

European Community

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INCREASES RELIEF AID TO CAMBODIA

The European Community has agreed in principle to give another US \$35 million in relief to 2.5 million starving Cambodians, more than doubling what it had already pledged.

Irish Foreign Minister Michael O'Kennedy, who chaired a meeting of the nine EEC (European Economic Community) countries in Luxembourg this week, said, "no one can guarantee that it will all go to the starving people, but we are prepared to take some risks to ensure that those who are starving can be helped."

Earlier the EC had registered concern because it could not be sure the aid would reach famine victims on both sides of the fighting and not go to the rival armies.

Mr. O'Kennedy said a considerable effort would be devoted to supporting the refugees in Thailand with a view to their eventual return home to help rebuild their country.

He told a news conference on 30 October that he would arrange for an EC working group to go to Thailand to see what could be done to ease the burden of an influx of more than 300,000 Cambodian refugees there. He welcomed the recent decision of the Thailand Government to grant the status of "Refugees" to Cambodians crossing into Thailand and underlined the determination of the Community to give substantial assistance to the Government of Thailand to cope with this problem.

The Irish Minister said the nine members of the EC had committed at least US \$55 million to aid Cambodians, including US \$42 million dollars worth of EC aid and US \$13 million pledged by member countries. This was half the figure of US \$110 million which U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim has estimated as necessary to cover a six-month relief programme up to the end of March.

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The Council of Ministers accepted the EC Commission's proposal that the money for this aid should be raised from budget categories which would not affect the food aid already earmarked for Vietnam.

Mr. O'Kennedy said the permanent Representatives of the Nine would present this to the Budget Committee of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Monday 5 November for the necessary approval.

More than US \$30 million will be allocated by the Commission to the International Organisations concerned (particularly to ICRC and to UNICEF) to help finance these organisations' emergency actions in the area. The remaining money will be used to finance the supply of food aid in the form of 20,000 tons of rice. In addition, the Council also endorsed the Commission's proposal to supply 1,500 tons of skimmed milk powder if required.

The Council also emphasized the valuable role to be played by the non-governmental and voluntary agencies who are at present engaged in the relief effort in Cambodia.
