

PAKISTAN FLOODS: The Elders urge the world to respond more quickly and generously

Desmond Tutu: “We must hold the people of Pakistan in the heart of the human family at this time.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As the United Nations’ General Assembly meets to discuss Pakistan’s humanitarian emergency today, The Elders have called on governments and individuals to respond more quickly and generously to help the millions of people whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered by the floods.

The situation in Pakistan is deteriorating rapidly. Disease is spreading, little aid is reaching the people and children are particularly vulnerable with as many as 3.5 million at risk of water-borne illness such as hepatitis and diarrhoea.

The United Nations has launched a \$460m emergency appeal but only half the money has been pledged. Aid flows are improving but much more is needed and the effort must be sustained in the coming weeks and months.

The Elders do not usually issue joint statements in response to natural disasters, however the scale of the flooding, its disastrous and long term impact on the lives of 15-20 million people, and the relatively weak response to such urgent need, have compelled them to add their voices to the calls for help.

Desmond Tutu, Chair of the Elders said:

“I urge people all around the world to hold the people of Pakistan in their hearts and in the heart of the human family at this time. We should respond to their suffering just as we responded so generously to the tsunami in 2004 and the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. This is a disaster on a comparable scale – and may potentially be even worse.

“Let us not for a moment allow ourselves to feel that some are less deserving of our help than others. It is time for us to stand in solidarity with the people of Pakistan. Please give generously and help to share their enormous burden as they struggle to recover.”

Kofi Annan called on donors to speed up delivery of assistance, ensure it reaches those who need it, and be prepared to sustain the effort for years to come:

“Let us ensure that the world comes to Pakistan’s aid quickly and in a sustained way. Not only is there not enough aid, it is not reaching those who need it quickly enough.

“The floods have destroyed a fifth of the country. Crops and livestock have been lost as well as roads, factories, hospitals and schools – all the things that people need to rebuild their lives. When the waters recede we will only really see the enormity of the task ahead. Rebuilding Pakistan will require resources, skills and energy for a long time to come.”

Ela Bhatt of India said:

“I deeply sympathise with the people of Pakistan hit by this disaster and urge all nations, particularly my own, to help them recover. I also have confidence in the resilience of the people, especially the women of Pakistan. I know that they have the courage to come out of this crisis as we have seen them come out of crises before.”

About The Elders

The Elders are an independent group of eminent global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela, who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

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This media release is also available at:
<http://theelders.org/media/mediareleases/pakistan-floods>

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