



Press Release

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Launch of 2007 Humanitarian Appeal

SECRETARY-GENERAL ASKS FOR \$3.9 BILLION IN LIFE-SUSTAINING

ASSISTANCE AT LAUNCH OF HUMANITARIAN APPEAL 2007

Amid Unprecedented Wealth, Essentials for Needy Remain Unavailable, He Notes

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan this morning asked for \$3.9 billion for basic life-sustaining humanitarian aid and protection in answer to the call of 27 million people across 29 countries whose lives were crippled by "conflict and calamity", as he launched the Humanitarian Appeal 2007.

Introduced by Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Annan said those 27 million individuals — overwhelmingly women and children — subsisted on the very margins of society in places like Somalia, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They sought a hand up, rather than a handout.

"In our era of unprecedented prosperity, they are the ones for whom, more than anyone else, the essentials of existence — clean water, life-saving drugs, emergency shelters — remain essentially unavailable," he said, noting that \$3.9 billion amounted to approximately the same price as two cups of coffee for each citizen of the world's wealthy countries. Africa remained the continent most in need this year, though previous appeal funds had made a remarkable difference. "With our help, my fellow Africans are transforming despair into hope, and hatred into healing. They are resourceful and resilient, and they deserve our continued strong support."

Noting that today's event would be his last Humanitarian Appeal, the Secretary-General said that while seeking funding for assistance and protection programmes in previous years, he had been dismayed that donors had given only two-thirds of the "bare-bones" requirements on average. "I believe we should, and can, do much better — better as nations, better as the United Nations, and maybe even better as individuals."

The Appeal is based on the Consolidated Appeals Process, a tool for aid organizations to plan, coordinate, fund, implement and monitor their response to disasters and emergencies, in consultation with Governments. The process contributes significantly to the development of a strategic approach to humanitarian action and encompasses host Governments, donors, aid agencies, the Red Cross movement, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies.

Opening today's event, Mr. Egeland said humanitarian work was a question of life or death for tens of millions of people. Great progress had been made in 2006, with 97 million people in 82 countries having been fed and some 30 million children vaccinated against measles in emergency situations. Thousands of emergency health facilities had been supported and thousands of emergency education facilities created. Drinking water had been provided to millions, in addition to protection and assistance for some 20 million refugees and displaced persons.

"In 2007 we need to do even better," he said, adding that in the process leading up to this year's event, appeals had been analyzed, needs assessed and strategic goals developed by some 170 organizations that had come together. That process had produced 13 strategic plans, called consolidated appeals. In order to enhance transparency and effectiveness, they were specific about what should be funded, how much it would cost and what would be accomplished.

It was unacceptable that more money could not be found to fund humanitarian programmes fully, he said, pointing out that the world spent \$1 trillion on military, and billions on agricultural subsidies. The Appeal was a mere sliver compared to that amount. Generosity had been uneven, with the most generous donor in 2006, Sweden, having given five times more in terms of gross domestic product than the tenth most generous. If others improved their performance only partially in relation to the most generous donor, the Appeal could be fully funded.

In 2006, 65 Governments contributed to appeals – slightly less than the 74 Government donors in 2005, which was heavily influenced by the tsunami, but greater than previous years. Among other donors, the United States, European Commission, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Japan topped the list in 2006 in channelling emergency relief funding to crises through the consolidated appeals in countries where they exist. The United Nations is hopeful that, in 2007, this improvement can be built upon with a common commitment to reach 100 per cent funding of all appeals.

Paying tribute to the Secretary-General, who for 10 years, had guided, promoted and defended humanitarian work while helping to reorganize it, Mr. Egeland said a two-thirds funding of the Appeal, as with the 2006 Appeal, was not good enough. In many situations, two-thirds funding meant that children would die, mines would remain in place and health stations would not be built. The best way to thank Mr. Annan was to fund the 2007 Appeal fully.

Denis Mukwege Mukengere, describing his experiences as Director of the Panzi Hospital in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, said that since 1980, HIV and AIDS had joined the number of calamities. As if that was not enough, the new phenomenon of sexual violence had emerged in the country's eastern part since 1999. Women were often raped in public, or in front of their families, by several men, acts that were frequently followed by the mutilation of the victims' genitalia, resulting in infections, incontinence and a heightening of the HIV risk. Although it was not certain that the purpose of the practice was to decimate an entire population in the east of the country, the rapes were driven not by sexual desire, but a desire to destroy the family, the community and an entire people. Rape was a weapon of mass destruction.

Thanks to the partnership of non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, as well as the support of donors, the Panzi hospital could provide assistance to many victims, he said. Over the last five years, more than 10,000 women victims of sexual violence had been treated, though they were a mere part of the total number, as only victims with surgical problems were transported to hospitals. 10 per cent of women would never be cured owing to mutilation of genitalia and urinary tract infections. Many victims suffered from psychological trauma and some victims took their own lives by refusing treatment. The Panzi hospital worked with non-governmental organizations and the media to sensitize communities to the situation. It had also organized a mobile team that sought out victims in their hiding places.

Also participating in today's launch was Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Jordan, Goodwill Ambassador for the World Food Programme, who said the issues had not changed much over the last 10 years, adding, "new faces, new initiatives, but the same old problems". Yet, in that time, giant strides had been made in the fight against poverty. Millions more children had been vaccinated and benefited from education. Despite the perennial concerns voiced over the lack of funds, official development assistance had been rising steadily.

She said that, although any necessary measures should be taken to make United Nations aid agencies more efficient, the need for improvement should never be used as an excuse to hold back funds required for the delivery of essential services. "Whatever its critics might say, the UN aid agencies represent by far the largest humanitarian network in today's world, and there are millions of people benefiting from their efforts, any of whom would simply not survive otherwise."

People often expressed the notion of aid as a moral obligation or duty, though assisting others should never be a burden, she said. "The giving of aid is a privilege, a blessing, and with the giving comes responsibility." All too often, the need for assistance was brought on by man-made problems, such as conflict, unfair trade practices and irresponsible exploitation of natural resources. While natural disasters were inevitable, man-made crises should be prevented. "We all live on the same planet, and in this era of globalization, there can never be a 'them' and an 'us'."

A 10-minute film entitled *Surviving and Rebuilding* showed experiences from humanitarian field work, which underlined and illustrated the speakers' points.

The \$3.9 billion requested would benefit 27 million people and fund 13 appeals covering the following countries, regions or territories: Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Great Lakes, Guinea, Liberia, Nepal, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Congo, Chechnya (Russian Federation), Somalia, the Sudan, Uganda, West Africa and Zimbabwe. The financial tracking of appeals and all humanitarian funding can be accessed at www.reliefweb.int/fts, and further information can be found at www.humanitarianappeal.net.

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