

*Press Release: For immediate release*

**DEPUTY EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR CALLS FOR STEPPED-UP ASSISTANCE TO CAMEROON AMID GROWING INSECURITY IN LAKE CHAD BASIN**

(Yaoundé, 26 February 2018): Concluding a four-day visit to Cameroon, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller, called on the international community and the Government to step up support to humanitarian actions in the country. During the visit, she met with the Minister of External Relations and the Governor of the Far North. She went to Zamai site for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Minawao refugee camp to see first-hand the impact of the deteriorating security situation in the Lake Chad basin.

“The Lake Chad crisis and violence in the subregion are far from over. The international community cannot spare any effort,” said Ms. Mueller. “Violent attacks by armed groups, mostly affiliated with Boko Haram, have increased over the past year, and I have seen the direct impact and growing humanitarian needs in the Far North of Cameroon.”

Cameroon is the country most affected by the regional extension of the conflict with Boko Haram, which started in Nigeria’s north-east region nine years ago. More than 60 suicide attacks were conducted in the Far North in 2017, which represents a 50 per cent increase compared with the previous year.

“In Zamai IDP camp, I met a woman called Sara and her baby. She explained that she and her husband had been kidnapped by Boko Haram. She managed to escape but has no idea of her husband’s whereabouts or whether he is still alive. We need to be able to provide food, water and other life-saving assistance, as well as protection, to women and men like Sara and her 10-month-old baby,” explained Ms. Mueller. “The response to increased forced recruitment and violent attacks should be increased solidarity with those affected by crises.”

“This is an area that needs greater attention, including from donors. Security and access are major challenges, but the lack of funding remains, by far, the main impediment to humanitarian aid reaching those most in need,” emphasized Ms. Mueller.

As of today, the Humanitarian Response Plan proposed by UN and NGO partners to respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs in the country has received only 5 per cent of the US\$305 million required. In Cameroon, 3.3 million people need urgent humanitarian assistance. In the Far North, one person out of three (or 1.5 million people) is now food insecure at crisis and emergency levels.

Ms. Mueller’s visit was also an opportunity to discuss other crises that Cameroon is facing, with an increased influx of refugees from the Central African Republic and sociopolitical tensions in the north-west and south-west regions.

“The UN remains deeply concerned about the situation in Cameroon, including in the south-west and north-west. We are again calling on all parties to avoid further escalation of violence and to protect civilian populations,” said Ms. Mueller. “Further fact-finding missions will be taking place as early as next week, and we are putting into place assistance to the internally displaced persons, who are estimated in the tens of thousands.”

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