

UN EMERGENCY FUND RELEASES US\$ 8 MILLION TO ASSIST MOST-VULNERABLE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DPRK

(Bangkok, 2 February 2016) United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 29 January 2016 released US\$ 8 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for severely underfunded aid operations in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK). These funds will enable life-saving assistance for more than 2.2 million people most vulnerable and at risk of malnutrition. The DPRK was one of nine countries to receive such grants within the overall \$100 million allocation to underfunded emergencies.

Undernutrition is a fundamental cause of maternal and child death and disease: in DPRK, chronic malnutrition (stunting) among under-five children is at 27.9 per cent, while 4 per cent of under-five children are acutely malnourished (wasting). Around 70 per cent of the population, or 18 million people, are considered food insecure. Food production in the country is hampered by a lack of agricultural inputs and is highly vulnerable to shocks, particularly natural disasters. Due to drought in 2015, 11 per cent of the main harvest was lost.

Health service delivery, including reproductive health, remains inadequate, with many areas of the country not equipped with the facilities, equipment or medicines to meet people's basic health needs. Under-five children and low-birth-weight newborns are vulnerable to life-threatening diseases, such as pneumonia and diarrhoea if they do not receive proper treatment or basic food, vitamins and micronutrients.

CERF funds will be used to sustain critical life-saving interventions aimed at improving the nutrition situation in the country through reduction of maternal and under-five child mortality and morbidity. More than 2.2 million people, including 1.8 million under-five children and 350,000 pregnant and lactating women, will benefit from assistance provided by CERF funds.

“The commitment and support of the international community is vital. Protracted and serious needs must be addressed” said United Nations Resident Coordinator for the DPRK, Mr. Tapan Mishra. “Humanitarian needs must be kept separate from political issues to ensure minimum living conditions for the most vulnerable people.”

The United Nations will continue to work towards addressing the structural causes of vulnerabilities and chronic malnutrition through its interventions agreed with the DPRK Government.

For further information, please contact: **Kristen Knutson**, OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific: Email: knutson@un.org; mobile +66 899 447 623
OCHA press releases are available at www.unocha.org or www.reliefweb.int.