

**EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR'S  
KEY MESSAGES ON THE SAHEL  
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**I. Key Messages**

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1. Across the Sahel region of western Africa, a combination of drought, poverty, high grain prices, environmental degradation and chronic underdevelopment is expected to plunge millions of people into a new food and nutrition crisis this year. Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad, as well as northern Cameroon and northern Nigeria are all likely to be affected. For many people, the crisis has already begun. An estimated 10 million people are struggling to get enough to eat, including 5.4 million in Niger. More than 1 million children under the age of five are at risk of severe acute malnutrition.
2. Last year, despite warnings, governments and aid organizations did not respond early enough in the Horn of Africa. This year, in the Sahel, early warning must be followed by early action. We know what is coming, and we know what to do to save lives. While we cannot stop this crisis taking place, we can take steps to avert a catastrophe. Early action means prepositioning emergency food assistance, supporting blanket feeding for malnourished children, and making available life-saving treatment for acutely malnourished children. Early funding will be necessary to secure the resources required.
3. Several Sahelian governments have put forward plans to deal with the crisis at hand, and build resilience to avert future emergencies. The humanitarian response is only one part of a longer-term comprehensive strategy - involving local communities, governments, regional organizations, private businesses, development agencies and many other players. We cannot do this alone; we all need to work together to implement the proposals, which will result in building the longer-term resilience of vulnerable communities.
4. Insecurity is making the work of humanitarian organizations more difficult. A growing rebellion in northern Mali has forced many humanitarian actors to leave the region and thousands of people have fled the conflict, resulting in internal displacement in Mali and a growing refugee caseload in neighboring countries. In addition, arms and drug trafficking have led to a rise in banditry in many parts of the region. For the most part, aid agencies continue to be able to operate and reach people in need, but the risks need to be managed carefully.
5. Across the region, international agencies have called for more than US \$720 million to support national efforts to respond to the crisis. To date, donors have provided \$135 million, and relief activities have already begun. But we need more resources now. To prevent a large-scale crisis, we need to act now.

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