

UN chief arrives in flood-hit Pakistan, urges massive support from world

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Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, walks with Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, upon his arrival at the Islamabad International Airport in Islamabad, Pakistan, on September 9, 2022. (Photo by Press Information Department)

Islamabad, September 9 (RHC)-- The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Pakistan on Friday for a two-day visit to show support and solidarity with the South Asian country hit by devastating floods.

The UN chief was received by Pakistan's deputy foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar upon his arrival in Islamabad, with officials hoping that his visit will boost international support for the massively flood-hit country. "I have arrived in Pakistan to express my deep solidarity with the Pakistani people after the devastating floods," Guterres said in a tweet.

During the visit, Guterres will be visiting the worst-affected places in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan and will meet with Pakistan's prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, according to Pakistani media reports. He will also convene a press conference with top Pakistani officials and visit the National Flood Response and Coordination Centre (NFRCC).

Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement that the UN chief will have meetings with the Pakistani leadership and senior officials "to exchange views on the national and global response to this catastrophe caused by climate change." "The secretary-general's visit will further raise global awareness about the massive scale of this calamity and the resulting loss of life and widespread devastation," the statement noted.

Pakistan's information minister Marriyum Aurangzeb also issued a statement, saying the visit will "make the world better understand the devastation caused by the floods." The UN chief's visit to Pakistan comes less than two weeks after he launched a \$160 million appeal to help the millions "shattered" by the devastating natural calamity in Pakistan.

In a video posted on his Twitter account on August 30, the UN chief termed the flooding a "monsoon on steroids." "I appeal for massive support from the international community as Pakistan responds to this climate catastrophe," Guterres said at the time.

The South Asian country has seen record-breaking floods since mid-June brought by monsoon rains and glacier melt in northern mountains, killing at least 1,391 people and displacing some 33 million others.

Prime Minister Sharif, after visiting flood-hit areas that cover almost a third of the South Asian nation on Wednesday said that parts of the country appeared "like a sea." "You wouldn't believe the scale of destruction there," Sharif told reporters after a visit to the southern province of Sindh. "It is water everywhere as far as you could see. It is just like a sea."

Foreign Minister Zardari said on September 1 that the floods were "a climate disaster of biblical proportions." "Pakistanis at this point in time, are paying in their lives and in their livelihoods for a climate disaster that is not of their making," he said.

Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's planning minister, in an interview with Reuters on August 29, said people have "lost their complete livelihood" in the devastating floods, while stressing that the country was a victim of climate change caused by the "irresponsible development of the developed world."

He further said the economic losses incurred due to flooding could amount to at least \$10 billion.

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