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**OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN BANGLADESH**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**BANGLADESH NEEDS FULL YEAR TO RECOVER: UN**

**DHAKA** -- In the wake of the devastating floods in Bangladesh, the United Nations Resident Coordinator said here today that the stricken country will need at least a year to recover from the massive damage to its land, its people and its economy.

Speaking at a donor conference in the Bangladeshi capital on Wednesday, Douglas Casson Coutts, acting Resident Coordinator, said that tens of millions of Bangladeshis now face grave food insecurity, waterborne diseases, a badly mangled infrastructure and extremely poor prospects for the next rice crop.

The UN called the conference to alert donors to the enormous challenges ahead for Bangladesh. "We are still working out exact numbers in each sector, but it is already clear that the country will need a lot of support to get back on its feet," Coutts said.

A comprehensive plan to assist the people of Bangladesh in overcoming the impact of the floods is being prepared by the UN. The organization expects to present the plan next week to donors for funding.

As the floodwaters recede, the full extent of the wreckage – and the consequent challenges of rebuilding houses, roads, schools and public services – is emerging.

Coutts stressed that with more than 60% of the national work force dependent on agriculture to survive, the rural people will need substantial assistance just to get back to where they were before the monsoon season arrived.

He noted that floods in April destroyed much of the national rice crop. A second set of floods in mid-July then wiped out people's household food stocks and removed other sources of nutrition and income such as livestock rearing and agricultural day labour.

Coutts also warned that if people in the countryside find themselves without food or any form of livelihood, they are bound to migrate to the cities in search of survival, cities that are already overwhelmed by the mushrooming slum populations.

"Bangladesh can not afford anymore urbanization. We have to give people the means to stay home and help rebuild their communities," he said.

Coutts reminded the donor conference that the United Nations takes the longer view for Bangladesh: "We are seeking not only to help the country get back on its feet, but also to assist the Government in developing the environmental and social protective measures the nation needs to withstand the monsoon seasons to come."

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