

**United Nations Revised Appeal Launch - Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar**

**Statement by John Holmes,  
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs  
and Emergency Relief Coordinator**

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Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you here this morning to present the Revised Appeal for Myanmar, also known as the Cyclone Nargis Response Plan, on which some 36 UN agencies, NGOs and other international organisations have collaborated; and to call for further generous support for immediate relief and early recovery assistance to those families and communities who were so badly affected by Cyclone Nargis. I am delighted to be joined on the platform this morning by representatives of the key response coordination mechanism set up in late May, the Tri-partite Core Group (TCG), namely H.E. Kyaw Tint Swe, the Permanent Representative of Myanmar; Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN; and Mr. Dan Baker, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in Myanmar. Let me welcome once again particularly the excellent cooperation between the UN and ASEAN we have seen over the last two months.

In recent years, we have been reminded forcefully of the destructive power of nature, most dramatically by the 2004 tsunami, but also by the growing number of severe hurricanes, tropical storms, heat waves and fires; torrential floods across parts of Asia, Africa and the Americas; and not least and most recently, the massive, deadly earthquake in Sichuan, China and Cyclone Nargis, the focus of today's Revised Appeal launch. Natural hazards respect neither politics, nor wealth nor national borders. No country, however powerful, is immune from natural hazards. As these disasters have shown, no country, however wealthy or well-equipped, is able to go it alone in coping with a sudden natural disaster of such force and magnitude. And of course it is those living near the poverty line who are always disproportionately affected.

In Myanmar, an estimated 2.4 million people were severely affected by Cyclone Nargis, equivalent to more than one third of the population of 7.3 million in the affected townships. Nearly 140,000 died or are missing, among which an estimated 55% were female. In the 18-60 year old age group, more than twice as many women died as men. Up to 800,000 were displaced from their homes in the initial weeks following the cyclone. Nargis was the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar and one of the most devastating cyclones to hit Asia since the cyclone that struck Bangladesh in 1991.

Although national, private sector and international responders have worked tirelessly to bring aid to the most vulnerable in the wake of the disaster, many still remain in need of basic assistance and urgent support to get their lives and livelihoods back to normal. The challenges are still great. The relief operation is by no means over. On the contrary, we need to continue working quickly and in more effective cooperation to address the outstanding needs.

Among the most vulnerable groups in Myanmar are the most remote and difficult to access communities in the southern Delta region; households headed by women, children or the elderly; those who've been displaced; and those who have lost their livelihoods. Many families in the Delta region were already living in under the poverty line before the Cyclone struck. Households who have lost everything, including family members, need tools, draught animals, and household equipment, as well as access to credit, in order to re-establish livelihoods and not be dependent on aid. Although the preliminary results of the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment indicated that most villages had received some kind of relief - and as a result of the Assessment process itself, villages which had not been reached before could be helped quickly - it is also clear that many affected areas have not yet received the level of assistance they need. The challenge now is to ensure that appropriate relief continues to be provided in a timely, coordinated manner and at adequate levels.

In this context, it is encouraging that, albeit not without difficulty, we have been able to make significant progress over the last six weeks in improving the access of international aid workers and assets to the worst affected areas in the delta. Working together in the Tripartite Core Group, we have been able to overcome problems as they have arisen and reduce bureaucratic hurdles which at times threatened to reduce the effectiveness of the relief operation. I trust that we will be able to go on overcoming future challenges too, through the kind of constant consultation and cooperation which have proved their worth over time.

### **Overview of Revised Appeal/Cyclone Response Plan**

This brings me to the Revised Appeal itself. As many of you recall, the first Flash Appeal for \$187 million, swiftly afterwards revised to \$201 million, was launched on 9 May – a week after the cyclone's impact – based on the best information available at the time. Ten weeks later, much more information is available and we can better identify what is needed for the period up to April 2009, which is the period covered by the Revised Appeal. I want to thank the donors for their generous contributions to date, which have enabled us to provide the essential support so far, and covered around 70% of the initial appeal.

We are still awaiting the full and final results of the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PoNJA), available only later this month. However, findings, based in particular on data from the Village Tract Assessment (VTA) component, indicate that life-saving relief must still be provided and that humanitarian efforts should continue and be stepped up to cover unmet needs. I will come back to this in a moment.

The Revised Appeal is therefore designed to address both these important remaining relief needs and urgent early recovery measures, prioritizing provision of timely and coordinated help in the key areas of Water, Sanitation, Education, Health, Nutrition, Food, Shelter and Agriculture, as well as continued support for vital services such as Emergency Telecommunications, Information Management and Logistics.

Through the revised Appeal, some 13 UN agencies and 23 NGOs are now appealing for \$481.8 million altogether, i.e. \$280 million beyond the initial \$201 million appeal. Given the

contributions so far, \$303.6 million is still needed. There are 103 projects altogether. The main elements of the revised appeal are as follows:

- The revised requirements for food amount to over \$112 million, of which only \$32 million has so far been covered.
- Agriculture needs are some \$58 million, and are only 13% met up to now.
- Broad early recovery requirements amount to some \$54 million, \$8 million of which has so far been received.
- Water and sanitation needs are some \$50 million, 35% covered so far.
- Logistics needs have not changed much from the initial appeal, at around \$50 million, but are still significant and only 56% covered thus far.
- Health projects amount to \$46 million, of which \$16 million has so far been contributed.
- Shelter requirements amount to \$42 million, of which just over half has already been covered.
- Other major sectors are Education, Protection of Children and Women, and Nutrition.

Let me give you as background to these priority elements some key points from the Village Tract Assessment portion of the PoNJA assessment.

The Assessment found that 42% of all food stocks had been destroyed and that 55% of families had food stocks for one day or less. Continued food assistance is therefore required in the Ayeyarwady area of the Delta and Yangon Division for many months to come. In particular, we believe we must ensure that approximately 924,000 people receive food assistance until the November harvest this year, with continued relief to be extended to April 2009 for approximately 300,000 of the affected population. Malnutrition levels in children were already high before the Cyclone, so therapeutic and targeted supplementary feeding in food-insecure townships must be continued and scaled-up to prevent up to 60,000 at risk children from sliding into acute malnutrition

In the Water and Sanitation sector, according to the Assessment, over 70% of households reported inadequate access to clean water due to damaged rainwater collection systems and saltwater contamination of ponds. Thus, we need to provide 1.4 million people with access to safe drinking water and sewage disposal facilities until April 2009. We must also ensure that families have the knowledge and means to practice good hygiene in order to stave off health risks.

In the Shelter sector, half a million homes are estimated to have been severely damaged by Cyclone Nargis, and although the VTA indicates that approximately 75% of affected households have put up some kind of shelter since then, many of these are rudimentary at best. Continued distribution of sustainable shelter materials and associated toolkits is therefore required.

In the Health sector, while no outbreaks of disease have been reported, the Assessment confirms that population displacement, overcrowding in temporary shelters, lack of safe drinking water and poor access to primary health care still carry the risk of communicable disease and outbreaks. While surveillance systems have been set up in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, we must therefore improve sustainable access to health facilities including mobile

clinics, and support the immediate repair and provision of power and water supplies to critical health facilities and medical stores. In addition, the assessment has revealed that 20% of people surveyed have reported psychosocial problems but only a fraction had received support.

In Education, the Assessment confirms that over 3,700 schools were damaged by the cyclone, and at least 1,435 schools in affected townships have completely collapsed. Urgent resumption of education and early childhood development is critical to bring a sense of normalcy to children's lives, and provide a platform for positive psycho-social support. Thus, we must aim to rehabilitate at least 1,640 destroyed or damaged schools and provide 1,315 safe learning spaces and 520 for early childhood learning within the next 12 months.

Agriculture is a key area for the future, as we are all aware. According to the Assessment, an estimated 63% of paddy fields were submerged and up to 85% of seed stocks were destroyed by the cyclone and subsequent flooding. Loss of draught animals and power tillers is preventing over 52,000 farmers from using the current rice planting season: some 550,000 MT of paddy rice could be lost.

Similar losses in fisheries and mangrove forestry are impacting both food security and livelihoods, particularly of the most vulnerable, the landless and marginal farmers. We must therefore quickly enable 50,000 farming households to resume rice cultivation, fishing and alternative cropping, and provide 99,000 landless families with income-generating activities such as ruminant and poultry rearing.

In addition to the early recovery support planned in these specific sectors, the humanitarian community is focusing on cross-cutting priorities such as restoring non-agricultural livelihoods, revitalizing local communities, repairing community infrastructure to facilitate movement of people and goods to markets, providing support to local authorities and communities to minimize negative environmental impact, and strengthening the capacity of communities to withstand the effects of future disasters. Special attention should also be paid to disaster risk reduction provisions in the rehabilitation and recovery phases. Building back better must be a major priority.

In conclusion, this Response Plan is about helping vulnerable people in dire need. I hope the international community will show itself fully ready, capable and willing to help provide further critically-needed assistance to the people of Myanmar. The survivors of this tragedy deserve nothing less. I trust all concerned will continue to work together in a spirit of collaboration since so much remains to be done to address significant relief and early recovery needs at least by the end of April next year. I therefore appeal to donors to give generously and help us to provide this urgently needed help to the victims of Cyclone Nargis.