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Remarks to the press on the Central African Republic and Philippines

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I have just had an opportunity to brief Member States here about the humanitarian situations in the Central African Republic and also in the Philippines, two crises that obviously demand our urgent and sustained attention.

Yesterday, I also briefed the Security Council on the unfolding situation in the Central African Republic with High Commissioner António Guterres, USG Hervé Ladsous, the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic and the Representative of the African Union.

I will start with Central African Republic and then say a few words at the end about the Philippines. The situation in the Central African Republic is extremely grave and urgent action is required by everyone if we are going to prevent further bloodshed.

The violence has led to a total breakdown of the state. A State that was already very weak now does not really have any institutions, they cannot deliver basic services and they have no capacity to stop the violence.

There was palpable fear in the eyes of the people that we met in Bangui and also in Bossangoa. And lots of people saying that they wanted to leave the country.

The number of internally displaced people is extremely high at 650,000, with 232,000 IDPs in Bangui alone. We have 70,000 people at the airport leaving in appalling conditions and 290,000 people who have fled to neighbouring countries.

So this is not just about Central African Republic. It is about the region as a whole and in particular the large numbers of people going to Cameroon, but also going to Chad, to DRC and also the Republic of Congo. We, the humanitarian community, have stepped-up our response, we reconfirmed our commitment to doing all we can to secure additional capacity and resources to support the people of CAR. But security is key and the amount that we can do given the lack of institutions on the ground is constrained.

More troops are needed now to restore security and stabilize the country. There is a proposal for a UN peacekeeping force but that will take at least six months.
We have a looming food crisis and with the upcoming rainy season millions of people will be at risk of communicable diseases. We are extremely worried that if we do not get the money that we need to pre-position, we will have an even further crisis.

Financial support is urgently needed to provide seeds and tools so that people can plant, so that we can support the pre-positioning of stocks, support voluntary returns where possible, and improve conditions in IDP sites.

We have asked for $551 million, given the scale of the crisis it is a modest amount. For now, we are only 16 per cent funded. At the conference which was co-hosted by me and Commissioner Georgieva in Brussels on 20 of January, we had a lot of pledges; we need those pledges to be turned into cash.

Just a few words on the Philippines, where I went a couple of weeks ago to revisit Tacloban and also Guiuan. It is four months since Typhoon Hayan.

When I went to Tacloban last year, within a few days of the typhoon, the city had been flattened, the streets were piled high with debris, people were literally just sitting there not knowing what had happened to them, they were looking for loved ones. It is a very different view now, the streets are jammed with traffic, more businesses have reopened, and children are back in school. You can see the signs of early recovery everywhere.

But I think that we have to recognize that behind those signs of early recovery, there are still some people who are extremely vulnerable. Progress has been made, but we need to sustain our response on the emergency side and also make sure that as we transition into early recovery and development that it is done in a way that does not leave gap.

The United Nations and partner organizations provided food, medicine, water and sanitation and hygiene assistance. We distributed tents and tarpaulins to more than 550,000 people. But shelter remains a major concern in the short term, but also longer term sustainability: it is important to support agriculture and the fishing community.

During the emergency phase, we helped to clear debris from 900 kilometres of roads and 400 kilometres of drainage channels and we are continuing to see cash-for-work programmes. The task now is to continue to ensure that the most vulnerable people are included in the recovery, because there are millions who continue to need support to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

Thank you.