

UN chief expresses concern over Trump's freeze on U.S. foreign aid



United Nations, January 28 (RHC)-- The head of the United Nations has expressed concern about U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to pause foreign assistance from the United States as his administration promotes its "America First" agenda.

During a news conference on Monday, a spokesman for Antonio Guterres said the UN secretary-general had noted the policy change "with concern." "He calls for additional exemptions to be considered to ensure the continued delivery of critical development and humanitarian activities for the most vulnerable communities around the world," Stephane Dujarric told reporters.

"Those lives and livelihoods depend on this support," said Dujarric, adding that the US is "one of the largest aid providers" in the world. "We are currently mapping out what [the Trump administration's decision] means and the impact that it would have."

Trump signed an executive order shortly after he was sworn in for a second term on January 20, ordering all federal government agencies to enact a 90-day pause on foreign development assistance and to review existing programmes.

“It is the policy of United States that no further United States foreign assistance shall be disbursed in a manner that is not fully aligned with the foreign policy of the President of the United States,” the order reads.

Days later, the U.S. State Department said in a memo that it was suspending almost all new funding for foreign aid programmes with exceptions for the country’s top Middle East allies, Israel and Egypt. The order on Friday also included an exemption for emergency food assistance and related expenses.

“President Trump stated clearly that the United States is no longer going to blindly dole out money with no return for the American people,” the department said in a statement on Sunday defending the measures.

The statement also affirmed newly confirmed Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s support for the Trump-led policy. “Reviewing and realigning foreign assistance on behalf of hardworking taxpayers is not just the right thing to do, it is a moral imperative. The Secretary is proud to protect America’s investment with a deliberate and judicious review of how we spend foreign assistance dollars overseas.”

But experts have slammed the Trump administration’s decision, saying it will have disastrous consequences for people around the world.

Michael Schiffer, who served as the assistant administrator of the US Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Asia bureau from 2022 to 2025, said stopping foreign aid — even temporarily — will have “obvious, predictable results”.

“Children will die. Our national security will erode. America’s alliances will suffer. US partners will be at risk. And America’s enemies will rejoice,” Schiffer warned in a column for the website Just Security.

Jeremy Konyndyk, president of Refugees International and an ex-USAID official under former Presidents Joe Biden and Barack Obama, also said “a global stop-work order on foreign aid will cost many, many lives if kept in place”.

Konyndyk noted that U.S. foreign assistance goes to addressing famine in Sudan, supporting refugees in Africa and Asia, and funding HIV/AIDS treatment programmes around the world. “It is no exaggeration whatsoever to say that following through on this policy will kill a lot of people,” he wrote on social media.

“It will also shred U.S. global credibility in much of the world, where our assistance programs are a huge share of our country partnerships.”

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