



Emergency Humanitarian Aid Decision
F9 (FED9)

Title: **Emergency response to populations affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano.**

Location of operation: **COMOROS**

Amount of Decision: EUR **500,000**

Decision reference number: **ECHO/COM/EDF/2005/01000**

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population.

1.1. - Rationale:

The Karthala Volcano (2,360 metres) forms most of the landmass of Grande Comore (also called Ngazidja), the main island of the Union of the Comoros (pop. 230,000; 250 Km. off East Africa). This is one of the largest volcanos in activity in the world. Over the last two hundred years, there has been an eruption every eleven years on average. The last eruption was reported in 1991. The majority of the eruptions were magmatic, resulting in lava flow on both sides of the island. However, phreatic eruptions also occurred, projecting vapour, gas and rocks in the periphery of the summit. A century ago, it released a cloud of deadly gas, killing seventeen people.

During the second week of April, the Karthala Volcano showed signs of increasing activity. This activity escalated further. On Saturday 16 April, the volcano projected clouds of ash and smoke affecting a number of villages in the Dimani and Oichili regions in the eastern part of the island. Initial reports indicate that some rivers flowing on the flank of the volcano have become polluted with volcanic debris.

On Sunday 17 April, populations from these villages began to flee in fear of gas and lava flow. According to the local authorities, as many as 10,000 people fled their homes in the eastern region in order to seek refuge in other parts of the island.

The activity of the Karthala Volcano stabilised from Monday 18 April. A team of two specialists from La Réunion (France) that flew over the crater on Tuesday 19, indicated that the lake of lava in the central crater of the volcano had receded, that the lava flow was confined within the volcano and that it was in the process of cooling down. At the same time, seismographic data collected by the Comoran National Documentation and Scientific Research Centre (CNDRS) has shown a reduction of the seismic activity.

The CNDRS has been conducting field assessment on the volcano during the days after the initial eruption with support from the French specialists.

As of Wednesday 20 April, the majority of the populations who had fled from their villages during the weekend were reported to have returned to their homes.

The CNDRS and the French specialists have warned that the reduction of activity of the volcano does not mean that the eruption is over and that the situation may change rapidly. The authorities remain on alert.

1.2. - Identified needs:

In the hours following the eruption of the volcano, an estimated 10,000 villagers from the Dimani; Oichili and Domba Regions fled their villages seeking refuge among family members in other parts of the island.

The authorities have issued a warning to the populations alerting them about the risks of being exposed to gases and ashes. The authorities have also been providing emergency assistance to populations in affected areas. This includes the coordination of operations, the mobilisation of approximately 50 vehicles to bring these people back to their villages and the dispatch of two medical teams.

According to a joint assessment made by UNDP and UNICEF on Tuesday 19, food is not a major concern and no major health issues have arisen. Returning villagers have found their homes intact. Children are not suffering from specific problems; they are likely to return to schools when they reopen as soon as the teachers return.

However, the main area of concern is the availability of drinking water in the areas that were exposed to smoke and ashes. According to the authorities, as many as 38,000 persons living in 36 villages may be affected by the contamination of water tanks. According to UNICEF's representative in Comoros, about 90% of the cisterns in the villages contain water which is undrinkable. No report of increased morbidity due to consumption of contaminated water has been received so far.

The authorities are distributing drinking water in the areas affected by water contamination. UNICEF, which has five water tanks each capable of holding 10,000 litres, has begun supplying the villagers. In the meantime, water has been tested with the support of UNICEF, which facilitated the sending of samples to Madagascar, where facilities for both bacteriological and chemical analysis are available. The tests show high concentrations of Nitrate and Chloride.

1.3. - Target population and regions concerned:

An estimated 39,000 are having problems to access safe drinking water. These populations are distributed as follows:

Region	Estimated population
Dimani	10,057
Oichili	13,279
Domba	15,754
TOTAL	39,090

1.4. – Risk assessment and possible constraints:

The authorities remain on alert as the CNDRS and French specialists have warned that the reduction of the activity of the volcano does not mean that the eruption is over, and that the situation may change rapidly. According to the Volcanological Observatory in Moroni, the risk of increased activity in the short term is strong.

Based on the information available, authorities are making a number of hypotheses in the event of an increased volcanic activity:

- 1) a subterranean lava flow spews in the sea and increases the dimension of a small island, which has emerged at 15 km off the coast during recent months, or
- 2) the lava discharges directly on the flank of the volcano from cracks in the crater.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed.

2.1. - Objectives:

Principal objective:

To assist the population affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano to regain their normal livelihood.

Specific objective(s) :

To provide safe drinking water in the villages affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano.

2.2. - Components:

- To support the implementation of the water trucking system to the affected villages and to set up temporary structures for the distribution of safe drinking water.
- To clean and rehabilitate the village water tanks that have been polluted by the ashes and debris projected by the volcano.

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision.

The duration of humanitarian aid operations shall be 6 months from their starting date. Expenditure shall be eligible as from 17 April 2005.

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. In this respect the procedure established in the general conditions of the specific agreement will be applied.

4 - Previous interventions/Decisions of the Commission within the context of the current crisis.

No previous interventions or financial decision have been adopted in support of emergency operations in response to the eruption of Karthala volcano in Comoros.

5 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms.

The government of the Union of the Comoros has put in place its national disaster preparedness and response plan, which specifies roles and responsibilities of the government departments and their partners in the event of a disaster.

Disaster response coordination falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and Territorial Security, which manages relief operations through a Central Command Post. International support is coordinated by the UN Resident Coordinator. The OCHA Regional Office maintains regular contact with the Resident Coordinator in order to determine additional coordination support needs

UN Agencies have provided four vehicles in support of government's activities. UNICEF has made personnel available to strengthen national capacities to coordinate assistance operations, and has purchased 10 Mt. of rice for distribution to families who are still hosting IDPs. It is also preparing to provide further assistance, such as non-food items, essential drugs and education materials, pending further information on the needs.

UNICEF has also distributed two health kits to Oichili and Mbeni health centres, in the centre and north-eastern regions respectively, to help routine services cope with the needs of the displaced populations.

The Comoros Red Crescent Society participates in the coordination task forces set up by the authorities, and monitors the situation very closely. It is working jointly with the Regional Intervention Platform for the Indian Ocean (PIROI) run by the French Red Cross Society from La Réunion. So far, PIROI has sent a water engineer and 600 kg of materials (including 10 water bladders of 1,000 m³, motor-driven pumps, kits of water analysis etc...)

The French Government sent a team of specialists from La Réunion in order to assist with the assessment of the volcanic activity.

6 - Amount of Decision and distribution of funding by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the Decision: EUR 500,000

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Principal objective: <i>To assist the population affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano to regain their normal livelihood.</i>			
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Geographical area of operation	Potential partners¹
Specific objective 1: To provide safe drinking water in the villages affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano.	500,000	Dimani, Oichili, Domba and other region of the Grande Comore	- UN - UNICEF - BEL
TOTAL: 500,000			

¹ UNICEF

COMMISSION DECISION

of

on the financing of emergency humanitarian operations from the 9th European Development Fund

in
COMOROS

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, in particular Articles 72 and 73 thereof²,

Having regard to the Internal Agreement of 15 December 2000 on the Financing and Administration of the Community Aid under the Financial Protocol to the Partnership Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Community and its Member States signed in Cotonou (Benin) on 23 June 2000, in particular Articles 24(3) and 25 thereof³.

Whereas:

- (1) On Saturday 16 April, the Karthala volcano erupted and began to spew clouds of ash and smoke affecting a number of villages in the Grand Comore Island.
- (2) The eruption remitted two days latter, with no major lava flow. However, the rain-fed water supply systems of an estimated 36 villages have been polluted, making the quality of water inadequate for human consumption.
- (3) Around 38,000 people are in need of safe drinking water to avert the risks of water-related health complications.
- (4) An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that humanitarian aid operations should be financed by the Community for a period of 6 months.
- (5) In accordance with the objectives set out in Articles 72 and 73 of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement and Article 25(2) of the International agreement it is estimated that an amount of EUR 500,000 from the 9th European Development Fund is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to populations directly affected by the conflict.

² OJ L317 of 15.12.2000, p.3

³ OJ L317 of 15.12.2000, p.354

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 EUR 500,000 from the 9th European Development Fund for humanitarian aid operations to assist vulnerable people directly affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano.
2. In accordance with Article 72 and 73 of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objective(s):

- To provide safe drinking water in the villages affected by the eruption of Karthala volcano

The full amount of this decision is allocated to this objective.

Article 2

1. The implementation of humanitarian aid operations funded by this Decision shall have a maximum duration of 6 months from their start date.
2. Expenditure under this Decision is eligible from 17 April 2005.
3. If the operations 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 3

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

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission