

UNITED NATIONS AND PARTNERS SEEK \$10 MILLION FOR GHANA FLOODS

(New York/Geneva/Accra, 4 October): The United Nations and partner organizations seek nearly \$10 million to fund relief efforts for 75,000 people in northern Ghana, where entire communities along the Black and White Volta Rivers were hit by floods after heavy and persistent rain fell in late August and mid-September. Because of those floods, farmers in the already vulnerable Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions have lost their crops, and vast tracts of land and food storage and processing facilities are currently submerged. Houses, bridges, schools and health facilities have also been destroyed.

“Although floods are common in Ghana, this year’s abnormally heavy rain has resulted in flooding that is stretching the ability of affected communities to cope,” said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “Food security is a particular concern in areas of the country where people’s lives were already precarious. The generosity of Member States and other donors can help prevent living conditions from deteriorating even further.”

Preliminary assessments by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture reveal an estimated loss of 144,000 metric tonnes of crops, including maize, sorghum, millet, peanuts, yam, cassava and rice. In addition, prices of all staples have doubled since the flooding, and not all food commodities are readily available at markets, due to flooded roads and submerged bridges. This leaves around 75,000 people at risk of malnutrition until next year’s harvest, which will take place only if irrigated crops can be planted on schedule. Seeds, fertilizer and tools must be supplied by March 2008 for that to happen.

Funds from the appeal will also ensure that those cut off by floodwaters have access to health services through outreach and mobile clinics. Partners with logistics expertise will enable mobile teams to deliver essential drugs and medical supplies to inaccessible areas by the use of helicopters or boats. The teams will also be able to provide insecticide-treated bed-nets to prevent an increase in malaria as the flood waters recede, as well as chlorine tablets to make household water safe to drink. Funds are also needed to fix damaged public and household latrines.

River boats will be used throughout the relief operation, estimated at six months, or until the floods have receded following the end of the rainy season. In addition to helping restore food security to the affected population, the humanitarian community will also distribute tents to those deemed the most vulnerable -- around 18,000 persons that have lost their homes to the floods -- to use as temporary shelter while they rebuild their mud-block houses on higher grounds. The same group of people will receive basic household items, such as blankets, sleeping mats, jerry cans and kitchen-sets.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will temporarily reinforce the office of the Resident Coordinator to sustain existing national disaster management structures and reinforce partnerships with relevant relief agencies.