

**AGENCIES IN NEPAL APPEAL FOR \$123.5 MILLION FOR
HUMANITARIAN AID**

(Kathmandu/New York, 10 March 2010): Humanitarian agencies in Nepal today appealed for US\$ 123.5 million to fund projects to assist more than 3.4 million vulnerable people across the country who are in need of life-saving assistance, including food aid, in 2010.

Nearly half of Nepal's districts are experiencing food shortages and the humanitarian country team estimates that nearly 2.5 million people face extreme food insecurity, mainly in the Midand far-western hill and mountain regions.

Strengthening preparedness and early warning systems to reduce the number of people affected by future disasters is also a priority. Nepal is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, including floods, landslides and earthquakes. In 2009, some 152,000 people were affected by monsoon floods and landslides. Preparedness activities in water, sanitation and hygiene are also needed following a severe diarrhoea outbreak in western districts of Nepal last year.

“As a country emerging from conflict, Nepal needs sustained international humanitarian support to see it through this fragile period of transition,” said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “An estimated 28,000 children die every year from preventable diseases, some of them the consequences of severe malnutrition. Most of these problems can be solved with adequate donor support,” Mr. Holmes said.

Rural households in Nepal are particularly vulnerable. More than 70 percent of household budgets are devoted to the purchase of food, and dependence on subsistence agriculture remains high. Inadequate funding for agriculture in 2009 is believed to have compounded the effects of the severe winter drought. Sufficient investment in agriculture might have mitigated the current food crisis.

In the post-conflict environment, economic growth and development will take time. Meanwhile, generalized poverty and lack of social services have created widespread basic needs.

Funds requested in the 2010 Nepal Humanitarian Transition Appeal will be used to improve food security, fund nutrition projects, strengthen disaster preparedness and assist refugees. Nepal hosts an estimated 89,000 refugees from neighbouring Bhutan.

The appealing organizations are seven United Nations agencies and three non-governmental organizations.

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