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Humanitarian Aid: remembering the 2010 floods in Pakistan, helping recovery

Brussels, 01 August 2011 - One year after the worst monsoon floods in 80 years, vulnerable populations in Pakistan are still struggling to rebuild their lives and recover from the effects of the disaster. The European Union continues to support the worst-affected populations with generous humanitarian aid. More than 20 million people were affected by the floods, over 1,900 people died and an estimated 12.5 million required urgent humanitarian assistance.

Kristalina Georgieva, the European Union's Commissioner for crisis response, remembers her visit to the worst-affected areas just weeks after the peak of the floods: *"Millions of Pakistanis had been victims of consecutive tragedies – they had lost everything in the conflict that has been raging in their home regions, and then had lost everything again in the floods"*.

In 2010, the European Commission helped those in the direst need with €150 million in humanitarian assistance. A further €76 million has been committed to cover continuing acute needs in the affected areas such as shelter, water and sanitation, food, livelihood recovery and healthcare.

"In the face of a disaster of such great proportions, massive relief assistance was needed. The European Union was quick to react and provided emergency relief rapidly and efficiently. I am glad that our assistance could reach the most vulnerable – children, women and isolated communities," Commissioner Georgieva said.

The European Union's humanitarian involvement in Pakistan focuses on three separate but interdependent crises:

- 1. Support for the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan (around 1.7 million people) mostly through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- 2. Support for the conflict-affected population and internally displaced persons (1.4 million people) as well as returnees (1.95 million people).
- 3. Support for the flood-affected population, some of whom are also internally displaced persons, returnees and Afghan refugees.

However, despite the substantial assistance from the EU and the international community, the sheer scale of the disaster has left a lasting imprint on countless lives and livelihoods in Pakistan.

"By commemorating this sad anniversary, we take stock of the work we have done together with our humanitarian partners but, equally importantly, we hope to bring fresh international attention to the humanitarian challenges in Pakistan. This is the only way to help the country raise its resilience to withstand and cope with future emergencies," Commissioner Georgieva said.

"If flooding resumes, millions of people may not be able to cope with the risk to their lives and subsistence," the Commissioner warned.

At the start of a new monsoon season, the humanitarian community is concerned about the lack of resilience and the high vulnerability of the affected populations. The majority of those most severely affected by the 2010 floods were people already living in poverty and in conflict-torn areas. In many cases cash for work and cash grants are being used as an alternative to other kinds of assistance. This allows people to prioritise their own needs and helps rebuild communities and restore sustenance.

The European Commission continues to keep a close eye on the situation in the most affected regions of Pakistan, especially in those that are at the highest risk of new flooding. The Commission is prepared to assist again if the upcoming monsoon season proves to be as destructive as in 2010.

Background

During the summer of July 2010, an area of Pakistan stretching from the Chinese border in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south was hit by the worst flooding in living memory. The agricultural heartland of the country was devastated and there was significant damage to public and private infrastructure.

This disaster came on the heels of an ongoing armed conflict which has displaced almost three million people since 2009.

In 2010, the European Commission provided €150 million for humanitarian aid to Pakistan through its Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Directorate-General (ECHO). Most of the funding was allocated to the victims of the devastating floods and has been used to assist with the most urgent priorities such as shelter, food assistance, the provision of clean drinking water, access to healthcare and sanitation. There has been a strong focus on reducing vulnerability to disasters, preparedness and increasing people's resilience and coping capacities.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated following Pakistan's request for assistance to the international community. The Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) within the European Commission coordinated the response of the 31 European countries that participate in the Civil Protection Mechanism. In addition to in-kind assistance (water purification tablets, emergency health kits, hygiene kits, tents, water tanks, generators, etc.), EU civil protection experts were deployed to Pakistan to facilitate the coordinated civil protection assistance and to liaise with the UN agencies.

In addition to humanitarian aid, the European Commission is providing €425 million in development assistance to Pakistan in the period 2007-2013. Funded activities focus on rural development/natural resources management and on education/human resources management. Disaster risk reduction and preparedness are an integral part of the implementation of these funds.

Total EU development assistance for Pakistan both from the EU budget and from the Member States for 2009-2013 amounts to over €2.4 billion, which represents around 30 % of the total annual aid to the country

So far this year the European Commission has committed €76 million for humanitarian assistance in Pakistan. €70 million was allocated earlier in 2011 and a further €6 million was committed in July in view of continuing high needs. The most recent funding has been targeted at food and livelihood assistance and to help fight malnutrition in the most vulnerable communities.

European Commission-funded humanitarian projects continue to be implemented by non-governmental organisations, UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.

For more information

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

The European Commission's humanitarian aid:

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

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