

UN seeks 1.4 billion dollars aid money for Rwanda

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GENEVA, Jan 17 (AFP) - The United Nations is seeking almost 1.4 billion dollars from international donors to kickstart the devastated Rwandan economy and prevent a slide to another bloodbath, UN officials said here Tuesday.

Without the desperately-needed funds, the international community would see a new humanitarian disaster in Rwanda, to follow the genocide carried out in 1994, they said.

"We risk going down the spiral of despair," said the UN Secretary-General's special advisor to Rwanda, Shahryar Khan, at the start of a meeting of potential international donors to the central African country.

Gustav Speth, head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said that without a rapid resumption in government and a kick-starting in the economy, "we would set the stage for further collapse and

chaos," only months after up to one million people were killed in an apparently pre-planned genocide.

Ethnic minority Tutsis and moderates from the Hutu majority were targeted in the killings which have been attributed by the UN to Hutu supremacist militias and government army troops set up by the late Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana.

The UN is launching appeals for two separate Rwanda funds which together total 1.4 billion dollars.

Rwandan Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu, along with ministers from several donor countries, has already launched an appeal for 764 million dollars during a UNDP Round Table for Rwanda.

A new, UN consolidated inter-agency appeal will be launched on Friday, seeking 710 million dollars for "the most acute needs which still have to be covered", according to Peter Hansen, the assistant head of human-

itarian affairs at the UN.

"Its challenge will be to help create an environment in which longer-term economic and social stability can be successfully addressed," Hansen said.

The Kigali government says the money would go towards assisting the balance of payments, reorganising state services, repair infrastructure, rehouse refugees, stimulate production, and get schools and hospitals working again.

"The country is still in a state of shock and total deprivation,"

explained UNDP head Speth.

Hansen said the international community had already spent close to

a billion dollars in the past year, but much still remained to be done in a country "with approximately 1.9 million refugees and over a million internally displaced persons."

"There can be no reconciliation without rehabilitation," he warned.

However, "there is a positive side" to the situation, said special representative Khan. He said that in some regions, up to 50 percent of the refugees had returned.

The deposed "government in exile", based in Zaire, has asked donors to reject the demands of the Kigali authorities.

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