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**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

### **THOUSANDS FLEE VIOLENCE ALONG CAR-CHAD BORDER**

(New York, 14 September 2007): The entire population of some 12,000 people has now fled from their homes in the area between the towns of Markounda and Silambi, in the north of the Central African Republic (CAR) on the border with neighbouring Chad, according to the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for CAR, Toby Lanzer. For months, civilians have been caught between various armed factions, including state and non-state actors from CAR and Chad. In late August, reports from the region made it clear that, following a particularly acute period of violence, the population had escaped into the bush. A United Nations mission, led by Mr. Lanzer, traveled to the Markounda-Silambi axis in the Ouham prefecture 500 kilometres or twelve hours north of the capital, Bangui, from 7 to 10 September.

The consequences for the 12,000 people who were living along the axis are immediate and grave. While in July only 5,000 people were displaced along the axis, and many of them were on their way home, the entire population has now been displaced. “Conditions are abominable – marked by constant driving rain and night-time temperatures dipping to 15 degrees Celsius,” said Mr. Lanzer. “All this comes at the height of the lean season, when people are at the end of their ropes,” he added. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have no shelter or potable water, no health care and no basic items such as cooking pots or soap. Reports indicate a sharp increase in acute respiratory infections amongst the displaced population.

Noting the deterioration in CAR’s north, United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), John Holmes, called on all parties to create conditions that would enable the displaced to return home. “We are approaching the harvest in the coming weeks, and people need to get to their fields. If not, hunger will inevitably follow,” said Mr. Holmes. The United Nations and its partners will continue to work in the region this week in order to increase humanitarian aid there. To respond to the needs of the displaced, the United Nations and partners have mobilized \$43 million against the appeal total of \$83 million. The ERC may approve an allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to supplement the funds available. Further donor contributions are urgently required, particularly in light of the limited capacity of local authorities to protect and assist the affected population.

Internal conflict in the Central African Republic has forced almost 300,000 people to flee their homes during the past eighteen months. In addition, conflicts in Chad and the Darfur region of Sudan loom large over the people in the northern regions of the country.

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