

Joint Statement on Mozambique

by United Nations Regional Directors for Southern and Eastern Africa

The United Nations is deeply concerned by the worsening humanitarian crisis and escalating violence forcing thousands to flee in Cabo Delgado province

20 January 2020, Johannesburg

Escalating conflict and a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Cabo Delgado has left communities completely reliant on humanitarian assistance. According to the Government, attacks by non-state groups have forced more than 565,000 people to flee their homes and villages, abandoning their crops and livelihoods.

Last December, the United Nations Regional Directors for Eastern and Southern Africa visited Mozambique to assess the plight and needs of displaced populations as well as of host communities in northern Cabo Delgado province, and met government officials in Maputo.

They expressed their deep concerns about the unfolding humanitarian situation in Cabo Delgado where violence has exposed people to human rights violations and left people with very limited access to food and livelihoods. The growing insecurity and poor infrastructure have meant that reaching out to people in need has become harder and coupled with the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis has become even more complex.

The joint mission with Regional Directors of FAO, IFAD, IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and WFP, as well as by the UNDP Resilience Hub Manager and members of the UN Country Team, allowed participants to witness first-hand the impact of continuing violence in Cabo Delgado and to show support for affected communities and the Mozambican people.

They heard extremely moving accounts from displaced men, women and children in the city of Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado, and in the districts of Ancuabe and Chiúre, whose lives have been upended by conflict and insecurity. They also met communities accommodating the displaced, visited planned resettlement areas and held discussions with the provincial governor and Secretary of State, as well as with religious leaders and representatives of civic organisations.

The crisis in the north of the country is a complex security, human rights, humanitarian and development emergency, underscoring the imperative of continuing to provide life-saving assistance while collectively supporting government-led long-term resilience building.

While acknowledging that much has been done to help victims of the crisis, the Regional Directors stressed that with displacement increasing daily, the lack of adequate food, water, sanitation, shelter, health, protection and education was exacerbating an already dire situation – one set to be further compounded by the imminent rainy season in a country particularly prone to climate extremes, as cyclones Idai and Kenneth devastatingly illustrated in 2019. Most recently, tropical storm Chalane, which hit the same populations last December, as cyclone Idai did less than two years ago, was a harsh reminder of the climate threat Mozambicans are facing and of the urgency to massively scale up investments in recovery and resilience.

With COVID-19 keeping most schools closed, the importance of robust investment in education to build Mozambique's social and human capital is a growing concern.

There is an urgent need to expand protection, health, food and nutrition programmes for vulnerable children and women, and vaccination and immunization interventions and psychosocial counselling, and of working to enable displaced farming and fishing families re-establish sustainable livelihoods.

The Regional Directors urged support for the adequate resettlement of uprooted families straining the already limited resources of impoverished host communities and slowing government efforts to effectively register and assist the displaced.

They noted that urgent investments in development and resilience-building are required to not only promote human rights and social justice, but also to limit the impact of current crises and help prevent future ones.

To curb violent extremism, they called for development initiatives to be transnational in approach and to prioritise the economic empowerment and social and political inclusion of women and young people.

They urged the Government of Mozambique and the international community to step up efforts to end all forms of violence in the country, including gender-based violence and child marriage, and to invest more in women and girls as agents of progress and change.

The Regional Directors expressed gratitude to the government for its role in helping to meet the humanitarian needs of people in the north of the country and re-affirmed the commitment of the United Nations to upholding human rights and promoting peace and sustainable development for all Mozambicans.

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