

# PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Country Team in Thailand

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## United Nations Provides Urgent Support to Tsunami-stricken Thailand

*Wednesday, 29 December 2004 – Bangkok:* A United Nations Disaster Assistance and Coordination team arrived in Thailand Tuesday night to assist the Royal Thai Government and the UN Country Team with the relief operations in the disaster stricken Southern Thailand. The five-person team from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) is made up of experts in the areas of disaster relief coordination, medical support, telecommunications, and information. The team is accompanied by the UN Resident Coordinator in Thailand and representatives from UNICEF, World Food Programme, and the World Health Organization.

The role of the UN team is to provide strategic support to the Government in the monumental task of coordinating the relief operations. It will also undertake needs assessments and assist the Government in coordinating international assistance.

The UN team is traveling to Phuket and other affected areas Wednesday evening to assess the situation and provide on-the-spot coordination support.

The UN agencies based in Thailand also met on Tuesday to coordinate their support to Thailand. Initial assistance from the UN includes:

- UNICEF is contributing an initial USD100,000 to the relief efforts, and is programming USD 1.4 million of assistance to the affected provinces to support children and their families. Major activities will focus on psycho-social care and support, reuniting children with their families, and assistance in the areas of education, nutrition, water and sanitation.
- UNDP has today transferred USD 100,000 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an initial contribution to relief operations, particularly for transport of emergency relief. Further assistance for recovery and reconstruction will be forthcoming depending on the results of the UN assessment and Government requests.
- The UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance has today contributed USD 50,000 for the purchase of body bags, formalin, and medical supplies.
- UNFPA will make an immediate contribution of USD 50,000 for planning, implementation of emergency response (staff, transport, local

procurement of health and hygiene supplies, needs assessment costs, etc). More assistance will be provided based on the UN team's needs assessment that will take place shortly.

- FAO has offered support to fisheries and farming communities, as well as committed to contribute USD 20,000 to the UN Emergency Relief Fund and also earmarked initial amount of USD 20,000 for damage and needs assessment.
- World Food Programme (WFP) will provide an initial USD 500,000 in food aid. More assistance may be provided in the future based on the UN team's and WFP's own assessment in collaboration with the government.
- UNHCR will be making an immediate contribution of USD 50,000 for the emergency shelter needs of the local population.
- WHO is working closely with the Ministry of Public Health and other UN partners on multi-sectoral assessment of the situation, particularly in areas of health, water, sanitation and disease control, on the basis of which further action will be taken

Other key UN agencies are also providing support, or are in the process of mobilizing funds or contributions in-kind.

The UN Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have agreed to set up a "UN Emergency Relief Fund" to be managed by the MFA Humanitarian Relief Coordinator, through which the initial support from the UN agencies will be channeled. This Fund will provide a quick and flexible mechanism to support the relief operations, logistics support, transport of relief items and personnel, search and rescue operations, and medical supplies.

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