

## HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND OTHERS TO LAUNCH 2011 HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

**Valerie Amos**, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, held a press conference at the Palais des Nations in Geneva today on the occasion of the launch of the 2011 Humanitarian Appeal. She was joined in the press conference by **Kenichi Suganuma**, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations Office at Geneva; **William Lacy Swing**, Director-General, International Organization for Migration; and **Pierre Salignon**, Director-General, Medecins du Monde.

**Ms. Amos** said they were here today because tens of millions of people would need emergency aid to survive in 2011. Many were among the most vulnerable people in the world, already suffering from mal-nourishment, disease, or violence. Conflicts and natural disasters would make things worse and they would need help. The 2011 Humanitarian Appeal was asking for the resources needed to give that help. United Nations agencies, non-governmental aid organizations and other humanitarian stakeholders had come together to analyse the needs and had developed action plans aimed at saving lives and giving access to basic services. Meeting the emergency needs of the 50 million people in these crisis situations would require \$ 7.4 billion. This was the largest amount that they had ever requested; 425 aid organizations were aiming to help 50 million people, the largest ever number of targeted beneficiaries, and this reflected the scale, depth, frequency and complexity of crisis situations around the world, from Haiti, Niger and Djibouti, to Chad, West Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Part of the context for the 2011 Global Appeal was the fact that vulnerabilities remained high: people's ability to withstand shocks was weakened, even in countries without a major crisis. Food and fuel prices were still well above historical averages. This year showed how easily a deeply vulnerable region like the Sahel could fall into acute crisis, and they saw that in Niger and Western Chad most dramatically. Conflict was still a dominant feature in the lives of many of the people in the countries in this appeal. Abuse of civilians by armed groups continued in the Central African Republic, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan's Darfur region and Somalia. There was continuing conflict in Afghanistan. In the occupied Palestinian territories, travel restrictions and other constraints could have life-threatening consequences. In Sudan, the fear of returned conflict prevailed. This year also saw two mega disasters: the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods. But humanitarian donors rose to the challenge despite the global recession. Thirteen billion dollars in international humanitarian funding had been received from private and government donors towards 150 disasters around the world. This was the most ever recorded in a single year. Strong political support and the generosity of private donors continued. Their task for 2011 would be to sustain that support.

In response to a question on whether the appeal for Sudan took into account the upcoming referendum and a possible new independent State, and how her trip to Sudan went, **Ms. Amos** said that there were two different elements in terms of their planning. One was what they identified on the needs in Sudan next year, regardless of the outcome of the referendum, and the second was the contingency planning they had put in place bearing in mind the possibility of large scale movements of people and the possibility of renewed conflict, particularly in the border areas. On her visit to Sudan, Ms. Amos said that it was clear that the people of the south wanted an opportunity to express their views in the referendum process. She was struck by the need for greater attention to be given to development in the south of Sudan, where basic infrastructure and service provisions remained extremely poor. In the Darfur region, there were continuing issues around people in the camps, continued violence in some of the camps, which was making lives difficult for the people there, ongoing skirmishes and problems with security in parts of Darfur, which made humanitarian access extremely difficult. The Government of Sudan had put together a Darfur Strategy to enable people to return to their places of origin, but the United Nations had made it absolutely clear to them that people's security had to be guaranteed, there had to be a degree of stability and security, all returns had to be voluntary, and basic services had to be provided. This continued to be a tense

time in Sudan as political negotiations continued around citizenship, assets, wealth sharing and other issues.

In response to a question about the two mega crises, Haiti and Pakistan, neither of which had received all the money they had appealed for, and whether this made her anxious about receiving the \$ 7.4 billion they were asking for, **Ms. Amos** said that if they looked at the average across the appeals processes, they were on average 50 to 60 per cent funded. Haiti was 73 per cent funded and Pakistan was 50 per cent funded. There was an issue with respect to the impact of the global financial crisis, but also the impact of the rise in the number of disasters, the complexity of these disasters and the need to always seek additional funding. They also needed to think again about how they financed these appeals, what more they could do in terms of increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, and what more they could do in relation to helping countries to prepare more effectively in terms of looking at their vulnerability to risk and in relation to preparing for disasters.

In response to a question on the cholera epidemic in Haiti and why it looked as if what was being done was not effective, **Mr. Salignon** said from the field perspective in Haiti, the needs were everywhere. Non-governmental organizations like Medecins du Monde were doing their best to answer to the new emergencies. There was a need to strengthen the international capacity to deal with the cholera epidemic. It would also depend on the mobilization of the international community, and they also needed to be sure that the international commitments to build back the country would be respected. If they did not have a concrete reaction today and in the future, they would have a second earthquake, a social and economic earthquake this time.

Answering another question, **Ms. Amos** said that the \$ 7.4 billion was for 14 appeals covering 28 countries, as some of these were regional appeals. The appeals for Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan were additional to the \$ 7.4 billion requested.

Responding to a question on how the aid operation in Haiti was still seen as not delivering, and whether they were concerned that this could affect funding for next year, **Ms. Amos** said she was of course concerned if there was any perception that they were not delivering with respect to their mandate. People did not acknowledge the context sufficiently in Haiti. Even before the earthquake, fewer than 40 per cent of the population had access to basic healthcare, and fewer than 50 per cent had access to clean water. In Port Au Prince, 85 per cent of the inhabitants lived in slums or in poor housing. There was now the earthquake, the impact of seasonal flooding and Hurricane Thomas and the cholera epidemic, so that was three emergency situations in a year. They needed to remember the scale of the humanitarian response; they had managed to feed millions and give them access to healthcare. Humanitarian needs continued, but at the same time they had overlapping development or early recovery needs and longer term reconstruction needs.

Also responding to the same question, **Mr. Swing** said that he agreed with Ms. Amos's accurate analysis of the context in Haiti. He was in Haiti in the 1990s when they were trying to get out of difficulties, and in fact Haiti had been moving forward when the earthquake occurred, but it was a country which even then had extremely limited capacity in some areas. Everyone was trying to do three things at once. The International Organization for Migration and its UN partners were still working on the 2008 floods in Gonaives, on top of that dealing with the earthquake and beginning to try to transition to some form of reconstruction, but still with 1.3 million people who were still displaced. None of these were short term problems. There had been some weaknesses, they all knew that they were less than totally coordinated. A cluster system was making great progress, but it was something that over a period of time had to develop. The real issue now would be the sustainability of the situation.

In response to a question on the response to the cholera epidemic, Ms. Amos said that there were three important things: one was to raise awareness of the fact that people did not have to die from cholera. There had to be attention given to better hygiene, and making sure that people understood the importance of washing their hands and sanitation. Second, cholera was very simple to treat, so access to dehydration points was important, and third, there was a need to make sure that cholera treatment centres and units were available. In the longer term, they could look at the issue of

vaccination. Now the focus was on good hygiene practices, supplies for oral rehydration points and making cholera treatment units available.

Answering another question, Ms. Amos said the appeal was only launched an hour ago, so it was too early to say how the donors would react. There were some countries around the world that worked very hard to protect their humanitarian and development budgets. There were pressures on the donors as a result of the global financial crisis. The United Nations' challenge was to demonstrate that their work made a difference and saved lives.

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