UN CALLS FOR $408 MILLION IN REVISED REGIONAL FLASH APPEAL FOR LIBYA CRISIS

(Geneva/New York, 18 May 2011): The UN has called for an additional US$233 million to assist as many as 2.1 million civilians affected by the conflict in Libya, and warned of a potential worsening of the humanitarian situation both within and outside the country.

An initial flash appeal for $160 million was issued on 7 March, based on projections of up to 400,000 people fleeing Libya and another 600,000 needing help within. As of today more than 803,000 people have left, and new focus is being placed on the crisis within Libya - where up to 1.6 million people require assistance.

“The conflict, the breakdown of state infrastructure, and shortages of cash and fuel are causing serious problems for the population of Libya,” Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos told Member States today in Geneva. “In Misrata, which remains at the forefront of our concern, some people are running short of food, water and other basics. Widespread shortages are paralyzing the country in ways which will gravely impact the general population in the weeks and months ahead; particularly the poorest and the most vulnerable.”

The revised flash appeal launched today in Geneva calls for a total of $408 million to last until the beginning of September, of which $175 million had already been received.

While pockets of acute humanitarian need have emerged in some places, such as Misrata, in most of the country the situation is not yet critical. But there is significant potential for a worsening of the situation, with food, fuel and medical stocks running low, and an emerging shortage of personnel in key sectors such as health.

The crisis is also taking a toll on nearby countries. Niger and Chad, two of the world’s poorest countries, face the burden of reintegrating thousands of former expatriates, whose remittances from Libya had been essential to the survival of their communities at home.

Ms. Amos reiterated UN calls for a pause to hostilities in Misrata, to allow further delivery of essential medical supplies and other relief items, as well as the evacuation of third country nationals, the wounded and others who require emergency medical assistance.

A pause would also allow an independent assessment of the humanitarian situation, which has been hampered by limited access. The last assessment inside Libya took place on 7-11 April, more than one month ago.

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