

**Press conference by Valerie Amos, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator**

**Islamabad, 09 September 2010**

**Near-verbatim transcript**

This is the first week in my role of Emergency Relief Coordinator, and given the scale of the disaster facing Pakistan, I wanted to visit here. I wanted to make sure that the world remembered what is happening here. I wanted to give recognition and talk to the teams of humanitarian workers, all of them doing a very good job in very difficult circumstances. I wanted to talk to the Government of Pakistan who has been leading the relief effort, and I wanted to talk to some of our donors. I am very glad I came.

Next week I will launch the next phase of the appeal focused on the large unmet needs. When I do that, I will be speaking on behalf of the people I have met and on behalf of millions I have not. So what are my impressions? I traveled to Sindh Province and to Nowshera [in Khyber Paktunkhwa]. In different parts of the country they are experiencing different stages of this crisis. Each of these is a big disaster in its own right. In some areas the flood waters have receded and the relief effort is focused on early recovery activities. In other parts of the country, particularly in Sindh province, the flood waters are still spreading and a new disaster is happening literally every day. Millions more people have been displaced over the last two weeks. The point I want to make is that this is an immense and still evolving crisis.

In any other context what is happening now would be seen as a huge crisis in its own right. But after several weeks of flooding in Pakistan, it seems that these terrible floods and the immense human suffering that accompanies them are no longer news. We have to change that. People are still hungry, which could lead to malnutrition. Skin diseases are on the rise because of lack of soap and clean water for washing. Diarrhoea is also on the rise. We need to make every effort to avoid a potential health crisis. Every day, new settlements are being set up, more people are turning to us for help and we need to respond.

In addition to my visit on the field I also met with the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Chairman of the NDMA. I met with NGOs, the UN team here and other officials. They are equally as involved as we are working to their absolute limit to meet these expanding requirements. The disaster is bigger than the UN can deal with alone, bigger than the humanitarian community can [deal with alone]. It is one of the biggest disasters the humanitarian community has ever faced. And I know that we will need new ways of working, new ways of funding, and new donors and we will need our current donors to do much much more.

We can and we must continue to stabilize and alleviate suffering. I will be doing all I can to raise awareness of the scale of the crisis. The world needs to understand that this is not just “business as usual”. For millions of people far away from the cameras in this room there is an immense tragedy which continues to unfold. The human implications of what will happen if not enough is done are terrible. Many millions have lost everything. They have nothing to go back to. Without money there is a real limit to what we can do and that is why I will be allocating an additional 10 million dollars from the Central Emergency Response Fund to the Pakistan flood crisis and I will be asking all of our supporters to dig deeper and to do more.

**Question: I am Nawab Shah from Geo Television and my question to the Under Secretary General is that today in your Nowshera visit due to some security problem you had to quickly windup your visit. Do you think that security concerns can hamper the work of the humanitarian workers? Thank you.**

**USG:** Well, of course humanitarian workers have a huge amount of expertise and experience working in extremely difficult situations and not just here in Pakistan but in other parts of the world. So while we recognize that security concerns have to be taken seriously, our job is to balance that need of security and the duty of care that we have to our staff, with the urgent need to get basic services to people. Everywhere I have gone and all of the humanitarian workers that I have spoken to — they absolutely recognized that and I was delighted this morning that I had an opportunity to talk to people in the camps to get a sense of the difficult situation that they all face and to get a real sense of what they really want to do—to leave the camp, to go back, to rebuild their homes and to have the opportunity to rebuild their lives. We’ve got to focus both on the emergency response, really making sure that people have access to basic services but also to early recovery.

**QUESTION: This is Nayyar from daily Jammu and Kashmir. Ma’am as you know Pakistan is facing so many problems like flood, disaster etc. My question to you is how long you will continue to support Pakistan?**

**USG:** I don’t think that this is something that we can put a date on. What we have to do is to look at the need and try to get funding for those needs to continue our work.

**QUESTION: Hi. Good afternoon. My question is regarding the comments that so many people are making that most of the donors are directing their assistance to setting camps directly in the province destroyed by the Taliban. Is this true, is it really happening?**

**USG:** We are certainly not targeting our assistance to any particular province. What has happened is that the waters have come down from the north through to the south so we’ve had to scale up our efforts in certain parts of the country and there are other parts of the country where we’ve not had people on the ground but we’re addressing that.

**QUESTION: This is Mazhar Iqbal. I am from A-TV. First of all I’d like to thank that you have just made an appeal to the international community that they should respond to the disaster. Madam, we have the impression here in Pakistan that the main hurdle is that we are not receiving response from the international community. As a responsible person of an international body how would you view the trust deficit phenomenon here in Pakistan?**

**USG:** I think it’s important to remember that in addition to the resources that have come in through the UN appeal process there are many many donors who have given direct assistance from their government to the government of Pakistan so the figures that you see from us represent only a proportion of the aid which has come in and what I will be appealing to our donors to do is to scale up

their efforts in the light of those huge unmet needs which still exist here because of what has happened in the way that this crisis has unfolded.

**QUESTION: This is Mian Iftikhar Sharif from Saudia TV. A wide number of relief from foreign countries which was provided to Pakistan was sold in the black market. Do you believe that this kind of news will affect the donations process for Pakistan?**

**USG:** Well, if there are relief items which are falling into the wrong hands then we will investigate that because what we are seeking to do with our relief effort is to make sure that the needs of the people of Pakistan who have suffered as a result of the floods are met. So anytime we see our emergency supplies being diverted in that way we will of course investigate against the root of the problem.

**QUESTION: I am from German Radio Deutsche Welle You just mentioned briefly that you were looking for new ways of donating funds. Could you elaborate a bit on that?**

**USG:** It's less about new ways of donating funds. There are whole range of things that have become clear to me in the last two days. The scale of our efforts needs to be increased, and capacity needs to be increased but I also recognize that as a world community we are facing larger and larger disasters. Can we just operate in the way that we have operated in the past? I don't think so. So we need to find new ways of working, new systems of funding and these are things that I will be talking to partners and others about in the coming week because I don't want another situation like this to occur and for the UN but also our partner NGOs and others to be caught out in this way.

**QUESTION: My question is regarding security concerns.**

**USG:** There's no doubt that we are operating in a complex environment here in Pakistan. I think we all recognize that. As I said before humanitarian workers are well experienced and have great expertise working around the world in difficult environments including difficult security environments. Our task will be to get the balance right in terms of protecting our workers and our NGO partners and others will be doing the same thing and ensuring that we're doing all we can to alleviate suffering. So that's what we are going to be doing.

**QUESTION: You have announced an additional 10 million dollars for Pakistan from the emergency response fund. What is the total amount at the moment and what is the capacity of the response plan?**

**USG:** The amount that I am announcing is specifically from the Central Emergency Response Fund, which as a fund is the third largest donor overall to Pakistan in the context of wider appeal that was launched.

**QUESTION: I want to ask what the plans for the early [phases of the] crisis are and what are [are] the long term rehabilitation plans?**

**USG:** The long term rehabilitation plans are being discussed with UNDP, the World Bank and other donors. What I am going to be seeking to do next week--and we have been talking to all our agency partners and NGOs--is to launch the next phase of the appeal, which will cover both the emergency phase--the fact is that in some parts of the country like Sindh the emergency is very very real and new-- but also looking to fund stages of what we call early recovery, supporting people to go back to their home to restore their livelihoods. That's what we'd call early recovery work, and it aims to really encourage people to get back into economic activity so that they are really able to rebuild their lives.

**QUESTION: How UN is getting along with National Disaster Management Authority in Pakistan and can you tell what amount or figure you will be launching in your next appeal?**

**USG:** You can find out what figure next week on 17 September when we make the launch. In terms of our relationship with the national disaster authority we have a very good relationship. I met the chairman and other people and they briefed me on what work they are doing here in Pakistan.

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