

**Statement by Mr. Tapan Mishra, UN Resident Coordinator in DPRK,  
on the release of the 2019 Needs and Priorities Plan**

**6 March 2019**

The Humanitarian Country Team in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is today releasing the 2019 Needs and Priorities Plan which calls for US\$120 million to urgently provide life-saving aid to 3.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian operations in DPRK are a critical lifeline for millions of people who are in a protracted cycle of humanitarian need. Women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and are prioritized in this plan. For example, in the nutrition sector, 90 per cent of assistance goes to children under five and women. In the health sector, 92 per cent of assistance is directed to children under five and women. Their plight must not be forgotten.

An estimated 11 million people in DPRK lack sufficient nutritious food, clean drinking water or access to basic services like health and sanitation. Widespread undernutrition threatens an entire generation of children, with one in five children stunted due to chronic undernutrition. Coupled with limited healthcare and a lack of access to safe water and sanitation and hygiene services, children are also at risk of dying from curable diseases.

Most concerning is that the overall food production in 2018 was more than 9 per cent lower than 2017 and was the lowest production in more than a decade. This has resulted in a significant food gap. Without adequate funding for life-saving activities as outlined in the Needs and Priorities Plan, we open the door to a potential deterioration of the humanitarian situation in DPRK and to increased malnutrition and illness. If we are to address and mitigate the impact of food insecurity on the most vulnerable in the country, including women and children, the time to act is now.

Despite these alarming facts, humanitarian activities in DPRK are critically underfunded and the needs of millions of mostly women and children have not been met. Last year's Needs and Priorities Plan was only funded at 24 per cent, making it one of the lowest funded humanitarian plans in the world. A number of agencies have already been forced to scale back their programmes. Without adequate funding this year, the only option left for some agencies will be to close projects that serve as a life-line for millions of people.

Although Security Council sanctions clearly exempt humanitarian activities, life-saving programmes continue to face serious challenges and delays. While unintended consequences of sanctions persist, these delays have a real and tangible impact on the aid that we are able to provide to people who desperately need it. We must collectively fulfil our commitment under the Sustainable Development Goals to "leave no one behind."

Last year, we were only able reach one third of the people to whom we planned to provide humanitarian assistance. An estimated 1.4 million people didn't get food assistance. Just under 800,000 people were not able to access essential health services. An estimated 190,000 kindergarten children and 85,000 acutely malnourished children did not get the nutrition support they needed. Beyond the numbers, the human cost of our inability to respond is unmeasurable.

In spite of these challenges, and thanks to the generosity of donors, the UN and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) were able to reach two million people with humanitarian aid. I have never failed to be impressed by the commitment and work of the humanitarian organisations in the country. I have seen the impact of their programmes on the lives of ordinary people who they have supported by providing nutritious food, ensuring children are vaccinated, treating malnutrition and diseases, providing access to clean water, and supporting farmers to grow food despite the risk of natural disasters.

I have also seen progress being made on the ground. We have made great strides in improving access and monitoring for humanitarian agencies in DPRK through continued, principled, and robust engagement with the Government. Humanitarian agencies rigorously monitor their programmes throughout the country to ensure assistance is reaching the most vulnerable. In 2018, 1,855 project site visits were conducted during 854 monitoring days by UN agencies and INGOs, covering all 11 provinces in the country.

Since 2012, there has also been an improvement in the child nutrition situation with rates of chronic undernutrition amongst children under five dropping from 28 per cent to 19 per cent. Yet my concern, and that of the entire humanitarian community, is that while the impact of stunting is irreversible, these overall improvements are not.

I appeal to all our potential donors and stakeholders to rise above political and security considerations, and to not allow them to get in the way of providing life-saving aid to the men, women, and children who need it the most. We simply cannot leave them behind.

*The 2019 Needs and Priorities Plan is available to download here: <https://bit.ly/2Hh4Bv1>*

*Handout photos and B-roll video are available to download here: <https://bit.ly/2Ur6BEV>*

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