

CONCEPT NOTE

Arria-Formula Meeting of the Security Council: The Humanitarian Crisis in Cameroon

May 13, 2019; 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Conference Room 1

Context:

Cameroon is experiencing the impact of three distinct, complex humanitarian crises fueled primarily by violence and insecurity. More than one in six people in Cameroon need humanitarian assistance, an increase of 30 percent since 2018.

In the last two years, violent clashes in Cameroon between the military and armed separatists in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest Regions have driven more than 560,000 Cameroonians from their homes, including 32,000 refugees in Nigeria and approximately 530,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are also some 280,000 refugees from the Central African Republic living in Cameroon, primarily in the East and Adamaoua regions, and more than 100,000 refugees from northeast Nigeria living in Cameroon's Far North Region, along with some 250,000 IDPs. The number of people living as either IDPs or refugees in Cameroon has more than doubled in the last year. Cameroon now has the 6th largest displaced population in the world. Three million people are food insecure, and 222,000 children under five are suffering from acute malnutrition, including 60,000 with severe acute malnutrition. More than 1.5 million people are in need of emergency health assistance.

The situation in the Northwest and Southwest Regions is of particular concern; insecurity and attacks against civilians have forced significant internal displacement across four regions, which now host approximately 40 percent of the total displaced population in Cameroon. Civil society organizations and international NGOs report that security forces and armed separatists are targeting civilians throughout the area, including allegations of murder, assault, kidnapping, extortion, torture, rape, sexual exploitation, and the destruction of homes and schools. Particularly disturbing are reports of increasing targeted attacks against medical facilities and operations with a blatant disregard for protections and norms afforded these location in conflict.

Humanitarian access remains a key challenge for the humanitarian community, especially in the North-West, South-West and the Far North, primarily due to the unpredictable security situation, ongoing conflict, reported international humanitarian law violations, and administrative impediments. In the North-West and South-West, more than 50 per cent of the IDP population have sought refuge in rural areas, often inaccessible to humanitarian workers, which means that humanitarian actors are not able to independently and impartially assess their situation or provide them with aid.

Tens of thousands of children throughout the region are out of school as a result of the crisis. Children, and their basic right to education, are particularly vulnerable as a result of the 'no school' policy pursued by separatists non-state armed groups. 80 per cent of children are deprived of education, and only one in four completed the 2017- 2018 school year in the South-West. With half of the population of Cameroon under the age of 18 and poverty rates of 74

percent, young people are particularly vulnerable and exposed to recruitment by non-state armed groups and other abuses.

Objective:

- This meeting will highlight the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Cameroon, with a particular focus on the Northwest and Southwest Regions.
- By raising awareness, this meeting seeks to galvanize a stronger regional and international response to this grave and worsening humanitarian crisis.
- To focus on practical steps that need to be taken by all actors to ensure a principled humanitarian response with a particular focus on the respect for IHL, protection of civilians with a focus on the needs of the most vulnerable.

Panelists:

- Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock
- Norwegian Refugee Council Secretary-General Jan Egeland
- Reach Out Cameroon Executive Director Esther Omam Njomo

Guiding Questions:

- What can the UN, Member States, regional organizations, and humanitarian actors do to make sure affected populations in Cameroon are receiving humanitarian assistance?
- What challenges do humanitarian actors face in gaining safe accesses to IDPs and refugees and how can they be addressed?
- What more could UN offices and agencies do to protect civilians and address humanitarian needs, and what support do they need to respond to challenges on the ground?

Format:

Following introductory remarks by the co-hosts and the panelists, members of the Security Council may speak and ask questions for no more than five minutes each.

All member states as well as permanent observers and NGOs are invited to attend. Requests from members states, permanent observers, and NGOs to speak should be addressed to the co-hosts prior to the Arria and will be accommodated at their discretion. Interpretation will be provided. The Arria will be open to the press.

Outcome:

There will be a chair summary.