

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CONCLUDES HIS VISIT TO ETHIOPIA

(New York, 28 November 2007): John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, today concluded his first official visit to Ethiopia. Earlier in the day, Mr. Holmes met with the senior national government officials in Addis Ababa, including the Prime Minister, his Deputy and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also held talks with representatives of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the African Union (AU), and United Nations staff.

In his discussions with Ethiopian officials, Mr. Holmes shared his observations about the humanitarian situation in Somali region and expressed concerns of the aid community on the ground. He also discussed ways in which the United Nations could support the government in its efforts to provide relief to affected populations, especially in Somali region. “There are grounds for concern regarding the potential for a very serious humanitarian crisis,” he said. “But we can avert this if we take all the necessary actions, working alongside the Government.”

Earlier in the day, Mr. Holmes met with Mr. Azouz Ennifar, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for UNMEE, to discuss issues pertaining to the Ethiopia-Eritrea border situation. Shortly after, Mr. Holmes discussed with AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr. Said Djint, mechanisms for closer liaison with the AU. Mr. Holmes also shared his assessment of the humanitarian situation in Somali region with the heads of United Nations agencies and discussed suggestions about humanitarian action in the country. He also briefed them on the outcomes of his consultations with government officials. Mr. Holmes also spoke to the international and local press on his observations and the results of the visit.

On Tuesday, Mr. Holmes led a field visit to Jijiga and Kebridehar in the Somali region, where the United Nations has recently established a field presence.

In the evening, Mr. Holmes left Addis Ababa and flew to the Sudanese capital of Khartoum – the next stop on his visit to the region – where he is scheduled to hold talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and representatives of the international and humanitarian communities. Mr. Holmes will travel to Darfur from 30 November to 1 December, where he will meet individuals affected by the conflict in the region.