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Supplementary support budget for the 2006-2007 biennium to ensure operations preparedness and business continuity in a protracted crisis such as human influenza pandemic

Summary

The UNICEF secretariat *recommends* that the Executive Board approve a supplementary appropriation of \$13.4 million for the 2006-2007 biennial support budget to ensure the viability of the organization's emergency preparedness and crisis management plan in this biennium. These investments cannot be absorbed within the ceiling for the current biennium. They are essential if UNICEF is to sustain its mission-critical functions and protect staff health and safety in the event of a crisis such as pandemic influenza, a threat that triggered a system-wide directive on crisis preparedness in March 2006. By bringing forward investments that would otherwise have been phased over two budget cycles, the crisis management plan will be viable in a protracted crisis and UNICEF will have complied with the Secretary General's directive on system-wide pandemic preparedness.

1. In order to sustain mission-critical activities during a global crisis that could simultaneously threaten Member States as well as the operations and staff of the United Nations system, agencies must have viable contingency plans in place to respond to the needs of the countries they serve and protect staff health and well-being. In March 2006, the Secretary-General directed United Nations agencies to review their contingency plans and assess existing capacities to sustain operations,

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maintain critical programmes and protect staff health, safety and security in the event of a human influenza pandemic.

2. UNICEF responded to the Secretary-General's directive by establishing a dedicated task force to guide the organization's response to avian influenza and undertake pandemic preparedness planning. The team worked closely with the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC), Dr. David Nabarro, and his team, using the United Nations system pandemic preparedness guidelines to identify critical functions related to programme response, business continuity, communications and staff safety and security.

3. The team assessed the UNICEF headquarters crisis management plan against the scenarios associated with a crisis such as human influenza pandemic and found gaps that would expose UNICEF to an unacceptable level of risk in a pandemic. The following scenarios associated with a pandemic informed the review: offices could be closed for several weeks to prevent the transmission of disease; transportation and other services could be significantly reduced; several staff members could be unable to report to work due to illness; and humanitarian organizations would need to respond to the significantly increased threats to people's lives and livelihoods. Similar reviews took place in country office locations under the leadership of resident coordinators and designated officials.

4. The existing crisis management plans of most United Nations headquarters locations were developed based on the assumption that a crisis affecting New York or another headquarters location would be brief, localized and would not directly affect significant numbers of staff. The risk of a global pandemic changes these assumptions. All agencies of the United Nations system are currently at various stages of preparedness to ensure that their plans are more robust and aligned with the Secretary-General's directive.

5. The revised crisis management plan for UNICEF headquarters seeks to ensure that business services will continue to be available to the six headquarters locations in Copenhagen, Geneva, Huningue, Tokyo, Florence and New York, with back-up connectivity for country and regional offices. Among the investments required is the need to establish an alternate data centre outside New York, greatly enhanced capacity for remote access to UNICEF operating systems to enable critical staff to work from home or other off-site locations, and to ensure, as a last resort, that the Crisis Management Team and other critical staff are able to maintain contact using limited voice and data connectivity via satellite phone connections.

6. The proposed supplementary appropriation totalling \$13.4 million will enable UNICEF to make the necessary investments to bridge the gaps in its existing crisis management plan to enable the organization to sustain operations in a protracted crisis:

(a) Establish and equip an alternate data centre outside New York for disaster recovery;

(b) Establish a specialized unit to be known as the Operations Preparedness and Business Continuity Unit, with responsibility for maintaining the viability of the UNICEF crisis management plan, training staff assigned to critical functions, conducting periodic simulation exercises and updating guidelines and procedures for crisis operations and business continuity. This unit will also act as the secretariat for the UNICEF Crisis Management Team and manage the inter-agency aspects of crisis

planning and preparedness, in particular the collaboration with the office of the United Nations Pandemic Planning and Preparedness Coordinator and UNSIC;

(c) Acquire hardware, software and communication equipment that will enable staff to continue to carry out critical functions from off-site locations;

(d) Pre-position supplies and equipment that will enable 31 critical staff to maintain operating systems on site for a period of up to six weeks if a lock-down of headquarters becomes necessary;

(e) Pre-position medical supplies to protect staff health and safety globally.

Additional budget requirements for 2006-2007

Supplementary biennial support budget for 2006-2007

<i>(In millions of United States dollars)</i>	
Maintaining business continuity — hardware, software, communication supplies, alternate data centre for disaster recovery	10.2
Medical intervention — vaccines, antibiotics and related supplies	1.0
Preparatory activities — capacity-building and training	2.2
Total	13.4

7. The UNICEF secretariat *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

Approves the supplementary budget in gross and net appropriations for the management and administration of \$13.4 million to cover the additional costs in the 2006-2007 biennial support budget associated with the need to strengthen capacities for crisis management and operations continuity in the event of a pandemic crisis, and to protect staff health, safety and security.