



Mercy Corps Statement
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
High-Level Humanitarian Event on South Sudan
25 September 2018, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Good morning. I'm Megan Doherty, Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy at the global humanitarian and peacebuilding organization, Mercy Corps. I thank OCHA for organizing this discussion as well as the panelist, Angelina Nyajima for her powerful words. Her courage in addressing gender-based violence is a model to all of us.

Mercy Corps' 185-person staff in South Sudan provides lifesaving support to tens of thousands of South Sudan's most vulnerable people, and we remain committed to standing in solidarity with the South Sudanese in their pursuit of peace. I will outline two main challenges facing our team in South Sudan and offer recommendations for how the donor and civil society communities can work together to address them.

Mercy Corps faces significant bureaucratic and security challenges that often impede or weaken our ability to execute operations. Our chief financial concern is the unpredictability of bureaucratic fees and procedures that delay our operations. Our country team recently calculated that Mercy Corps must navigate a system of at least 23 separate taxes and fees with multiple national and state government entities.

Secondly, our field staff faces egregious threats and violence. Due to the deterioration of the security situation, Mercy Corps was recently forced to make the difficult decision to relocate one of our remote field offices to a larger town in Western Equatoria. We reached this heart-wrenching decision after our staff suffered four armed robberies in the same community in a two-month period.

How can the United Nations and donor governments support Mercy Corps and other NGOs? Let me offer two recommendations.

First, we must support efforts by the South Sudan NGO Forum and OCHA to categorize fees and processes to promote predictability and consistency in the operating environment. Any changes in fees or procedures should come with a significant period of adaptation clearly outlined via official governmental communique. We must work to limit new fees for humanitarian service delivery, since any fee on our organizations reduces the resources for our frontline services to vulnerable populations.

Second, we must focus on coordination, ensuring that donor governments, NGOs, and UN agencies conduct collective humanitarian policy advocacy. We know that we are most successful in ensuring humanitarian access when advocacy efforts have been coordinated and

targeted, and Mercy Corps would welcome a more consistent opportunity to partner with the diplomatic community to present our access and security challenges.

Together we can ease human suffering in South Sudan and create a stable environment where peace is possible.