



# High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region

Federal Foreign Office, Berlin - Germany, 3 - 4 September 2018

#LakeChadBerlin

## Panel on Humanitarian Assistance and Protection

### **Background**

Nine years of violence and conflict have taken a heavy toll on the population in the Lake Chad Region. The crisis is unfolding in a region already affected by severe underdevelopment, poverty and climate change. The resulting humanitarian crisis has devastating impact on the lives of around 17 million people living in the affected areas, with women, youth and children bearing the brunt. In 2018, more than 10 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection. This includes nearly half a million children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition. The food security situation remains acute, with some 4.7 million people experiencing severe food insecurity. Basic social services, including education and health, have been disrupted and are in dire need of strengthening. While humanitarian assistance has brought relief to people in accessible areas, any rupture in this life-saving assistance could have major consequences. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of others live in precarious conditions in hard-to-reach areas, where international humanitarian actors are not able to provide relief.

The displacement situation in the region is complex, with new displacements occurring due to heavy rains and insecurity at the same time as some people are returning to their home areas. Across the four countries, violence has uprooted more than 2.4 million people from their homes, including 1.7 million internally displaced in north-east Nigeria alone. The majority of the displaced have found refuge with host communities, putting a heavy strain on people already suffering from poverty, extreme vulnerability and food insecurity. A large number of people also live in overcrowded camps with little or no access to any livelihood activities, making them dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive. In such conditions, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Since the Oslo Conference, the international humanitarian response has been scaled up significantly, in support of national and local efforts. In 2017, over six million people received humanitarian assistance throughout the region. During the same period, frequent security incidents and attacks targeting civilians have led to further displacements. Access challenges also remain in parts of the region where people have not been reached with life-saving assistance. People coming out of these areas are often in critical condition and dire need of assistance upon arrival. The ongoing rainy season has also brought additional risks of disease outbreaks. Humanitarian needs therefore remain high and serious protection gaps persist. Continued support is essential, and the combined financial requirements for humanitarian response in the Lake Chad Region in 2018 total US\$1.56 billion. As of mid-August, only 37 per cent of the required funding had been received.

The humanitarian response in the Lake Chad Region is at a crossroads. While recovery and development activities must be scaled up and root causes addressed, humanitarian needs are expected to continue in the foreseeable future, as new populations become accessible and sporadic insecurity-induced displacements continue. Voluntary returns will also need to be accompanied by emergency support packages. The protection of civilians remains a major challenge across the region with millions of women, children and men directly targeted by violence, deprived of their livelihoods and at high risk of human rights violations including kidnappings, arbitrary detention, rape, and sexual exploitation and abuse. The conflict also continues to hinder humanitarian access, and more needs to be done to ensure unfettered and unimpeded humanitarian access to vulnerable communities across the region. Finally, humanitarian operations in the region require additional and more predictable funding to be sustained and reach a scale that is commensurate with the needs of the affected people.

With the scale-up of the humanitarian operations achieved since the Oslo Conference in 2017, and new areas becoming accessible, national and international humanitarian actors in the Lake Chad Region have an opportunity to reach additional vulnerable people with assistance and protection, while recognizing that the primary responsibility for assisting and protecting the population rests with the affected governments. Further, through strengthening links with development actors, there are renewed opportunities for collectively reducing needs, risk and vulnerabilities, including through building resilience and supporting early recovery. Significant efforts are being made in this regard in all four countries of the region, with some having developed joint strategies to improve peoples' lives in the medium to longer term, while ensuring a continued focus on meeting their immediate humanitarian needs. At the regional level, there is also considerable commitment to collectively addressing the crisis including its root causes.

### **Objectives**

The objective of this high-level panel will be to consider how to strengthen the required humanitarian response in the near and medium future. The discussion will seek to:

- Draw international attention to the acute and severe humanitarian needs in the Lake Chad Region, and discuss future response requirements.
- Highlight progress as well as outstanding challenges and gaps in the humanitarian response, including with regards to the priorities discussed at the Oslo conference, such as protection, food security and education in emergencies.
- Explore how to best to address the protection crisis by facilitating the presence of humanitarian protection actors in areas of concern, preserving humanitarian space, ensuring a principled humanitarian response, and improving access to all people in need. Special attention should be directed to gender related issues and protection against sexual and gender based violence.
- Discuss the future of humanitarian operations in the region, with a view to reducing need, risk and vulnerability while enhancing local capacity, drawing attention to the importance of Government engagement, and ensuring international funding.
- Support strategic partnerships and multi-stakeholder cooperation around humanitarian action, including by strengthening linkages with civil society, advocating for more predictable and multi-year humanitarian funding, and generating new and increased commitments by Member States and affected countries.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Increased attention to the current and expected needs for humanitarian assistance in the Lake Chad Region.
- Clear commitment by Governments in the region to ensuring the protection of civilians, including by facilitating the presence of humanitarian protection actors, preserving humanitarian space and ensuring access, coupled with clear commitment by all partners to ensuring a principled humanitarian response and improving the quality and timeliness of assistance.
- Renewed international, regional and national commitments, including financial contributions and other partnerships, to addressing the humanitarian and protection needs.
- Agreed policy direction on the future of the humanitarian operation in the Lake Chad Region, including on ensuring adequate response capacity, sustaining international funding, enhancing local capacities and working with development partners to strengthen resilience and early recovery.