



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HUMANITARIAN AID OFFICE (ECHO)

Primary Emergency Humanitarian Aid Decision

23 02 01

Title: Primary Emergency Aid for the victims of the train explosion on April 22nd 2004

Location of operation: DPR KOREA

Amount of decision: Euro 200,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/PRK/BUD/2004/02000

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population:

1.1. - Rationale:

On 22 April 2004 at 04:00 local time an explosion occurred in the railway station of Ryonchong, in the North-West of DPR Korea near to the border to China. The blast was initially thought to have been caused by two trains colliding, but North Korean government sources have now been quoted as saying it was triggered when two train carriages carrying dynamite came into contact with a live power cable. South Korean media reports initially talked of up to 3,000 people dead or wounded. However all these reports are not yet confirmed. In any case, the casualty figures of 54 dead and 1200 injured have already been admitted by 23:00, 23 April (local time), but it is expected that a much higher number of casualties, in the thousands, will be found later on. According to reports from the local DPR Korean Red Cross, the explosion in the railway station of the city with 130,000 inhabitants has destroyed 1,850 houses and damaged another 6,300. A state of emergency has been declared by the authorities and they have issued an appeal for international aid.

This catastrophe has taken place in a country with little disaster preparedness and with a very weak infrastructure. Only the DPR Korean Red Cross is organized as a network of 13 provincial/municipality chapters and 200 city/county branches, covering the whole territory of the country. The national society has a nationwide network of 330,000 volunteers and 371,730 Red Cross youth at the community level.

The health sector in DPRK is desperately overstretched and wholly under funded and thus unable to provide even the most essential services to its population. The supply of basic drugs is totally dependent on international aid and the needs of particular

vulnerable groups like handicapped and older people are very much neglected. Most hospitals and clinics – and other public service infrastructure - were constructed, some 40-50 years ago and have hardly been maintained since they were built. Today, most hospitals and clinics have irregular electricity, usually with power available for only a few hours per day, and few health facilities have running water. Sterilization of instruments, lighting for operations and heating of hospitals during the harsh winter season remains severe problems.

No more detailed information has been obtained from the DPR Korean authorities. This must also be seen in the context of the limited access of information by aid agencies in general. However an inter-agency-assessment will be carried out by on 24 April.

1.2. - Identified needs:

Such calamities create a wide spectrum of needs. The explosion of the fuels and chemicals has created a blast destroying and burning everything in a wide range around the accident site. Victims have been burned or been buried under rubble. The first difficulty is to find the victims and to transport them to medical services. Some of the casualties buried under rubble, may need to be extracted by specialized search and rescue teams. It is highly likely that the 3 hospitals in the area are heavily overburdened and are running short of supplies, equipment and staff with specialised expertise. The medical services have to treat fractures, burns, contusions and other traumata. The hospitals will certainly run short of anaesthetics, antibiotics and basic supplies very shortly. Thousands of affected people living close to the disaster site have lost their homes and have already spent one night outside. The water supply will be disturbed by the interrupted electric power supply, which works for only a few hours per day. After the train explosion the water supply may be contaminated with chemicals or be completely broken. Possibly the water pumping station is affected.

For the above reasons, the needs are within the fields of emergency health, water supply and provision of basic items.

1.3. - Target population and regions concerned:

Inhabitants of Ryonchong and the surrounding area who are affected by the disaster.

1.4. – Risk assessment and possible constraints:

Working in DPRK involves operational difficulties and constraints to basic humanitarian standards in terms of access to the population, possibility of carrying out proper needs assessments and random monitoring and evaluation of the aid delivered. In the past the DPRK authorities have often created administrative difficulties for humanitarian agencies operating in the country. It is always possible that this type of obstacle will re-occur, but during this crisis the attitude of the authorities has been constructive up to now.

The number of affected may differ a lot from the initial estimates that are available at this time. It is hoped that the assessments over the next days will bring further clarification to this matter. Furthermore the kind of needs may change.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed:

2.1. - Objectives:

Principal objective : Save and preserve lives in context of the explosion in Ryonchon, DPR Korea

Specific objectives :

- provide emergency assistance to the victims of the explosion

2.2. - Components:

The target group receives the necessary immediate relief in the form of appropriate emergency shelter, potable water, non-food items, relevant first aid and receives medical attention.

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision:

The duration of humanitarian aid operations shall be 3 months

If the implementation of the actions envisaged in this decision is suspended due to *force majeure*, or any comparable circumstance, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the humanitarian aid operations.

Depending on the evolution of the situation in the field, the Commission reserves the right to terminate the agreements signed with the implementing humanitarian organisations where the suspension of activities is for a period of more than one third of the total planned duration of the action. The procedure established in the Framework Partnership Agreement in this respect will be applied.

4 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms

From the international side only one commitment has been made so far by the Swiss Government, in so far as SDC is prepared to finance or ship medical supplies and drugs to hospitals receiving victims in North Korea or China.

The International Federation of the Red Cross Societies (IFRC) has already dispatched medical supplies from the emergency preparedness stocks in Sinuiju. Sinuiju is located at the border with China and only some 15km away from the disaster. These aid deliveries contain among others 1,000 first aid kits, 10,000 blankets, 7,000 water de-contamination sets.

In general European Commission and the European Member states are an important donor to DPRK.

Donors in DPR KOREA the last 12 months					
1. EU Members States (*)		2. European Commission		3. Others	
	EUR		EUR		EUR
Austria	0	ECHO	0		
Belgium	0	Other services			
Denmark	0				
Finland	950,000				
France	0				
Germany	1,699,486				
Greece	0				
Ireland	0				
Italy	0				
Luxembourg	0				
Netherlands	0				
Portugal	0				
Spain	0				
Sweden	0				
United Kingdom	1,539,600				
Subtotal	4,189,086	Subtotal	0	Subtotal	0
		Grand total	4,189,086		

Dated : 23/04/2004

(*) Source : ECHO 14 Points reporting for Members States. <https://hac.cec.eu.int>
Empty cells means either no information is available or no contribution.

5 - Amount of decision and distribution of funding by specific objectives:

5.1. - Total amount of the decision: Euro 200,000

5.2. - Distribution by specific objectives

Principal objective: <i>Save and preserve lives in context of the explosion in Ryonchon, DPR Korea</i>			
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (Euro)	Geographical area of operation	Potential partners¹
Specific objective 1: provide emergency assistance to the victims of the explosion	200,000		- CROIX-ROUGE - DNK
TOTAL: 200,000			

¹ _____
DANSK RODE KORS, (DNK)

COMMISSION DECISION
of
**on the financing of primary emergency humanitarian operations from the general
budget of the European Union in
DPR KOREA**

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,
Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid², and in particular Article 13 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) An explosion occurred in the railway station of Ryongchon County, North Phyongan Province at around 12:00 PM, April 22, 2004 local time
- (2) Preliminary assessments indicate that several thousand people have been injured or killed. Thousands of homes and many public buildings have been destroyed or damaged.
- (3) The DPR Korean authorities have declared a state of emergency and have requested international assistance.
- (4) The victims are in urgent need of medical assistance, water and shelter items.
- (5) The duration of humanitarian aid operations financed by this decision will be a maximum of 3 months,
- (6) It is estimated that an amount of Euro 200,000 from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Community is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of the train accident people, taking into account the available budget, other donors' interventions and other factors.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. In accordance with the objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid, the Commission hereby approves a total amount of Euro 200,000 for primary emergency humanitarian aid operations to provide the necessary assistance and relief to the people affected by the explosion in DPR KOREA from budget line 23 02 01 of the 2004 general budget of the European Union,

² OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6

2. In accordance with article 2 (a), of Council Regulation No 1257/96, the humanitarian operations will be implemented in the framework of the following specific objective:
 - provide emergency assistance to the victims of the explosion

The amounts allocated to each of these objectives are listed in the annex to this decision.

Article 2

1. The implementation of humanitarian aid operations funded by this decision shall have a maximum duration of 3 months from their start date.
2. Expenditure under this decision is eligible from 22 April 2004
3. If the actions envisaged in this decision are suspended due to *force majeure* or comparable circumstances, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the humanitarian aid operations.

Article 4

1. This decision shall take effect on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission

Annex: Breakdown of allocations by specific objectives

Principal objective : Save and preserve lives in context of the explosion in Ryonchon, DPR Korea	
Specific objectives	Amount per specific objective (Euro)
provide emergency assistance to the victims of the explosion	200,000
TOTAL	200,000