

UN EMERGENCY FUNDING RELEASED IN RESPONSE TO TROPICAL CYCLONE HAROLD

(New York, 13 April 2020): UN Humanitarian Chief Mark Lowcock today announced the release of US\$2.5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to get lifesaving aid to thousands of people affected by Tropical Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu, in the South Pacific Ocean.

Tropical Cyclone Harold made landfall in Vanuatu on 6 April on the island of Espiritu Santo, before hitting the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga. Initial assessments suggest as much as 90 per cent of the population in Sanma, the most affected province of Vanuatu, lost their homes, and more than half of all schools and almost a quarter of health centres were damaged. Crops have been destroyed and many communities are now cut off from help because of flooding and the destruction of roads.

The CERF funds released today will enable UN agencies and humanitarian organisations to get safe drinking water, food, shelter, and healthcare where they are most needed. It will also support local and international logistics to enable the distribution of aid supplies.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said:

“Tropical Cyclone Harold has wreaked havoc in Vanuatu, destroying homes, schools, roads and crops. Thousands of people urgently need shelter, water and food to survive.

“The Government and first responders in Vanuatu did an excellent job of making people safe ahead of the storm hitting and meeting immediate needs after it hit. As the extent of the destruction becomes clear, this UN funding will ensure aid supplies are maintained and reach the people who need it.

“As the COVID-19 pandemic touches us all, now more than ever is the moment to support vulnerable countries like Vanuatu when they are hit by climate-related disasters. Not only will this help save lives, but it will help them rebuild their resilience, which is essential if they are to successfully fight the virus.”

To facilitate the movement of aid supplies, the Government of Vanuatu has eased in-country travel restrictions and lifted restrictions on domestic air and sea operations.

Since 2010, CERF has allocated \$135 million to countries in the Pacific region, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam and Fiji. CERF provided support to Vanuatu in 2015, in response to Tropical Cyclone Pam.

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