

## **LAUNCH OF GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FOR COVID-19**

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres was joined – virtually – by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization; Ms. Henrietta Fore, UNICEF's Executive Director, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. The press conference was moderated by Ms. Melissa Fleming, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications.

**New York, 25 March 2020**

Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Melissa Fleming: Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us online today at the United Nations to launch the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

UN-accredited members of the media have been invited to submit questions in advance, and we'll come to those after our statements.

We will hear from the UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, on the UN's response to COVID-19. We will also hear on the latest preparedness and response from Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

We also have on the line UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Henrietta Fore, who will speak to us about the challenges that children face around the world.

And the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, will explain how the Global Humanitarian Response Plan will help fight against the virus in the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries.

COVID-19 has now a foothold in almost every country on earth with 375,498 confirmed cases today and over 16,000 deaths in 195 countries. At the United Nations, we are especially concerned about the impact COVID-19 will have on fragile countries with weak health systems and vulnerable populations, particularly in camps or camplike settings and on malnourished children and on those with chronic diseases. With only a small number of cases so far having been reported in countries already facing humanitarian crises, we expect these numbers to rise.

So, next, the United Nations is focussed on ensuring that essential humanitarian relief operations continue while we also respond to this pandemic where WHO is in the lead.

Now I would like to invite the United Nations' Secretary-General to take the floor. Secretary-General, over to you.

Secretary-General: The world faces an unprecedented threat.

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly covered the globe. It has spread suffering, disrupted billions of lives and endangered the global economy.

COVID-19 is menacing the whole of humanity – and so the whole of humanity must fight back. Individual country responses are not going to be enough.

Wealthy countries with strong health systems are buckling under the pressure.

Now, the virus is arriving in countries already in the midst of humanitarian crises caused by conflicts, natural disasters and climate change.

These are places where people who have been forced to flee their homes because of bombs, violence or floods are living under plastic sheets in fields, or crammed into refugee camps or informal settlements.

They do not have homes in which to socially distance or self-isolate.

They lack clean water and soap with which to do that most basic act of self-protection against the virus – washing their hands.

And should they become critically ill, they have no way of accessing a healthcare system that can provide a hospital bed and a ventilator.

We must come to the aid of the ultra-vulnerable – millions upon millions of people who are least able to protect themselves.

This is a matter of basic human solidarity.

It is also crucial for combatting the virus.

The world is only as strong as our weakest health system. If we do not act decisively now, I fear the virus will establish a foothold in the most fragile countries, leaving the whole world vulnerable as it continues to circle the planet, paying no mind to borders.

This is the moment to step up for the vulnerable.

Older persons, persons with chronic illness and persons with disabilities face particular, disproportionate risks, and require an all-out effort to save their lives and protect their future.

We are also aware of the heavy impact the crisis is having on the world's women across many fronts, in particular losses of livelihood, increased burdens of unpaid care labour, and the heightened exposure to domestic violence.

Today we are launching a \$2 billion global humanitarian response plan to fund the fight against COVID-19 in the world's poorest countries.

Coordinated by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this interagency plan brings together existing appeals from the World Health Organization and other UN partners, and identifies new needs as well.

Properly funded, it will save many lives and arm humanitarian agencies and NGOs with laboratory supplies for testing, and with medical equipment to treat the sick while protecting health care workers.

The plan also includes additional measures to support host communities that continue to generously open their homes and towns to refugees and displaced persons.

We need to act now to stem the impact of COVID-19 in already vulnerable humanitarian contexts.

And we need to maintain support for existing humanitarian response plans on which 100 million people depend.

If such funding is diverted, the consequences could be catastrophic: the further spread of cholera, measles and meningitis; greater levels of child malnutrition; and a blow to the ability of these countries to combat the virus.

Let us do everything we can to prevent COVID-19 from wreaking havoc in places with limited healthcare capacity and resilience.

At the same time, we are doing our utmost to plan for and respond to early recovery in the countries around the globe that will need it most so that we achieve a new sustainable and inclusive economy that leaves no-one behind. I have asked United Nations Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to support countries around the world in addressing the socio-economic implications of this pandemic, [which] will require an adequate funding mechanism.

But now we need to support this humanitarian response plan, which is a necessity for global health security.

It is a moral imperative and in everyone's interests.

And it is a crucial part of winning this fight.

I appeal to Governments to give it their full support.

Thank you.

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Ms. Fleming: Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General.

We now have the Director-General of WHO. Dr. Tedros, over to you.

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Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus: Your Excellencies, Secretary-General, colleagues, Mark and Henrietta.

I am pleased to join my colleagues from across the United Nations at this critical moment in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

I am pleased to join colleagues at this critical moment in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

I want to begin by reiterating the Secretary-General's comments that now is the time for solidarity in the face of this threat to all of humanity.

As you know, the pandemic has accelerated over the last two weeks and while COVID-19 is a threat to people everywhere, what's most worrying is the danger the virus poses to people already affected by crisis.

People and communities that are already uprooted due to conflict, displacement, the climate crisis or other disease outbreaks are the ones we must urgently prioritize.

Despite their resilience they do need our help today and this new plan lays out what has to happen right now, in order to save lives and slow the spread of this virus.

I implore leaders to stand together and heed this appeal, joining the Secretary-General's call.

Since this outbreak was identified, WHO and our partners have been ramping up surveillance and lab testing across low- and middle-income countries.

We've brought scientists together to boost funding in the research and development of diagnostics, treatments and a future vaccine.

We've communicated online, via the media and in person with many world leaders, to ensure that preparations are accelerated and populations are sensitized.

And we've worked with business leaders to ensure supply chains are working and bottlenecks are overcome.

The new Global Humanitarian Response Plan builds on that effort and sets a six-point action plan for how to prepare and respond to this emergency:

First, the public must be effectively prepared for the critical measures that are needed to help suppress the spread and protect vulnerable groups, like the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

Second, ramp up surveillance and lab testing so that those with the virus can be identified quickly and isolated safely – helping to break the chains of transmission.

Third, prioritize treatment for those at highest risk of severe illness.

Fourth, slow, suppress and stop transmission to reduce the burden on health care facilities. This means safe hand washing; testing, isolating cases, and contact tracing, encouraging community-level physical distancing, and the suspension of mass gatherings and international travel.

For many on our planet following even this basic advice is a struggle but we as a global community must strive to make it possible.

Fifth, we're building the ship as we sail and it's critical that we continue to share learnings and innovations so that we can improve surveillance, prevention, and treatment. And ensure equitable access for the poorest to all R&D breakthroughs.

*And finally*, we need to protect the health and humanitarian supply chain so that our frontline workers are protected and able to travel freely as they give lifesaving care.

Our message to all countries is clear: heed this warning now, back this plan politically and financially today and we can save lives and slow the spread of this pandemic. History will judge us on how we responded to the poorest communities in their darkest hour.

Let's act together, right now!

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**Ms. Fleming:** Thank you very much, Dr. Tedros. And now I'd like to give the floor to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Henrietta Fore.

**Ms. Henrietta Fore:** In just a few months, COVID-19 has upended the lives of children around the world. Hundreds of millions are not in school. Hundreds of millions are not in school. Parents and caregivers have lost their jobs. Borders have been closed.

Children are the hidden victims of this pandemic. We're worried about its short- and long-term impacts on their health, their well-being, their development and their prospects.

We're worried about their lack of access to water and hygiene services. As you know, washing hands with soap is critical in the fight against COVID-19. And yet, 40 per cent of the world's population – or 3 billion people – do not have a handwashing facility with water and soap at home.

Even worse, 16 per cent of healthcare facilities, or 1 in 6, do not have hygiene services. And nearly 900 million children worldwide lack basic hygiene services at their school.

We're worried about their education. More than half of the world's students have been affected by nation-wide school closures in at least 120 countries.

We hope that most of these students will resume their learning as soon as the situation improves. However, we know from experience that for vulnerable children, the longer they stay away from school the less likely they are to return.

These closures are not only limiting the access to learning — but to school nutrition, health programmes, clean water and accurate information.

And that is why UNICEF is working with education ministries around the world to identify alternative learning programmes and opportunities, whether learning classes online or through radio and TV programmes.

We have also issued guidance, along with WHO and IFRC, to advise parents, teachers, school administrators and others on how to keep children learning while keeping them safe.

We're worried about children's protection. We know from previous health emergencies that children are at heightened risk of exploitation, violence and abuse when schools are closed, and jobs are lost, and movement is restricted.

For example, school closures during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa from 2014 to 2016 resulted in spikes in child labor, neglect, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancies.

We're worried about their access to basic health services, including immunization and the treatment of childhood diseases. We cannot save one child from COVID-19, and then lose many to pneumonia, measles and cholera.

We're also worried about their mental health. Children and young people are missing out on some of the best moments of their young lives — chatting with friends, participating in class, and enjoying sports. This increases anxiety and can cause changes in behavior. We have put out guidance for parents, teachers, and children and young people to help them cope during these challenging times. Depression and mental health are real, and are affecting one in three of us.

We're particularly worried about the millions of children on the move or living through conflicts. For them, the consequences of the pandemic will be unlike any that we have seen. As the secretary-general mentioned, these children live in overcrowded conditions, often in active war zones, with limited or non-existent access to health care. A family of six, eight, ten or 12 can be living in one room. Self-isolation and handwashing with soap will not be easy in such environments.

That is why funding this global humanitarian response plan for COVID-19 is so essential.

UNICEF alone is appealing for US \$405 million for our response in emergency countries. We are also seeking an additional \$246.6 million for our response in non-emergency countries.

So, our total appeal is for US \$651.6 million.

With support from the international community, we can, together, shore up preparedness and response plans in countries with weaker healthcare systems.

We can ramp up access to proper handwashing and sanitation services.

We can expand our engagement with communities to provide the information they need to avoid contagion.

We can maintain a steady flow of personal protection equipment — such as gowns, masks, goggles and gloves — to support infection prevention and control while keeping our essential, hard-working health workers safe.

And we can continue working with governments to strengthen protection services, psychosocial support and remote learning opportunities for all the children, and particularly for the most vulnerable children.

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Ms. Fleming: Thank you, Henrietta Fore from UNICEF.

Now, finally, to Mark Lowcock, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations' Emergency Relief Coordinator. Over to you, Mark.

Mr. Lowcock: Thank you, Melissa. And thank you Secretary-General, Tedros, and Henrietta. The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan is a joint effort.

It will address the immediate humanitarian consequences of this pandemic in countries which already face other humanitarian crises across South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The plan consolidates existing COVID-19 appeals and is based on contributions from the World Health Organization, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNHCR and UNICEF, as well as contributions from many leading humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

It will be implemented by UN agencies, with international NGOs and NGO consortia playing a direct role in the response.

Properly funded, it will help contain the spread of COVID-19 and it will save lives.

We know the virus is now arriving in some of the places least equipped to deal with it.

Once there it will undoubtedly hit the most vulnerable hardest — including women, older people, people with disabilities, and refugees, migrants and displaced people.

In Africa – Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia have already confirmed their first cases.

The virus is starting to spread across the continent despite efforts by governments and society to hold it back.

In the Middle East – the first case in Syria has been reported.

We know the impacts of this virus in these places could be catastrophic.

So, today's plan will equip humanitarian organizations to fight it.

It will allow UN agencies and NGOs to provide immediate assistance.

For example:

... WHO delivering lab equipment to test for the virus, and medical equipment to treat people;

... UNICEF and UNHCR installing handwashing stations in camps and settlements;

... UNICEF launching public information campaigns on how to protect yourself and others from the virus; and

... WFP establishing eight designated international and regional staging hubs in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. They will provide air transport services through cargo airlifts and passenger transport to get NGO, UN and other aid workers, and aid supplies right to the front line.

... and WFP will also be building supply chains and contracting charter vessels to get humanitarian aid to people who need it, quickly.

The appeal will be regularly updated, probably month by month to keep pace with this virus' spread and impact.

With a pandemic of this nature, there can be no half measures.

So, together, we ask governments to do two things.

First, pledge your support, financially and politically, to this response plan. We need \$2 billion for the nine months from April.

And we need to act now to stem the impact of COVID-19 in already vulnerable humanitarian contexts.

Second, continue to support existing humanitarian response plans. If funding is diverted from those plans to tackle COVID-19 we would create circumstances in which cholera, measles and meningitis can thrive, in which even more children become malnourished, and in which extremists can take control. And that would be the perfect breeding ground for COVID-19.

So, funding this plan by withdrawing funds from ongoing humanitarian responses would be entirely counterproductive.

Not only would it undermine the ability of these countries to handle the virus. It would also undermine our efforts to combat COVID-19 globally.



A wide range of organisations, including many national and international NGOs will have a crucial role to play in the response, and they will be able to access the funding this plan generates through partner arrangements with UN agencies, pooled funding mechanisms – including the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and Country-Based Pooled Funds – and through direct donor funding.

I want to stress that this plan is a plan for the entire Inter-Agency Standing Committee, working through all our clusters, not just the UN family. The airbridges and other services will be available to UN agencies but also to NGOs and other crucial aid workers.

We are also asking donors to top up the Country Based Pool Funds, which are a primary financing vehicle for NGOs, particularly national NGOs.

Because we need the full engagement of the NGO community to reach every affected community.

To kick-start the response plan, I am releasing an additional \$60 million from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund.

This new CERF allocation – which is one of the largest ever made – will support movement of aid workers and supplies, the protection of those most affected by the pandemic and additional water, health and sanitation services.

This allocation brings the Central Emergency Response Fund's support for humanitarian action in response to the pandemic to \$75 million.

Through the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, we can prevent the disease from getting a foothold in places with limited healthcare capacity and very little resilience.

Together, we can push this virus back. We are counting on your support.

Thank you.

Ms. Fleming: Thank you very much, Mark.

Now we can take some of the questions that we've received in advance from journalists. This is how we've had to do it because we're working in a digital... virtual world these days.

The first, I believe, would be... would go to Dr. Tedros and to Henrietta Fore. It's from Jeremy [inaudible] from Radio France.

He says, there's a common understanding that children are not easily affected by COVID-19, yet you say that children are "the hidden victims" of the pandemic. Can you elaborate on that and give us examples? By focussing on COVID-19, is there a risk? Also, that we see a backlash from other diseases like measles, which caused, I believe, 140,000 deaths in 2018, way more for now than COVID-19.

I believe Mark mentioned that a bit in his statement, but I'll turn the floor first to Dr. Tedros to reply and then to Henrietta.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus: Thank you, Melissa. We will be rushing to our other presser, actually. As you know, we have a regular press conference here.

And for the question you have asked, I have an excellent expert with me. Her name is Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove. So, I will give her the chance. Please. You have to get closer.

Dr. Van Kerkhove: So, thank you very much for the question related to children. I'm sorry. Yes. Thank you for the question as it relates to children. From our understanding of the epidemiology across the globe, children are infected. Children are susceptible to COVID-19 just as everyone else is, but what we're seeing is we're seeing lower attack rates or lower infection rates in children, certainly those that develop symptoms.

Of the children who have been infected by COVID-19, they tend to have more mild disease compared to adults and especially compared to older adults, but that is not universal. We have seen some children develop severe disease and critical disease, and we have had two children die globally. So, they are at risk, and they are a vulnerable population, and we need to do everything that we can to protect them.

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Ms. Fleming: Thank you, Maria. Could I ask Henrietta Fore to also reply to this question. Henrietta.

Ms. Fore: Thank you, Melissa. Yes. So, the reason we believe that children are the hidden victims is because of a couple of factors. One is that they're not able to go to school and, in many households, there is not someone there that can be their teacher. So, remote learning is not an option in some households. They do not have a connection to an Internet or a tablet. It is mostly the urban poor or the very poor, the most vulnerable that are hit hardest by this.

There is also an enormous amount of violence, both sexual and physical, that exists within homes and in communities. And as a result, when your parents are out of a job, there can often be a lot of stress at home. And as such, children can become victims.

We also find that what happens with children is that they don't have a way to let out their emotions, because they're not playing with other children; they're not talking to their friends, and this is difficult for them. So, they become hidden victims in those ways.

And then there's another side to it, which is that Mark mentioned that all of our other programmes to help governments with their health programmes are extremely important. Measles, cholera, many of the early childhood diseases, lack of immunisation, it all happens that those are needed now. And if we don't help the children get that now, if we just focus on COVID-19, we will really lose the health for many of these children.

So, it's multipart, but please keep in mind that COVID is one part of the world, that we have a humanitarian response for the whole world that we need help with. Thank you.

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**Ms. Fleming:** Thank you. I think we have one more question for Dr. Tedros before he needs to go, and then, of course, journalists can tune in to the regular 12:00 WHO press conference, Geneva time.

This is from Jamil Chade, who is from the UOL website in Brazil. He's referring to President Bolsonaro's reference to COVID-19 as "a little flu," and he said that he supports the idea of keeping everything open and said the media is to blame for this hysteria. How do you view this behaviour, which contradicts the recommendations by WHO?

**Dr. Tedros:** So, I would encourage him actually to the meeting... I mean to the next presser, but my short answer is, in many countries, ICUs are full, intensive care units, and it's a very serious business. Thank you.

**Ms. Fleming:** Okay. I think... the next question, I think, could be answered by Mark Lowcock. It's from Martin Jiangang Wang from the Xinhua News Agency. He asks... well, he says that it is easy for wealthy countries to open their pocketbooks when they are concerned that the likely global recession caused by COVID-19 will hit them. What would the UN do, instead, if money becomes a problem? Can you describe the conditions of healthcare infrastructures in conflict-ridden countries? How best can they cope with COVID-19?

**Mr. Lowcock:** Well, the point about the conflict-affected countries is they have the weakest health systems. They have the fewest facilities, the fewest number of health workers, and the scarcest availability of equipment. And, so, this is the easiest place, as we know from all the research, for the disease to take hold. And the problem is, if it takes hold there and it's not dealt with there, it remains a threat to everybody. So, if anybody on the planet wants to be safe, the best approach is to keep the people in the most vulnerable places safe, and we know that, if we act early, we will have the best response. And that's why we're putting this Response Plan in place now.

We're seeing huge economic stimulus plans being developed around the world, and that's going to help, but it would be a smart strategy and an intelligent strategy for every developed country just to spend a little bit of their money on dealing with this problem in the most vulnerable places, as well, because that is part of what you need to do if you want to protect yourself against this pandemic.

**Ms. Fleming:** Thank you, Mark. This is a question for the Secretary-General from Pamela Falk from CBS News. Has the Secretary-General received support for this wartime effort proposal to the G20 that you delivered in your letter yesterday? What can world leaders do to mitigate the impacts of a global coronavirus-related recession or depression?

**Secretary-General:** I believe that world leaders need to do several things, first to articulate their programmes to make sure that they suppress the virus in their countries and that they make available the means and instruments necessary for that also to be done in the developing world that is not represented in the G20. They represent 80 per cent of world economy.

And part of it is, of course, what we are asking for, a drop in the ocean, \$2 billion when, for

instance, what is being mobilised by the US Senate for the US economy is 1,000 times more, 2 trillion US dollars.

The second thing that governments need to do is to make sure that they are able this is not a financial crisis; this is a human crisis they are able to mobilise vast amounts of resource, double-digit percentage of the economy of their countries or of the global economy if one looks at the support of the developing world, in order to be able to support essentially people and businesses, the people that have lost their jobs, the people that are losing their livelihoods, and the businesses that cannot survive in this environment.

We need to make sure that, independently of maintaining the liquidity in the financial systems, we recognise this is a human crisis and we address the resources to the people and the businesses in need to allow for them to cope with this challenge, and then to allow for a strategy, following strategy of... exit strategy that can keep the virus suppressed but allow for a progressive recovery of the economies all over the world.

And third thing that I think is very important is to make sure that the human... the support to the developing countries, the financial support to the developing countries, in all its aspects, through the IMF, through the international financial institutions, through bilateral aid but, namely, through this humanitarian appeal that [provides] support to the developing world to keep their economies afloat and to keep people being helped and to keep health systems being put in a way that they can respond to this challenge is absolutely essential.

The worst thing that could happen is to suppress the disease in the developed countries but let it spread like fire in the developing world, where then millions of transmissions will take place. Millions of people will die, and the risk of mutation would be there, which means that the virus could come back in ways that even vaccines that, I hope, will be soon developed wouldn't be able to stop it again.

So, it's enlightened self-interest of developed countries to support the developing world and, above all, to support those most vulnerable situations like the ones we are presenting in this humanitarian appeal.

Ms. Fleming: Thank you, Secretary-General. Our next question is from Ben Parker from The New Humanitarian. I believe this also should be addressed to you, Secretary-General. The plan is presented as a joint effort from the IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) members, UN and NGOs, but the non-funding element is a small fraction. Why?

And I think there's a second part to the question, which I'll ask afterwards.

Secretary-General: I mean, this is essentially an appeal to raise emergency funds for emergency situations. This will be followed by many other initiatives that will be able to address aspects in which the question is not a question of funding, but it is all the policy-related questions in which our country teams are supporting governments in order to make sure that they provide the right support to the communities that are more in a vulnerable situation.

Ms. Fleming: Okay. And then the second part of the question, perhaps to Mark, the coordination structure has WHO in charge of health, UNHCR for refugees, and you, Mr. Lowcock, and the IASC - and a committee for the rest. Isn't that a recipe for confusion?

Mr. Lowcock: This coordination structure is a tight, tried and tested approach to deal with these kinds of problems. It models exactly what we've done in dealing with the Ebola outbreaks across Africa. The point about the pandemic is that no one agency on its own can give all the help a country needs. So, it requires a collective response and, you know, the world is lucky to have hundreds of very capable humanitarian agencies the UN, the Red Cross, the NGOs full of expert, courageous people who are ready and willing to tackle this problem, and working together is the best way to get the necessary support to the people who are at most risk.

Ms. Fleming: Thank you, Mark. And the third part of Ben's question I'll combine with a question from Philippe Rater from *AFP*. How much money is the UN asking for? In total, we see that UNICEF has asked for 246.6 million on top of the amount in the appeal today. Do you have one number for all requirements?

And then from Philippe, the UN is looking for 2 billion. What is the date you expect to get this amount, and which countries do you plan to get aid to first?

Mr. Lowcock: Well, shall I start on that, Melissa? What we're presenting in the collective plan is \$2 billion, which we need to implement those crucial programmes in the next nine months. As the Secretary-General said, there will be a series of other initiatives that the UN will take, especially on socioeconomic issues and helping with recovery and so on, and those are under development.

And I think that the additional point that Henrietta's made is that, beyond the 40 first-phase countries, those that are most vulnerable, where the risk is highest and the requirement for action is most urgent, there will be other needs as well, and UNICEF has started to lay that out in their other documentation. So, I think that's how this all fits together.

Ms. Fleming: Okay. While we have you, Mark, Sarah Walton from Feature Story News Agency wants to know, how will the UN... and this is perhaps to Henrietta, as well. How will the UN keep aid workers safe while delivering this support? Will they be practicing social distancing? And, if so, how will that affect their ability to help people?

Mr. Lowcock: So, we've issued, for all aid workers, again, through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a raft now of new guidance on how to operate in these circumstances, including on the crucial question of keeping our aid workers safe as they do their work at the front line.

One of the most important parts of this appeal is to enable us to scale up air services so that we can get to the front line and also give our frontline workers a chance to come out and recover and recuperate and so on. And we need a big scaleup in that, for the NGO staff, for the UN staff, for the Red Cross, to compensate for the reduced availability of commercial air services. So, I really hope everyone will focus particularly on that element of the appeal.

Of the money I'm allocating from the CERF (Central Emergency Response Fund), \$20 million is

going to that element of the appeal to kickstart this enhancement in air services, because it is absolutely crucial in order to keep all the frontline aid workers doing their job in combatting the pandemic.

Ms. Fleming: Henrietta.

Ms. Fore: Yes. So, I think there's several parts to this. For our courageous health workers, they need protective equipment. And, as you know, the world is in short supply of many of these pieces. So, for instance, masks, very important for frontline healthcare workers, in a normal year, we will order about 25,000. We now have a worldwide demand of about 55 million. So, part of it will be getting the private sector to help us to manufacture enough masks and enough gowns and goggles and other things that will keep our healthcare workers safe.

The second is that we are trying some new ways of doing things. So, as you know, we are battling polio in several countries around the world. There are trained polio workers, who usually are in very close contact with children and babies and families. We now will ask them to take a pause and for them to redirect their efforts to help on COVID-19. These workers can help us on information, alerting families on what to do but also in how to care and how to have hygiene.

So, this is a worldwide issue. What the Secretary-General said about the importance of the developing world is true, and in the appeal, we have two stages. One is the part that, under the IASC, our designate [audio gap] humanitarian urgent response countries, another for countries that are not as urgent, that are not in the appeal but we know they are going to need help, countries like South Africa and Senegal, like Mozambique. So, these countries also need help. This is a worldwide issue, and we can use all the help we can get.

Ms. Fleming: Okay. Okay. Thank you, Henrietta. A question for the Secretary-General from Edith Lederer from the Associated Press. She asked one question about funding, which I believe was answered.

Her second question is: Mr. Secretary-General, what's your reaction to rebels in the Philippines agreeing to your request for a ceasefire? Have you received any other positive responses? And what are you doing to promote wider agreement to your appeal?

Secretary-General: Well, all our special envoys around the world are having, at the present moment, initiatives in this regard. We had one in Syria. We had one in Yemen, and the same is applying across the board. All our special envoys and special representatives are taking diplomatic initiatives with both governments, different armed groups, in order... or when there is a conflict between the states, in order to make sure that we silence the guns.

That group has announced it. Other groups have done the same. I'm encouraged to see the truce holding with difficulties in Libya. I hope that it will be possible in Yemen and Syria to make serious progress.

I see, in other contexts, different parties to a conflict cooperating in order to respond to this dramatic situation. To give an example, in fighting COVID-19, the Palestinian Authority and

Israel have been able to work together, even if we know the extreme division that exists politically between the two.

So, I see a clear conscience emerging that it's time to stop the conflicts in order to concentrate our effort in the real war we are facing, and that is war against COVID-19.

Ms. Fleming: Thank you to the press corps for tuning in. Thank you to our panellists. I'm afraid we couldn't answer, due to time restrictions, all of the questions, but we will endeavour to get answers to those who... questions that remain to you over the phone or in writing.

So, thank you very much for tuning in, and thank you for supporting us with your coverage so that we can raise the \$2 billion necessary to help the most vulnerable people of this world. Thank you.

[Press Conference concludes at 11:00 a.m.]