

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**RECORD NUMBER OF UN EMERGENCY MISSIONS IN THE AMERICAS  
UN DISASTER ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION TEAMS' RESPONSE IN 2007**

(New York/Geneva, 26 December 2007): In 2007, the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams conducted nine missions to the Americas, the highest in the history of the teams, including the first-ever mission to Mexico. Previously, the highest number of missions to the Americas was eight, after Hurricanes Mitch and Georges in 1998.

The missions to the Americas were to Mexico (floods), the Dominican Republic (Tropical Storm Noel), Honduras (Hurricane Felix), Belize (Hurricane Dean), Jamaica (Hurricane Dean), Peru (earthquake), Uruguay (floods), and two to Bolivia including in response to the floods there.

Fourteen missions in one year is a higher number than usual for the emergency teams. Moreover, 10 out of the 14 missions, or 70% of the total, were in response to hurricanes and floods--possibly a glimpse of the shape of things to come given the reality of climate change.

In 2007, members of the UNDAC system continued to increase, and Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) joined the UNDAC system. The UNDAC system today consists of more than 160 national emergency managers from fifty-seven countries in Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, together with staff from OCHA and 12 other international organizations including UN agencies and the Red Cross and Crescent movement in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private sector companies. Further expansion of the team is being pursued in Africa and Asia.

Since its inception in 1993, UNDAC members have carried out 167 missions. The largest number of UNDAC deployments were conducted in late 2004 and early 2005 in response to the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, in which 44 experts from 16 countries and four agencies were deployed to five tsunami-affected countries, beginning on 26 December 2004, exactly three years ago. The second largest deployment also took place in 2005 in response to the earthquake in Pakistan in October of that year.

The UNDAC System, managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is designed to support member states in coordinating disaster response during the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster. It also aims at strengthening national and regional disaster response capacity.

“The 160 members of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system collectively possess literally thousands of years of experience in managing the response to disasters of all kinds and in all parts of the world,” said Arjun Katoch of OCHA, Chief of the UNDAC system. “With their duffel bags perpetually packed, and their travel papers ever ready, these are the men and women who leave their homes within hours of a tragedy to respond to needs of their fellow human beings around the globe,” he added.