

Two weeks since floods in eastern Libya, UN teams remain on the ground, providing humanitarian assistance and supporting early recovery

(Benghazi, 27 September 2023) Two weeks since devastating floods in northeastern Libya claimed several thousand lives and ravaged entire neighbourhoods, the United Nations and its partners remain on the ground and continue to provide critical humanitarian assistance and support to affected people in Derna, Benghazi, Al Bayda, Shahat and Soussa.

“As families grapple with their losses and consider their future, humanitarian agencies have stepped up to help them meet their basic needs,” said Georgette Gagnon, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Libya, following her second visit to Derna since the floods.

According to the World Health Organization, 4,255 deaths have been confirmed due to the floods, with 8,540 people still missing. Humanitarian needs remain critical. UN agencies found that half of the 78 health facilities assessed in Derna and parts of Al-Jabar Al-Akhdar are either partially or totally non-functioning. Rushing floodwaters also destroyed water networks and sewage pipes. Many families displaced by the floods are staying with host families, while others are sheltering in schools as local authorities find solutions for their housing needs. With the imminent start of the school year in eastern Libya, addressing the situation of displaced people staying in schools is an urgent priority.

United Nations agencies and partners, who were on the ground in the affected areas within hours of the floods, are providing safe drinking water, medical supplies, hygiene kits, school supplies, blankets, food items and psychosocial first-aid services to people, as well as supporting the establishment of six field hospitals.

Gagnon highlighted progress in ongoing efforts to remove debris and rehabilitate roads and deliver humanitarian assistance to affected people. Together with WHO and UNICEF, she reviewed access to essential health services and medical referral paths in Al Bayda and Shahat and met with displaced families in Derna.

Gagnon also thanked Libyan and international search and rescue workers for their tireless efforts to find survivors in the most difficult conditions and commended the search and rescue operation. Over the last 14 days, some 800 women and men from 12 countries have supported Libyan efforts on land and at sea. While many international teams have now demobilized, a number remain in Libya to support the Libyan-led recovery effort.

In meetings with local authorities, Gagnon discussed the importance of full access by humanitarian workers, and the need for strong coordination among relevant national and international stakeholders. She highlighted the need to accelerate early recovery efforts to advance longer-term reconstruction.

“What people in Derna and surrounding areas have experienced is tragic beyond words,” Gagnon said. “All the displaced families I met said they have one wish: For their lives to go back to normal. The outpouring of unity, solidarity and support shown by Libyans from all over the country gives me hope this will happen soon.”

United Nations agencies have appealed for US\$71.4 million to meet the immediate needs of 250,000 affected people in the next three months.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Amanda Price, amanda.price@un.org, +1 917 853 2839