



**Remarks by Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Corps
U.N. Humanitarian Flash Appeal for Ukraine
Tuesday, March 1, 2022 9:15am EST**

Good morning and good afternoon. Secretary-General Guterres, Emergency Relief Coordinator Griffiths, and High Commissioner Grandi, thank you for your work in issuing this Flash Appeal and gathering support for humanitarian assistance in Ukraine and throughout the region. I am grateful for this opportunity for Mercy Corps to call attention to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation we see as the result of this conflict. Mercy Corps, like so many other international and local NGOs, is responding to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the burgeoning refugee flow into the broader region.

You've heard the startling statistics and context provided by ERC Griffiths and High Commissioner Grandi, and it's clear that in a short time, this conflict has already exacted a deep and devastating impact on civilians—one that will expand in the coming days, weeks, and months. Mercy Corps and the rest of the NGO community is deeply concerned a humanitarian catastrophe is now unfolding in Ukraine and in the region, threatening lives, infrastructure and livelihoods; creating shortages of essential food and medical supplies; and causing significant displacement and suffering.

As the conflict escalates, we expect the greatest humanitarian needs to be food, shelter, water and sanitation services, and cash for people to buy other essential items. We expect the conflict will significantly affect health systems and increase preventable infectious disease, including COVID-19. This conflict will also have reverberating effects in the region and around the world. As Ukraine is a key supplier of wheat, corn, and sunflower oil, impacts to those supply chains will affect many other response efforts, reducing our collective ability to provide commodities in the Middle East and Africa during a time of heightened food insecurity in Afghanistan, Yemen, and the Horn of Africa. To be clear, this is not a local problem; it is not a regional problem; it is in fact a global problem.

We call first and foremost for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure to minimize the suffering and reduce the scale of damage from this conflict. No amount of humanitarian aid will ever replace lives lost. Parties to this conflict must uphold International Humanitarian Law.

Second, we urge the international community to provide additional and sustained assistance for this crisis. Given the number of other pressing humanitarian emergencies happening around the world—from Afghanistan to those suffering from drought in the Horn of Africa— it is essential that new funding for this crisis not come at the cost of responding to those situations.

Furthermore, this funding must be as flexible as possible to ensure humanitarian actors on the ground are able to respond to dynamic changes in the conflict and assist people accordingly. We must concentrate on funding relief operations for refugees who manage to cross a border and for the significantly higher number of people in need of aid who remain inside Ukraine - whether in government- or non-government-controlled areas. Mercy Corps also urges the

prioritization of cash assistance to give those impacted by this conflict the dignity of choice as they determine their most urgent needs.

Third, we call on international donors to utilize the expertise of and directly fund local organizations who have contextual knowledge and deep roots in communities both inside Ukraine and in refugee-receiving countries. The vibrant civil society in this region should be supported throughout this crisis and response.

Finally, we urge all countries involved to quickly address the bureaucratic and administrative impediments that too often thwart humanitarian response. These include addressing any visa and registration challenges for humanitarian workers, delays in accessing populations in need and providing mechanisms to deconflict humanitarian activities with the range of armed actors on the ground. We hope rapid efforts can be made especially in providing a corridor for humanitarian actors and convoys of essential food and medical supplies to get into and out of Ukraine.

The time to act is now. We must move forward decisively as one united humanitarian community. With this flash appeal, we call on donor governments to supply the essential funding required to catalyze a humanitarian response at the scale this fast-moving crisis in Ukraine and in the broader region demands. We also urge all countries involved to take the necessary actions to ensure humanitarian actors can operate unimpeded and mount a rapid and effective response. Thank you.