



EUROPEAN UNION

~FACTSHEET~

TSUNAMI AND REINFORCING EU DISASTER AND CRISIS RESPONSE

Humanitarian Aid – a swift and generous response to Tsunami disaster

Humanitarian-aid response of the European Union and its Member States and the initial forecasts for rehabilitation and reconstruction currently stand at over € 1.5 billion in official aid. The initial € 23 M of Community humanitarian aid funds have already been contracted. An additional € 100 M from the Community emergency reserve have been made available for humanitarian aid. Out of this, a package of € 80 million has just been approved to cover the still substantial emergency needs of the victims and to bridge the gap until reconstruction funds become available. At this stage, 83% of the humanitarian funding announced under the European Community budget has already been committed.

Reconstruction – addressing the immediate needs with a multitude of instruments

€ 350 million have been pledged by the EU in the Jakarta Conference for reconstruction needs. The Commission and the European Investment Bank are engaged in preparatory work for the setting up of a concessional finance facility, the "Indian Ocean Tsunami Facility", of up to EUR 1 billion. Beyond financial aid, some 20 flanking measures are now under way or are planned by the Commission and range across trade, fisheries, health, information and communication, research, satellite monitoring, finance, and justice and home affairs. Coordination among all the players concerned for the assessment of medium-term needs in order to optimise the effectiveness and quality of aid is vital. Reconstruction efforts must be based on the national priorities of the countries concerned and must respect the principle of ownership.

Flanking measures - New general System of Preferences

On 10 February 2005 the Commission adopted an amended proposal for a Council Regulation on the General System of Preferences (GSP), in which the proposed date for entry into effect is advanced to 1 April 2005. The advanced application of this Regulation will be instrumental in the long-term economic recovery of tsunami-affected countries to immediately benefit from the new system which will be more generous and transparent. Sri Lanka, Indonesia, i.a. will benefit from the additional advantages.

Lessons to learn

The EU and its Member States have displayed a major effort in the humanitarian, financial and logistical field, as well as the various mechanisms put in place to coordinate the Union's work, in particular in the areas of humanitarian aid, civil protection and consular co-operation. For the future the EU will examine all possible ways of improving the European Community's civil protection mechanism and the humanitarian aid instrument, including its field assessment

capacity, while taking due account of the principles and specific nature of humanitarian aid. Furthermore, within the context of the ongoing reflection on the setting up of the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps foreseen by the Constitutional Treaty, consideration will be given to the contribution which could be made in this type of situation by such a corps.

Other areas of reinforced cooperation will include the possibilities for developing a **European Union rapid response capability** (planning, coordination and resource mobilisation structure) to deal with disasters of the kind we have just experienced. The Union will swiftly assess lessons learned regarding the protection of European citizens, with a view to improving its ability to react in this area, including in the area of consular cooperation between Member States. The EU will also examine the possibilities for better coordination of military resources through the appropriate bodies, so that they can be made available efficiently in support of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The EU has adopted an **action plan** aimed at encompassing all the initiatives taken, or to be taken by the Union and its Member States following the earthquake and tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. It is intended to serve as a framework for all EU activities in this regard, in particular to allow for better coordination of efforts on all levels and regarding all means (analysis, planning of means, operational conduct, prevention, etc.). This plan shall serve to aim at short-, mid- and long-term activities, help to mobilise the necessary means (financial, human, military) and refer to activities inside and outside the EU.

For more information go to:

The website on EU response to the Tsunami disaster:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/tsunami/index.htm>

The EU Humanitarian aid website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/whatsnew/tsunami_en.htm

February 2005