As we approach the first anniversary, both tsunami victims and European citizens wish to know how the European Commission has delivered on its commitment and what challenges remain.

The European Union was among the leaders of an unprecedented international effort, reacting rapidly and generously. Only hours after the news broke, the European Commission funded humanitarian assistance. This aid – food, medicines, temporary shelter – will continue to mid 2006 for those families who still need help.

In total, the European Commission is providing €470 million, one quarter of the Union’s aid. The largest part – €350 million – goes into long-term reconstruction work in the three worst-affected countries of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Other affected Asian countries decided to finance the reconstruction themselves.

To ensure speed of delivery the Commission coordinates its aid with the governments and pools its funds with other donors. Projects are underway, focusing on rebuilding communities, restarting livelihoods and reconstructing infrastructure.

Huge challenges remain. Governments of affected countries need to coordinate hundreds of agencies to avoid duplication of effort. It will take time and vigour to rebuild the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people. Children must again attend schools, health services must again operate and ownership of property needs to be respected. As well as delivering aid the EU has paid particular attention to the civil conflicts in Aceh (Indonesia) and in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

The EU’s response to the disaster has never been bigger. The EU has provided satellite imagery of the coasts so governments can better plan future development and coastal defences. We are also developing world-wide warning systems with the UN and in improving the EU’s capacity to respond to civil crises with aid, medical and military help.

The European Union has a long-term commitment to continue its support.

From immediate humanitarian response to major actor in a massive international relief effort, the EU has been at the heart of the response to last year’s devastating Tsunami. But beyond the rebuilding effort, the EU has been working with the local people and communities to make their future better than before the disaster; to restore peace and democracy to divided regions and prosperity where people have long struggled to survive.

For more details on the EU’s response, including the assistance provided, see the dedicated web site at http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/tsunami/
Beyond the Tsunami

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"On the very same day that the tsunami struck our first humanitarian aid was committed."

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Beyond the Tsunami

The EU helps rebuild the lives of local communities on the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Bey0nd the Tsunami

The impact of the EU's response one year later

For more details on the EU’s response, see the dedicated web site:

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The EU helps local communities rebuild livelihoods

"The EU bought me a new cart and equipment for my mobile porridge business. Thankfully, I am now making a profit which I use to look after my extended family."

Sri Lanka

65-year-old Daoud, a retired fisherman

"Since the tsunami, the well water is salty and smelly. Now, special boats with machines which make freshwater from the sea come regularly. It’s good for me and my children to be able to wash and bathe properly."

Maldives

Saeeda Hassan, mother of nine

"‘The EU does not only provide aid but also develops long-term projects to help the tsunami-affected regions."

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© Photos and text, European Commission, 2005
On 26 December 2004, a devastating tsunami ripped across the Indian Ocean leaving havoc and destruction in its wake - 200,000 people dead, countless coastal villages levelled and roads and railways destroyed.

The Indonesian province of Aceh suffered the worst of the devastation. Over 13,000 people lost their lives in just 15 minutes, and hundreds of thousands were left suffering and homeless. Sri Lanka was the second worst-affected country with close to 35,000 dead and near to a million displaced. The Maldives faced a substantially lower death toll than others, but the country faced a sharp immediate recession and was shaken to the core of its economy, with damage estimates reaching a huge 4% of GDP. India suffered devastating losses in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as well as along its southern tip. Estimates are of 40,000 people killed. Thailand’s popular tourist areas were the worst hit by the tsunami which claimed over 6,000 deaths, including 2,500 foreign tourists. The disaster triggered an unprecedented outpouring of solidarity for the tsunami’s victims. The international community's response was historic in its generosity with aid topping $12 billion, largely from private donations to NGOs.

The tsunami badly hit the North and East of Sri Lanka. The area has already been ravaged by twenty years of civil war between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The Commission is putting together a support package to help reintegrate former combatants and to encourage the development of the rule of law and democracy in Aceh.

The EU has already committed €17 million of European Commission representation in Colombo to a fully-fledged EU mission in Sri Lanka to improve the coordination of its response to both Sri Lanka and Thailand. The EU has upgraded its planning to spend €420 million for the reconstruction of Aceh and the surrounding area.

EU UPGRADES ROADS TO TSUNAMI-AFFECTED AREAS

Sri Lanka was the second most devastated country. The Commission has already allocated €15 million of immediate humanitarian aid; Beyond relief, €40 million are already being spent to rebuild part of the Matara-Batticaloa road, the vital link to tsunami-affected areas in the South and South-East. To improve the coordination of its response to both Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the Commission has upgraded its representation in Colombo to a fully-fledged Delegation, which covers both countries.

EU IMPROVES MAN-MADE SEA DEFENCES

During the tsunami, the whole of the Maldives momentarily disappeared. The low-lying islands were covered by a tidal wave, that severely damaged infrastructure and had a major impact on tourism and fishing industries. After years of spectacular economic growth, the Maldives is now in economic recession. The European Commission acted swiftly to provide €2.7 million for humanitarian assistance to help protect the Maldives in the future, a substantial further €13 million of European Commission development aid is helping to build safer islands for the population. On these islands they will benefit from better schools and hospitals, safer homes and better job opportunities. Natural and man-made sea defences will protect the islands from further sea surges and rising sea-levels.

EU PROVIDES GRANTS TO REBUILD LIVES

As part of its €15 million post-tsunami facility, the European Commission’s Asia Pro Eco programme is providing grants for projects in India to help the country tackle major issues on the protection and revitalisation of the environment. This comes on top of the European Commission’s ECHO funding of €10 million over 18 months to projects in all the affected areas, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.