



12 April 2018: More than 13 million people are now in desperate need of humanitarian assistance in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where violent conflicts have spread to new parts of the country. The crisis is on the same scale as Syria when it comes to people in need for aid, but it is referred to by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([UNOCHA](#)) as “[one of the most complex, but forgotten refugee crises globally](#)”.

Tomorrow, on Friday 13 April, UNOCHA, together with the Kingdom of Netherlands and the European Union, will host a [Humanitarian Conference](#) on the DRC in Geneva.

The Norwegian Refugee Council [stated](#) that a quadrupling of the current support is necessary to ensure affected communities receive immediate aid: "We cannot afford the pledging conference to be an 'all talk and no action' kind of event," said the Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council Jan Egeland; "Continued inaction would be measured in loss of civilian lives."

However, the DRC authorities have shown [reluctance](#) to join, saying they will boycott the conference because the UN's description of DRC's humanitarian crisis as "catastrophic" is false and gives the country "a bad image."

UNOCHA spokesman Jens Laerke says this is based on a misunderstanding, after the United Nations last year declared several regions in the country as a Level 3 emergency – the world body's highest-level emergency. "It is not a classification of the severity of a crisis. It is a classification that is internal to the UN system, so that we mobilize, so that we are able to respond to the crisis as it is," said Laerke.

He says the UN invitation to the DRC to attend the conference is still open, and that they hope the Government will change its mind and be present at the event tomorrow.

Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Sigrid Kaag, Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, who are both co-hosts for the event in Geneva, [visited](#) the DRC in March. Travelling to Kalemie in the south-eastern province of Tanganyika, they spoke with some of the people who living in the Katanika displacement site after having fled ethnic violence.

"What we know is happening in many parts of the country, doesn't need to persist if we work together," said Mr. Lowcock. "Every vulnerable Congolese family deserves all our support to rebuild their lives."

Currently, more than 5 million people have fled their homes and are internally displaced or have sought safety in neighboring countries. Yet the international response has still not matched the gravity of the situation.

"There is no excuse for doing nothing. There are 13 million reasons to care about DR Congo. Those lives are just as important and just as worthy as lives anywhere else in the world," Jan Egeland stated prior to the conference tomorrow.

UN humanitarian conference seeks aid for 13 million Congolese trapped in forgotten crisis

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