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## **REPORT ON HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFRICA**

## **REPORT ON HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFRICA JULY 2017 – JANUARY 2018**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The report gives an overview of the humanitarian situation on the continent caused by armed conflicts, food insecurity, natural disasters and effects of armed conflict. It highlights general trends in both internal and across border displacement, life-saving needs of affected population and the search for durable solutions. Information used in the report is drawn from updates provided by Member States to the African Union Commission and data gathered from the United Nations. Taking fully into account observations previously shared with the Commission by Member States regarding this report and in order to create a better understanding of the factors which trigger displacement and humanitarian needs in Africa and build the capacity of Member States in collecting, analysing and disseminating data on internal displacement, the Commission continues to carry out training and other related capacity development initiatives on improving data management on displacement and humanitarian issues.

2. Furthermore, this report gives account of the activities of the Commission carried out during a period from July 2017 and January 2018, in tackling the humanitarian crises in the continent and providing Member States with the necessary assistance. These activities were implemented with a range of stakeholders including AU partners and humanitarian agencies.

3. In terms of methodology, and in conformity to Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.986 (XXXI), of 1 July 2016 this report used information and statistics from member states and partners from the UN agencies with global mandate on refugees, returnees, IDPs, migration and disasters.

### **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFRICA**

4. Armed conflicts in North East Nigeria, Somalia, Central African Republic and South Sudan have been major triggers of humanitarian needs and forced displacement during the second semester of 2017. In Lake Chad Basin, South Sudan and Somalia, a combination of conflicts and climatic variations are drivers of extreme food insecurity. Natural disasters were major causes of humanitarian concern in Somalia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

5. Large number of refugees left their homes due to persecution, conflicts and human rights violations. By the end of 2016 there were 5.6 million refugees and asylum-seekers and more than 12 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region. The conflict in South Sudan has triggered one of the fastest growing refugee crises in the world, with 2 million refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries. The number of South Sudanese refugees has seen more than 60 percent growth during the second half of 2016. According to UNHCR some of the top refugee source countries include Central

African Republic, South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Burundi and Somalia.

6. Several countries in Africa have been hosts to refugees for many years. African countries continue to demonstrate exemplary levels of solidarity towards those who are forcibly displaced. Some of the top refugee hosting countries in the world are in Africa. Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda, host 4.9 million refugees. This accounts for 28 per cent of the global total. These African countries already face severe structural barriers to economic growth and development, and usually have the least resources to respond to the needs of people seeking refuge. Chad, for example, has the fourth-largest refugee population relative to its national population. The root causes of the displacement crisis have often been neglected for years, putting refugees in protracted situations and exposing them to risks of multiple displacement. Some 552,200 refugees in Africa returned to their countries of origin in 2016, often in less than ideal conditions. Since August 2016, over 250,000 Nigerian refugees have returned to Nigeria from Cameroon, many of them into situations of internal displacement.

7. In addition to the refugee influx, a large number of people have also been internally displaced in Africa in 2016 and 2017. Some 3.9 million persons were newly displaced within their own country. Overall 12.6 million persons were internally displaced as of the end of 2016. South Sudan hosts more than 2 million IDPs. Other countries with large number of IDPs include the Sudan (2.9 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2.9 million), and Somalia (2.6 million). Among the displaced are women and children who are often the most vulnerable.

8. Conflicts remain the most significant trigger of internal displacement in Africa. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of Africa's internal displacement is caused by conflicts. Protracted conflict situations, generalised violence and instability in Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, North East of Nigeria, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Lake Chad Basin continue to subsist, with tens of thousands of people fleeing their homes. Terrorism continues to be the driver of the conflict in the North East of Nigeria and other Lake Chad Basin countries and Somalia.

9. The instability created by the challenges faced by Libya during this transition period and the concomitant creation of ungovernable space is causing immense suffering to civilians including Sub-Saharan migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. The instability created by the withering of the structures of governance in Libya and concomitant creation of an ungovernable space has led to the increased wave of the most dangerous irregular crossing of the Mediterranean Sea by many African migrants. The incidence of irregular migration continues unabated, leading to deaths of several persons in the Mediterranean Sea. Detention of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have exposed vulnerable groups to abuse and exploitation. Migrants also face slavery and slavery like practices by criminal networks, cartels and terrorist groups. The African Union Commission has taken a strong leadership role in responding to the unfolding crisis involving African migrants in Libya. The Chairperson of the Commission

immediately dispatched a high-level mission to Libya to consult with migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, Libyan authorities and humanitarian partners. The Libyan situation was also top of the agenda at the AU-EU Summit held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire where a decision was made to immediately set-up a trilateral Task Force constituting AU, EU and the UN (represented by IOM and UNHCR). The Task Force is currently working on an immediate humanitarian evacuation plan to implement involving some 15, 000 persons. Concerned African governments, Libyan authorities and partners are also facilitating the voluntary return of migrants.

**10.** Several African countries which were severely affected by the effects of El Nino and La Nina especially in the Eastern and Southern regions have shown resilience and recovery. Hit by severe and unprecedented drought and following heavy floods there are still considerable number of civilians requiring humanitarian assistance. Some of these severely affected countries include Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, and Burundi in East Africa; while in Southern Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi and South Africa are the affected countries.

**11.** The Fall Armyworm (FAW), a new pest to some of the regions in Africa, has the potential to cause widespread crop damage further exacerbating food insecurity. It particularly affects economically crucial crops such as maize, rice, sorghum, cassava, cotton and also vegetable crops. Some 25 Member States of the AU have reported the spread of FAW. The impact the worm will have on food security, livelihoods of farmers and trade is significant as it has a potential to affect over 80 types of crops. The AU Commission is working with governments and international partners particularly the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization to collect, analyse and disseminate information; create awareness about the problem among Member States; share experiences; and provide the required technical assistance.

**12.** Heavy and prolonged rains in Sierra Leone caused massive mudslide on 14 August 2017 resulting in the death of 500 persons and destruction of property. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a major landslide on 15 August 2017 caused the death of more than 170 persons and a significant loss of property.

## **REGIONAL ANALYSIS**

### **NORTH AFRICA REGION**

**13.** The North Africa region continues to constitute a transit or final destination for sizeable mixed migratory flows from Sub-Saharan Africa. The situation is further driven by terrorism, foreign fighters, proliferation of small arms and light weapons which has caused instability in the Middle East and affected countries in the region particularly Libya. The violence and unrest in the latter country has also created protection needs, with increased number of refugees and asylum seekers being arrested and detained. These violations particularly affect those from sub-Saharan Africa. This situation also constitutes another reason why some of the migrants do want to make the hazardous Mediterranean crossing.

## Libya

14. Civilians in **Libya** continue to suffer as a result of conflict, insecurity, political instability and a collapsing economy. According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix of IOM, 423,394 migrants have been identified in several parts of the country. Over 90 percent of the migrants originate from Africa. Some 67 percent (264, 471) originate from Sub-Saharan countries, out of which 55 percent are from Niger and Chad. The remaining 45 percent come from 23 other African countries. According to UNHCR there are around 43, 000 refugees and asylum seekers in Libya. It is estimated that over 20, 000 largely migrants are in detention centres at different locations in the country. These individuals are subjected to inhuman practices and exploitations.

15. The direct humanitarian impact of the political flux on Libyan affected population is also severe. Hundreds of thousands of people across the country are now suffering, living in unsafe conditions and high-risk hostile environments, with little or no access to life-saving health care assistance, essential medicines, food, safe drinking water, shelter and education.

## The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

16. The protracted refugee situation of the **Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic** populations in Algeria remains an issue of concern to the Commission. As a matter of fact, Algeria is hosting 165,000<sup>1</sup> Sahrawi refugees living in five camps near Tindouf of which 125,000 are vulnerable and receive humanitarian assistance from UN agencies.

17. During his visit in March 2016, the Secretary General of the United Nations strongly stated that he was shocked at the humanitarian situation in the camps and called for more mobilization for the protracted situation and the holding of a contribution announcement meeting. In the face of further deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the Executive Director of the World Food Program visited Tindouf region in December 2017 during which he measured the food aid deficit and serious problems of malnutrition of the Saharawi refugee population living in one of the most hostile regions of the planet and without the possibility of resilience.

18. For more than 40 years, the Sahrawi refugees have been living under extremely harsh conditions in the Sahara Desert in southwestern Algeria. The African Union therefore calls on the international community to contribute to the improvement of the difficult and extremely harsh conditions of this vulnerable refugee population, which are awaiting the organization under the auspices of the United Nations, of a referendum on self-determination.

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<sup>1</sup> Note Verbale. Ref:015/2018/AB, dated 06 January 2018, from Algeria

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REGION

19. In **Central Africa Republic** conflict and forced displacement is increasingly widespread and impacting previously unaffected parts of the country. Central African Republic is one of the few countries in the world where almost one person out of two depends on aid to survive. The number of people displaced both as refugees and IDPs has reached an ever-recorded high of 1.1 million people. As the crisis further expands towards the East and North West of the country, there are new massive displacements and there is a significant risk that the condition of people previously displaced and who remain in camps will deteriorate. Nearly one family out of four has already been forced to flee. In July 2017, the number of IDPs exceeded 600,000, which represents an increase of almost 50 per cent since January 2017. The vast majority of these IDPs are in makeshift camps, mosques, churches, near bases of the UN's MINUSCA peacekeeping force or in other empty buildings.

20. The resurgence of armed conflicts seriously undermines hopes for the return of IDPs and refugees, given the continuing deterioration of the situation in Central Africa Republic. Attacks against humanitarian aid workers and medical facilities also hampers access to vital services. The reduction in humanitarian space across the country amid deteriorating security has made the delivery of essential protection activities and assistance ever more challenging.

21. The upsurge in violence in the Central African Republic may also have a significant impact on the region: as violence flares up, populations are likely to increasingly cross borders into Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and Cameroon, adding to the close to 500,000 refugees already hosted by these countries and putting further pressure on the limited resources of the host countries. According to UNHCR and its partners more than 7, 000 Central Africans have crossed into Cameroon.

### Democratic Republic of Congo

22. The humanitarian situation in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** has deteriorated dramatically over the past year. The crisis has deepened and spread, affecting people in areas previously considered stable and stretching the coping mechanisms of people in areas already impacted. With an internal displaced population of 2, 2 million IDPs at the end of 2016, a surge in violent conflict and intercommunal tensions has forced more than 1.7 million people to flee their homes in 2017 – an average of more than 5,500 people per day. As of October 2017, the total number of internally displaced people in the Democratic Republic of Congo has reached 4.1 million<sup>2</sup>, which is the highest number of any country on the African continent. Insecurity has had a devastating impact on people's ability to access food, and 7.7 million people across the Democratic Republic of Congo are facing severe food insecurity – a 30 per cent increase from the same time last year. The situation is further complicated by political situation and economic downturn. This deterioration, observed mainly in the

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<sup>2</sup> OCHA, Personnes déplacées et retournées au 31 octobre 2017, p. 1

Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika regions, is taking place against the backdrop of one of the world's largest and most complex humanitarian crises. Across the country, at least 8.5 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection, close to 2 million children are affected by severe acute malnutrition – i.e. 12 per cent of the world's caseload – and outbreaks of diseases, including cholera, affect tens of thousands of people every year. At the same time, the Democratic Republic of Congo also hosts 26, 236 refugees<sup>3</sup>, including from Rwanda, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi.

**23.** As a result of the marked deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo posing enormous challenges for collective response efforts, the United Nations System declared System-Wide L3 Emergency Response for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, focusing on the Kasai region, Tanganyika and South Kivu provinces, for a period of six months, effective 20 October 2017.<sup>4</sup>

## **Burundi**

**24.** The forced displacement situation in **Burundi** particularly the flight of persons across the border into neighbouring countries of Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi continue unabated. As of April 2017, about 237,393 persons have fled to Tanzania, while about 85,733 and 37,354 have fled into Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo respectively. Uganda received another case load of 34,801 Burundians during the same period. While the country may not be in the midst of a massive humanitarian emergency, early warnings indicate a huge risk of the situation deteriorating, with likely severe consequences, as some of the neighbouring countries may be in violation of the principle of non-refoulement in respect of the treatment of the refugees.

**25.** At the same time an estimated 90,000 people were affected by the El Niño phenomenon (heavy rains, strong winds, floods and landslides). The food security and nutrition situation are increasingly worsening with 23 percent of the population experiencing food insecurity. The latest evaluation of harvest, food availability and the nutrition situation shows a 2.1 percent reduction of the main staple production is mainly to climate hazards (heavy rains and floods), persistence of plant disease, and lack of agricultural inputs and degradation of land productivity. As a result, about 23 000 tonnes of beans, 60 000 tonnes of maize and 75 000 tonnes of paddy rice were lost<sup>5</sup>.

## **Cameroon**

**26.** After Nigeria, **Cameroon** is the second country most affected by the Lake Chad crisis. Boko Haram's cross-border raids, suicide bombings and heightened insecurity have caused significant displacement and amplified the vulnerability of the local

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<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, Factsheet SEPTEMBER 2017, p.1

<sup>4</sup> OCHA, Democratic Republic of Congo Overview, November 2017.

<sup>5</sup> FAO, June 2016, situation report on Burundi

population in the Far North region. As of October 2017<sup>6</sup>, 237,967 persons were internally displaced in the Far North region and 332,000 were registered as refugees. Ongoing attacks, military operations and insecurity are severely limiting access to basic services such as education and health.

**27.** The armed conflict and the resulting displacement are fuelling sexual and gender-based violence as well as inter-community tensions around scarce resources. Food insecurity and malnutrition continue to be of high concern in the arid Sahel region regularly affected by drought, food shortages and epidemics. Water and sanitation services are the weakest in the country, with only 40 per cent of the population having access to clean drinking water.<sup>7</sup> UNICEF and other humanitarian actors reports that in some areas in Far North region there are large number of schools closed due to insecurity.

**28.** The renewed violence in Anglophone parts of Cameroon has resulted in the flight of several Cameroonian refugees into South-eastern parts of Nigeria. Nigerian authorities together with UNHCR have already registered 2000 individuals. Some 3000 individuals are awaiting registration. Many of the new arrivals are women and children. Nigerian government and UNHCR report that they are planning for the arrival of over 40, 000 refugees from Cameroon due to the political violence and deteriorating security situation. This refugee influx creates additional challenge to both Nigeria and Cameroon which are already grappling with Boko Haram related displacement.

## **Chad**

**29.** Over 4.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in **Chad**, including nearly 900,000 people expected to be food insecure across the country in June. As of 31 December 2017, there are over 410,000 refugees (mainly from Sudan and Central Africa Republic) in the south and east of the country and about 174,200 IDPs in the Lake Chad region. The country faces security threats on its periphery, most notably from Boko Haram (BH) since February 2015 in Lac region. Attacks have targeted both military operations and civilians, driving people from their homes. Around 130,000 people are displaced in Lac region. 57% of refugees hosted in Chad are children, 56% are women and almost 69% of refugee households are headed by women

## **EAST AND THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION**

**30.** East Africa hosts more than 50 percent of the continent's internally displaced persons. The region has been affected by conflicts, disasters and terrorism. The region has been affected by three consecutive years of drought, a consequence of the El Nino phenomenon.

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<sup>6</sup> UNHCR Cameroon, factsheet October 2017.

<sup>7</sup> OCHA, Revised requirements and response priorities, September 2017, p.5.



## South Sudan

**31.** The renewed violence in **South Sudan** continues to result in massive and unprecedented displacement of persons both within the country and to its neighbours. The South Sudan displacement situation remains one of the fastest growing displacement phenomenon in the world. According to UNHCR, Uganda remains the largest recipient of displaced South Sudanese, while Sudan and Ethiopia are hosting a large number refugees from the same country. As of October 2017 about 3.9 million or a third of the estimated population of South Sudan are displaced. 1.8 million Persons are internally displaced while about 2.1 million are refugees in neighbouring countries. Uganda is host to a majority of South Sudan refugee population with 1, 035, 703 persons followed by Sudan hosting 454, 660 refugees and Ethiopia, 41.366 refugees.

**32.** Since January 2017, 641,911 refugees fled South Sudan into neighbouring countries amongst whom 345,279 to Uganda alone and close to 4,500 South Sudanese refugees in the first two weeks of October 2017. There are now 2.1 million South Sudanese refugees and the Regional Refugee Response Plan projection of 2,130,500 by 31 December 2017 is likely to be exceeded in the near future. Of these persons about 63 % are children and 53 % women and girls.

**33.** At the same time, there is a large number of internally displaced persons. There is the initial caseload of IDPs resulting from the 2013 conflict and who are under the United Nations Protection of Civilians programme and are cantoned within the UNMISS premises. The situation has been further compounded by the July 2016 resurgence of the conflict which has also generated another wave of internal displacement as well as displacement across the borders. Furthermore, there are newly emerging conflicts in the country, with fresh conflicts emerging in the Equatorials, while the government is reported to be attacking new rebel locations thus increasing widespread displacement of persons. Currently, there is only one State out of the original ten States in the country that is conflict free, Warap State. According to UNOCHA, since December 2013, the conflict has devastated the lives of millions of South Sudanese and displaced more than 2.7 million. About 1.73 million of them have been displaced internally in the country and nearly 1.05 million are refugees in neighbouring countries.

**34.** Another worrying phenomenon in South Sudan is violence against aid workers, humanitarian infrastructures such as schools and hospitals including shooting, ambushes, assaults, harassment and robberies. This has resulted in the tragic killing of three humanitarians, bringing the reported number of aid workers killed in South Sudan since the conflict began in December 2013 to more than 55. Recently, 78 denial of humanitarian access incidents were reported by humanitarian partners, 73 per cent of which involved violence against humanitarian personnel and their properties. Road and river travel for humanitarians continues to be hazardous.

## Somalia

35. Humanitarian needs in **Somalia** are rising due to limited rain, conflict, displacement and lack of access to services. Over one million people have been displaced due to drought and conflict in 2017.<sup>8</sup> Nearly two-third of the displaced persons are below the age of 18. Many areas in the country face food insecurity. Nearly 900,000 Somali refugees are in the region.

36. The AU Mission in Somalia and the Peace and Security Council through its various sessions and decisions on the situation in Somalia have played a pivotal role for the improvement of the security situation in the country. UNHCR has supported the voluntary return of more than 100,000 Somali refugees from Djibouti, Kenya, Yemen and other countries of asylum. *IGAD Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action* which the Heads of States of IGAD countries adopted on 25 March commits its Member States to “collectively pursue a comprehensive regional approach to deliver durable solutions for Somali refugees, while maintaining protection and promoting self-reliance in the countries of asylum.

## Ethiopia

37. In 2017, Ethiopia experienced significant rise in the level of internal displacement caused by drought and communal conflicts. Areas affected by drought often lead to competition over resources and ethnic tensions. Displacement is also occurring in areas which have been negatively affected by drought and effects of climate change. Food insecurity particularly in Somali region was responsible for the displacement of large number of persons. Conflict in particular in Oromia and Somali region has also displaced large number of persons. Many of the IDPs are displaced within their own regions. Authorities in Ethiopia have responded by restoring security and providing humanitarian assistance.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION

38. The negative impacts of the El Nino induced drought had caused a humanitarian crisis affecting an estimated 40 Million people in Southern Africa, accounting for 14 percent of the total SADC population. Some 23 million persons require immediate humanitarian assistance. The scale and magnitude of the drought has tested local capacity of Member States of SADC.

39. In July 2017 **SADC** launched a 2.4 billion USD appeal to assist countries in the region. Thanks to the efforts by Member States, SADC and the international community, El Nino affected population started to recover. Though farmers in the region have taken advantage of the good 2016/2017 harvest, an estimated 5 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance.

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<sup>8</sup> Somalia: Humanitarian Snapshot, 7 December 2017.

**40.** In **Madagascar**, maize production is below the 5-year average and less than 2016. In 2017 the country's main rice producing region had the lowest production ever recorded. National cassava production is also below the 5-year average and less than last year. Following the end of the emergency response plan in May 2017 for El Nino affected regions, a new plan has been developed. Based on figures generated from food insecurity analysis completed in June 2017, the new assistance plan targets 262,800 persons in emergency of which 142,064 in the South and 120,736 in the Southeast; and 804,600 in crisis of which 440,528 in the South and 364,072 in the Southeast. The forecast shows that there is an increased chance of cyclonic activity for Madagascar from December 2017 to March 2018 which will cause damages and loss. But cyclones are generally beneficial to some areas of Madagascar because it brings water for planting.

**41.** **Mozambique** is susceptible to environmental shocks, including cyclones, flood and drought. It continues to face humanitarian problem in drought-affected areas in the Southern and Central regions which face food insecurity. Many households are recovering from the El Nino related drought which peaked in early 2017. However, food insecurity remains a major problem in the country.

## **WEST AFRICA REGION**

### **Nigeria**

**42.** The North East of **Nigeria** still remains an area of serious concern. Nearly 1.5 million persons are still internally displaced despite the gains made by military authorities in recent times, as Boko Haram still creates a volatile situation in the Lake Chad Basin area. New displacement continues to be reported during the reporting period. The Boko Haram conflict has resulted in wide spread displacement, violation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws, protection risks and a growing Humanitarian crisis. The conflict is now into its 8th year. The prolonged Boko Haram-linked conflict has plunged north-east Nigeria, a region with a long history of poverty and underdevelopment, into deep devastation.

**43.** Significant achievements have been scored by Nigerian authorities in improving security, clearing several areas from Boko Haram elements, providing humanitarian assistance and implementing reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. However significant number of people are still displaced both within Nigeria and across the border mainly to Cameroon. Returnee refugees and IDPs are joining camps and camp-like situations in North-East Nigeria and face major constraints in securing livelihoods and opportunities to establish themselves back in their areas of origin. During the reporting periods, the Government of Nigeria and humanitarian organizations have massively ramped up assistance to improve access to services.

**44.** Violent attacks targeting civilians continue to be reported, and insecurity and access remain a critical hindrance to aid delivery and restoring livelihoods in communities. In particular, women and children continue to suffer grave rights violations. Over 8 million people across the three most affected states of north-east Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, require humanitarian assistance. More than 1.8 million people, most of whom children, remain displaced across 2,140 locations. Over 1 million IDPs and refugees have returned near their areas of origin and are trying to rebuild their lives with little support. Many are now closer to home but remain displaced, often in IDP sites, without adequate shelter and assistance, and where basic services are thinly stretched. The highly volatile and threatening environment poses even greater safety and protection risks to boys and girls. They are increasingly exposed to abduction or recruitment by armed groups, including being used in suicide attacks. There are still reports of boys and girls forcibly used as suicide bombers by Boko Haram has steeply increased.

### **Sierra Leone**

**45.** Prolonged and heavy torrential rains have led to a series of significant floods and mudslides on 14 August in several areas of Freetown, the capital of **Sierra Leone**. This resulted in the death of some 500 persons, the displacement of thousands of civilians and the destruction of significant amount of private and public property. The Government prompt action has managed to rescue several civilians from the mudslide. The Government is also coordinating humanitarian and recovery efforts to the affected population.

**46.** The efforts of ECOWAS and AU member states extended to Sierra Leone is highly appreciated as it went a long way in providing the immediate needs of the affected families. This is a positive show of solidarity with the government and people of Sierra Leone.

**47.** The African Union Commission Chairperson promptly expressed solidarity with the people and government of Sierra Leone, dispatched his Special Envoy and called for international support to the country. The Commissioner for Social Affairs visited the country and expressed the Commission's solidarity. Investments in disaster preparedness and risk mitigation is needed if Sierra Leone will be able to withstand future shocks.

### **STEPS TAKEN BY THE AFRICAN UNION IN ADDRESSING HUMANITARIAN CRISES**

**48.** The African Union Commission on the basis of a mandate of the Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.965-986 (XXXI), of 1 July 2016, which called for improvement of reporting methods and credible sources of data on the humanitarian situation in Africa; and the ardent call in the Common African Position on Humanitarian effectiveness in Africa; as well as April 2017 Harare Plan of Action for the implementation of the Kampala Convention convened a meeting of Member States and

Partners on how to strengthen the collection, analysis and use of forced displacement data and reporting in Africa. Some 14 member states and several partners were represented. The meeting facilitated sharing of experiences among countries on data management, identified approaches on improving capacity of collecting and managing data on humanitarian issues at the national level and shared information on partnerships and international assistance and cooperation.

**49.** The Commission supported the role of the PRC-Sub Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons to carry out a number of assessment missions. Countries covered in these missions in 2017 include Republic of Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Through these missions, members of the Sub-Committee and the Commission gathered first-hand information on prevailing humanitarian needs in the countries involved and efforts by governments and their international partners to respond to humanitarian situations and implement recovery and reconstruction efforts. The Commission also extended solidarity financial and technical support.

**50.** In the light of the fast-deteriorating situation in Libya, the Commission is supporting the development and implementation of an emergency action plan to facilitate the return and evacuation of African migrants from Libya. Following a decision reached during the 5<sup>th</sup> AU-EU Summit in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire in November 2017, a Task Force has been established involving the AU, the EU and the United Nations represented by IOM and UNHCR. Under the leadership of the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, the Task Force will involve a political, strategic, technical and operational coordination among the stakeholders to support a voluntary return process of migrants from Libya. This process targets up to 15, 000 migrants prioritizing those who are currently under in detention. The Chairperson of the Commission held a series of consultations and meetings with Member States of the AU who have substantial number of nationals in Libya. Member States are expected to dispatch consular officers to Libya to support identification of nationality and facilitate access to documentation.

**51.** The Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Humanitarian Relief in Africa (SEAF) has supported assistance to member countries affected by humanitarian disasters. The Sub-Committee on SEAF provides financial and material assistance to support national activities and programmes for mitigating the impact of disasters. The Committee is also responsible for determining the policy of the Fund in view of providing emergency assistance to affected countries, and rapidly. The symbolic assistance from the Fund is intended to show solidarity with the affected countries and to invite the international community to provide the support required to avert human suffering and damages. Owing to the escalating humanitarian needs in the continent and the depletion of the fund, the Executive Council, through its decision July 2017 EX.CL/Dec.968 (XXXI), called on the Commission to work with the Sub-Committee on SEAF and the Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs to mobilize resources in order to replenish the Fund. The Commission has developed a concept note for a major pledging conference and is currently consulting relevant stakeholders to organize a pledging conference in 2018.

52. The African Union Commission organized the **5<sup>th</sup> Annual African Union Humanitarian Symposium** in Nairobi, Kenya from 25 to 27 November 2017 under the theme ***“A Common Vision and Perspective for Protection, Solidarity and Solutions for Large Scale Refugee Movements in Africa.”*** Some **36 Member States** were represented at the Symposium. South Sudan and Burundi were represented at the ministerial-level. Representatives of African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, UN agencies, the World Bank, African Development Bank, INGOs, local NGOs, faith-based organizations, the private sector, refugee representatives, researchers the academia and the media also attended the Symposium. The Symposium, supported by UNHCR, shared information on lessons-learned regarding the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) of the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in roll-out countries in Africa.

53. The CRRF is currently being implemented in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Somalia. Malawi and Rwanda are in the process or have already adopted CRRF policies and approaches which strengthen long-term economic resilience of refugee and host populations.

54. The AU Commission working together with its various partners implemented projects further strengthening the capacity of Member States in implementing the Kampala Convention including trainings. The first State Parties Conference of the Kampala Convention, held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 4-5 April 2017, developed and endorsed an action plan which is aimed at further promoting the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Kampala Convention. The Commission is also currently finalizing a 10 years plan of action on humanitarian effectiveness. The plan builds on existing standard and policy frameworks.

55. The year 2019 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 OAU Convention as well as the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 Kampala Convention. In this connection, at its 29<sup>th</sup> Assembly in July 2017, the AU’s Executive Council called on the Union to declare 2019 the *Year of Refugees, Returnees and IDPs*, and called on the AU to work with UNHCR and other relevant partners to organize a series of commemorative events aimed at raising the visibility of forced displacement in Africa. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1969 OAU Convention and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2009 Kampala Convention provide a strategic opportunity to re-commit to the values, principles and standards of Africa’s legal protection framework

56. The Commission organized the Second Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons held its session in Kigali, Rwanda on 16-19 October 2017. The STC session, held under the theme ***“Opportunities for Migration and Free Movement of Persons in Africa and Mitigating Challenges”*** involved both expert and ministerial-level

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Member States of the African Union AU Commission should work in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in implementing the New York Declaration on Large Scale Movement of Refugees particularly with regard to implementing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and contribute to the development of the Global Compact for Refugees;
2. The AU Commission should work together with its partners to take concrete steps in finalizing the 10-year Plan of Action and implementing the Harare Plan of Action;
3. Organize Donor/Pledging Conference with the view to raising resources to replenish the Special Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF);
4. Continues to implement the return and evacuation plan by targeting stranded African Migrants in Libya who are subjected to serious violations and abuse through the Tri-Lateral Task Force which involves the AU, the EU and the UN. Member States are encouraged to support verification of nationality, access to documentation, granting of landing rights and facilitation of overflights permissions for aircrafts involved in the evacuation process;
5. Support robust peace initiatives by the AU and RECs aimed at addressing conflict situations that have resulted in protracted displacement and humanitarian crises.
6. Member States should take concrete steps to address the root causes of humanitarian crises by expanding democratic space, inclusive development and good governance, developing disaster preparedness, prevention and response mechanism as well as developing early warning systems and conflict resolution mechanism as well as implementing human rights commitments as enshrined in the African Union and international treaties.
7. Member States are encouraged to continue providing to the Commission updated data and information on the humanitarian situation in their respective countries.
8. The Commission to continue supporting the activities of the PRC Sub Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons.

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