

# PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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## Top UNDP official Hafiz Pasha visits Aceh

***Banda Aceh, 26 February*** - Assistant UN Secretary General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific Dr Hafiz Pasha arrived in Aceh on February 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> as part of his tour of countries affected by the tsunami. He came to see for himself the extent of the devastation and the problems it caused, and to discuss how UNDP's contribution to the emergency response can be developed in to long-term reconstruction.

### **Q: How will the UN role change from emergency phase to reconstruction?**

A: In the emergency phase the concentration was on activities that could not wait– such as clearing up the rubble, removing debris and recovering the dead. With progress made on this front time has come to start focusing on the rehabilitation of infrastructure and let people come back to their homes and start making a living. As we move on we look at issues of long-term stability: helping people to find permanent jobs. A lot of victims in Aceh were fishermen, for example, they will need fishing gear and boats. To other important issues are permanent shelter and support for local government to implement their reconstruction plan.

### **Q: What are the priorities for reconstruction?**

A: The biggest priority is shelter. The people of Aceh need permanent shelter of reasonable standard. This means building more houses, but also helping people repair their original places of residence. Shelter will take up to 30% of the cost of reconstruction. Then of course we will focus on restoring basic services in the areas to which people will return, such as water supply and sanitation. Physical infrastructure – roads, bridges etc., will also need to be rebuilt. In addition there is what I'd like to call the 'software' of the reconstruction programme, support for the local government as well as for civil society.

### **Q: What are the principal challenges facing UNDP in Aceh?**

A: Clearly, this region has a history of conflict. To be able to function in such an environment and to continue delivering our programme, the relationship between the Government and GAM has to remain in a state that allows for this. The other challenge is the decimation of local capacity – many professionals such as teachers, doctors and civil servants have perished. To replace these skilled people will be one of the principal challenges.

**Q: What struck you most?**

A: The extent of the devastation struck me most. Two months after it happened you still see the complete devastation. I saw dead bodies coming out of the rubble even now and that left a lasting impression on me. But I was also very struck by how people have developed coping mechanisms – activity has restarted, you see people going back to their homes, if only to see what they could salvage, starting up markets and that sort of thing. I was very impressed by the resilience of the people.

**Q: How concerned are you about corruption? And what can the UN do about it?**

A: Clearly this is an issue that keeps coming back. But it's important to understand that there are two dimensions to this problem: the question of ensuring that the money the UN is providing is not misused, and in a wider context dealing with the endemic nature of corruption in Indonesia. As far as UN money goes, we need some degree of oversight of the money we're providing. Therefore we need to promote inclusion of civil society. We are working with international accountancy firms who have offered pro bono services to help improve financial systems and track the money. On top of that is the overall anti corruption programme we are running with the Government, which focuses on setting up an independent institution for accountability and the handling of cases of alleged corruption.

**Q: How concerned are you that the short attention span of the international community means that there won't be enough reconstruction money, now that we're out of the crisis phase?**

A: Fading attention for the plight of the tsunami survivors remains an area of concern. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has appointed former US president Bill Clinton as his special envoy. Hopefully he will continue to draw the attention of the international community to the continuing needs of survivors. It is extremely important we sustain the momentum.

**Q: What is the state of the pledges? How much has been pledged and of that, how much financial assistance has actually been received?**

A: We had a flash appeal of 72 million USD. If you include expressions of interest we have achieved 70 percent, which is around 50 million USD. In addition, there is donor money that is currently unallocated, that we can add to that total when it is earmarked for tsunami related projects. When that happens, we are expecting that we'll come close to achieving our target.

**Q: Are more donor conferences planned for Aceh?**

A: The Government of Indonesia will produce a reconstruction plan - the so-called "blueprint" - at the end of March. In early June the Government has scheduled another meeting of the Consultative Group for Indonesia (CGI) the donor forum chaired by the World Bank. The time between the blueprint and the CGI will be used to write an implementation plan for reconstruction. With this plan the Government will approach the international community.

**Q: Will you visit Aceh again?**

A: At the very least, I will be back in Aceh at the start of July. That will be the six month' anniversary of the flash appeal. I'll want to see how it has changed and developed, and also to focus then on subsequent reconstruction. Of course, I would want to see what difference we have been able to make for the Acehese people.