

Date: 23 April 2004

Ref: OCHA/GVA - 2004/0061

**OCHA Situation Report No. 1
Democratic People's Republic of Korea – Explosion in Ryongchon County
Occurred on 22 April 2004**

The Government has formally requested international assistance.

Event and Impact

1. On Thursday 22 April 2004, at 1210 hrs local time (0310 UCT), two train wagons carrying explosives detonated at Ryongchon Station, Ryongchon County, North Phyongan Province. Initial reports from Government received today indicate that the accident happened during shunting operations at the station. According to the Government the explosives were enroute to a construction site for a large scale irrigation project.
2. According to initial reports of the Government's Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee (FDRC) the explosion injured over 1,000 people. So far, 50 bodies have been recovered. These are initial casualty reports and are subject to change.
3. The explosion reportedly caused major damage to housing and infrastructure, including schools and medical facilities. Initial reports from Government indicate that more than 1,800 dwellings have been completely destroyed.
4. Following a request from the Government, an Inter-Agency assessment mission to Ryongchon County is planned for Saturday, 24 April. The mission will undertake an initial assessment of the damage. Participants will include representatives from WFP, WHO, UNICEF, OCHA, IFRC, ECHO, NGOs and representatives of the Diplomatic Community,

National and International Response

5. The National Red Cross has mobilized in response to the disaster. Red Cross volunteers, working at the Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Warehouse in Sinuiju, are currently preparing relief items for distribution to the affected population in Ryongchon. Distribution of items such as blankets, kitchen sets and plastic sheeting should start as early as tomorrow. The Ministry of Public Health also responded to the disaster by sending medical supplies from Pyongyang to Ryongchon County early this morning.
6. The in-country UNICEF, WHO, and IFRC have reallocated medicines and medical supplies from existing programmes to meet some of the immediate needs. It is expected that these items will be delivered to Ryongchon County tomorrow. The value of these items is over US\$150,000 and includes medical kits for a county hospital, essential medicines and IV fluid.
7. A formal request for international assistance in response to the disaster was received by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Pyongyang this afternoon from the Government.

8. In addition to the assistance already being dispatched to the area, WFP has sufficient food in-country to meet the immediate food needs of the affected population. Where possible, identified needs will be met with resources available through existing in-country programmes. A decision on whether or not to appeal for additional assistance will be made following tomorrow's initial assessment mission to the affected area.

9. OCHA is prepared to field a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team and to provide an emergency grant upon request. Several international search and rescue teams are available for deployment if required. OCHA is in contact with its Office in Pyongyang, and will revert with further information, as it becomes available.

10. This situation report, together with further information on ongoing emergencies, is also available on the OCHA Internet Website at <http://www.reliefweb.int>

Telephone: +41-22-917 12 34	Fax: +41-22-917 00 23	E-mail: ochagva@un.org
In case of emergency only:	Tel. +41-22-917 20 10	
Desk Officers:	Mr. S. Nakajima / Mr. R. Mena Direct Tel. +41-22-917 4034 /1455	
Press contact: (GVA)	Ms. Elizabeth Byrs	direct Tel. +41-22-917 26 53
(N.Y.)	Ms. Stephanie Bunker	direct Tel. +1-212-963 87 40