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EC ACTS SWIFTLY TO BOOST RELIEF OPERATION FOR IRAQI KURDS

The European Community is rapidly building up operations to bring urgently needed food and medical supplies to hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees who are fleeing Iraq and gathering along its borders with Iran and Turkey.

The EC's relief operations are made possible by the 150 million ECU* emergency aid package decided at the special European Council in Luxembourg April 8.

Decisions about how the new aid is to be spent are being taken daily. Presenting the latest figures, EC Commissioner Abel Matutes, whose responsibilities include Mediterranean and North-South Relations, said, "the situation is dramatic because of the massive exodus [of refugees] and because of the geographic and climatic conditions. We have not had to confront such a situation since Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge."

The EC is contributing 100 million ECU to the package from its own resources, and 50 million ECU comes from the budgets of the EC member states. This is in addition to the 5 million ECU released April 3 from the EC's emergency funds to establish refugee camps and for air-drops of food, medical supplies and personnel.

Of the EC's 105 million ECU contribution, almost 60 million ECU has been disbursed to secure the following relief operations:

- **82 programmed flights** carrying food, medicines, medical teams, tents and blankets to logistics bases established at sites in Turkey and Iran;
- **food-aid** for about 600,000 people over a 2-month period. The aid includes 18,000 metric tons of flour, 1,080 metric tons of vegetable oil, and 720 metric tons of lentils;
- **establishment of logistical and operational centers** in Turkey and Iran to come to the aid of new influxes of refugees;
- **supplies for logistical centers**, including tents, blankets, lamps, kitchen utensils, medication, basic sanitation needs and food (high-nutrition biscuits);
- **setting up of mobile and stationary medical teams** in Iran and Turkey to provide immediate care, medication and nourishment.

* ECU (European Currency Unit) = \$1.24 on April 10, 1991

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