The European Union donates € 2.6 million to UNICEF in the fight against cholera

Port-au-Prince, 17 June 2015- The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) has allocated Euro 2.6 million to UNICEF to strengthen prevention activities and rapid response to cholera.

Since the beginning of the epidemic in October 2010, there have been 740,991 suspected cases of cholera, with 8,792 reported deaths as of 23 May 2015, according to the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP). Under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Health, this donation will enable continuation of the current action at the national level. This includes supporting epidemiological surveillance, coordination of actors in the response to cholera outbreaks and implementation of appropriate and rapid community response to prevent the disease from spreading.

"Although in 2015 the number of suspected cholera cases has fallen significantly from the peaks of 2011 and 2012, the outbreaks of late last year and early this year show how essential it is that efforts to cut the disease transmission are maintained and remain a priority for ECHO. This rapid response must of course go along with the work of developing water and sanitation infrastructure in the country, which remains critical," stressed Ms. Segolène de Beco, ECHO Head of Office in Haiti.

Marc Vincent, UNICEF Representative in Haiti, welcomed the agreement. "We thank ECHO for this generous contribution on behalf of all the children of Haiti. At a time when we are witnessing a decrease in funding, ECHO continues to support the important work of partners on the ground," he said. This donation is particularly important as it has been the rapid response system of partners that has supported a reduction of the number of cases at the national level. It is this action that needs to be maintained to protect populations against future outbreaks.

UNICEF and its partners are working to support coordination, monitoring, patient care and quick response to prevent new outbreaks, such as those reported in November 2014, particularly in the West Department. Efforts to prevent contamination of water supply networks in areas affected by cholera in Port-au-Prince and other urban areas are currently underway.

2015 is a crucial year to affirm and extend the progress made in the fight against cholera. A key challenge however, is the lack of resources. It is important to support DINEPA (Direction Nationale d'Eau Potable et d'Assainissement), Ministry of Public Health and NGO partners in their efforts to increase hygiene awareness of individuals and to protect sources of water supply before the long rainy season starts in September 2015.
UNICEF, through its NGO partners on the ground, and through previous contributions from ECHO as well as funding from UK Aid, OCHA, and UNICEF National Committees, has been conducting massive and rapid actions since the beginning of 2015.

These include more than 2,936 interventions following alerts, 1,921 (81 per cent) of which were early responses conducted in the first 48 hours following the alert. More than 1.2 million people have been sensitized through various communication methods (door-to-door, panel discussions, mass media), more than 15,051 cholera kits were distributed, 18,552 houses were disinfected and 171 water points have been established or rehabilitated.

For more information:
Cornelia Walther, communication chief, UNICEF Haiti, +509 37871822, cwalther@unicef.org
Avril Hilaire, ECHO, regional communication officer +505 22706201, echo.managua@echofield.eu