

SECTION A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

A1.Purpose and Methodology of the evaluation

27. The evaluation was the first undertaken ECHO's programme in DPRK. The terms of reference are attached as Annex A. During briefing meetings and discussions in Brussels on 23rd September 2004 the following addition to the terms of reference was adopted:

General

The evaluation will additionally consider ECHO activities in DPRK during the first nine months of 2004. The evaluation will take note of ECHO activities prior to 2001 where these are of particular relevance. The primary emphasis of the evaluation will be on activities taking place in 2003 and 2004.

Para 57, 5th bullet point, first sentence

The report will incorporate an assessment of regional issues in DPRK but will not necessarily use this as a primary parameter in how the report itself is organized.

28. The consideration of recent developments is particularly important since this may prove to have significant consequences for the future of ECHO activities in DPRK. An outline of these events is contained in Section A2 below.

29. The purpose of the evaluation is 'to assess the appropriateness of ECHO's interventions since 2001, in accordance with ECHO's mandate, in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives, and to produce recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future operations.' At a global level, the evaluation is required to analyse developments in the humanitarian situation in DPRK and assess the extent to which ECHO has been able to adapt its strategy to changing circumstances, as well as the coherence and complementarity of ECHO's strategy in relation to other instruments and stakeholders.

30. The methodology of the evaluation focused on documentary research combined with open and semi-structured interviews with primary stakeholders. These included ECHO staff in Pyongyang and Brussels; staff and counterparts of agencies supported by ECHO; DPRK officials at national, regional and local level; and members of EU member state missions in the country. The levels of interest in and cooperation with the evaluation mission were high, and the degree of involvement and support shown by EU ambassadors was exceptional. The evaluation team would like to thank all those involved. For details of people met and meetings held please see Appendix B.

31. The evaluation team was in Brussels from September 24th-26th for briefing, planning and initial documentary research, and was in DPRK from October 12th to November 2nd. The first week in DPRK was primarily spent interviewing stakeholders in Pyongyang. An inception report was produced towards the end of this period. The next nine days were spent in fieldwork, i.e. visiting project sites and local stakeholders, firstly in the eastern part of the country and subsequently in areas in and around Pyongyang. The last few days were spent on some final meetings, including two feedback workshops held on October 29th with ECHO's partner agencies - the first on health, nutrition and food security, the second on water and sanitation. A

preliminary report was produced in-country and discussed with ECHO staff in Pyongyang on November 1st.

Note on format

32. ECHO has grouped its interventions in DPRK into three broad sectors (health, water and sanitation, and nutritional support/food aid). All these sectors relate to the health status of the population and are fundamentally interrelated; moreover interventions in these areas can be mutually reinforcing. In order to analyse ECHO's interventions it is necessary to divide them into categories, even though these categories overlap or are slightly arbitrary.

33. We have therefore organized our research and analysis primarily by sector. This is reflected in the framework for this report, which comprises three sections:

- (A) Background, context and general/global issues
- (B) ECHO-supported interventions by sector
- (C) Cross-cutting issues

34. Section (A) covers the 'global' issues specified in the terms of reference, focusing on those we consider particularly relevant to the unique circumstances of DPRK. Section (B) deals with operational and programmatic matters and is organized along sectoral lines, following ECHO's own broad categorization. Section (C) covers cross-cutting and operational issues.¹ Conclusions and recommendations are included at the end of each subsection. The index to the report illustrates this overall outline.

A2. Developments in DPRK

35. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, founded in 1948, continues to pursue policies based on socialism and self-reliance that no longer have parallels anywhere else in the world, even in other countries run by communist parties. The comparative continuity of policy in DPRK, at least until very recently, has been primarily influenced by the unresolved conflict in the Korean peninsula. The social, political and economic environment has profound and often unanticipated implications for international agencies working in the country.

36. Economic progress in DPRK was very considerable until the 1970s. However the demise of the Eastern Bloc, along with economic and policy changes in China, led first to a sharp decline in the international trade, and eventually to the virtual collapse of the DPRK economy. In 1995 the country was hit by devastating floods which destroyed a good part of its harvest. For the first time in its history the country appealed for international assistance. Further floods in 1996 were followed by a drought and tidal wave in 1997. These natural disasters exacerbated a situation which was already becoming serious, and led to starvation and famine. Hundreds of thousands of people are believed to have perished.

¹ In this way we have incorporated global, operational and sectoral aspects into our analysis whilst organizing our findings primarily along sectoral lines, reflecting the realities of the DPRK programme. In other words our specific findings relating to the programme, as set out in Sections (B) and (C), are in both cases organized primarily by sector. Section (A) however deals with issues of broader relevance.