

Remarks for ASG a.i. Ramesh Rajasingham, OCHA

Introduction

Thank you for the leadership of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, the wise guidance of the Director General of WHO, Dr. Tedros and the direct cooperation of all the leadership of the IASC members.

- We are now at a point where cases have now been confirmed in almost every country covered by the Global Humanitarian Response Plan.¹ There is particular concern for the rapid increase of cases being observed in Africa (more than 10,000 confirmed cases as of 14 April).
- The spread and scope of COVID-19 requires unprecedented cooperation – not just in the UN and the IASC, but across the entire international community. In this regard, we welcome this meeting as an opportunity for continued partnership and collaboration.

Status of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan

- The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) launched on 25 March by the Secretary-General, the Director General of WHO and the Emergency Relief Coordinator requesting \$2 billion is the vehicle for raising resources for the immediate COVID-19 related health and multi-sectoral

¹ Note: following the confirmation of Yemen's first case of COVID-19 on 10 April, DPRK is the only country in the GHRP that does not have any reported/confirmed cases.

humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable population groups in all countries already facing a humanitarian crisis.

- So far, approximately \$600 million has been reported, with significant additional resources being mobilized and pledged. We are enormously grateful to donors for their commitment and generous contributions. I have to emphasize though that funding for the GHRP should not be diverted from support to ongoing humanitarian and refugee operations, which would be counterproductive and lead to additional suffering and loss of life in the short term.
- The Central Emergency Response Fund and Country Based Pooled funds administered by OCHA has allocated over \$160 million to support efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, keep up supply chains, transport humanitarian workers and supplies, and provide lifesaving assistance and protection. Again, thank you very much to those donors for their strong support to the CERF and CBPFs.
- The first update of the GHRP is expected to be published on 7 May, which will include more detailed needs for the current set of countries along with a set of additional countries (which are currently being decided by the IASC). This next iteration will be the result of a more bottom-up approach, and will incorporate a broader range of inputs at the country level, including from international and national NGOs. it will

also include an increased focus on gender, mental health, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Update on humanitarian response

- The IASC is fully engaged and leading the global coordination of humanitarian-related aspects of the COVID-19 response. 8 IASC interim guidance have been published to support COVID-19 preparedness and response (including on adjusting food distributions, response in camps and camp-like settings, gender, mental health and PSEA).
- At an operational level, COVID-19 is creating a new set of challenges, especially in terms of humanitarian access.
- While hindered, humanitarian operations have not stopped. Humanitarian organizations are on the ground and continue to deliver assistance and provide protection services, despite delays and other operational challenges, to the most vulnerable people, including displaced persons, older people, people with disabilities, women and girls.
- The UN and partners continue to strictly comply with public health and safety measures, and are committed to supporting governments' efforts to combat COVID-19. At the same time, humanitarian organizations are reporting access challenges related to these emergency measures – including flight suspensions, border closures, quarantine policies, visa

restrictions and curfews – which are resulting in delays and suspensions of essential humanitarian activities, as well as challenges in rotating and surging staff. This, in turn, may affect populations' access to assistance and protection services.

- The UN and partners are working with national authorities to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, including fast-tracking the passage of humanitarian personnel and cargo across and within borders. We deeply appreciate Member States' strong support on this issue to facilitate the safe and timely movement of humanitarian personnel and goods, such as PPEs and other medical supplies to support humanitarian operations.
- Humanitarian organizations are also adjusting their modalities to ensure continuity of humanitarian operations.
- At the global level and under the GHRP, WFP is providing common services to enable the movement of humanitarian personnel and goods, including establishing ten international and regional staging hubs and providing air services for humanitarian workers and cargo (including for relocations and medical evacuations). Urge donors to fully fund the logistics component of the GHRP as an essential enabler of the ongoing humanitarian operations. As part of this work, WFP opened a new hub in Addis Ababa's Bole Airport in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia this week, from

which COVID-19 supplies, equipment and humanitarian workers will be transported across Africa. The first cargo flight arrived on Monday, carrying PPEs and other supplies from WHO for distribution to 32 African countries.

Vulnerability outlook

- Finally, Excellencies, we have to stress that the potential longer-term effects of COVID-19 on the global economy and those of individual countries are dire. COVID-19 is set to overwhelm weak health care systems, some of which have been decimated by years of conflict and attacks. It will bring already fragile economies to a standstill and put vulnerable populations at terrible risk. These effects are already being initially observed; for example, food price increases – some as high as 50 per cent – have been reported in many vulnerable countries. We will keep monitoring these needs in vulnerable situations and appropriately reflect them in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan updates.
- Thank you very much for this opportunity.