

Hunger Must Never Be 'Weapon Of War': UN Chief

AFP:: UN chief Antonio Guterres on Monday said food must not be used as a weapon of war as world leaders gathered for a food summit in Africa, where 280 million people face hunger and starvation.

The African Union, for its part, urged donors to provide greater support for the world's poorest continent, which is struggling with poverty, unrest and the effects of climate change.

"Hunger fuels instability and undermines peace. We must never accept hunger as a weapon of war," Antonio Guterres told the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa via video link.

"Climate change is disrupting harvests, supply chains and humanitarian aid," he said.

"Conflict continues to spread hunger from Gaza to Sudan and beyond," he warned amid a severely deteriorating crisis in Gaza, whose population of more than two million is facing famine and malnutrition.

The World Health Organization has warned malnutrition in the occupied Palestinian territory has reached "alarming levels" since Israel imposed a total blockade on Gaza on March 2.

In late May, it began allowing a small trickle of aid to resume but more than 100 NGOs have warned that "mass starvation" was spreading in the besieged territory.

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The summit takes place against the backdrop of aid cuts by the United States and other Western nations that are badly affecting much of the developing world.

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, head of the African Union's executive commission, said food insecurity was on the rise across Africa, blaming "climate shocks, conflicts and economic disruptions".

"At this crucial moment, how many children and mothers on the continent are sleeping hungry?" he asked.

"Millions, certainly. The urgency of the situation is beyond doubt."

Youssouf said that more than 280 million Africans were malnourished, with "nearly 3.4 million... on the brink of famine".

Roughly 10 million people had been displaced due to drought, floods and cyclones, he added.

Youssouf urged AU member states to devote 10 percent of their gross domestic product to agriculture to help foster "nutritional resilience".

"But we cannot do this alone. We call on our partners to honour their commitments to finance and support African solutions," he said.

Sudan is "the largest humanitarian catastrophe facing our world and also the least remembered", Othman Belbeisi, the regional director of the UN's migration agency, IOM, told reporters last week.

Since April 2023, Sudan has been torn apart by a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, commander of the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

The fighting has killed tens of thousands and displaced more than seven million people.

