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United Nations
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Improving lives and helping people



Humanitarian Assistance to IDP's in Pakistan

Humanitarian funding better than ever-- but aid for Pakistan lagging

(Islamabad/New York, 21 July 2009): Humanitarian Appeals have received the best funding of all time by mid-2009, according to the United Nation's Mid-Year Review of Humanitarian Appeals, released in Geneva. The appeals have received 49% of funds needed so far, the best ever at this time of year in percentage terms and by far the most in dollar terms.

Humanitarian funding for Pakistan, which is currently the fourth largest displacement crisis in the world, is still lagging behind other appeals, with just 43% of the required \$542 million provided so far.

The largest donor of aid against the appeal for Pakistan remains the United States, which has provided nearly half of the funds so far.

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Japan, the United Kingdom, the Central Emergency Response Fund, and Australia round out the top five. Globally, the top recipients of aid, in absolute dollar terms through appeals are Sudan, the occupied Palestinian territory, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Pakistan. The most under-funded crises, in terms of percentage of aid received, are Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Iraq and region, Pakistan and Uganda.

"While I am pleased that the most essential humanitarian needs such as food are better funded for Pakistan, I am stymied by the lack of funding for other urgent assistance," said Wolfgang Herbringer, Acting United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Pakistan. "In particular, now that people are returning to their homes, they will need assistance for some months to come, including for early recovery efforts, for which the funding is simply shockingly low," he said. "I do not think the international community has given the depth and extent of this humanitarian crisis the attention that it deserves," he added.

Funding required for global crises has escalated sharply from \$7.8 billion in the original 2009 appeal launched in November 2008 to an unprecedented \$9.5 billion on behalf of over 40 million people currently in need. The increase is due to significantly changed ground realities in some countries, including Pakistan, where displacement has crested to over two million people. The original Pakistan response plan requested \$52 million, a number that has increased more than ten-fold.

Globally, the outlook for the remainder of the year is dim. The global recession continues to put pressure on crisis-stricken people in poor countries: jobs – already rare – are lost; remittances from relatives abroad decline; food and fuel prices remain high; farming inputs become harder to access, making food production less secure. Moreover, economists project that the world economy will contract by 1.7% in 2009 before expanding again in 2010.

The World Bank estimates that before the end of the year the crisis will push an additional 90 million people into poverty, bringing the number of poor in the world to over 1 billion.

As vulnerable populations are pushed deeper into poverty, with basic needs in food security, health and education starting to go unmet, there is likely to be a rise in distress migration, malnutrition, and social unrest – all factors that will increase the number of people who need humanitarian aid.

Nearly 400,000 displaced Pakistanis returning home, says UN official

23 July 2009- Almost 400,000 people, out of the more than 2 million who escaped Government militant clashes in northwest Pakistan, have now returned to their homes, the top United Nations relief official in the country announced. Wolfgang Herbinger, the acting UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan said that more than 385,000 people have now returned to their homes in the past 10 days since authorities for the uprooted to return to some parts of Buner and Swat, among the areas hardest hit by the operations pitting Government forces against militants in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). With the onset of the monsoon season and the needs of the returnees remaining acute, "this is a critical time for the complex humanitarian situation in Pakistan," Mr. Herbinger told reporters in the capital, Islamabad.

The Coordinator said that to mitigate the impact of the heavy rains, relief agencies are working to prevent outbreaks of water, sanitation and hygiene-related diseases in camps. The vast majority of the nearly 2.3 million people who have escaped the violence are sheltering either in schools and other public buildings, with host families or in rental accommodations.

The pace and scale of returns in the near future will depend on the security situations in the areas to which internally displaced persons (IDPs) will be returning, Mr. Herbinger said, adding that stepped up efforts are crucial to provide assistance to the returnees so that they can re-establish their lives.

With more than 80 per cent of people in the conflict-torn areas relying on agriculture for the bulk of their livelihoods, "household incomes took a battering" due to the recent violence, said Richard Fuller, Senior Emergency Coordinator for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), addressing the same press conference.



WFP has reached more than two million IDPs since fighting resumed in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province in May 2009

Providing essential live-saving assistance, such as food aid, must be followed by aid in reducing dependence and resuming normal lives through timely support for the restoration of agriculture, he said. It is estimated that two-thirds of food and cash crops may have been lost in some parts of NWFP during the clashes, one in three livestock animals having been lost across the area.

Early recovery efforts are centering on the concept of "building back better," with the foundation being laid for long-term targets to ensure that people's lives are better than they were before the violence broke out.

Agriculture, Rural Development, and Poverty Reduction

Top UN Asia-Pacific official pushes for pooling of fiscal resources to beat recession

28 July 2009 - Large-scale government stimulus packages are closed off to many nations across Asia and the Pacific, the top United Nations official for the region told a gathering of senior finance and central bank representatives, promoting a cooperative approach to jumpstarting economies out of the global recession.



Senior finance and central bank officials from Asia and the Pacific at their meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh

"We need to recognize that not all countries have the fiscal space to implement countercyclical measures at significant scales due to budget constraints," Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said yesterday. Shrinking resources and other fiscal issues have left several countries in the region with little room to manoeuvre in their efforts to reignite suffering economies, Ms. Heyzer said in a message to the regional highlevel workshop on the role of monetary, fiscal and external debt policies in responding to the financial crisis.

In her address, Ms. Heyzer pointed to the international community's response to the crisis and noted that the Asia-Pacific region, with over \$4 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, can work together to spur recovery and restore economic growth. Ms. Heyzer added that ESCAP can bring countries together to share experiences and coordinate their development activities for greater regional results, as exemplified by the high-level meeting in December 2008 in Bali, Indonesia, on the food and fuel hike, financial market meltdown and climate change crisis.

"The huge scale of government spending in the pipeline in many countries offers an unprecedented opportunity to design policies that will bring about more inclusive and sustainable development," she told participants at the four-day workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The ESCAP workshop looking into various economic policies used by governments in the region to deal with the global financial crisis, hosted by the Bangladesh Bank, has brought together top officials from the finance ministries and central banks of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. Also attending are experts from international organizations, including those from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and civil society organizations.

Education

New UN online scheme allows free academic journal access to poorest nations

23 July 2009 - The United Nations has partnered with the scientific publishing industry to provide research institutions in least developed countries free access to online journals, the UN World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) announced at the launch of the scheme in Geneva.

The new UN-brokered programme, Access to Research for Development and Innovation (aRDi), will allow industrial property offices, universities and research institutes to subscribe free of charge to prominent science and technology publications including the American Institute of Physics, National Academy of Sciences, Oxford University Press and Royal Society of Chemistry, among others.



Francis Gurry, Director General of WIPO

The World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) provided advice and expertise gained from similar initiatives which offer access to journals in their respective fields of the UN agencies.

“Knowledge contained in scientific and technical literature is critical to the innovation process,” WIPO Director-General Francis Gurry said at the start of a two-day gathering of ministers and senior officials from discussing ways intellectual property policy can create wealth in least developed countries (LDCs). In certain developing countries, low-cost access to a range of key online scientific and technical publications will also be afforded to industrial property offices.

Health and Population

Change in drug treatment reduces HIV infection in newborn babies – UN-backed study

22 July 2009 - Mother-to-child HIV transmission rates can be dramatically cut with the administration of a cocktail of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs over a longer period of time to pregnant and breastfeeding women, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) announced.



A newborn whose mother is HIV-positive

Newborn babies are over 40 per cent less likely to become infected with the virus if HIV-positive pregnant women take a combination of three ARV drugs from the last trimester of pregnancy until six months into breastfeeding, rather than a short course of drugs that ends at delivery, according to a new study led by the World Health Organization (WHO). The study – named Kesho Bora, which means “a better future” in Swahili – involved 1,140 women from Burkina Faso, Kenya and

South Africa and showed that a significant reduction can be achieved in many pregnant women with a lowered immune cell count.

In many developing countries HIV-positive mothers face a tough choice between breastfeeding their babies and risking the transmission of the virus through their milk, or giving them formula which deprives infants of the natural immunity passed on through breast milk and helps protect against diarrhoea, malnutrition and other potentially deadly diseases.

UNAIDS said in a news release that it was clear that the Kesho Bora research increases the range of treatment options available to mothers living with the virus and offers them hope that, if they so wish, they have a greater chance of breastfeeding their babies without passing on HIV.

The agency added that there is no increased risk to the health of the mother or the infant associated with this triple-ARV regimen, consisting of zidovudine, lamivudine and lopinavir/ritonavir.

“Strengthened services for maternal health, for reproductive health and for paediatric health will mean we can prevent mothers from dying and babies from becoming infected with HIV in Lesotho and around the world,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé during a recent visit to Lesotho in Southern Africa. The initial findings of the three-year study were presented at the 5th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention, which concluded in Cape Town, South Africa.

WHO worked on the study in partnership with the French National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis (ANRS), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) of the US National Institutes of Health. Additional funds for the Kesho Bora study were provided by the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership, the Thrasher Foundation, the UK Department for International Development, UNICEF and the Belgian Government.

Environment

Ban urges China to serve as model for combating impact of climate change



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (lef) meeting with President Hu Jintao of China

24 July 2009 – China can act as a model for developing countries and the wider world by investing in environmentally friendly growth and prioritizing the creation of cleaner energy, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, urging the leaders of the planet’s most populous nation to “serve as the vanguard of tomorrow’s economy.”

Addressing the launch in Beijing for a new energy-saving initiative known as the “Green Lights Project,” Mr. Ban said that China’s recent emergence as the world’s leading emitter of greenhouse

gases meant it was vital for the international community that the country pursues sustainable environmental and economic policies.

“China has an opportunity to blaze a new trail for the world. It has the vision and leadership to create a new clean-energy path to prosperity,” he said, calling on the country to assume a global leadership role.

“By investing in green economy and green growth, your country has an opportunity to leapfrog over decades of traditional development based on high-polluting fuels. The key is prioritizing clean energy, which China has already begun to do, creating new jobs, spurring innovation, and ushering in a new era of global prosperity. In so doing, China can serve as the vanguard of tomorrow’s economy, today.”

The Green Lights Project, which has been jointly organized by the UN and the Chinese Government, is a \$14 million programme aimed at promoting the use of energy-saving lamps and phasing out the sale and production of incandescent lamps. It could cut Chinese energy consumption by as much as 8 per cent.

Mr. Ban stressed that countries that take the lead on combating climate change “will reap rewards. They will be winners in the global marketplace. They will be winners at home as the whole of society benefits.”

He said China’s position as a global power meant it had additional responsibilities, particularly regarding the conference in December in Copenhagen, Denmark, convened to approve a global emissions pact to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period ends in 2012.

Mr. Ban has also scheduled a summit of world leaders at UN Headquarters in New York on 22 September to try to accelerate momentum towards obtaining a deal in Copenhagen.

“Major emerging economies, including China, have taken great strides. I am impressed by China’s efforts. In the areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency, for example, remarkable progress is already being made. I urge you to build on this progress, including through energy and carbon intensity targets,” he said.

“Strong signals from China on mitigation actions announced before Copenhagen will help push the negotiating process forward. They can also direct responsibility to other key countries to do more.” The Secretary-General noted also that trust between rich and poor countries will be essential if countries are to reach an agreed outcome in Copenhagen.

Later Mr. Ban discussed Copenhagen with Chinese President Hu Jintao, while in talks with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao he discussed the climate change mitigation efforts that developing countries can undertake and the role that China can play in helping sub-Saharan African countries achieve the socio-economic targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Mr. Ban also held extensive talks with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, with the two men discussing climate change, UN reform, the MDGs, China’s efforts to reduce poverty, the global financial crisis, disarmament, peacekeeping and a series of regional issues, including the situation in Myanmar and recent developments in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

In addition, the Secretary-General addressed the alumni of the UN-China Advanced Leadership Programme, saying that China is making vital progress on the renewable energy front.

China's renewable energy investments are now second only to that of Germany, Mr. Ban noted, adding that China is well placed to be a leader in what is shaping as one of the main global marketplaces of the future.

'Greening' agriculture key to fighting climate change, boosting food security – UN



24 July 2009 – Environmentally-friendly farming practices hold the key to combating climate change and poverty, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said, stressing that 'green' agriculture holds the key to dealing with the world's rapidly growing population.

One-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, are attributable to agriculture, deforestation and other forms of land use.

The agricultural sector, argues [UNEP](#), could be mostly carbon-neutral by 2030 and produce enough food to feed the projected global population of 9 billion by 2050 if it adopted methods such as agroforestry, reduced soil cultivation and the use of natural nutrients like fertilizer trees.

A study by the World Agroforestry Centre – which will hold its second annual World Congress of Agroforestry, sponsored by UNEP, in Nairobi, Kenya, next month – has found that using fertilizer trees, which trap nitrogen from the air and transfer it to soil, could decrease reliance on commercial fertilizers by up to 75 per cent while boosting crop yields.

Transitioning to a green economy will help tackle a wide range of issues, including the food and fuel crises as well as the scarcity of natural resources, said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. "Farming will either be part of the problem or a big part of the solution," he said. "The choice is straightforward: continuing to mine and degrade productive land and the planet's multi-trillion dollar ecosystems or widely adopting creative and climate-friendly management systems of which agroforestry is fast emerging as a key shining example."

At least one billion hectares of farmland in developing countries can be converted to carbon agroforestry projects, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Nobel Peace Prize-winning UN scientific body.

Mr. Steiner underscored the need for nations to "seal the deal" on a "comprehensive and scientifically credible" pact when they meet this December in Copenhagen, Denmark, to wrap up talks on a successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period ends in 2012. "There is a lot at stake, not least the future of agriculture and farmers' livelihoods," he said.

Cross Cutting Themes / Other Issues

New regional body will help protect human rights in South-East Asia – UN official



High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay

22 July 2009 – The United Nations human rights chief [welcomed](#) the latest move to set up a regional body to protect the rights of people living in South-East Asia, highlighting the need to appoint “independent and impartial” experts to serve on it when it is launched in October.

The foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have endorsed the terms of reference for the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, which will be the first regional body of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay called the endorsement “an important step forward” in the establishment of the new mechanism, noting that similar bodies are already functioning in other regions, including Africa, the Americas and Europe.

She strongly encouraged ASEAN States to appoint Commission members who are “independent and impartial, and have proven expertise in human rights.”

In addition, the national selection processes should include wide consultation and participation by various actors in society, said Ms. Pillay, noting the regional leaders’ stated commitment to create a “people-oriented ASEAN.”

At the same time, the High Commissioner voiced her disappointment at the Commission’s “lack of a clear protection mandate,” but said she hoped its role would expand after its launch in October at the 15th ASEAN Summit, to be held in Phuket, Thailand.

She also stressed that close cooperation and partnership with independent and effective national human rights institutions, which are already established in some ASEAN nations, will help to reinforce the new Commission’s role.

According to the High Commissioner’s office, regional arrangements – such as the one being created by ASEAN – can play an important role in protecting and promoting international human rights standards, including by helping to address shortcomings in national frameworks.

For more information on the United Nations and its activities, please visit the main UN website at www.un.org or the UN Pakistan website at www.un.org.pk

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