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IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP urge immediate action to address escalating humanitarian crisis in Sudan

GENEVA/NEW YORK/ROME/PORT SUDAN – Four United Nations agencies today called for urgent international attention on the crisis in Sudan, to address the immense suffering and growing dangers to the population. Over 900 days of brutal fighting, widespread violations of human rights, famine, and the breakdown of life-sustaining services have pushed millions to the brink of survival, particularly women and children.

During recent visits to Sudan, senior leaders from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) witnessed the devastating impact of the crisis across the country, including in Darfur, Khartoum and other conflict-affected areas.

Sudan is facing one of the world's most severe emergencies, with more than 30 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 9.6 million internally displaced people and nearly 15 million children. Additionally, while around 2.6 million people have returned to their homes as fighting in Khartoum and other parts of the country has eased, many are finding their homes and neighbourhoods damaged or destroyed and lacking access to essential services. Since the beginning of 2025, more than one million people have returned to Khartoum alone.

Now in its third year, the brutal conflict has destroyed essential services like healthcare and education. 14 out of 17 million school-aged children are out of school. Entire communities have been displaced, with families fleeing for their lives facing human rights violations and grave protection risks. Famine was confirmed in parts of Sudan last year and the hunger situation remains catastrophic, with children among the hardest hit. Malnutrition rates have soared, and thousands are at imminent risk of death without immediate food and nutrition assistance.

"This scale of return to Khartoum is both a sign of resilience and a warning," said Ugochi Daniels, IOM's Deputy Director General for Operations, who has just returned from a visit to Sudan. "I met people coming back to a city still scarred by conflict, where homes are damaged and basic services are barely functioning. Their determination to rebuild is remarkable, but life remains incredibly fragile. Across Sudan, cholera, dengue and malaria are spreading, making it even more urgent to invest in clean water, health care and other essential services so that people can truly start over."

Families returning to Sudan, many driven by the determination to rebuild their lives after years of relentless conflict, reflect a fragile but hopeful shift. Yet Sudan remains a country in deep crisis.

Access to most affected populations remains severely constrained. Humanitarian actors face insecurity, bureaucratic impediments, and logistical challenges that make the delivery of life-saving aid extremely difficult: there is a need for simplified procedures. Attacks against civilians remain widespread and women and girls continue to face serious risks of conflict-related sexual violence.

In Khartoum with anti-foreigner sentiment rising, Sudan's longstanding support for nearly 900,000 refugees is under pressure. Continued protection for refugees is lifesaving for hundreds of thousands in need.

"This is one of the worst protection crises we've seen in decades" said Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner at UNHCR, following a visit to displacement sites in Port Sudan and outside of Khartoum. "Millions are displaced inside and outside of the country and returning families have little support with the absence of other options. I spoke with families who recently fled Al Fasher with horrific stories of being forced to leave everything behind, taking treacherous routes at great risk. It's a dynamic environment and support is needed everywhere."

The situation across the Darfurs and Kordofan states is deeply concerning, with humanitarian needs escalating. Communities are increasingly isolated, and the collapse of essential services is leaving millions vulnerable. Agencies continue to make every effort to reach civilians where children and families are enduring conditions that defy survival.

In Al Fasher, over 260,000 civilians, including 130,000 children, have been trapped under siege for more than 16 months, cut off from food, water, and healthcare. Health facilities have collapsed, and thousands of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition are now without treatment, facing an imminent risk of death. Reports of killings, sexual violence, and forced recruitment are mounting daily. In the Kordofans, towns like Dilling and Kadugli have been isolated for months, with families enduring destroyed water systems and non-functioning health services. Outbreaks of cholera and measles are spreading unchecked.

"What I witnessed in Darfur and elsewhere this week is a stark reminder of what is at stake: children facing hunger, disease, and the collapse of essential services," said Ted Chaiban, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director. "Entire communities are surviving in conditions that defy dignity. Children are malnourished, exposed to violence, and at risk of dying from preventable diseases. Families are doing everything they can to survive, showing extraordinary resolve in the face of unimaginable hardship. It is clear that the UN and partners are responding, but the resolve of families must be matched by urgent global action to secure access, mobilize resources, and ultimately stop the conflict."

Funding shortfalls are further compounding the crisis. The 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan for Sudan, totaling US\$ 4.2 billion, remains critically underfunded at only 25 per cent, threatening the scale and continuity of emergency operations. Despite massive challenges, the humanitarian response in Sudan has reached over 13.5 million people so far this year – including in the hardest-hit areas of Darfur, Kordofan, Khartoum and Al Jazira. But without additional resources, humanitarian agencies will be forced to scale back life-saving interventions, putting millions of lives at risk.

"I saw a city devastated by war, where families returning home to Khartoum urgently need food, water, and basic services. But above all, I saw determination and willingness to rebuild and restart life. I saw hope," said Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director of the World Food Programme. "We are all working together, alongside local organizations and community groups, to help displaced families, residents and returnees rebuild their lives, with access to food, nutrition and meals for school children, and support to restore essential services."

The four agencies jointly call for:

- Immediate cessation of hostilities and protection of civilians, especially children.
- Unhindered humanitarian access to all affected populations, including a UN presence throughout the country.
- Simplified procedures for aid delivery and staff movement.
- Urgent and flexible funding to scale up lifesaving interventions.
- Support for durable solutions for displaced populations, including returnees and host communities.
- Continued support for internally displaced populations and the nearly 900,000 refugees inside Sudan in need of international protection and services.

IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP reaffirm their commitment to working together to deliver life-saving assistance and protection to children and families across Sudan. The humanitarian community stands ready, but it cannot act alone. The world must step up.

For more information, please contact:

- Joe Lowry | IOM Cairo | jlowry@iom.int | +436603776404
- Omond Okoth | IOM Geneva | kokoth@iom.int | +41227179702
- Assad Nasrullah | UNHCR Sudan | nasrullah@unhcr.org | +249 91 217 8991
- Dana Hughes | UNHCR Nairobi | hughes@unhcr.org | +254 717540160

- Eujin Byun | UNHCR Geneva | byun@unhcr.org | +41 79 747 8719
- Eva Hinds | UNICEF Sudan | ehinds@unicef.org | +249 123 168 594
- Ammar Ammar | UNICEF Amman | aammar@unicef.org | +962 7 91 837 388
- Joe English | UNICEF New York | jenglish@unicef.org | +1 917 893 0692c
- Rana Deraz | WFP Sudan | rana.deraz@wfp.org | +254702707894
- Annabel Symington | WFP Rome | annabel.symington@wfp.org | +39 342 1884921

About IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing support to migrants across the world, developing effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration and providing advice on migration policy and practice. IOM's work is focused on saving lives and protecting people on the move, driving solutions to displacement, and facilitating pathways for regular migration.

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About UNHCR

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee home because of conflict and persecution. For nearly 75 years, UNHCR has worked to ensure that refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people worldwide can rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF, the United Nations agency for children, works to protect the rights of every child, everywhere, especially the most disadvantaged children and in the toughest places to reach. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive, and fulfill their potential.

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About WFP

The United Nations World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.

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