

COP15

Humanitarian Day

**HUMANITARIANS STRESS THE IMPACT OF
CLIMATIC CHANGE ON HUMANITY**

The Humanitarian Community calls for urgent action on the adaptation and reduction of risk of disasters to protect the world's most vulnerable communities

COPENHAGEN, 15 December 2009 – Vulnerable communities and humanitarian agencies raised their voices with a powerful message that “Climate Change is already affecting millions of the world’s most vulnerable persons – we must work more unitedly now to help them to adapt”.

The events taking place in the framework of the “Humanitarian Day” at COP 15 stressed the urgency with which the world community needs to act to address the very real challenges already affecting the poorest and most vulnerable countries, especially children and youth.

Diverse NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and United Nations Agencies, as spokespersons for the most affected countries, spent the day explaining the different effects of climate change, ranging from famines and malnutrition, threats to public health from epidemics and competition for scarce resources like water, to displacement and migration to more environmentally stable and safer places.

These unprecedented impacts could overwhelm the response of national governments and disaster risk management systems world-wide, warned UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes, emphasizing that any agreement on adaptation should include the reduction of disaster risks and preparatory measures for disasters.

“The reduction of disaster risk, preparation for disasters, and response are the vital first line of defence for vulnerable communities, especially in regions of the world that are most susceptible to disaster risk,”, said Holmes. “While humanitarian organizations can help to reduce the impacts of extreme climate on

individuals, we must support governments in their investment and strengthening of disaster management systems now, in order to save lives”.

Helping nations and communities at risk to adapt rapidly and adequately to the changing reality is the main priority for everyone, as shown by the testimony of hundreds of witnesses of climate change, representatives of youth and humanitarian leaders.

“Poor people in developing countries, which are carrying more than 90 per cent of the burden of climate change through death, disease, misery and loss of means of subsistence, must be the central actors in developing adaptive solutions to help the most vulnerable”, said Oxfam Great Britain Director Barbara Stocking.

Thirteen-year-old Sok, from the Seda commune near Kampong Cham in Cambodia, said, “We are suffering from a drought and a much hotter climate than before, so now our family needs to pump water for our rice fields from more distant sources. Our parents cannot do it by themselves, so when the situation gets serious we have to miss school to help them”.

“The interests of the most vulnerable communities would be better addressed with a strong accord signed by all the governments here in Copenhagen”, emphasized the Secretary General of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Bekele Geleta. “However, independently of the outcome, our objective will continue to be to support the most vulnerable and work with the governments, and in the communities, to reduce vulnerability”.

The events on humanitarian themes continue in Copenhagen this December 16, when attention will be focused on the critical problems of human security like migration and displacement.

For more information on these humanitarian concerns and opportunities for interviews, please contact:

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