

**OCHA Statement**  
**ECOSOC Special Meeting**  
**Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon:**  
**Reducing risks and capturing opportunities**  
**New York, 6 May 2016**

Thank you Madam Moderator, Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

As we have heard, the 2015-2016 El Niño has had devastating humanitarian impacts.

More than 60 million people of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people are in need of humanitarian assistance due to droughts, floods and other extreme weather events made more devastating by the 2015-2016 El Niño. Countries throughout Eastern and Southern Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific have been most affected. The numbers are staggering. One million children in Eastern and Southern Africa alone are severely acutely malnourished. In Ethiopia, as we have heard from Commissioner Mitiku Kassa, 10.2 million people require emergency food assistance. Across Southern Africa, 32 million people need some form of assistance, and that figure is likely to increase. In the Asia Pacific region, around 11 million people are food insecure, and in Central America and the Caribbean, more than 9.7 million people have been affected by drought conditions linked to El Niño. El Niño-induced weather extremes have especially affected food security and nutrition, as well as health and water, sanitation and hygiene. El Niño has also forced thousands of people to leave arid or flooded regions.

The humanitarian response to this El Niño event has been unprecedented. National governments, with the support of regional organizations, the United Nations and NGOs have worked hard to respond, and coordination has been working well.

Starting in mid-2015, OCHA and humanitarian partners stepped up risk analysis, preparedness and response efforts, worked with national governments and development partners to make early risk reduction and resilience investments, and advocated with donors for early and flexible funding. OCHA has convened six Member States briefings since October to support field efforts to raise the alarm and mobilize resources. The Central Emergency Response Fund has allocated \$115 million for life-saving activities related to this El Niño in 18 countries.

But a critical resource gap is preventing the necessary scale-up and threatening to cut short life-saving programmes.

Overall, about US\$3.6 billion is needed by governments and Humanitarian Country Teams to tackle El Niño-related needs in the 18 countries that have concluded costed response plans for which external assistance is sought. A number of donors have made significant funding commitments and national governments have made major investments

of their own resources. While these contributions provide a good start, they are far short of what we need today. Even once welcome pledges of nearly \$500 million announced at an OCHA-sponsored Call to Action in Geneva last week are delivered, we will still face an alarming funding gap of over \$1.7 billion. This figure is expected to grow in the coming months as additional plans are concluded and new needs assessments are finalized.

Although the El Niño phenomenon itself is subsiding, its humanitarian impact will continue to increase in the coming weeks and months, with related food insecurity not projected to peak before December 2016. This could become even worse if a La Niña event strikes in the third or fourth quarter of this year, which has an estimated 60 to 70 per cent chance of happening, as people's coping capacities have already been eroded.

Assistance efforts must be urgently scaled up before the worst-case scenarios become a reality. We must respond quickly to immediate, life-threatening needs, but we must also work together to help people to become more self-reliant, build individual and community capacity to respond to future shocks, and increase investments in disaster risk reduction ahead of the next El Niño or La Niña event, which is only a matter of time

To do this, OCHA will work with donors and other partners to urgently increase funding to response and resilience efforts, bring forward planned funding, reprioritize development funds to reduce risks and build resilience, and find additional resources to cover funding gaps.

The World Humanitarian Summit, to be convened by the Secretary-General in Istanbul on 23 and 24 May, provides a critical opportunity for the international community to change the way it manages climatic risks, including during the High-Level Roundtable on Natural Disasters and Climate Change.

OCHA is working with partners to develop an agreed set of actions that both humanitarian and development actors will agree to undertake within defined timelines once a heightened risk of an El Niño or La Niña event is confirmed, to ensure more effective and early action in future. Given the increased chance of a La Niña event occurring later this year, there is an urgent need to step up preparedness, resilience and risk reduction efforts.

Thank you.