensions, economic stress, and a sharp increase in violence, including in previously peaceful areas such as the Kasais, and intensified violence in other areas such as Tanganyika, South Kivu and Ituri. This is in addition to the sustained needs in areas such as North Kivu. Widespread human rights violations, including targeted attacks against civilians, a high prevalence of gender-based violence, and significant movements of civilians are all elements of a severe protection crisis.

There is a clear correlation between conflict and high food insecurity in the DRC: armed conflict and violence prevent farmers from tilling the soil and prevent people from accessing local markets. Despite great potential and resources, the result is that an estimated 9.9 million people are food insecure and nearly 2 million children are severely acutely malnourished. This year some 10.5 million people affected by conflict and epidemics will require emergency health services, including 5.4 million women, while education support is planned for nearly 1.7 million vulnerable children in conflict-affected areas.
Congolese have also sought refuge in neighbouring countries, with a significant increase in refugee flows to Uganda, Angola, Burundi and Zambia. As of December 2017, almost 750,000 Congolese have sought international protection in neighbouring countries, making the DRC refugee population one of the ten largest in the world. At the same time, the DRC itself hosts more than 540,000 refugees, mainly from Rwanda, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi, which add to the already difficult humanitarian situation in the country.

In late 2017, humanitarian actors activated measures to scale up international response capacity to support the crises in the Kasais, Tanganyika and South Kivu and significant gains have been made. In these areas, 1 million people have been reached with humanitarian assistance since October, and across the DRC, 4.2 million people received assistance in 2017. Nevertheless and despite generous support by donors, underfunding remains a serious constraint.

**Objective**

The objective of the conference is to draw attention to the urgency and severity of the humanitarian crisis in the DRC and to secure additional and sustained financial support for the coordinated inter-agency response. Noting the opportunities that exist in the DRC for recovery and development, the conference will also highlight both the need and mechanisms to invest in its people. The conference will also discuss key challenges and potential solutions to address the challenging operating environment for humanitarian actors including the security of humanitarian aid workers and administrative impediments. Protection and the unique needs of men, women, girls and boys will be cross-cutting and featured throughout the event.

**Expected outcomes**

- Heightened awareness of the nature and causes of the humanitarian crisis in the DRC, and implications for the region, including a better understanding of the humanitarian-development nexus and the opportunities it offers for effective response and sustainable solutions.
- Strengthened regional and international solidarity with affected people, both inside and outside of the DRC.
- Funding mobilized in support of humanitarian response in the DRC, highlighting the inter-agency DRC Humanitarian Response Plan and the Regional Refugee Response Plan as the most effective, efficient and strategic investments to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to people affected by the crisis in the DRC. Unearmarked core support to UN agencies and humanitarian partners and to the DRC Humanitarian Fund is also crucial to ensure predictable and timely funding to the crisis.
Format and outline
The Conference will run from 11:00 to 17:15. It will include a high-level panel, two thematic events and statements by delegations. Ministers from UN Member States, including the DRC, will be invited, as well as leaders of relevant regional organizations, financial institutions, private sector entities, UN agencies, funds and programmes, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and international and Congolese civil society. The high-level segment will begin at 11:00 with a scene-setter highlighting the experiences of Congolese individuals and communities. The Emergency Relief Coordinator will then moderate a panel including the co-hosts (EU and the Netherlands), UNHCR and CARITAS. This will be followed by short (three minute) statements by Member States and other participants on their financial and other support for DRC. From 14:14 to 15:15 there will be a thematic event on gender-based violence.

Statements by participants will continue in the afternoon. The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator will close the event with a summary of the day’s proceedings.