EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR’S
KEY MESSAGES ON THE PHILIPPINES, TYPHOON HAIYAN/YOLANDA
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Key Messages

1. The humanitarian situation in the areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) is catastrophic. Almost 13 million people in the Philippines are affected, including some five million children. 1.9 million men, women and children have been displaced, many desperate for food, safe drinking water, basic shelter and sanitation. Many people have lost everything: their loved ones; their homes; their communities.

2. A disaster of this magnitude requires a massive response. The Government of the Philippines mobilized relief operations under extremely challenging circumstances. Local government has been decimated either because people have died or because they are searching for loved ones. Due to the scale, complexity and urgency of the situation the humanitarian community has declared the highest level of emergency response, meaning that supplies, logistical capacity and experienced humanitarian leaders have been deployed from around the world to support Government-led efforts.

3. The scale and scope of this tragedy has shocked everyone. Despite the evacuation of people before the typhoon hit and the presence of humanitarian teams on the ground, nobody anticipated the ferocity of the typhoon and the storm surge. People in the Philippines are resilient; they deal with numerous crises each year, but this situation was outside their experience.

4. The priorities for the next days and weeks are transporting and distributing more high energy biscuits and food, tarpaulins, tents and other shelter and essential items. Hygiene kits are needed particularly for children, water purification tablets, and a service to help families find each other. A major cash-for-work programme to clear routes needs to get under way and more body bags are needed. Trucks, motorcycles, generators, fuel and telecommunications equipment are needed to get life-saving supplies to the people who need them the most. It is an immense logistical challenge. The work being done by military personnel from partner countries to support the efforts of the Philippine military is an essential element of scaling up humanitarian operations. The arrival of additional aircraft, helicopters, communications equipment and other essential supplies is enabling us to reach more vulnerable people in remote locations every day.

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The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.
5. The United Nations and humanitarian partners are mounting a major aid operation throughout the affected area. Medical teams are providing emergency services in Cebu and Tacloban, and food supplies for 170,000 people have been distributed in the affected areas. A pipeline of relief supplies from Manila to the affected areas is starting to deliver. We have coordination and assessment teams in Busuanga, Roxas and Tacloban, and logistics staff are working in Cebu. Water services have been restored in some areas, and child protection specialists are working with the authorities to identify and register children separated from their families.

6. A humanitarian response plan has been launched, seeking US$301 million for the United Nations and humanitarian partners to provide emergency food, shelter, clean water and sanitation and health services for six months. This will be updated as the situation evolves. US$25 million has already been allocated by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to kick-start life-saving operations. All contributions, from countries, companies and private individuals will make a difference. Please give generously and show your commitment to the people and Government of the Philippines as they cope with this shocking tragedy.