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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**PARTNERSHIPS VITAL TO INFORMATION SHARING IN HUMANITARIAN  
RESPONSE**

**Geneva: 26 October 2007:** The importance of partnerships and information sharing between UN and non-UN actors, governments and affected populations to ensure better humanitarian operations has been emphasised in a new statement agreed by aid agencies.

"We have to share information and analysis because they are essentially common to us all, what binds us together despite our differences," UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes said in a keynote speech at the Global Symposium +5 'Information for Humanitarian Action in Geneva, Switzerland.

"We have to be able to assess quickly and credibly the seriousness of a hurricane in Central America versus a flood in Africa and a drought in Africa. We have to be able to distinguish the gravity for the victims of the media-worthy conflict in an easily accessible and "sexy" part of the world from the long running and media-neglected, but possibly much more devastating drama in some other remote part of the globe." he added.

Hosted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the five day event brought together 250 representatives from the UN, government and non-governmental organisations, scientists, academics, the media and the private sector.

The outcome of the Symposium was a Statement recognising as a common vision the central role of information management and exchange in support of effective humanitarian preparedness and response.

"Timely and accurate information is central to saving lives, the power lies in its effective management and application," said the Symposium Chair, Sharon Rusu of OCHA.

The Statement highlighted several key issues as requiring follow up: strategic use of information and analysis, communications with affected communities, partnerships, preparedness, the use of new technology, and a move to have information management recognised as a profession within the humanitarian sector.

The Symposium Statement called for the humanitarian information community to develop an action plan by March 2008 with the goal of implementing several recommendations including stronger partnerships between the private sector and humanitarian community, and better community engagement

Highlights of the Symposium included the use of new and innovative technology being used in humanitarian operations such as the virtual web, satellite imagery, interactive mapping, blogging and the use of mobile phones in the field.

The draft Statement will be posted on the Reliefweb site ([www.reliefweb.int/symposium](http://www.reliefweb.int/symposium)) for one month for review by participants before being finally endorsed in November 2007.

All key note addresses, presentations and panel debates are available via webcast at [www.reliefweb.int/symposium](http://www.reliefweb.int/symposium)

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