ABUJA, Nigeria, September 14 (Infosplusgabon) - Noting important progress in delivering life-saving aid to millions in north-east Nigeria, the top United Nations humanitarian official has underscored that international assistance to people suffering amid the crisis must not dwindle.

“We have averted famine, but millions of people are still at risk if more international help is not forthcoming,” said Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, at the end of a two-day mission to the country.

“At next week's General Assembly in New York, I will urge world leaders to maintain their financial and political support for the Lake Chad Basin crisis, and to work with the Nigerian authorities to bring stability to the north-east,” he added, according to a UN statement.

In particular, Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, noted the Nigerian Government's leadership and coordination of relief efforts and welcomed Vice President Yemi Osinbajo's assurance to extend the Government's own food aid programme.

He also highlighted that the international system has also rapidly scaled up and saved millions of lives, reaching two million people with food assistance every month as well as providing

life-saving nutritional support to hundreds of thousands of children.

However, the humanitarian situation remains precarious.

Since the beginning of the Boko Haram conflict, more than 20,000 people have been killed, thousands of women and children abducted, many forced into displacement, and subjected to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. In north-east Nigeria, at least 8.5 million people are dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Recalling his visit to Gwoza – a town which Boko Haram declared capital of its territory in 2015 before Government forces took it back the same year – and meeting Fatima, a nine-year-old girl who fled with her family to the town four years ago, Mr. Lowcock said that though many towns in the region are relatively safe, more needed to be done to bring safety to the rural areas.

“In the meantime, Fatima and millions of others like her will rely on humanitarian assistance,” he noted.

Mr. Lowcock travelled to Niger and Nigeria from 9-12 September, shortly after beginning his roles as the top UN relief official on 1 September.

While in the two countries, he also held meetings senior government officials, UN humanitarian agencies, international non-governmental organizations and the diplomatic community.

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