

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs****IDPS WANT SECURITY BEFORE RETURNING TO HOME AREAS**

(New York, 30 November 2007): John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, travelled to south Darfur Friday and met with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ed Daein camp, home to some 50,000 people.

“Clearly after living in camps, in some cases, for over three years they are frustrated. While they expressed a strong desire to return to their home areas, all the people I spoke with were unequivocal that they would only be able to do so when security conditions were right and services were in place,” said Mr. Holmes.

One woman told the Emergency Relief Coordinator that women were the first victims of the conflict. “We have lost husbands, villages and families and we are still not safe even to go to town, collect firewood, and this has been the situation for the last four years,” she said.

Mr. Holmes also had a short meeting with the Wali in Nyala, where concerns of mutual interest were expressed, and will follow up with further substantive discussions.

United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations and local government also voiced concern about the potential of a serious food gap, even as early as January, as a result of early indications of a potentially poor food harvest due to infestations, birds and poor rainfall.

In meetings with aid workers, continuing challenges concerning access, safety and security of staff, and viability of programmes were raised against a background of increased security related incidents including car hijackings, assault and harassment. Many organisations also expressed their frustration at bureaucratic impediments which continue to hamper an effective and efficient response.

On Saturday, the Emergency Relief Coordinator will leave Nyala for El Fashir in north Darfur to hold meetings with United Nations staff and partners on the ground as well as local authorities.