Humanitarian aid and ECHO. Annual reports 2000 and 2001

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PURPOSE : to present ECHO's Annual Report 2001. CONTENT : the Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office states in this report that the global disaster situation continues to challenge the humanitarian community. The global trend towards more natural disasters continues, aggravating demographic changes, environmental degradation, changes of land-use and other factors, particularly in the least developed and conflict-ridden states. The most important events in 2001 with humanitarian implications were the earthquakes in El Salvador and India, the floods in India, and the droughts affecting Central Asia. Regarding man-made disaster, the number of wars and violent crises has increased to 38 at the end of 2001. The circumstances are exacerbated in some regions by the effects of natural disasters and adverse climactic phenomena. ECHO allocated a total of EUR 543.7 million to fund humanitarian projects in more than 60 countries. The ACP countries were the biggest recipients of humanitarian aid allocated by the EC with a total of EUR 173.320 million (33%). Within Africa, the biggest crisis remained in the Great Lakes with EUR 35 million allocated for the DR Congo, EUR 32 million for Burundian refugees in Tanzania and EUR 20 million for Burundi itself. Assistance to the Western Balkans decreased compared to last year (16% decrease) due to the stabilisation of the region. However, mainly due to the large caseload of refugees and IDPs, Serbia remained ECHO's biggest operation. Whilst prospects for the return of the IDPs are still bleak, durable solutions for refugees - mainly integration but also repatriation - are in sight. ECHO's programme in 2001 continued to address basic needs whilst pursuing more durable solutions, such as facilitating the repatriation (legal information, go and see visits) and supporting the private accommodation of refugees, as a more dignified alternative to life in collective centres. Aid for Asia increase slightly and reached 20% (16% in 2000). Since the start of 2001, ECHO has provided almost EUR 54.7 million of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Of these funds, EUR 23.4 million were allocated prior to September 11. After that date, EUR 31.3 million has been channelled through a variety of NGOs and international organisations to continue delivering food to the drought-affected populations and to pursue primary assistance to the IDP populations. These funds have been used to respond to war casualties and mine injuries resulting from increased population movements, and to provide assistance for people returning to their home areas (farming tools, seeds and shelter materials). They have also been used to fund logistics such as the WFP lorries and telecommunications, air transport, and to contribute to the re-opening of the ECHO office in Kabul. With respect to partners, three main partner groups were EC-NGOs (62.5% of ECHO's funding was implemented through them), the UN (26.5%, up from 19% last year) and other international organisations (7.9%). In 2001, ECHO continued to implement the recommendations of the so-called Article 20 evaluation as part of the overall reform effort. Important achievements include clarifying ECHO's mandate with respect to its role in the linking of relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), improving ECHO's relations with the UN and implementing its administrative reform. The new primaryemergency procedure came into operation in June 2001 and allows ECHO to arrange the immediate despatch of the assistance with its partners within hours of the sudden onset of a crisis.