

# Media Update

4 November 2016

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## United Nations

Secretary-General Message

### WORLD TSUNAMI AWARENESS DAY

5 November 2016

Today marks the first observance of World Tsunami Awareness Day. On this day, in 1854, a Japanese village leader recognized the signs of an approaching tsunami and improvised a remarkably effective early warning system – he set fire to his rice sheaves, saving the lives of the many villagers who saw the smoke and ran uphill to help put out the flames.

Over the years, early warning systems have grown more sophisticated, particularly since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which claimed nearly 226,000 lives. That tragedy prompted the introduction of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System.

In September this year, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO invited disaster management officials from 24 countries around the Indian Ocean to participate in one of the largest tsunami simulation exercises ever organized. The importance of simulation exercises and evacuation drills is underlined in a report released today by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. It highlights that population growth has greatly increased exposure to tsunamis and other hazards in many regions.

Since 1996, 250,900 people have died in 21 countries affected by 30 tsunamis. Tsunamis also pose a significant threat to major infrastructure either already built or planned for coastal areas. The significance of this threat was demonstrated in March 2011 by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, which claimed many lives, left many more homeless and triggered a meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.



World Tsunami Awareness Day serves as a reminder of the importance of reducing current and future levels of risk. This should be a clear guiding principle for all those working in the public and private sectors who have to take decisions on major infrastructure projects in seismic zones and near exposed coastlines. Tsunamis may be rare but, like any other natural hazard, if we fail to prepare and raise awareness, then we risk paying a heavy price.

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## United Nations

### Secretary-General Message

# INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PREVENTING THE EXPLOITATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN WAR AND ARMED CONFLICT

6 November 2016

This year, the world began implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With 17 universal and interdependent Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda is a transformational blueprint for peace, prosperity and dignity for all on a healthy planet. To achieve this vision, we must recognize that we have a duty of care towards the environment in peacetime and during war.

Poor governance of the environment and natural resources can contribute to the outbreak of conflict. It can fuel and finance existing conflicts and it can increase the risk of relapse. Conversely, there are many examples of natural resources serving as catalysts for peaceful cooperation, confidence-building and poverty reduction.

In the aftermath of violent conflict, natural resources, such as land, timber, minerals, oil and gas, are often the primary assets that governments need to support livelihoods and economic recovery. How governments manage these resources can fundamentally alter the course of post-conflict peacebuilding. That is why it is so important that we work together to combat environmental crime, end the illegal exploitation of natural resources, improve



transparency, share benefits more equitably and encourage the participation of women, indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups in decision-making.

The 2030 Agenda explicitly recognizes that “sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development.” That is why, earlier this year, all 193 Member States of the United Nations Environment Assembly adopted a resolution committing to protect the environment in areas affected by armed conflict. At the same time, the United Nations International Law Commission is currently reviewing the international legal framework for protecting the environment before, during and after armed conflict. It aims to establish guidelines that can better support environmental preservation, particularly in protected areas and environmentally sensitive sites, such as drinking water aquifers, which are of critical environmental and cultural importance and can be severely affected by warfare.

With the 2030 Agenda and the concurrent efforts of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the International Law Commission, we have a range of important tools at our disposal. On this International Day, I urge governments, businesses and citizens around the world to prioritize environmental care and the sustainable management of natural resources for preventing conflict, building peace and promoting lasting prosperity.

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## UNICEF

### Press Release

## Children and pregnant women among those lost at sea in latest tragedy on the Mediterranean – UNICEF

**LAMPEDUSA, Italy, 3 November 2016** – A number of children and pregnant women were among the 240 people reported to have drowned off the coast of Libya Wednesday attempting to reach European shores.



A young Liberian woman, one of 29 survivors brought to the island of Lampedusa earlier today, lost her two-year-old son, 13-year-old daughter and 21-year-old brother – all of whom drowned when their boat capsized. UNICEF’s Helena Rodriguez, a gynaecologist and cultural mediator\* on Lampedusa, is working with Italian health workers to treat the 31-year-old woman for acute pneumonia and shock.

“The tragedy has left this young woman in a state of deep shock after she saw her children and her young brother drown in front of her,” said Rodriguez. “Even though she had paid smugglers \$2,400 for her family to make the crossing from Libya to Italy, when she and others saw the completely unseaworthy boat, they refused to get in because they were afraid. But the smugglers shot at them and forced them to go. This is why so many people drowned just 12 km from the Libyan shore.”

Rodriguez, who was at the pier to assist survivors in the early hours of Thursday morning, said those rescued from the sea were in difficult physical and psychological condition upon arrival – with some in a coma and others suffering from severe burns due to exposure to engine fuel. “It is an awful situation here,” she said.

Two other women who were saved by the same Norwegian rescue vessel also lost their children at sea. Most of the victims were from Senegal, Liberia, Guinea, and Nigeria.

2016 is set to be the deadliest year on record for the Mediterranean with more than 4,200 refugees and migrants having died attempting the dangerous journey across the sea. Nearly 160,000 have arrived to Italy by sea so far this year.

*\*Footnote: cultural mediators work as interpreters of cultural needs and practices*

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#### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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## UNICEF

### Press Release

**Embargoed until 9:30 GMT on Friday 4 November 2016**

## Hurricane Matthew one month on: More than 600,000 children still in need of aid – UNICEF

***UNICEF ramps up water, sanitation, health, education and protection services***

Download fresh photos and broll from Haiti:  
<http://weshare.unicef.org/Package/2AMZIFM2233>

**PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, 4 November 2016** – One month after Hurricane Matthew pummeled Haiti, nearly 600,000 children remain in need of humanitarian assistance, stalked by disease, hunger and malnutrition, UNICEF said today.

“One month after the hurricane, life for more than half a million children in Haiti is still far from back to normal,” said Marc Vincent, UNICEF Representative in Haiti. “Too many children are still homeless, hungry, out of school and in danger. We are scaling up our response and are determined to help as many of them as possible as fast as we can.”

Taking stock of the situation of children since the Category 4 storm flattened buildings and destroyed livelihoods, UNICEF said there have been at least 1,000 suspected cholera cases among children in the past month. Out of 219 cholera treatment centres in the country, 18 have been damaged in the



worst-hit departments of Grand'Anse and South, further complicating efforts to contain the disease.

Total destruction of crops and loss of food-stocks and livestock in some of the worst affected areas have left over 800,000 people in need of immediate food assistance and more than 112,000 children at risk of acute malnutrition.

An estimated 50,000 children have been left homeless and are staying in temporary shelters. Another 3,500 children living in institutions need help accessing nutrition, water and sanitation services.

Up to 80 per cent of hospitals and health centres in Grand'Anse have lost their roofs. An additional seven health centres in Grand'Anse, four in South and three in Nippes are no longer operational.

More than 700 schools have been affected and about 86 schools have been used as temporary shelters, causing school disruption for at least 150,000 children.

UNICEF is working with national and other partners to provide basic assistance to the most vulnerable children. Joint actions so far include:

- Providing 100,000 people a day with safe water;
- Organizing a cholera vaccination campaign that will be launched next week to immunize up to 900,000 people;
- Providing cholera prevention kits that contain water purification tablets, soap and oral rehydration salts. Between 100 and 200 kits are distributed every day;
- Delivering an integrated package of services to prevent and treat malnutrition among children under five as well as pregnant and breastfeeding mothers living in the hurricane affected areas;
- Replenishing vaccines and restoring the cold chain so that routine immunization can resume in the health centers that are still operational and in mobile clinics;
- Distributing emergency medical supplies to 18 health centers;
- Setting up mobile child friendly spaces where vulnerable children and families can receive psychosocial support, and training 60 volunteers to staff them;

- Repairing 22 schools and distributing school-in-a-box and early childhood development kits so that children can resume their learning as soon as possible.

UNICEF requires over \$23 million through the end of the year to meet children's humanitarian needs following the hurricane, including for the cholera response. So far, it has received a mere US\$6 million.

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