



## Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan expresses sympathy for the families of those killed in the Badakhshan avalanche**

*Humanitarian community addressing needs of those missing; health, food aid and temporary shelter prepositioned for distribution.*

(Kabul, 9 March 2012): The Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, Michael Keating, today expressed sympathy to the families of 50 Afghans who died and four who were injured as a result of an avalanche that occurred on 4 March 2012 in a village of 199 people in Dispay, Shaki district, Badakhshan province, on the Tajikistan border.

The humanitarian community including the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement are focusing on the search and recovery of the 145 villagers that remain missing, presumed dead. Access to Dispay village is possible only by road from neighbouring Tajikistan but has been severely hampered by snow-blocked roads, helicopter access is not possible as there is a high risk of triggering further avalanches.

Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an affiliate of the Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN), has sent a team from neighbouring Tajikistan to support the search and rescue / recovery efforts of neighbouring villagers who have lead the response to date. Health, food and temporary shelters supplies provided by WHO, WFP, MAIL and IOM remain prepositioned and available in the Shaki district to address needs.

“This tragedy is likely to be one of many in the near future. Heavy snows will result not just in avalanches but also, in a few weeks' time, severe flooding in many parts of the country,” said Humanitarian Coordinator, Michael Keating. “Every effort is being made to minimize loss of life through emergency preparedness such as prepositioning of food, shelter and medicine, good information sharing and coordination among those actors able to respond.”

**For more information contact:**  
Christophe Verhellen, OCHA Afghanistan Public Information, [verhellen@un.org](mailto:verhellen@un.org), Tel. +93.793.001132