

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL DONORS' CONFERENCE  
ON THE REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION  
OF THE AREAS AFFECTED BY THE 8 OCTOBER EARTHQUAKE  
Islamabad. 19 November 2005

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Mr. President,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by paying homage to our hosts, the President, people and Government of Pakistan, whose losses in this tragedy are greater than we can fathom.

Mr. President, I am sure I speak for all us today in paying tribute to the courage your country has displayed in the wake of the catastrophe. As you have said, the entire nation has emerged as one.

Today, we have gathered to make common cause with you in the work ahead.

The earthquake of 8 October was an unprecedented disaster. **It** requires us to mount an unprecedented response.

Yesterday I was able to visit the disaster areas, and to see the valiant relief and recovery work taking place there. Words and statistics fall terribly short as we seek to convey the human suffering of countless families and communities.

Clearly, the sheer magnitude of the impact of the quake is still emerging. But one thing we do know already: we must be prepared to work together in the long run. The people and Government of Pakistan will need the enduring support of the international community.

Let me thank the donors who have stepped forward already; the international organizations that are providing invaluable support; and the heroic NGOs, both national and international.

Above all, let me recognize the excellent ongoing cooperation with the Government of Pakistan, as well as the spontaneous and generous contributions of the Pakistani people. The huge effort would not have been possible without many organizations and individuals pulling together.

There are no ready-made solutions to the many challenges this catastrophe has brought with it. So the pooling of assets, resources and expertise remains vital --bringing together in close collaboration the Federal Relief Commission, provincial authorities, local communities, international NGOs and UN agencies. I saw this at first hand in Muzaffarabad yesterday.

I also saw that one of the greatest challenges facing us is the need to work on three levels at once: the immediate, medium and long term. If experience has taught us anything, it is that our efforts on all three must happen in parallel:

relief --saving lives;

early recovery -restoring livelihoods;  
and reconstruction --rebuilding economies.

How we fare on the first two will shape how well we achieve the ultimate goal of successful reconstruction.

Each level requires our sustained commitment. Each requires us to come up with innovative solutions. Each requires cash matched by coordination.

First, there are urgent human and humanitarian needs, which demand our continuing attention. The difficult terrain makes this is one of the most challenging relief operation ever undertaken. The pitiless Himalayan winter is already upon us, and growing more severe with every day. We must sustain our efforts to keep people as healthy and strong as possible, until we can rebuild.

That means we must provide them with shelter and warmth. We must provide them with food, clean water, and medical treatment. We must ensure their safe transfer to camps if they so choose; we must do all we can to help them stay safely in their home communities if they so choose. In sum, we must ensure that the earthquake does not claim more lives than it already has.

Second, we must act quickly to jumpstart recovery for those affected by the disaster. That means restoring livelihoods through cash grants, small loans, or cash-for-work programmes. It means helping to provide resources and materials to repair houses, or to expand the housing of host families taking in others.

It means resuming school classes at all levels --be it in tents or temporary buildings. It means ensuring medical care to provide immunizations, maternal and child health --through whatever facilities we can. It means re-opening roads to traffic, and ensuring water, sanitation and power --both to camps and damaged areas.

And it means putting the conditions in place whereby temporary solutions do not become a permanent makeshift reality.

That must take us to the III1Q level, that of reconstruction. The task of rebuilding both lives and infrastructure will require a sustained effort on a wide range of fronts -- from microfinance to vocational training, from re-equipping health systems to restoring

damaged schools. You will hear more about that today from colleagues of the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

It is in this phase that we will find the opportunity to improve on what was there before; to build better lives for the men, women and children of the region. This is where we can and must strengthen health services, upgrade water and sanitation, and build more and better schools. This is where we can and must explore innovative business development funding to support small enterprises. This is where we can and must train for safer construction and improve preparedness for the next time a disaster strikes.

This, in short, is where we can and must turn a challenge *of* inhuman dimensions into an opportunity for human development. As you have said, Mr. President: "Nobody can bring back those who died, but 11 is in our hands to change the lives *of* those who have survived, and that we will do --*Inshallah*."

Today, I ask the international community to support all three stages of the work towards that goal. It will require the generous support and engagement of Governments, civil society and the private sector. It will require all our energy and creativity. It will require us to work as one. I hope I can count on all of you as we pursue that mission in the weeks, months and years ahead. Thank you very much.