Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

The world needs more action

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“Tens of millions of people are in desperate need of humanitarian help through no fault of their own. They lack the basics to survive, like food, water, or shelter. Many have to flee their homes because of conflict, persecution, or environmental damage. They travel many miles under stressful and harsh conditions, sometimes crossing borders to seek safety in the only places they know – shelters, humanitarian aid camps, safe havens, or a caring friend or family’s home.

“On World Humanitarian Day, we should think about those in dire need. Last year, the number of people fleeing their homes reached an all time high of over 45 million. The situation has become so drastic that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have this year appealed for a record $13 billion to help them. From Mali to Syria, Yemen to the Central African Republic, this is an extraordinary year of humanitarian crises. Each such crisis must be met with extraordinary action.

“Action works. We know that from the individual humanitarian aid workers in the field, who put their lives on the line daily to bring help to people in need. They are an inspiration. People like Dr Denis Mukwege, a gynaecologist in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who runs a gynaecology clinic and is an outspoken advocate on preventing rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict, despite threats to his own safety. World Humanitarian Day honours these individuals, as well as marking the tragic end of Sergio de Mello, a career humanitarian who was killed on the front line in Iraq 10 years ago today, together with 20 other United Nations staff members.

“Countries can also act to help those in need. In Syria, the bold figures – 100,000 people killed, 7 million in need, overly 6 million people displaced – disguise the scale of the human tragedy. The United Kingdom is taking a leading role to bring relief to those in need. Our $530 million in humanitarian support has already provided food to 132,000 Syrians and clean water to 900,000 more. This response is not enough. Stopping the violence is the surest way to begin to address the spiralling humanitarian crisis. That is why we are strongly supporting UN efforts to bring the parties together to negotiate a political transition based on last year’s Geneva agreement.

“Actions by the international community have an impact. In Mali, where 1.4 million are in need of immediate food assistance, the international community united behind a French military intervention at the beginning of the year to drive out extremist terrorist groups from the north of the country. The UN Security Council took positive action by establishing a new UN peacekeeping mission that will help bring stability and provide the political space for Malians to resolve the root causes of the crisis. But further action is needed to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. An inclusive, national dialogue must take place to help bring peace and stability to the area. Without it, extremists will continue to exploit local grievances.

“The world needs more action. History shows that large-scale human suffering can pose a serious threat to international peace and security, causing each of us to be less safe. In this, the UN Security Council must play its part and take action to address the root causes of conflicts which give rise to humanitarian emergencies in the first place.

“You too must act. Get involved in the issues important to you and help bring a resolution to crises large or small. Show that you care about what’s happening in the world around you. Join the World Humanitarian Day conversation on

worldhumanitarianday.org

or on social media with #WHD2013. Give your thoughts on what you think our world needs. Contribute to humanitarian aid in the world’s most blighted places. Do what you can, in whatever way you can. Don’t let the tens of millions of people who suffer in humanitarian crises go unnoticed.

“Act now.”

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