

UN Joint Remarks Donor Conference on Albania earthquake response

Brussels, 17 February

Excellencies,

The United Nations reiterates its condolences to the people of Albania for the tragic loss of life and destruction that occurred in November last year. The United Nations provided immediate support to the Government in response to the earthquake, and we continue providing help to the country.

WHO staff in Albania, in close coordination with the Ministry of Health, deployed the same day as the quake its emergency team and provided equipment, contributing to health services continuity.

UNICEF mobilized experts to address critical child protection and education needs.

OCHA dispatched UN Disaster Assistance Coordination experts to support the EU Civic Protection Team.

And UNDP deployed a team of international advisers for the post-disaster emergency response and early recovery efforts. In partnership with the Government and the EU Civil Protection Unit, UNDP applied **Building Damage Assessment (BDA)** and **Household Damage Assessment (HDA)** methodology to support authorities assess the damage and impact on infrastructure and to collect geo-referenced information.

UNDP also provided non-food items to vulnerable Roma and Egyptian communities.

In parallel, we started the preparations for recovery. Under the strong leadership of the Albanian Government, and in partnership with the European Union, World Bank and the UN, the high-quality Post Disaster Needs Assessment was carried out.

Under the overall coordination of the Resident Coordinator in Albania and with the technical support from UNDP, the UN agencies joined forces in developing and implementing the recovery measures based on the sectorial needs as identified by the Government.

UNDP led the infrastructure and the productive sectors, with a total of 10 sub-sectors including employment, business, and tourism. Together with the EU, UNDP also co-led the sectors of social protection, civil protection and disaster risk reduction. UNICEF and WHO took a lead in the education and health care sectors, respectively. FAO helped assess the impact on rural producers. UNESCO focused on cultural heritage. UN Women provided support for the initial PDNA training to ensure that gender equality was addressed across all the sectors. Supplementary rapid survey work was undertaken by national partners with the support of UNDP and UNICEF.

The United Nations fully supports the reconstruction and recovery plans as outlined in the PDNA. UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO and FAO have proposed specific activities in the areas of education, health, community infrastructure, employment and the recovery of businesses, rural productivity, cultural heritage, disaster risk reduction and social protection. More detailed

information about our UN support for recovery programmes is available in the UN Support for Earthquake Recovery document.

The Albania SDG Acceleration Fund – co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations – is available to receive funding and finance joint UN programmes through a dedicated Earthquake Recovery Window. The Window will ensure transparency and coordinated reporting. In addition, there is also the possibility of direct financing of UN agencies. All activities undertaken by the UN will be undertaken in support of Government efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are many important principles underlying the PDNA that are well presented in the document. I would like, however, to highlight three:

First, the UN would like to encourage the Government in its pursuit of participatory and transparent governance mechanisms in the implementation of its recovery programmes.

Second, Albania will suffer more natural disasters. It has one of the highest risk ratings in Europe, whether to earthquakes, floods or forest fires. A robust Disaster Risk Reduction framework is essential for the country, anchored in a strong Civic Protection Agency but also mainstreamed across line Ministries, agencies, and different levels of national and local governance.

Third, the recovery outlined in the PDNA is fully consistent with the SDGs. A good recovery programme will help Albania achieve its SDGs faster.

The United Nations remains a steadfast partner to the people of Albania, and we look forward to working hard to support all recovery efforts.

Thank you.