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Humanitarian situation in Ukraine and the humanitarian response

Report of the Emergency Relief Coordinator

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [ES-11/1](#) entitled “Aggression against Ukraine”, which was adopted on 2 March 2022 and in which the Assembly requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator to provide, 30 days after the adoption of the resolution, a report on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and on the humanitarian response.

The period covered in the report is from 24 February to 24 March 2022. The report sets out the context of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, including the needs of affected people, and the humanitarian response, by the humanitarian community, including United Nations entities, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and international and national non-governmental organizations. The report does not cover the situation and response in Ukraine’s neighbouring countries.

The United Nations and humanitarian partners reached at least 890,000 people with humanitarian assistance between 24 February and 24 March 2022 under the flash appeal launched on 1 March 2022. Various forms of assistance were provided, including food, shelter, blankets and medicine, and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies. The United Nations and humanitarian partners have increased their presence and activities across the country to respond where needs are most acute, complementing the efforts of the Government of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, local civil society groups, religious communities, the private sector and community-based organizations, as well as private individuals who are on the front lines of supporting Ukrainians in their hour of greatest need.



As the armed conflict continues, with devastating effects on the people of Ukraine, the United Nations and the humanitarian community will continue to rapidly scale up the humanitarian response across the country and continue to advocate respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need in the country.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution ES-11/1, adopted on 2 March 2022 by the General Assembly at its eleventh emergency special session. In paragraph 13 of the resolution the Assembly requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator to provide, 30 days after the adoption of the resolution, a report on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and on the humanitarian response. The Assembly reiterated this request in paragraph 12 of its resolution ES-11/2, adopted on 24 March 2022. The period covered in the report is from 24 February to 24 March 2022.

II. Humanitarian situation in Ukraine

2. Since the start of the military offensive of the Russian Federation in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated rapidly and with devastating impact. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has recorded 2,685 civilian casualties in the country, amounting to 1,035 killed and 1,650 injured (including 90 children killed and 118 injured) as at 24 March. Most civilian casualties are attributed to the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, including shelling from heavy artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, and missile and air strikes. OHCHR believes that the actual casualty figures are higher as the ability to collect and verify information from many locations is severely hindered owing to the ongoing hostilities. Such locations include the cities of Mariupol and Volnovakha (Donetsk oblast), Iziurm (Kharkiv oblast), Sievierodonetsk and Rubizhne (Luhansk oblast), and Trostianets (Sumy oblast).

Affected people

3. In the period between 24 February and 24 March 2022, more than 10 million people in Ukraine were displaced¹ owing to the hostilities – almost 25 per cent of the country's population of 41.4 million. The figure includes the more than 3.6 million people who had fled across international borders to neighbouring countries, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,² including more than 1.8 million children, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).³

4. For the more than 6.5 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine,⁴ forced to flee or shelter in crowded spaces with limited sanitation facilities and access to health services, the risk of outbreaks of infectious diseases, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), cholera, polio, tuberculosis and diarrheal diseases, continues to rise. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the west of Ukraine hosts around 40 per cent of all internally displaced persons. The majority come from east Ukraine (37 per cent) and from Kyiv (30 per cent).

5. Another 12 million people remain stranded within affected areas across Ukraine, unable to leave owing to the ongoing clashes, the destruction of bridges and roads and a lack of resources or information on where to find safety and appropriate

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Ukraine IDP figures: general population survey", 17 March 2022.

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Operational Data Portal (accessed on 24 March 2022).

³ UN News, "One month of war leaves more than half of Ukraine's children displaced", 24 March 2022.

⁴ IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, "Update on IDP figures in Ukraine", 18 March 2022.

accommodation.⁵ These people are directly exposed to heightened insecurity and are almost completely cut off from basic supplies, including food, water and medicine.

6. Third-country nationals present in Ukraine have also been affected by the conflict, and face specific risks, with reports of discrimination, xenophobia and harassment against them as they try to leave the country. IOM estimates that there were more than 470,000 third-country nationals in Ukraine prior to the conflict, including asylum seekers and refugees from other regions, as well as foreign students and workers. It reports that, as at 22 March, 186,470 third-country nationals from over 138 countries had fled Ukraine for Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Slovakia.⁶

Vulnerable groups

7. The conflict is deepening a pre-existing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Eight years of conflict in eastern Ukraine have already left 2.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance on both sides of the former contact line in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. More than 30 per cent of the people in need in these two oblasts are older persons, according to the 2022 *Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ukraine*, which was produced by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs before the escalation of current hostilities. This is the highest percentage globally of older persons affected by conflict in a single country. In many instances, older persons and persons with disabilities have been unable to flee hostilities or access shelters, aid and medical assistance, remaining at great risk of injury or abandonment. Ukraine is home to many persons with disabilities, estimated at 6.6 million by the Global Protection Cluster, a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and United Nations entities.⁷ The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons have called jointly on the parties to prioritize the evacuation of individuals who are older and those with disabilities from all conflict-affected areas, including the cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson.

8. Women and girls face an increased risk of gender-based violence, both in conflict-affected areas as well as during displacement. Most refugees are women with children, and many women travel alone, making them more vulnerable to gender-based violence, including the risk of conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking. OHCHR has received reports of cases of different forms of gender-based violence in the country, including sexual harassment and violence. IOM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) hotline services that offer specialized counselling in relation to gender-based violence, sexual harassment, violence, counter-trafficking and assistance to migrants provided more than 15,000 consultations between 24 February and 24 March. The lack of or disruption to essential services, such as emergency medical services, health care and social services, put women and girls at a greater risk of adverse health outcomes. According to UNFPA, an estimated 80,000 women will give birth between March and May in Ukraine – many of them without access to critical maternal health care if the crisis continues to shut down essential services.

⁵ Protection cluster, “Ukraine response protection snapshot”, 10–16 March 2022.

⁶ IOM, “Regional Ukraine response situation report #9”, 21 March 2022.

⁷ Global Protection Cluster, “Protection of persons with disabilities in Ukraine”, 8 March 2022.

Disruption to public services and damage to infrastructure

9. The escalating conflict has severely limited or halted the provision of public services across the country, including electricity, heating, transportation, telecommunications, health services and education. The Government of Ukraine estimates that at least \$100 billion worth of infrastructure, buildings, roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and other physical assets has been destroyed in Ukraine.

10. Schools and education facilities across the country are closed or teaching through online formats. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, as at 23 March, 548 educational facilities had been damaged amid the hostilities, 72 of which had been destroyed.⁸ The education cluster in Ukraine, led by UNICEF and Save the Children, estimates that access to education has been affected for about 5.7 million children and adolescents between 3 and 17 years of age.

11. Health services and facilities have come under tremendous strain owing to the lack of medical supplies and to damage sustained by medical facilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) has verified 72 attacks on health care as at 24 March, representing a rate of more than two attacks per day, causing 71 deaths and 37 injuries since 24 February.⁹ Severe disruptions to supply chains and the inaccessibility of medical stockpiles owing to the ongoing hostilities are hindering or halting treatment and care for the sick and wounded.

12. The number of people in Ukraine without access to electricity and gas increases daily. The Ministry of Energy reported on 22 March that more than 865,000 users in nearly 1,320 settlements across Ukraine remained without electricity in the country and that 291,000 users had been cut off from gas supplies.

13. Water and sanitation facilities have also been damaged by shelling, affecting access to safe water. In Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (east), humanitarian partners report that many settlements have been completely cut off from the water supply. The water, sanitation and hygiene cluster estimates that around 1.4 million people lack access to water in Ukraine, while access remains limited for another 4.6 million.

14. The business sector in Ukraine has been similarly affected by the dire consequences for peoples' livelihoods. More than 50 per cent of businesses have shut down completely, while the other half are operating well below capacity.¹⁰ As the armed conflict escalates, the work force in the country is either on the move, fleeing for safety or hunkering down in shelters or homes, or is volunteering or being conscripted to fight in the conflict.

15. Ongoing armed conflict and the disruptions to essential public services are also negatively affecting agricultural activities. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the armed conflict may prevent farmers from accessing their fields, harvesting and marketing current crops, planting new crops or sustaining livestock production. In a preliminary assessment, FAO suggests that, because of the armed conflict, between 20 and 30 per cent of the areas under winter cereal, maize and sunflower seed production in Ukraine will either remain unharvested or will not be planted, with the yields of these crops also likely to be adversely affected.¹¹ FAO reported on 4 March that world food prices had reached

⁸ "Education in emergency" (saveschools.in.ua) (accessed on 23 March 2022).

⁹ World Health Organization, "Surveillance system for attacks on health care" (accessed on 24 March 2022).

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme, "The development impact of the war in Ukraine: initial projections", 16 March 2022.

¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Note on the impact of the war on food security in Ukraine", 25 March 2022.

their highest point in the 61-year history of its Food Price Index, pushed higher by supply chain issues and the crisis in Ukraine.

16. The sheer scale of the ongoing hostilities and destruction threatens to reverse decades of hard-earned development gains and poverty reduction in Ukraine and expose the Ukrainian people to extreme economic vulnerability.

Humanitarian needs

17. Prior to the start of the Russian military offensive on 24 February, humanitarian assistance in Ukraine was geographically limited and small in scope and scale. An estimated 2.9 million people in the country were in need of humanitarian assistance at the start of 2022, with humanitarian partners aiming to reach at least 1.8 million people in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, including 144,000 internally displaced people (of whom 24,000 were living in other oblasts across Ukraine – only 1 per cent of the overall population that humanitarian assistance aimed to reach). The financial requirements for the planned 2022 response were estimated at \$190 million as at 11 February 2022.

18. The Russian military offensive has prompted a stark projected increase in people in need, along with a significant expansion of the geographical areas where humanitarian assistance is required. Humanitarian needs are most acute in the hardest-hit cities in Ukraine, particularly those that are encircled and/or subject to shelling from heavy artillery, rockets, missiles and air strikes. This concerns, for example, Mariupol and Volnovakha (Donetsk oblast), Iziium (Kharkiv oblast), Sievierodonetsk and Rubizhne (Luhansk oblast), as well as Trostianets (Sumy oblast), where the extent of civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure is unknown.

19. Millions of people in Ukraine have limited financial means to meet their immediate and medium-term needs for basic items and services. According to World Food Programme (WFP) estimates, after one month of conflict, 45 per cent of the people in Ukraine are worried about not having enough food. WFP estimates that one out of five people in the country are already using coping strategies, such as reducing the size and number of meals. Adults are also sacrificing meals or eating less in order for children to have more.

20. Because of the destruction of private housing and residential buildings, it is vital to provide safe and adequate shelter for the affected people. For those who are unable or unwilling to leave their homes, the full range of humanitarian assistance is needed, such as construction materials to cover damage to their homes, temporary accommodation, warm clothes, blankets, fuel, food items and access to power and connectivity, safe drinking water, medical assistance and protection services. An initial survey by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Ukraine,¹² identified the heightened and distinct needs of women and girls, as well as other vulnerable groups, affected by the displacement, including the need for relief from threats to safety, sufficient access to shelters, livelihoods and income support, psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence, connectivity, legal assistance and social services.

21. Several factors compound the severity of humanitarian needs in Ukraine, including the harsh winter conditions, for example, in Mariupol, where the lack of water, electricity, gas and heating is contributing to severe suffering in temperatures that have dropped to minus 5°C. The presence of mines and explosive remnants of war

¹² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), “Rapid assessment: impact of the war in Ukraine on women’s civil society organizations – results from a UN-Women survey conducted between March 4th and 10th 2022”.

further intensifies the needs of the affected people. Prior to the current conflict, approximately 2 million people had been exposed to the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war in eastern Ukraine on both sides of the former line of contact. Ukraine is among the most contaminated countries in the world, ranking fifth in the world for civilian casualties owing to landmines and explosive remnants of war. According to estimates provided by the Association of Deminers of Ukraine, 82,525 km² of the country are contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war.

22. Amid ongoing hostilities, the potential for an environmental health catastrophe is an additional threat. According to WHO, the air pollution level in Kyiv remains categorized as unhealthy, with the fine particulate matter (PM2.5) concentration in the capital currently more than 12 times higher than the WHO air quality guideline value. On 21 March, another potentially serious environmental health concern emerged when the Sumykhimprom chemical factory in Novoselytsia (Sumy oblast, north-east) – located just 6 km south-east of the city of Sumy – reportedly started to leak ammonia after having been shelled, contaminating a roughly 2.5-km zone around the facility. Moreover, military attacks near or on nuclear electrical generating stations pose an incalculable risk to the safety of the population living in the area and beyond the borders of Ukraine.

III. Humanitarian response in Ukraine

23. Prior to 24 February, Ukraine had already established the humanitarian coordination architecture for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, including a humanitarian country team that was overseen by a Humanitarian Coordinator who coordinated the humanitarian response of more than 100 organizations in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, working on both sides of the former contact line in the areas of education, food security, health, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

24. Based on a contingency plan developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee prior to the Russian military offensive, the humanitarian community adapted quickly to the escalation of hostilities. On 24 February, the Secretary-General allocated \$20 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to immediately scale up life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection to civilians.

25. The public services of Ukraine, local NGO partners, the private sector, religious communities, local civil society, community-based organizations and private individuals have played a pivotal role in the provision of immediate assistance. These operational front-line actors reach the affected people across the country, capitalizing on their networks, understanding and knowledge of the local context. In the first days after the launch of the Russian military offensive, the Government of Ukraine established a Coordination Centre for Humanitarian and Social Affairs in order to facilitate relations with diplomatic missions, international organizations, NGOs and Member States and ensure the coordinated delivery of humanitarian assistance to the country.

26. On 25 February, the Secretary-General appointed a Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine to lead and coordinate the United Nations operational response on the ground. The Crisis Coordinator, at the level of Assistant-Secretary-General, serves as the most senior liaison with the Government and de facto authorities in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts and leads the inter-agency response, including with NGOs. Moreover, an inter-agency United Nations operations centre in Geneva was established on the same day to help the humanitarian community to provide around-the-clock monitoring and support. In order to further support the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, the Emergency Relief Coordinator also designated a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator on 26 February.

27. On 27 February, the Humanitarian Coordinator allocated \$18 million from the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund to support the best-placed partners delivering life-saving assistance, including mobile health programmes, trauma and psychological first aid, safe drinking water, cash for food, and shelter, among other priority interventions. With increased donor contributions, the Fund has allocated \$30 million since 24 February with an additional \$50 million allocation already under way.

28. Within five days of the launching of the Russian military offensive, the United Nations developed a comprehensive picture of overall needs in the country, which it presented in the context of the humanitarian appeals it launched in Geneva on 1 March in support of the people of Ukraine. In the first appeal, the flash appeal for the humanitarian response in Ukraine, \$1.1 billion was requested to help more than 6 million people in need for a period of three months, from March to May 2022. In the second appeal, through an inter-agency regional refugee response plan, \$550 million was requested to protect and assist refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries for a period of six months, from March to August 2022.

29. These humanitarian appeals have generated a generous donor response. Some \$468.5 million in funding had been recorded in the Financial Tracking Service for the flash appeal as at 24 March. The Ukraine crisis has generated an unprecedented public response, demonstrated by the individual donations from 143 countries, amounting to more than \$3 million for the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund.

30. With the scale-up of the operations, additional United Nations entities, international and national NGOs are joining the coordinated response. As at 24 March 2022, more than 100 partners, including 37 national NGOs, reported having planned or implemented activities in all sectors of the response, with the highest number of partners working in the health sector. More than 80 organizations are engaged in the response to the health needs of the population, providing much needed support to hospitals and mobile clinics. Even though the actual number may be much higher – particularly with regard to national NGOs – this figure represents a 200 per cent increase in the number of health partners. As the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need is the current priority and the monitoring systems are being re-established, the number of partners engaged in the humanitarian response is likely to be much higher than what is currently reported. Most operational humanitarian partners are national NGOs.

31. More than 1,000 national and international personnel of the United Nations were working in Ukraine as at 24 March. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has added a surge capacity of more than 50 colleagues to Ukraine and Poland in order to strengthen its presence on the ground and to support the Crisis Coordinator, the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator. Experts were deployed for leadership roles in the areas of coordination, community engagement, information management, public information and reporting, protection, addressing gender-based violence, cash programming and civil-military coordination.

32. Prior to the Russian military offensive, the humanitarian response in Ukraine covered six sectoral areas: education; food security and livelihoods; health; protection; shelter and non-food items; and water, sanitation and hygiene. In early March 2022, four additional clusters were activated: camp coordination and camp management; logistics; emergency telecommunications; and nutrition. In order to support the further ramping-up of efforts by aid agencies, the Secretary-General allocated an additional \$40 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund on 14 March to provide Ukrainians with life-saving health services, food, shelter, protection and services to address gender-based violence, as well as to support flexible ways to distribute cash to people in need.

33. To support the work of the clusters and strengthen response coordination, the United Nations established operational hubs in Lviv, Uzhhorod, Mukacheve and Chernivtsi to service west Ukraine; in Vinnytsia to service central Ukraine; and in Dnipro to service the east, in addition to the operational hubs in Luhansk and Donetsk established previously. The United Nations further maintains a government liaison office in Kyiv and has appointed focal points to liaise with oblast authorities across the country.

34. On 18 March, the United Nations and partners completed the first convoy of urgent humanitarian aid to the city of Sumy in the north-east of Ukraine, one of the most conflict-affected areas of the country. The 130 tons of essential aid included medical supplies, bottled water, ready-to-eat meals and canned food that will directly help some 35,000 people. In addition to those items, the convoy brought equipment to repair water systems, which will help 50,000 people. Safe passage for the humanitarian convoy followed successful dialogue with and notification sent to the Ministries of Defence of Ukraine and of the Russian Federation, which was facilitated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

35. A humanitarian notification system has operated in Ukraine since 2015 to provide information on humanitarian operations so as to enhance the safety of humanitarian premises, personnel, equipment and activities in areas of active military operations in Ukraine. In the current dynamic environment, and on behalf of the humanitarian community, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has strengthened its engagement and dialogue on a suitably expanded humanitarian notification system with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Defence of Ukraine and of the Russian Federation. The system serves as a complementary set of data for military planners to ensure that air strikes or other kinetic operations do not impede humanitarian operations or people engaged in humanitarian activities.

Sectoral response

36. As at 24 March, 890,000 people had received some form of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, mostly provided in the east, with more than 430,000 people reached in Kharkiv oblast. Humanitarian partners have worked to procure large quantities of vital supplies, which have already been delivered to people in need across the country, and further supplies which are in transit within Ukraine, or on their way to Ukraine from other countries around the world. The actual number of people assisted with some form of humanitarian aid is likely to be much higher, as not all assistance is recorded and not all partners report on the number of people who receive their assistance. Humanitarian partners are currently re-establishing the monitoring system in the country, which will allow for the systematic tracking of needs, response and gaps in humanitarian assistance.

37. The humanitarian response is now coordinated across 10 sectors, with the provision of cash assistance as the preferred modality to address the basic humanitarian needs of affected people in a comprehensive manner. The humanitarian response is guided by the Accountability to Affected Populations Framework, which outlines commitments to involve people affected by crisis in key decisions and processes that concern them, and supports listening to and acting upon the voices of people, as well as the full commitment to zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse in the humanitarian response across Ukraine.

38. In close collaboration with the protection and emergency telecommunications clusters, partners are reviewing the operational system of hotlines available to affected people. The hotlines are critical channels through which humanitarian

partners receive information on humanitarian needs and which allow them to influence the response, as well as being essential for enabling communities to have access to safe, accurate and vital information. The community-based complaint and feedback mechanism continues to be operational, which ensures a timely and effective response to allegations of possible incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, the swift deployment of a senior protection adviser and a senior gender adviser will help to ensure the centrality of protection and gender equality considerations in the humanitarian response.

Cash assistance

39. As of mid-March, markets and the banking system were still reliable in many parts of Ukraine with sufficient liquidity. Cash programming was determined as a priority response modality, as it increases the ability of people in need to meet their immediate basic needs, reduces the risk of their resorting to negative coping mechanisms and maximizes the use of resources in a way that is most suited to their preferences. Several organizations have started to pay out \$75 per person per month, for an initial period of three months, with the intention of expanding activities.

Camp coordination and camp management

40. Partners under the newly activated camp coordination and camp management cluster support local authorities in the identification of new locations for shorter-term reception centres and longer-term collective centres, thereby ensuring a coordinated multisectoral response is provided in sites, including by setting up efficient referral mechanisms and mapping existing accommodation for newly displaced persons.

Education

41. Education partners are facilitating access to temporary learning arrangements and distributing educational and recreational supplies for children and adolescents. Furthermore, education partners are supporting the enrolment process for displaced children and initiatives that enable children with disabilities to continue their education. Organizations are also working with protection partners to provide psychosocial care to children, teachers and caregivers, and to support social workers and staff in various educational institutions. Mobile teams provide case management for the most vulnerable families with children, including those at risk of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, in coordination with the respective line ministry and local authorities.

Emergency telecommunications

42. Partners under the newly activated cluster are scaling up communication services and data connectivity services, as humanitarian responders require reliable data connectivity and a communications network to operate. Telecommunications are equally important for effective communication with affected people, in order to better understand the needs and act upon people's preferences and priorities. Only a few days into the crisis, between 3 and 5 March, the emergency telecommunications cluster conducted an initial assessment of the information needs of the affected people, in order to inform the response.

Food security and livelihoods

43. The food security and livelihoods cluster is coordinating life-saving food and livelihoods assistance. The cluster reached an estimated 800,000 people between 24 February and 24 March. WFP has mobilized food supplies to assist 3 million people inside Ukraine and is putting in place the systems for delivery. As at 24 March, WFP had provided food assistance to 716,000 people in Ukraine and is planning to scale up gradually to reach 1.2 million people by mid-April and 2.4 million people by May. Ongoing rapid needs assessments led by FAO indicate that food shortages are expected immediately or in the next three months in more than 40 per cent of oblasts. It is uncertain whether and where the harvest of existing winter crops or the planting of new crops can take place, or whether livestock production can be sustained. Preparedness to cultivate this spring is severely compromised owing to supply chain disruption and poor access to or availability of agricultural inputs, including animal feed, seeds, fertilizers and equipment, as well as shortages of fuel and labour. The immediate concern for FAO is to ensure that rural households are able to plant vegetables and potatoes from now until mid-May. Funding received will support 23,000 people in 92 villages in severely affected oblasts, comprising multipurpose cash assistance with agricultural inputs for household vegetable production. Planning is under way to cover additional key agricultural inputs, including cereal seed, fertilizer, plant protection products, animal feed, feed additives and/or ingredients and veterinary medicine, in close collaboration with local and national authorities.

Health

44. Health partners are providing much needed assistance to hospitals and mobile clinics. The health cluster reached an estimated 522,000 people between 24 February and 24 March. Assistance provided includes emergency health, trauma and emergency surgery kits, as well as essential medicine for chronic diseases and vaccines and support for mental health and psychosocial support. As at 22 March, WHO had delivered about 150 tons of medical supplies to support trauma, surgical and primary health care in Ukraine. Hundreds of tons of medicine and medical supplies are in the pipeline. Emergency operations centres are being established in eight oblasts to coordinate the emergency health response. Risk communication and community engagement materials on breastfeeding in emergencies and severe stress management have also been developed.

Logistics

45. The newly activated logistics cluster provides coordination and logistics services to humanitarian partners, including transport and storage services in Poland and Ukraine. On 10 March, the cluster facilitated the transportation of over 44 tons of emergency supplies to Lviv, the first of many common transport services organized since the escalation of the crisis. As at 23 March, the cluster had facilitated the transportation of more than 192 tons of emergency supplies to Ivano-Frankivsk (Ivano-Frankivsk oblast), Lviv and Uzhhorod (Zakarpattia oblast, west) and the storage of over 720 m³ of relief items. The logistics cluster plans to facilitate the transportation of more than 770 tons of relief items and provide 2,859 m³ of storage space.

Nutrition

46. The newly activated nutrition cluster collects data to facilitate the analysis of partners' locations in Ukraine, their capacities and the possibility of dispatching nutrition supplies to the most vulnerable populations, including children and pregnant and breastfeeding women. The nutrition cluster currently estimates that more than 450,000 children between the ages of 6 months and 23 months need complementary food support. In partnership with the health cluster, the nutrition cluster supports mothers with early initiation of breastfeeding, and the cluster also closely coordinates with the food security and livelihoods cluster.

Protection

47. Protection partners conduct monitoring visits and provide protection services to displaced persons in transit and collective centres, and are delivering critical protection services, including explosive ordnance risk education, awareness-raising and emergency assistance, as well as providing psychosocial support through hotlines and through online and face-to-face counselling. The protection monitoring tool, applied by more than 20 partners in 16 regions, enables the protection cluster to monitor protection risks in-country, identify the most vulnerable people and determine the levels of access to and availability of essential protection services and shelters. A comprehensive directory of protection services and assistance, provided by protection partners across Ukraine, provides information on the facilitation of referrals by operational hotlines, non-protection actors and local authorities, including in cases of gender-based violence and child protection. National protection partners are critical in organizing evacuations, complementing the State service providers and the work of partners operating outside the cluster system. The protection cluster reached an estimated 24,000 people between 24 February and 24 March.

Shelter and non-food items

48. Partners provide repair and construction materials, including emergency shelter kits, tarpaulin, plastic sheets, timber battens, wooden planks and shatter-resistant protective film to help people living in damaged homes and institutions exposed to cold temperatures. Non-food items, ranging from mattresses, bed linens, pillows, sleeping bags and blankets to warm clothes and personal hygiene items, including sanitary pads and diapers, are distributed to individuals waiting at border crossings and train stations or taking refuge in makeshift shelters, as well as to those living in collective centres and institutions.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

49. The Russian military offensive has exacerbated pre-existing problems around safe drinking water in the eastern oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk. In many localities, damaged water infrastructure remains unrepaired, as shelling and growing insecurity make it impossible to carry out vital repair work, forcing people with limited or no access to water to resort to collecting rainwater or melting snow. Partners continue to provide safe drinking water by tanker to villages and towns whose water supply systems have been damaged, while also providing jerrycans filled with water and containers for people with access to wells and tanks to store water. In addition, bottled water is supplied to individuals. Family, menstrual and institutional hygiene kits are also provided to individuals in need and to health and social institutions in the affected

areas. Water, sanitation and hygiene partners also support local authorities in providing appropriate sanitation facilities in reception and collective centres.

Humanitarian access and response constraints

50. The lack of consistent and safe humanitarian access is significantly constraining the humanitarian response. Humanitarian access relates to the ability of humanitarian actors to reach affected populations, as well as the ability of those populations to gain access to humanitarian assistance and services. Access is therefore a fundamental prerequisite to effective humanitarian action. Full and unimpeded access is essential in order to establish operations, move goods and personnel to where they are needed, implement distributions, provide health services and carry out other activities, and for affected populations to fully benefit from the assistance and services made available.

51. The lack of humanitarian access impedes the humanitarian response in Ukraine, especially in cities in the east, including in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, where access was already severely constrained prior to the launching of the Russian military offensive. A pause in the armed conflict is essential to allow for the safe passage of civilians caught in the conflict to leave on a voluntary basis, in the direction they choose, and to ensure that life-saving humanitarian supplies can be moved in for those who remain, particularly older people in remote areas and people with disabilities, who are among the most vulnerable groups. Moreover, the growing presence of unexploded ordnance in large areas of Ukraine represents an additional challenge for humanitarian access, especially given that the regular clearance and survey activities of mine action partners have had to be stopped owing to the hostilities. Reports of landmines on major roads, including those leading into Mariupol and Kherson, pose a serious obstacle to humanitarian access.

52. As a result of the security situation, many aid organizations are currently concentrated in the west, where assistance to internally displaced persons is ongoing, while the most acute needs are in eastern and central parts of the country, where civilians are trapped in active hostilities. For some sectors, there is a limited number of national partners to support the response, which highlights the need to establish new partnerships so as to widen the reach of assistance. For example, at present, there is an insufficient number of local implementing partners and qualified personnel to support nutrition-related interventions.

53. Significant logistical constraints are hampering the response. Some partners are attempting to capitalize on local procurement and delivery but face challenges, as the capacity of markets and ability to procure supplies varies in different parts of the country. Many distributors are no longer operational and humanitarian stockpiles are inaccessible owing to insecurity. The challenge is compounded by the lack of drivers and vehicles in-country, which negatively affects the transfer of relief items from relatively safe locations in the west of the country to the hardest-hit areas in the centre and east.

IV. Observations and recommendations

54. **The United Nations humanitarian operations in Ukraine are guided by the core principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, in line with General Assembly resolution 46/182 and subsequent resolutions. Humanitarian priorities are determined solely by the needs of the affected population on the ground. Respect for these principles is essential in order to build trust and acceptance with communities affected by and parties to the armed conflict, and thereby secure safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian**

access. I hereby call upon the parties to uphold these principles, and to facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered access.

55. One month into the military offensive, civilians have been increasingly living in a climate of fear, subject to systematic bombardments, killings, injuries and displacement. Families have been separated. The risks of sexual violence and trafficking, in particular for women and girls, continue to rise. In many cases, children are alone, without their parents. Homes and civilian infrastructure have been damaged and destroyed. Civilians caught up in the most conflict-affected cities in Ukraine face growing needs as critical supplies, including food, medicine and basic hygiene items, are becoming increasingly scarce, and vital services such as health, electricity, water and sanitation are disrupted.

56. The parties must take constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects, including civilian infrastructure such as schools and water and electricity plants, as well as civilian objects necessary for food production and distribution. I call upon the parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, including the prohibition of attacks on civilians or civilian objects. Attacks carried out with the use of new technologies and cybermeans must also respect international humanitarian law.

57. I am alarmed by repeated reports of bombing and shelling in cities and populated areas, which are a major cause of harm to civilians. The destruction of vital infrastructure resulting from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has deprived civilians of access to essential services. I call upon the parties to the conflict to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, particularly given the significant and foreseeable likelihood of their indiscriminate effects. All persons, including civilian internees and prisoners of war, must be treated humanely regardless of their status or their religious, ethnic or political affiliation.

58. In the current environment, safeguarding the access of civilians and other protected persons to health care is vital. Repeated reports of attacks on maternity wards and medical facilities are disturbing. Medical personnel and/or humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other facilities, must be protected.

59. As part of their obligation to take constant care to spare civilians throughout military operations, I call upon the parties to the conflict to allow safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities, such as Mariupol, on an informed, dignified, safe and voluntary basis. Civilians deciding to leave under safe passage should be duly informed of the evacuation process, times and routes. All possible measures must be taken so that civilians are received under satisfactory conditions with respect to shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition and so that members of the same family are not separated. Civilians should be duly informed of their rights, including their right to return.

60. There have been concerning reports of third-country nationals fleeing the armed conflict in Ukraine and becoming stranded in vulnerable situations and potentially exposed to discrimination, violence or other human rights abuses and crimes. I call upon all Member States to extend their assistance to help everyone reach safety and get the care, protection and assistance they require.

61. Active fighting and growing insecurity have greatly undermined the safety and security of humanitarian operations and jeopardized the humanitarian response. National staff and local organizations, who often are the first responders, are particularly exposed to the dangers of hostilities. All parties to

the conflict must allow and facilitate the safe, rapid and unhindered passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need and must respect and protect humanitarian personnel and assets. It is prohibited to attack, harass, intimidate or arbitrarily detain humanitarian personnel.

62. I call upon Member States to further support the rapid scaling up of United Nations and humanitarian organizations' operations in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and encourage them to contribute financially to the United Nations humanitarian appeals in support of the people of Ukraine, including the flash appeal for the humanitarian response in Ukraine, to help more than 6 million people in need, and the inter-agency regional refugee response plan, to protect and assist refugees, third-country nationals and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries. The challenges are immense, and despite the generous response already received, funding remains well below what is needed.

63. Humanitarian needs have risen dramatically across the world owing to armed conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic, climatic shocks and extreme weather conditions. In tandem with the rise in peoples' needs is the increase in requirements for funding the response. The funding environment is challenging; however, insufficient funding should not be the cause of further hardship and suffering for affected people around the world. I call upon Member States to extend their generosity to alleviate all humanitarian crises, wherever there is need.

64. The rise in the number of reports of gender-based violence is of grave concern, and the need to mitigate the harm to women is urgent. The longer the armed conflict continues, the more it will affect gender equality and Ukrainian women's rights. I urge all Member States to do their utmost to protect the rights of Ukrainian women and to ensure that Ukrainian women's leadership is promoted in the humanitarian response.

65. The impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine on many other parts of the world, including on other humanitarian emergencies, is of grave concern. The surge in food, oil and gas prices is likely to affect millions of vulnerable people in countries already suffering their own humanitarian crisis. I call upon Member States to take the necessary steps and maintain multilateral cooperation so as to mitigate any secondary impacts and to care for the most vulnerable people, many of whom have endured unimaginable suffering for far too long.

66. I reiterate the call of the Secretary-General for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue. The United Nations stands with the people of Ukraine.