



ADDITIONAL US \$38 MILLION URGENTLY NEEDED TO ASSIST WAR-AFFECTED CIVILIANS IN NORTH AND SOUTH KIVU

(Kinshasa/New York, 17 June 2009:) Humanitarian actors in the Democratic Republic of Congo appealed today for US \$38 million in life-saving assistance for nearly one million civilians whose already poor situation has grown worse following armed attacks and military operations in the eastern part of the country. The new funds would be used for civilians living mainly in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu where 800,000 people have internally displaced since the beginning of the year.

Women and children have been the most affected. Civilians appear to be in constant movement as the cycles of internal displacement and return are linked. It is estimated that there are 780,000 returnees in South Kivu, while that figure stands at 300,000 in North Kivu. Overall 1.7 million people are currently internally displaced in the entire Congolese territory. The constant movement of population has also affected humanitarian workers as it has made the planning and the delivery of aid more difficult.

Weeks of fighting have left North Kivu in a dire humanitarian situation characterized by massive population displacement, killings, acts of sexual violence, lack of protection and other human rights violations. Humanitarian gaps such as the destruction of schools, the deterioration of water supply systems and health services, and the weak response against acts of sexual violence have grown wider and require new funds. US \$23 million is needed for education, logistics, nutrition, non-food items, protection, water and sanitation, among others, humanitarian actors in North Kivu said today.

The situation in South Kivu is a mirror image of the one in the north, where an additional US \$15 million is needed. 1,135 cases of rape have been recorded in the first three months of 2009, representing more than half of the total caseload for 2008; over 350,000 people have been forcibly displaced; thousands of school-age children spend their days out in the streets rather than in the classroom, aid workers said.

“The prevailing situation has practically brought us back to square one. New financial contributions would ensure that lives are saved and allow humanitarians to stay the course”, Humanitarian Coordinator Ross Mountain said today in Kinshasa. International donors had already made great financial contributions, he added.

Eight months after launching an \$800-million appeal for funding, contributions have amounted to nearly \$409 million, a “remarkable” 49%, the humanitarian coordinator said.

Since the beginning of the year, the Pooled Fund--a common funding mechanism established in 2005 through which donors finance projects--has also allocated close to \$25 million to cover emergency needs in these two eastern provinces. In addition, the Central Emergency Response fund (CERF), which represents a third funding tool, has also been activated over the past six weeks to provide US \$10 million to cover the needs

of 200,000 IDPs in Haut-Uele in Province Orientale in the east, and US \$3 million for humanitarian air services.

However today's appeal comes as the contributions have been unable to keep pace with the latest emergencies and humanitarian actors fear further degradation.

Equally as important as funding is the need for protection, aid workers said.

They called on the Congolese authorities, who are primarily responsible for protection, to provide better protection of civilians and for themselves, citing the frequent killing of civilians. They also stressed that the increasing number of robberies, physical assault and other acts perpetrated against aid workers could compromise the very delivery of aid. Since January 2009, 61 acts of violence against aid workers have been recorded in North Kivu, they reported.

Fighters of armed groups such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, the Lord's Resistance Army, and soldiers of the Congolese army are at the origin of the current protection crisis, victims and humanitarian agencies said today. Advocacy efforts, both in the capital Kinshasa and in the concerned areas, are being conducted to urge the authorities to improve the protection of both civilians and aid workers.

"The coming months will be trying times for thousands of men, women and children. Once again lives will be at risk, and without additional support, we will fail to meet our responsibility", Mountain said on behalf of the humanitarian community.

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