
COVID-19 Coronavirus: WFP and FAO, hunger and famine alert. Beasley, “250 million people at risk”

(From New York) Within a few months, famine could become a “very real and dangerous possibility” for “over 250 million people”, said David Beasley, UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director, at a virtual session of the UN Security Council. The crisis generated by COVID-19 could push an additional 130 million people to the brink of starvation, besides those who are already enduring wars, famines and natural disasters. Mr Beasley painted a grim picture. “300,000 people could starve to death every single day” if we do not provide our “life-saving humanitarian assistance”. But to do that, “we need peace”. For this reason, the WFP Director called on conflict-riven countries to give “swift and unimpeded” humanitarian access to vulnerable communities so that they can implement preventive measures and set up a network of logistics hubs, for which an additional \$350 million is needed. “We do not have time on our side, so let’s act wisely – and let’s act fast”, Mr Beasley stated, insisting on the importance of prevention. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), added that conflicts have generated food insecurity in 55 countries including Yemen, which has experienced an unprecedented malnutrition crisis, and Burkina Faso where famine has increased tenfold due to forced displacement. The two heads of the food programmes voiced their concern about the impacts of COVID-19 and the economic shock that will ensue. Although it is still difficult to quantify the latter, we are beginning to see the effects, the most acute of them being certainly hunger. “The world is not only facing a global health pandemic but also a global humanitarian catastrophe”, Mr Beasley stressed.

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