

**Statement at the Launch of the Typhoon Bopha/Pablo Response: Action Plan for  
Recovery and the  
Philippines (Mindanao) Humanitarian Action Plan 2013  
United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator,  
Ms. Luiza Carvalho**

**Davao City, 10 December 2012**

*Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat* (Good afternoon to you all.) Thank you for joining us this afternoon for the launch of the Typhoon Bopha/Pablo Response: Action Plan for Recovery, and the Humanitarian Action Plan for the rest of Mindanao for 2013.

I would like to start first by extending my deep and heartfelt condolences to everyone who has lost friends and family in this disaster. I know there are people in this room who are grieving, and who are starting the long process of coming to terms with lives that have been suddenly and cruelly changed. I arrived here on Friday and I have only been to New Bataan, Cateel and Bagangan so far, but in those places I met survivors, and began to understand the depth of grief and suffering caused by this storm. I can't know how you feel but I can pledge that I and my humanitarian colleagues will do everything in our power to help you and all the survivors recover. Of course, on behalf of the Secretary General of the United Nations, the UN and the international humanitarian community, I also shared these sentiments with President Aquino when I met with him on Friday.

At the time Typhoon Bopha struck on 4 December we were preparing to launch the 2013 Humanitarian Action Plan, or the HAP, a fortnight later on 19 December. The focus of the HAP was on central Mindanao where there are people displaced by disaster and conflict, as well as residual needs from Tropical Storm *Sendong* that caused devastation to parts of northern Mindanao almost one year ago. Due to the devastating impact of Typhoon Bopha /Pablo, we are now also launching an action plan for the response and recovery of those who have been most severely affected. .

In the past few days I have visited many of the most affected areas and I can say that I feel so much for the hundreds of families who have lost their loved ones, for the tens of thousands of families who have lost their homes, and for the hundreds of thousands who have lost their animals and crops. Mindanao is a beautiful place and, having only recently arrived in the Philippines, I can only imagine how the coastal areas and inland in Compostela Valley must have looked just one week ago.

I must say that, while I visited places like New Bataan and Cateel, I was shocked by the scale of the destruction I saw. Areas which have been completely devastated, with only a few damaged buildings still standing. Debris from houses, buildings, landslides and logs. Entire plantations wiped out, and with them the capacity of those farmers to put food on the table of their families and care for those who depend on this income. This devastation cannot be erased overnight. We will all need to apply the same level of commitment to the Pablo victims as we did a year ago with Sendong.

In recent days I also visited a number of evacuation centers, particularly schools and gymnasiums, some housing thousands of evacuees. A colleague in the field reported on an evacuation centre with a thousand people and just one toilet. In our experience it does not take long in disaster situations for poor water, sanitation and hygiene conditions to create health concerns. We must improve this situation at the soonest possible time to avoid disease outbreaks that will further compound the hardships of the people already weakened by hunger, and grief from loss of family and friends. One appeal in particular to local media colleagues here: we have experts from specialist water and sanitation agencies who can provide advice for those affected on how to protect themselves against illness. Please talk to them, and help us get this vital and lifesaving information to survivors so they can take action themselves.

We also need to think of the things that are often forgotten. Emergency education is one – not just for the sake of learning, but for the sake of providing affected children with some semblance of normality in an otherwise frightening reality. Children in temporary learning spaces are better protected and can receive psychosocial support. The other is Early Recovery – we must put in place from the outset the steps that will be needed for recovery of homes and livelihoods.

In view of the devastation caused by the storm, on Friday the President declared a state of national calamity, and the Government accepted the international support offered by the United Nations and the Philippine Humanitarian Country Team. The Humanitarian Country Team has worked over the weekend to prepare an action plan for response and recovery, outlining its strategy to complement national and local efforts.

Today we are launching the Humanitarian Action Plan for 2013 and the emergency *Bopha* addendum. In addition to the original request for US\$35.5 million to support 81 projects to reach 219,000 affected people and their communities, we are requesting US\$65 million for 27 projects to reach 480,000 people most affected by *Pablo*. We will supplement and complement Government efforts to provide food, water for drinking and bathing, shelter, and essential household items to people in Davao and Caraga regions. Debris clearing to reduce health risks and logistics services that ensure uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian programmes is also a priority as well as coordination to avoid duplication and gaps in the relief effort. These emergency needs were jointly assessed by the Government and the Humanitarian Country Team in a multi-sectoral rapid needs assessment, an example of effective coordination at work and of a model of working in partnership that must and will continue. I am confident that we can achieve the objectives set out in this response and recovery plan, if we have the funding to do so.

I would like to thank colleagues and individuals who have already been working tirelessly, despite the fallen trees and powerlines, the landslides and broken bridges, to reach the affected areas and assess the needs of the people on the ground. These are joint efforts – by people who care – in Government, and in the humanitarian community. I would also like to make a point of drawing your attention to efforts that so often go unrecognised: those of thousands of ordinary people who have donated their time, money and services to help their friends, family and neighbours. To

mention just a few, we have seen local doctors spending their own money on supplies and driving to affected areas to help, volunteer teams clearing roads and Filipinos overseas mobilising to send money and help to those who have lost everything. Everyone in Eastern Mindanao is now a humanitarian. We share the government's commitment to a community led response that works with local networks and ensures that this response is a true partnership between responders and those affected.

This Bopha/Pablo action plan will be revised in the middle of January 2013 to include the most recent humanitarian developments.

Two months ago the President made a speech, at the time of the signing of the Framework Agreement, and some of what he said is as relevant here today as it was then. He said that: "Nothing is impossible to those who are willing to unite, to work for solutions, and to act towards consensus".

Now is the time for us to unite, to work together on solutions for the benefit of the people of Mindanao whose lives have been irreparably affected by Typhoon Pablo. The humanitarian community acts in support of the Government as primary responder, but even together we do not have all the solutions. We must ask the people. They know what they need and we must listen.

One of the striking things about the Filipinos I have met is their resilience; their "never give up" spirit. I guess that comes from being one of the most disaster prone countries in the world!!

Thank you, so much.