

COMMISSION DECISION
of
on the financing of primary emergency humanitarian operations from the general
budget of the European Communities in
Nicaragua

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 aid ¹, and in particular Article 13 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) On 4 September 2007 Hurricane Felix hit Nicaragua creating an emergency situation in several departments.
- (2) Rain with up to 30 cm and winds of more than 250 kilometres per hour have caused severe damage to the country's infrastructure.
- (3) Victims are in urgent need of medical assistance, emergency shelter, water and food supplies and relief assistance in general.
- (4) The duration of humanitarian aid operations financed by this decision will be of a maximum of 3 months.
- (5) It is estimated that an amount of EUR 1,000,000 from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Union is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to victims of Hurricane Felix taking into account the available budget, other donors' interventions and other factors.
- (6) The present Decision constitutes a financing Decision within the meaning of Article 75 of the Financial Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002², Article 90 of the detailed rules for the implementation of the Financial Regulation determined by Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002³, and Article 15 of the Internal Rules on the Implementation of the general budget of the European Communities⁴.

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 1,000,000 for primary emergency humanitarian aid operations to provide the necessary assistance and relief to people in Nicaragua from budget line 23 02 01 of the 2007 general budget of the European Communities.

¹ OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6

² OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p.1. Regulation as last amended by Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1995/2006, OJ L 390, 30.12.2006, p.1

³ OJ L 357, 31.12.2002, p.1 Regulation as last amended by Commission Regulation (EC Euratom) No. 478/2007, OJ L 111 of 28.4.2007, P. 13

⁴ Commission Decision of 21.02.2007, C/2007/513

2. In accordance with **Article 2(a)** of Council Regulation No.1257/96, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objective:
 - Provision of humanitarian aid to the population affected by Hurricane Felix.

The total 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 3 months from their start date.
2. Expenditure under this decision is eligible from 4 September 2007.
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 3

1. The Commission shall implement the budget by direct centralised management or by joint management with international organisations.
2. The actions supported by this decision will be implemented by humanitarian aid organisations that are signatories to the Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) or the EC/UN Financial Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA).
3. Taking account the specificities of humanitarian aid, the nature of the activities to be undertaken, the specific location constraints and the level of urgency, the activities covered by this decision may be financed in full in accordance with Article 253 of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation. This means that in case of co-financing, the possible rate of co-financing can go up to 99% if needed.

Article 4

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

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Membre of the Commission



Primary Emergency Humanitarian Aid Decision

23 02 01

Title: Primary Emergency Aid to the victims of Hurricane Felix in Nicaragua

Location of operation: Nicaragua

Amount of Decision: EUR 1,000,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/NIC/BUD/2007/01000

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population.

1.1. - Rationale:

Nicaragua is one of the poorest and most vulnerable countries in Latin America. The RAAN (Northern Atlantic Region of Nicaragua) is a historically "forgotten" region of the country, composed of a population of 314,130 people and with extremely low levels of poverty, infrastructure and communications. Twelve of the nineteen municipalities in the Atlantic regions are classified as extremely poor, with 56% of the population living with less than USD 1 and 88% living with less than USD 2, making the RAAN, along with the RAAS (Southern Atlantic Region of Nicaragua), the poorest region of Nicaragua. Housing infrastructure is very basic, as are access to schooling, health, water (11% in the RAAN), electricity (25%) and telecommunications.

The road connecting Puerto Cabezas (capital of the RAAN) to the rest of the country is very precarious, as are all communications in the RAAN region. Within the RAAN, communication between communities is mostly done through the multiple rivers in the region and travelling between communities may take an average of two to three days. In order to give an idea of the remoteness of the communities in this area, the Atlantic region (comprised of the RAAN and RAAS) represents 46% of the total territory of the country but only about 11% of the population.

This region's population is mainly composed of indigenous peoples, including the Mayangna (an indigenous population composed only of about 9,000 people) and the Miskitos. These populations survive mainly through fishing, hunting and some subsistence agriculture activities and live in very precarious housing structures. This is a historically forgotten population with very high levels of vulnerability.

On 4 September 2007, Hurricane Felix made landfall in Nicaragua as a Category V hurricane, with heavy rain and winds of more than 250 kilometres per hour. Hurricane Felix entered Nicaragua through the Autonomous Region of the Northern Atlantic (RAAN) at the level of Sandy Bay (community located 15 kilometers north of the capital, Puerto Cabezas), following a westward track towards Tegucigalpa (Honduras).

Although the hurricane was downgraded to a tropical depression on its way out of the Nicaraguan territory, heavy rain has been affecting northern Nicaragua and is expected to continue during the following days. Estimates are 8 to 12 inches of rain for Nicaragua, possibly reaching levels of up to 25 inches of rain in mountainous regions. This rainfall has already produced life-threatening flash floods and mudslides in all three countries which will most likely continue during the next few days, causing serious damage to human lives and housing. This situation is especially threatening at this time of the year when the winter season is already in advance and soils are well saturated, thereby exacerbating further the danger of mudslides.

The Government of Nicaragua declared a state of disaster for the RAAN on 4 September 2007. Due to the lack of access to the affected areas and difficulties in carrying out needs assessments as a result of the heavy winds experienced on 4 September, the first official information on damage to be reported by SINAPRED⁵ was emitted on 5 September. Except for some data on Sandy Bay, all the information focuses on the city of Puerto Cabezas. Very little information is currently available on the rest of the RAAN region, as well as on other departments of Nicaragua which have been and will continue to be affected by the rains (such as Matagalpa and Jinotega).

The Nicaraguan Civil Defence reports that about 34,000 people have been affected in Puerto Cabezas alone, which has a total population of 66,169 people. Heavy damage has been caused to infrastructure such as housing, churches, schools, hospitals and health centers and telecommunications. Ninety percent of houses in Puerto Cabezas have been affected. Specific figures indicate that 7,200 houses have been destroyed in the municipality of Puerto Cabezas, including 3,000 in the Sandy Bay area. Additionally, about 1,500 houses have been damaged. All public shelters have also been damaged and are currently in deplorable conditions. Many buildings considered to be safe and often used as shelters, such as the Uraccan University and the Las Colinas Hotel have also been destroyed. Government sources also confirm that there have been at least 30 deaths. According to unofficial sources, between 97 and 200 people are missing.

The bridge over the Wawabun River, which connects Puerto Cabezas with the rest of the country, has collapsed, thereby leaving the RAAN without communications, a fact that has complicated the execution of needs assessments. The dock in Puerto Cabezas has been severely damaged and the airport tower has collapsed. However, army planes are still using the airport in order to access the area since this is the only possible way to reach the RAAN at the moment. The hospital in Puerto Cabezas has been evacuated and patients with the most severe problems have been moved to the INATEC⁶ building, which does not have access to safe water.

Needs assessments are currently ongoing, including that of an UNDAC team who has been deployed to Nicaragua. It is currently impossible to access the RAAN by road or water,

⁵ National System for the Prevention, Mitigation and Management of Disasters in its' Spanish acronym.

⁶ National Technology Institute in its Spanish acronym.

which means that access to more detailed information will only become available when communications are improved. Figures on potential beneficiaries will most likely vary significantly in the coming days as access to these populations is improved and needs assessments are finalized. Heavy rainfall continues affecting the country and will most likely result in further flooding and mudslides, not only in the RAAN but also in the northern area of Nicaragua, especially taking into account that 93% of all rivers in Nicaragua flow into the Caribbean.

Water and sanitation infrastructure has been heavily damaged, including the flooding of wells and latrines at community level.

Livestock and agricultural leaders have expressed concerns over the loss of cattle and crops. Authorities are still assessing damages, but high levels of rainfall indicate that the rural population in that area, with a local economy based on subsistence agriculture and livestock, might encounter difficulties in the following weeks due to the expected losses in agricultural production and livestock.

1.2. - Identified needs:

Detailed information is lacking due to communications deficiencies and difficult access to the disaster zones. In-depth assessments are expected to become available in the course of the coming days.

The initial needs assessments carried out by SINAPRED and UNETE⁷ indicate that Hurricane Felix has produced major damage in terms of infrastructure, with great losses regarding housing. In the short term, stagnant water, flooded latrines and wells and the contamination of water sources could result in the proliferation of vectors, water borne diseases (such as diarrhoea and skin diseases), respiratory infections and low-hygiene related diseases.

The most urgent needs at the moment are the following:

- Safe water and sanitation
- Temporary shelters with basic facilities in sufficient number (set up of new temporary shelters and/or improvement of the existing ones)
- Health care (principally primary health care and psycho social support)
- Food
- Non food items such as domestic items, blankets, hygiene kits and clothes.
- Transportation of humanitarian staff and relief assistance to the affected areas
- Telecommunication

1.3. - Target population and regions concerned:

The area concerned is the Atlantic region of Nicaragua. Parts of other affected northern departments could also be covered by this decision.

⁷ United Nations Emergency Team

The population affected by Hurricane Felix is approximately 100,000 people, although these are very initial figures as needs assessments are still ongoing in Nicaragua. The average number of family members in the RAAN region of Nicaragua is 6.1.

1.4. - Risk assessment and possible constraints:

Access to affected population may be difficult due to damaged infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.) and the remoteness of the areas affected in Nicaragua. Figures on potential beneficiaries may vary significantly in the coming days as access to affected populations is improved. Other areas not yet assessed could also be targeted if needs are identified.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed:

2.1. - Objectives:

Principal objective: To save and preserve lives in the aftermath of Hurricane Felix

Specific objective:

- Provision of humanitarian aid to the population affected by Hurricane Felix

2.2. - Components:

- Food aid
- Water and Sanitation (including hygiene promotion)
- Non food Items (Protective kits, house kits, hygiene kits, etc.)
- Temporary Shelter
- Health Care (Primary, emergency, psycho-social support etc.)
- Specific actions such as, but not limited to, logistics, coordination and needs assessments, and possibly telecommunications in emergency

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision:

The duration of humanitarian aid operations shall be 3 months.

Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 4 September 2007.

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 recent DG ECHO⁸ humanitarian operations have been funded in favour of Nicaragua. However, the country benefits from the FIFTH DIPECHO ACTION PLAN FOR CENTRAL AMERICA (totalling EUR 7,500,000), in the framework of which seven projects are being funded covering 20 Nicaraguan municipalities and totalling EUR 2,505,000.

5 - Overview of donors' contributions

Donors in Nicaragua the last 12 months					
1. EU Members States (*)		2. European Commission		3. Others	
	EUR		EUR		EUR
Austria		DG ECHO	1,250,000		
Belgium		Other services			
Bulgaria					
Cyprus					
Czech Republic					
Denmark					
Estonia					
Finland					
France					
Germany					
Greece					
Hungary					
Ireland					
Italy	7,922				
Latvia					
Lithuania					
Luxemburg					
Malta					
Netherlands					
Poland					
Portugal					
Romania					
Slovakia					
Slovenia					
Spain					
Sweden					
United Kingdom					
Subtotal	7,922	Subtotal	1,250,000	Subtotal	0
		Grand total	1,257,922		

Dated : 06 September 2007

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

6 - Amount of decision and distribution by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the decision: EUR 1,000,000

⁸ Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid - ECHO

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Principal objective: <i>To save and preserve lives in the aftermath of Hurricane Felix</i>			
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Geographical area of operation	Potential partners⁹
Specific objective 1: Provision of humanitarian aid to the population affected by Hurricane Felix	1,000,000	Autonomous Region of the Northern Atlantic and other areas in Northern Nicaragua	- CARE - FR - PAHO - TSF - WFP-PAM
TOTAL: 1,000,000			

⁹ CARE FRANCE, (FR), TELECOMS SANS FRONTIERES, UNITED NATIONS - PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION, WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

7 - Evaluation

Under article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid the Commission is required to "regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations." These evaluations are structured and organised in overarching and cross cutting issues forming part of DG ECHO's Annual Strategy such as child-related issues, the security of relief workers, respect for human rights, gender. Each year, an indicative Evaluation Programme is established after a consultative process. This programme is flexible and can be adapted to include evaluations not foreseen in the initial programme, in response to particular events or changing circumstances. More information can be obtained at:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/evaluation/index_en.htm.

8 - Budget Impact article 23 02 01

-	CE (EUR)
Initial Available Appropriations for 2007	485,000,000
Supplementary Budgets	
Transfers	
Total Available Credits	485,000,000
Total executed to date (by 03/09/2007)	412,275,695
Available remaining	72,724,305
Total amount of the Decision	1,000,000