

Joint statement by Conflict and Hunger Informal Co-focal points on Sudan

Mr President,

I make this statement on behalf of Guyana and Switzerland, as informal co-focal points on Conflict and Hunger, in response to increasing warnings of famine in Sudan, and repeated calls for urgent action.

Acute malnutrition and hunger have soared since the conflict broke out in April 2023. Recent figures are appalling: eighteen (18) million Sudanese are acutely food insecure, including five (5) million who are at risk of dying due to malnutrition. This is the worst hunger level ever recorded during Sudan's harvest season.

Conflict is driving hunger, as many of those at risk of starvation are trapped in areas of active fighting, are displaced inside Sudan or forced across borders, mainly into Chad and South Sudan, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in both countries. 3.8 million children suffer from acute malnutrition in Sudan. Tens of thousands will likely die if there is no action. Already today, reports suggest that in Zamzam camp in North Darfur alone, a child is dying every two hours due to malnutrition.

The latest report produced by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) concluded that acute food insecurity may be even more severe and of greater magnitude than current forecasts suggest due to the intensification and expansion of the conflict. As highlighted by FAO and WFP, since December 2023 the conflict has spread into the country's breadbasket, jeopardizing the harvest and destroying critical food system and agricultural infrastructure. Likely scenarios indicate that the severity and scale of hunger in the coming lean season will be devastating. By June 2024, a shocking seven million people might face famine, with mass starvation expected.

The situation in Sudan is nothing short of catastrophic. The window of opportunity to significantly reduce the impact of potentially the largest hunger crisis in decades is rapidly closing.

The situation became even more alarming when the Sudanese authorities last month withdrew authorization for cross-border operations from Chad into Sudan. We welcome the current engagements between OCHA and the Sudanese authorities to address this issue and to ensure access to people in need across borders and across conflict lines. Cross-border humanitarian aid is currently the main way to deliver life-saving aid to the Darfur region, one of the most affected areas, already in IPC 4.

Conflict hotspots such as Khartoum, the Darfurs, the Kordofans and now Gezira State remain mostly inaccessible due to heavy fighting, insecurity, restrictions, threats, roadblocks, and bureaucratic impediments.

Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access across Sudan must be allowed and facilitated by all parties to enable life-saving interventions. This must include cross-border and crossline access. Bureaucratic and administrative obstacles for humanitarian actors must be removed. The protection of objects indispensable to the survival of civilians including foodstuffs, crops, livestock, agricultural assets, drinking water installations and irrigation works must be ensured, as required by international humanitarian law.

Mr President,

When adopting Resolution 2417 five years ago, this Council demonstrated its determination to address conflict-induced food insecurity, including famine, and stressed the importance that all parties respect international humanitarian law. Resolution 2417 is clear in condemning the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to civilian survival, as well as the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.

We must not remain silent in the face of such a humanitarian catastrophe. More must be done. As informal co-focal points, Guyana and Switzerland call on the members of this Council to give their full attention to the catastrophic situation in Sudan, and call on the warring parties to urgently stop the fighting and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

I thank you.