DRC: $30.5 MILLION URGENTLY NEEDED TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN NORTH KIVU

(Goma/Geneva, 17 January 2012): International and national aid organizations are appealing for US$30.5 million to respond to humanitarian needs over the next six months in North Kivu province in eastern Dem. Rep. of Congo (DRC). The “North Kivu Response Plan” aims to help some 590,000 people with life-saving and recovery assistance in the aftermath of the latest fighting that affected the province in late 2012.

“The North Kivu Response Plan is our answer to the loss and suffering endured by thousands of people these past months. We want to provide families with aid to cover their most basic immediate needs while looking ahead to restoring their livelihoods,” said Barbara Shenstone, Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in DRC. The North Kivu Response Plan is part of a $892 million country-wide action plan that will be launched in a few weeks in Kinshasa.

The six-months plan, initiated in December last year, addresses humanitarian needs in and around Goma and in the neighbouring territories of Masisi Centre and Kitchanga, the most affected by the recent violence. The first phase aims to provide emergency assistance in all camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), through blanket aid distributions, while promoting their return and the evacuation of public buildings. Humanitarian agencies will then provide aid to those who return to their homes so they can pick up their lives. In the third stage, aid organizations will provide a more holistic assistance package to the displaced who decide to remain in the camps and sites.

In many IDP camps and sites, drinking water is scarce. This has contributed to outbreaks of cholera and other water-borne diseases, and aid organizations have therefore begun rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructure. Health partners are also looking to renovate clinics and health centres and to replenish the looted medicine stocks. Some mobile clinics are already operating in Goma.

Aid agencies estimate that during the coming months about 320,000 people will need agricultural assistance, and some 13,000 children will need specialized feeding to fight off malnutrition. Close to 300 schools will have to be renovated and an estimated 240,000 children will need, among other things, extra classes, school material, and psychosocial and recreational activities to help them overcome recent trauma.

The response plan also addresses the security and protection of civilians, a paramount priority for the aid community. Clashes between the M23 armed group and the national Congolese army have diminished, but North Kivu remains highly insecure due to the proliferation of weapons, sporadic fighting between armed groups and the army, and inter-community tensions.
“While Goma remains calm but tense, new displacements are occurring every day elsewhere in North Kivu with thousands seeking safety in neighbouring South Kivu. Many, notably children, risk death, injury, recruitment into armed groups and abuse. We urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and to respect international law so that humanitarian agencies can continue to reach and attend to those affected”, said Barbara Beintein, UNICEF’s representative in the DRC.

The success of the response plan hinges on a “safe climate, free from violence and conducive to aid delivery”, Barbra Shenstone said, adding that any additional insecurity “will be a serious blow to relief efforts”.

Since April 2012, 500,000 people have been displaced due to M23-related activities, including the displacement of 150,000 people since the heavy fighting in mid-November 2012. Today, North Kivu is home to some 914,000 IDPs, the largest concentration in the country.