

UN reports Horn of Africa hit by drought and cholera

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Photo taken on Oct. 9, 2022 shows flooded houses in the Ahoada West area of Rivers state, south Nigeria. | Photo: NAN via Xinhua

United Nations, October 30 (RHC)-- Amid the worst drought in 40 years, Horn of Africa countries have been hit by outbreaks of cholera and acute watery diarrhea, while fighting in northern Ethiopia continues, according to a UN spokesman.

The start of the October-December rains has been poor, and rainfall will likely continue to be below average. It would make this the fifth consecutive year of a failed rainy season, said Stephane Dujarric, the chief spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "This could lead to a greater spread of cholera and waterborne diseases," Dujarric told a daily press briefing. "At least 29 countries have been impacted since January of this year."

He said the World Health Organization reported a shortage of cholera vaccines due to strained global supplies resulting from the high number of outbreaks globally. Because of the outbreak, the two-dose vaccine strategy will switch to a single-dose approach to save lives.

"But this will further compromise the health and lives of vulnerable children and lactating women, who are severely malnourished," he said. The spokesman said that with thousands of people displaced in

congested urban areas, there is limited access to water, health and malnutrition services -- a recipe for greater and more outbreaks.

In Ethiopia's Oromia region, 238 cases and seven deaths have been reported, while in the Somali region of Ethiopia, 35 cases and two deaths were recorded.

Kenya declared an outbreak on Oct. 20, and all counties were put on high alert, fearing the drought could worsen the situation. Six counties reported 94 cases and two deaths, he said.

Somalia reported, as of this month, approximately 11,300 cases of acute watery diarrhea or cholera since the beginning of the year, he said.

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