PRESS STATEMENT ON THE FAMINE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN

On 20th February, 2017 the Government declared famine in two Counties of South Sudan – Leer and Mayandit. More than 100,000 people in the two Counties of Unity state are confirmed to be experiencing famine and there are fears that the situation will spread as an additional 1 million South Sudanese may be affected in other areas. The calamity is the result of prolonged civil war and rising economic hardship that almost affected the entire country. The classification of famine in parts of country highlights the human suffering and widespread humanitarian crisis caused by the three-year-old civil war.

Today, an estimated 5.5 million people in South Sudan are severely food insecure of which 250,000 children are confirmed to be malnourished. Traditionally, the country’s breadbasket such as Equatoria and Upper Nile regions have been hit hard by insecurity that displaced million of people: Consequently, this has disrupted agricultural production and livelihoods activities in these areas. Also, the food insecurity in South Sudan has been compounded by erratic rains fall in 2016.

In response to the famine in Leer and Myandit and to prevent further escalation of food insecurity, H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit spelled out the TGoNU’s key priorities to address humanitarian crisis include; unhindered access to areas hit by the famine affected by food insecurity in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Equatoria areas; revival of the struggling economy; and the implementation of national dialogue initiative.

Humanitarian organizations on the other hand are vigorously appealing for funding to respond to the escalating crisis, with US$1.6 billion required to provide life-saving assistance and protection to some 5.8 million people across South Sudan in 2017. The South Sudan’s Country Humanitarian Coordinator Dr. Eugene Owusu has noted that “to avert further catastrophe, it is imperative that humanitarian are able to act swiftly and robustly.”

Given the increasing severity of the humanitarian crisis across Country, The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM) and RRC, plans to collaborate with humanitarian agencies and other government institutions responsible for humanitarian intervention in the country to coordinate responses to deliver timely and effective assistance to affected population and to prevent further escalation of the crisis.
To this end, the government and the humanitarian actors should not only respond to famine in the two counties but also accelerate efforts to reduce the impact of food insecurity to the affected population; this is to prevent further suffering.

In view of this worrying scenario, the Ministry plan to put the following strategies in place:

- Coordinate with humanitarian actors in South Sudan to develop a strategy that ensures humanitarian assistance is provided in a well-coordinated manner and in a way that addresses both immediate needs as well as long term solutions.

- Formation of the Famine Response Committee to monitor and coordinate the humanitarian responses and Access challenges in areas worst affected by famine and prevent further escalation;

- Establish coordination and information centre at the Ministry Headquarters to facilitate information sharing of humanitarian responses with the help of UNOCHA;

- Strengthen and operationalize Early Warning and Response system at the State levels.

- In collaboration and support from Inter-Cluster Working Group – ICWG. The impacts of famine, can be reduced through mitigation and preparedness;

- Complete the process of legislation of the National Disaster Reduction Management Policy – it will enhance coordination and identify roles and responsibilities of all humanitarian actors.

The Ministry at the same time is coordinating with other government institutions and all humanitarian actors to implement;

- The Humanitarian Response Plan 2017-2018 and

- Framework for Return, Resettlement and Reintegration of Displaced Persons by the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) of South Sudan.

Last but not least, we call upon all South Sudanese people: Political leaders, Community leaders, business sector, civil society groups and Faith-based organizations leaders to embrace the President’s call for constructive National Dialogue that aims to bring a lasting peace in the country.

The Ministry wishes to remind the people of South Sudan that the lasting solution to this an imaginable humanitarian crisis is sustainable Peace and Reconciliation, “South Sudan has enough resources and climate to feed itself”.

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