

Answer given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(17 September 1998)

Immediately after the tidal wave struck Papua New Guinea on 17 July 1998, the Commission forwarded to the affected area emergency relief items that were on their way to the island of Bougainville under another relief operation. This first aid included medicine and reconstruction packs, clothes and other articles of primary necessity.

In addition, the Commission made available humanitarian aid worth ECU 500 000 for the victims of the disaster. The aid was to enable European non governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide further emergency relief items such as medicines, food and clean water.

There was, however, a quick and overwhelming international response to this natural disaster from governments (in particular Australia, New Zealand, France and Japan), non-governmental organisations and private individuals. In a report published at the end of July, the United Nations Office for the co-ordination of humanitarian affairs and their team that was sent to Papua New Guinea declared that all immediate relief needs had already been met. This information was confirmed by many other sources.

In view of the changing circumstances as a result of the extraordinarily generous international response, and after consultation with the NGOs that were to implement the Community financed assistance, with the relevant United Nations bodies and with its delegation in Papua New Guinea, the Commission decided to reallocate the funds that had been made available to other, more urgent crises elsewhere in the world.

Regarding the rehabilitation and reconstruction work to be carried out in the area hit by the tidal wave, the Commission will give due consideration to any concrete request that may be made by the government of Papua New Guinea.

(1999/C 96/196)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2701/98**by Marie-Paule Kestelijn-Sierens (ELDR) to the Commission**

(1 September 1998)

Subject: Registration fees

Can the Commission provide a breakdown of the registration fees payable in the fifteen Member States of the European Union on the purchase of real estate?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(21 September 1998)

Registration taxes on immovable property are a matter for the Member States, and there is no plan to harmonise them at Community level.

The Commission does not, therefore, possess the detailed information sought by the Honourable Member.

(1999/C 96/197)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2704/98**by Graham Watson (ELDR) to the Commission**

(1 September 1998)

Subject: Maldives

On 18 June 1998 and the days following, the Maldivian authorities began to arrest and interrogate Christian believers living on the island. Reliable sources estimate that as many as 50 Maldivians suspected of being Christian believers have been arrested since that time.