

**Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator,
Mark Lowcock**

Opening remarks at the launch of the 2018 Global Humanitarian Overview

Geneva, 1 December 2017

I'm really thrilled to be here today to launch the Global Humanitarian Overview for 2018.

This is the world's most comprehensive, authoritative, and sophisticated assessment of humanitarian need in the year ahead.

It is based on data gathered from hundreds of different sources, including from hundreds of thousands of face-to-face interviews with people affected by humanitarian crises across the 30 or 40 countries where we expect to need to deliver a humanitarian response in 2018.

The overview - and the detailed country by country reports which accompany it - sets out highly prioritized, costed plans that aim to alleviate the suffering of affected people and aim to deliver assistance quickly and efficiently. The response plans are coordinated across the United Nations and most of the world's leading NGOs, and they reflect participation and inputs from Governments, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and a wide range of other stakeholders.

In 2018, in countries with Humanitarian Response Plans, we are projecting that 136 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection, that is 6 per cent higher than we were projecting for 2017 this time last year.

During the course of 2017, the number of people in need has gone up reflecting some new crises like that of the Rohingya refugees and also reflecting bigger problems on some of crises that we were forecasting.

The 2018 overview calls for US\$22.5 billion to provide urgent assistance and protection to 91 million of those affected people across 26 countries.

The amount we are calling for this year to finance those strategic, carefully prepared and costed plans is a record amount. It is \$300 million more than we sought last year. And that partly reflects the fact that although the agencies are getting faster and more efficient and more cost effective in what they are doing, the cost of operating in some of the places

where we have to operate is growing because they are highly insecure and protecting the aid operation is becoming more challenging.

Conflict and violence will continue to be the main drivers of humanitarian need in 2018, they force people to flee from their homes, they deny them access to adequate food, and they rob them of their means of making a living.

Droughts, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters will also fuel humanitarian suffering. Although the risk of el Niño or la Niña is, we project, low in 2018, some scientists are forecasting an increased risk of earthquakes next year.

In a number of countries where we operate, the humanitarian situation is improving. That is the case for example in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, Mali, some other places. And it is reflected in a lower level of response planning for 2018 than we have been dealing with in 2017. Conversely, the needs are expected to increase substantially in Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia.

And there will be an exceptionally high level of need sustained in Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and the neighbouring countries, and in Yemen. Yemen is likely to remain, in terms of the number of people who need help and whose life are in immediate danger, the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Humanitarian organizations will be able to meet a lot of the needs we describe in the Overview and we know that because of what has been achieved in 2017.

Donors provided record levels of funding in 2017, approaching \$13 billion to the Humanitarian Response Plans as of the end of November.

That was a very generous response but, even so, it represents just 52 per cent of the overall funds required if we were to meet all of the needs that we set out in the response plans for 2017.

Humanitarian agencies have reached tens of millions of people this year and they have unquestionably saved millions of lives.

The humanitarian community helped stave off famines in South Sudan, Somalia, north-east Nigeria and Yemen, because the response in those places which reached 13 million people was fast and effective. It was a very shocking thing to me to contemplate at the end of last year the prospect of four famines in the world in 2017. There has only been one famine in the last twenty years, the one in Somalia, which took the lives of a quarter of million people in 2011. Famine is something that can be eradicated from the human condition. And the response planning for 2017 showed the response could be effective. In some of the countries which were at risk of famine in 2017, we will need to sustain efforts into 2018 to stave off such an appalling tragedy again.

Aid agencies also rapidly provided life-saving aid and protection to over 620,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar.

They have helped millions of people displaced within their countries in places as different as the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria and Ukraine.

And they helped Governments to mobilize and prepare together with regional bodies in the Caribbean in advance of a series of record-breaking hurricanes. Record breaking in the ferocity of those storms that we saw in September. There was tremendous damage to property and to assets and livelihoods through those hurricanes, but there was a much lower level of loss of life than such ferocious storms would have caused in any previous era of history and that was because there was good preparedness and good response planning.

In many of these crises, aid workers put their own lives at risk in order to help others. This year alone, 171 aid workers have been killed, wounded or kidnapped while carrying out their work. Just this week we saw another horrific example of this, with 45 people, including a number of NGO workers, killed in an atrocious attack in Jonglei in South Sudan.

In the year ahead, humanitarian agencies will work to improve their impact, they will get faster, more efficient, more cost-effective, they will deliver the commitments they made in the Grand Bargain agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul last year.

Humanitarian agencies will increasingly ensure that assistance is closely attuned to people's priority needs. The reason we do those hundreds of thousands of face-to-face interviews with affected people is to make sure that the plans we are developing respond to exactly what those people say to us.

Humanitarian agencies will also in the year ahead contribute to more sustainable solutions in fragile contexts and protracted crises, by ensuring greater join up and collaboration with development agencies as we do the planning analysis and work together to provide sustainable solution. There are very few humanitarian crises which can be solved by humanitarian intervention alone, so it is essential that we work together with the development sector, with the peace and security folks, with the political people and human rights people. A mark of success for the humanitarian system is to see a reduction in need. We will only see that if we work together with other sectors.

For our part in OCHA we will aim to enlarge the country-based pooled funds, which are one of the best means there is to provide immediate, efficient financing to local actors, especially to local NGOs, and to prioritize the humanitarian financing in the countries where they operate.

And we will also work to continue to expand the Central Emergency Response Fund. It is a vital lifeline when a crisis breaks out, it is typically the first provider of financing in a new crisis, and that means it is instrumental in gearing up the overall response.

This year the CERF has received \$456 million as of the end of November, and that has enabled it to leverage a rapid response in the four famine countries, to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to the hurricane-hit Caribbean.

I want to thank all the donors who stepped up to fund humanitarian response plans this year, and to all of the supporters to the CERF and Country-Based Pooled Funds.

I look forward to working with all of you to ensure swift support to the 2018 Global Humanitarian Overview. One thing we know is that the faster the response is, the better it is and the cheaper it is. In particular, in times when resources are scarce, the value of speed is accentuated.

Humanitarian help to people in crises is a cheap and effective way of saving lives - it costs on average less than one dollar a day for the people we help - and it gives tens of millions of people every year the chance of a better future.

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