UN DEPUTY HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CALLS FOR INCREASED SUPPORT TO MADAGASCAR TO RESPOND TO THE MOST ACUTE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND THEIR ROOT CAUSES

(Antananarivo, 5 June 2019): At the end of a three-day mission to Madagascar, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller called for urgent action to avert the consequences of climate change and for increased investment to respond to the country’s most acute humanitarian needs and their root causes.

Ms. Mueller highlighted that climate-related challenges are exacerbating the risks faced by people who are already extremely vulnerable and are compounding humanitarian needs in the country. “I have seen the humanitarian impact of climate-related challenges, with the poorest and most vulnerable people bearing the brunt,” she said. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and intense here.” In the past 20 years, the island nation has been struck by 35 cyclones, 8 floods and 5 periods of severe drought, representing a three-fold increase over the previous 20 years.

The deputy humanitarian chief visited the south of the country, which remains severely underdeveloped and suffers from recurrent droughts. People in the Grand Sud region face persistent food insecurity and high levels of malnutrition, which escalate into a humanitarian crisis each time there is a significant climatic shock. “I met amazing women who, with the right support, are finally able to put food on the table for their families. But I also saw too many malnourished children. Much more has to be done to support them”, she explained. Across the country, 1.3 million people are severely food insecure.

In Berano commune, Amboasary district, Ms. Mueller saw that despite the remarkable efforts of a community doctor, more than 60 children died from measles during the last months. “The doctor explained how the support from the international community, including the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund managed by OCHA, has helped to improve the health conditions in the area. But still, since September 2018, more than 1,200 people, most of them children, died from measles in Madagascar. We cannot let this happen again.”

During her meeting with the Prime Minister, Christian Ntsay and the President Andry Rajoelina, Ms. Mueller commended the Government on its efforts to lead comprehensive development action to end chronic needs in the Grand Sud region. “The Government, together with international partners, has made progress in addressing the root causes of recurrent humanitarian needs,” she said. “However, more funding is urgently required to meet the humanitarian needs we have been unable to address. Innovative development programming is also crucial to increase resilience and disaster risk reduction, particularly for the most marginalized.”

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