

United Nations



Nations Unies

Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Democratic Republic of the Congo

PRESS RELEASE

The extremely serious humanitarian situation in Goma requires immediate attention from the international community

Kinshasa, January 30, 2025 – *The Humanitarian Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Bruno Lemarquis, reiterates his deep concern over the critical situation in Goma. After several days of intense fighting, the city is now facing the devastating consequences of the hostilities, with massive humanitarian needs and severely strained response capacities.*

Medical facilities are overwhelmed. Between 23 and 28 January, the hospitals in the city of Goma, supported by MSF, the ICRC and the WHO, treated more than 1,000 wounded, many of them civilians who had fallen victim to bullets and heavy artillery explosions. The lack of medicines, equipment and medical staff is jeopardizing the treatment of the wounded and increasing the risk of loss of life.

Basic services are largely paralyzed. Electricity and drinking water have been cut off for several days, forcing the population to draw directly on untreated water from Lake Kivu. This situation exposes thousands of people to the immediate risk of water-borne diseases such as cholera. The morgues are full, and the lifeless bodies left in the streets of the city pose a major health risk for the survivors.

Humanitarian infrastructure and warehouses have been looted, severely compromising the humanitarian response. Significant quantities of food, medicines, and essential medical supplies have been lost in targeted attacks on United Nations agencies and humanitarian NGOs critical to the emergency response. This loss delays the rapid delivery of aid to populations in desperate need. Humanitarian actors on the ground continue their operations despite extremely precarious conditions. However, **without additional resources, including the replacement of looted stocks, without the restoration of internet access, and given the security risks restricting humanitarian movements, the response remains severely hindered and intervention capacities greatly reduced.**

On behalf of all the humanitarian actors serving vulnerable populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I condemn in the strongest possible terms the looting of humanitarian facilities and warehouses. These acts are unacceptable and constitute a violation of international humanitarian law. They directly compromise the delivery of vital aid to the most vulnerable populations.

I call on all parties to protect civilians and ensure their access to goods and services essential to their survival. I also call on all parties to facilitate, accelerate and protect the supply of humanitarian actors. Without supplies of essential goods, fuel and logistical equipment, it will be impossible to meet the growing needs of the population and to maintain humanitarian operations in Goma.

I call for the immediate and sustained resumption of operations at Goma airport, a vital access point for humanitarian resupply, emergency response efforts, and the free movement of affected populations.

I also call for the strict respect of the rights of internally displaced persons and for all returns to be voluntary. Returns can only take place under safe, voluntary, and dignified conditions, in

accordance with international principles. It is imperative to ensure that displaced persons have a free and informed choice, as well as secure and viable conditions for their return.

I call on the international community to step up its support in the face of a worsening humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian actors remain on the ground, mobilized to scale up their response, but without adequate resources, the current crisis risks deteriorating even further. Immediate action is essential.

On behalf of the entire humanitarian community in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I reaffirm that the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence of humanitarian actors are absolute and non-negotiable. Their sole mission is to provide assistance and protection to vulnerable populations, regardless of political considerations.

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