

Remarks by UNICEF Zambia Representative, Ms. Noala Skinner, at the launch of the Regional Refugee Response Plan for DRC, 23 May 2018

- Minister of Home Affairs
- Other Government Officials present
- My colleagues from the United Nations
- Representatives from Cooperating Partner Organizations present
- Members of the media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Zambia's reputation as a generous and welcoming country is well known throughout Africa, and indeed the world. The latest hospitality shown to those arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo shows that this legacy is very much alive and well.

As the Commissioner for Refugees has stated, 60 per cent of the refugees who have come are children...nearly a quarter are under five years of age. Under the leadership of the Government of the Republic of Zambia and our colleagues at UNHCR, UNICEF and other UN agencies are active at both the Kenani transit centre and the Mantapala re-settlement site, with staff now permanently on hand to support the response, especially in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene; in the protection and education of children; in health; and in nutrition.

Honourable Minister, I want to appreciate the unique nature of this response that has brought together Government, Ministries, Provincial and District departments working with UN agencies and other development partners to serve these most vulnerable refugees and host communities.

Thanks to funding from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund and the generosity of donors, more than 1,100 children attend activities at the child-friendly spaces run through our partner Save the Children, and at least 80 community members have been trained in basic child protection. With Plan International and Save the Children, we're building 24 classrooms, which will cater for 3,450 children, including those with special needs. Before these buildings are constructed, we're supporting temporary learning spaces that currently provide an education to 271 girls and 230 boys. We've procured school equipment and furniture, which are now on the way.

When it comes to water, sanitation and hygiene, the provision of safe drinking water has been a key concern. Through the interventions of UNICEF, World Vision, Oxfam, Norwegian Church

Aid and the Zambian Red Cross, among others, 253,000 litres of safe water are now being provided each day through boreholes and pumping-treatment stations. 381 emergency communal latrines and 346 emergency communal baths have been built, while we also promote the construction of household latrines and good hygiene practices, especially to prevent waterborne diseases like cholera.

On the health side, we are working through Plan International to build a new health post, which will be of enormous benefit to both refugees AND the Zambian host communities. In the meantime, under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and other development partners have supported the vaccination of more than 6,000 children against measles. Routine immunization is supported at registration, and severe medical cases are transferred to St Paul's hospital. For nutrition, an estimated 4 per cent of refugee children under 5 suffer from severe malnutrition, and since January, 252 children have been admitted for treatment. We've donated therapeutic food supplies, helped train community workers, and supported iron and folic acid supplements for pregnant women.

In all this, we aim for an integrated response to ensure that Zambian communities are also benefiting from the services being put in place. As our emergency funding comes to an end, more support will be needed as we seek a sustainable approach to the care of refugees and we thank our partners and donors in advance for their continued support and solidarity going forward so that we can continue to work ON THE GROUND in support of refugees and host communities.

As the Commissioner for Refugees has mentioned, and Honourable Minister you have seen for yourself, working in Nchelenge has some challenges – particularly with regards to the road network, which has slowed down resettlement, increased the cost of construction, and made medical referrals more difficult. We hope more can be done in this area, especially as the heavy rains come to an end.

Honourable Minister, with continued donor support UNICEF is committed to supporting Zambia in the refugee response so that we can play our part to help children and young people to be safe, well nourished, with adequate water and sanitation, learning and playing, and able to develop to their full potential.