On 11 March at the UN Security Council debate on conflict and food security, the UN Secretary-General called for a swift, coordinated response and appealed to Member States and partners to take action to prevent famine and a further deterioration in emergency levels of food insecurity. The Secretary-General established a High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine to bring attention and mobilize support for the most affected countries. The Task Force is advocating for additional resources to scale up humanitarian response and stop the advance of famine, promoting improved access to people in need, and have joining-up efforts to share data and real-time information.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and the World Food Programme (WFP), will convene a virtual high-level event to take stock of recent efforts to stop the advance of famine and famine-risk and give a clear direction of urgent actions the international community must take to address gaps in the current response to prevent further deterioration in the severity and scale of acute food insecurity.

In 2021, UN agencies confirmed that we now face an unprecedented Catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity, with half a million people (584,000) experiencing famine-like conditions (Catastrophe/IPC phase 5) in Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan, and Yemen. In recent months, vulnerable populations in Nigeria and Burkina Faso have also faced these same famine-like conditions (Catastrophe/IPC 5). In addition, 41 million people worldwide face emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 4), only one slight shock away from the edge of famine – a 50 per cent increase in just two years. Millions more are experiencing crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC 3) and at real risk of rapid deterioration.
Famine High-Level Event

The compounding impacts of climatic shocks, conflict and insecurity, adverse macroeconomic shocks, and the COVID-19 pandemic and its indirect socioeconomic impacts, on top of protracted food insecurity from past shocks, will likely continue to drive acute food insecurity and malnutrition for the remainder of 2021 into 2022. Limited resources have already meant major opportunities to reduce acute food insecurity have been missed and have forced partners to reduce rations in some instances, scale down critical livelihood support and make difficult prioritization decisions that have put many more millions of lives at further risk.

For the international community’s efforts to successfully avert the most severe outcomes, we must also invest in humanitarian diplomacy to increase adherence to international humanitarian law, which acts as a line of defense against hunger in armed conflict. This is well reflected in UNSC resolution 2417 which recalls the obligation of all parties to respect civilians and civilian objects, including those required for food production and distribution, and to allow and facilitate humanitarian access. Where conflict and food insecurity persist, vulnerable populations, such as displaced persons, women, and children are disproportionately impacted and face acute protection risks.

The international community must act urgently and at scale before it is too late for millions of people.

Event overview and objectives

- **Inform Member States and partners** about the efforts of the High-level Task Force on Preventing Famine over the last six months.
- **Raise awareness of the famine-like and acute food insecurity situation**, including its impact in terms of malnutrition and protection concerns, and highlight the remaining gaps and challenges.
- **Advocate for the timely mobilization of resources** that are flexible, frontloaded and unearmarked to facilitate multi-sectoral and rapid response and avert catastrophic consequences.
- **Appeal to ensure that civilian populations can safely access life- and livelihood-saving assistance, particularly in situations of widescale insecurity and armed conflict**, including through adherence to international humanitarian law as reflected in UN Security Council resolution 2417 (2018)
- **Commit to anticipate and act ahead of predictable crises** to mitigate the impact of shocks and reduce suffering through the use of early warning mechanisms, to release pre-arranged financing for collective early and anticipatory action, and to monitor through independent, real-time monitoring and impact evaluations.
- **Explore partnerships and solutions for preventing famine and addressing acute food insecurity**, as well as the critical role that international financial institutions can play, including the World Bank, IMF and regional development institutions.

Format and participation

This high-level event will take place virtually on **Monday, 4 October from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. New York (EDT) / 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Geneva (CET)**. The opening session will feature remarks by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mr. Martin Griffiths, FAO Director-General Dr Qu Dongyu, WFP Executive Director Mr. David Beasley, a possible Member State(s) and an NGO(s). The event will be moderated by a media anchor (tbc).

Following the opening session, Member States and partners will have the opportunity for interventions.

This event will be managed using a virtual platform. Participation through the virtual platform is by invitation only. Invitations will be sent to all UN Member States and Observers in New York and Geneva; Inter-Agency Standing Committee members; IFRC and ICRC; international financial institutions, NGOs and other relevant organizations.

The event will be held in English and streamed live on UN Web TV.

More information regarding the format and technical requirements of the meeting will be shared in due course with registered participants.
Agenda (tentative)

Opening Session: 10 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.
- Moderated by a media anchor (tbc)
- Opening remarks from USG/ERC Martin Griffiths
- Remarks from FAO DG Qu Dongyu
- Remarks from WFP ED David Beasley
- Remarks from Member State (tbc)
- Remarks by NGO(s) (tbc)

Interventions from the Floor: 10:25 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.

Closing Remarks: 11:25 a.m.-11:30 a.m.