

United Kingdom Written Statement

ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, 23-25 June 2021

The world faces an unprecedented humanitarian crisis resulting from the triple threat of conflict, climate change and global pandemic. Humanitarian needs are at an all-time high. The UN estimates that 237 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance this year. This means 1 in 33 people worldwide needs help, the highest number in decades.

Famine is now a devastating reality for thousands of people. The situation in Tigray is particularly harrowing, where recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) data shows over 350,000 people face man-made famine-like conditions. This represents the worst global food crisis since the 2011 famine in Somalia. In addition almost 170,000 people face famine-like conditions in **South Sudan, Yemen** and **Madagascar**, and **North-East Nigeria** is projected to have populations likely to be in IPC 5. This is against a wider backdrop of over 200 million people in crisis or worse phases of food insecurity (IPC 3-5) in 53 countries across the world.

The global humanitarian system saves millions of lives each year. As one of the biggest humanitarian donors, since 2015, **the UK has provided over \$11 billion in humanitarian funding to support the world's most vulnerable people**. We are at the forefront of driving more effective and innovative approaches to crisis prevention, preparedness and response, helping the most vulnerable when disaster strikes and preparing developing countries to build resilience and manage conflicts.

The UK recently published its [Integrated Review](#) of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy which reiterates the UK's commitment to principled humanitarian action and International Humanitarian Law. With the creation of its Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office in September, the UK is committed to bringing together the UK's humanitarian expertise with diplomatic efforts to deliver the best outcomes for crisis-affected people. The UK is **particularly concerned by the increasing risk of famine**, reflected in the launch of our Call to Action to prevent famine last September, alongside the appointment of the UK's first Special Envoy on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs.

2021 marks a **critical year for collective action to respond to and tackle the global challenges** that are driving unprecedented humanitarian needs. The renewal this month of the Grand Bargain brings new energy to drive reform in the humanitarian system. As the holder of the G7 Presidency this year, we are delighted to secure the [G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact](#). This is the first agreement of its kind that coordinates urgent financial and diplomatic efforts among G7 members under the shared objective of preventing famine and reducing acute food insecurity. We look forward to the UN Food Systems Summit in October and COP26 Climate Change Summit in November as important milestone events for further collective action.

With global humanitarian needs at an all-time high and expected to continue to rise **during the next decade, it is vital that we all better prioritise resources to reach the people most in need, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian response**. The UK will work with allies and partners to deliver responses that are better prioritised, providing the people in greatest need with what they need most, and supporting principled humanitarian responses that are fast, accountable, inclusive, data-driven and evidence based. Working with local partners, closest to affected populations, will also be critical, as well as a sharp focus on the most vulnerable, particularly women and girls who are disproportionately affected by crises.

By 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could live in fragile or conflict settings. The same countries are disproportionately impacted by climate change and least able to cope as a result of ongoing conflict, poor governance, weakened systems and infrastructure, and the diminished resilience of vulnerable populations. We need new partnerships and to foster new ways of working to **shrink humanitarian needs and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action**. Together with International Financial Institutions and UN, Red Cross and NGO partners, the UK will work to prevent, better anticipate and prepare for future shocks to minimise their impact on people. The UK will drive more effective conflict-sensitive approaches to protracted crises and support improved data, evidence and early warning to better manage risks across the whole system.

We also need stronger collaboration across the humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development nexus. In some of the most climate vulnerable contexts, which are often protracted humanitarian crises, we need to ensure that actors on climate adaptation and resilience financing are working alongside humanitarian and peacebuilding partners.

Whilst the spread of COVID-19 is first and foremost a health crisis, we must not lose sight of the inevitable humanitarian, protection and development crises that follow an upsurge in cases in fragile settings. As the centre of gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic now shifts to the poorest, unvaccinated countries, **our attention must also turn towards system-wide readiness and contingency planning, and to address protection concerns.** Conflict, and specifically the conduct of hostilities violating International Humanitarian Law, is driving humanitarian need. The UK will promote respect for, and compliance with International Humanitarian Law and condemn serious violations and abuses. We need to continue to press for humanitarian access in conflict affected contexts to ensure vaccines and wider humanitarian aid reach those that are most in need. The UK is committed to ensuring the protection of people in conflict and crises, with particular emphasis on the protection of civilians, including combatting sexual and gender-based violence and safeguarding the rights of women, children and people with protected characteristics.

The climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic risk reversing decades of progress towards achieving gender equality, we must not let this happen. We will use our Presidency of COP26 to champion inclusion and amplify the voices and solutions of women, girls and those whose views are often most marginalised, empowering them as decision-makers, advocates and leaders. We believe this will support girls, their families, and their communities to be more resilient in the face of climate shocks.

Globally, at least 200 million adolescent girls face enormous barriers to realising their right to education and are at heightened risk of child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation or child labour. The UK is working to ensure all girls can access twelve years of quality education by introducing an ambitious resolution at the Human Rights Council together with the United Arab Emirates. The UK and Kenya are co-hosting a major Global Education Summit in July to raise critical funds for the

Global Partnership for Education to get children back into school and learning. Education will empower and equip girls to lead change in their countries and communities.

The time for action to protect the most vulnerable and address the upward trend in humanitarian need is now. The UK, as a force for good in the world, will play its part with partners across the international system to achieve this.

It has never been more important for us all to work together in support of those in need.