

## **King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia Receives UN Humanitarian Chief**

(Riyadh, Dubai, New York, Geneva, 6 April 2008) -- John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator was received this afternoon by HM King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, King of Saudi Arabia to whom he expressed gratitude for the commitment demonstrated by Saudi Arabia in supporting humanitarian efforts in the region and beyond. They discussed ways of strengthening the partnership between the UN and the Kingdom in the humanitarian area, and agreed that this should be pursued intensively.

“I was deeply impressed by the commitment of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques to humanitarian causes throughout the world and look forward to taking further the dialogue we have begun with the Saudi authorities in the weeks and months to come,” said Mr Holmes.

Earlier today, Mr. Holmes, accompanied by Mr. Abdul Aziz Arrukban, the United Nations Special Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General based in the Gulf region, met with HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs. They discussed the wide range of humanitarian issues afflicting the world today and agreed that there was a need to further reinforce UN-Saudi partnership to improve responsiveness to humanitarian crises worldwide, not least in the light of the major challenges of climate change and rising global food prices.

Mr. Holmes and Prince Saud al Faisal agreed on strengthening the coordination mechanisms between the UN, including OCHA, and the Saudi and Gulf Cooperation Council government and civil society organizations. They also discussed the need for better coordination in providing the right assistance at the right time, while recognising the work and resources dedicated by the Saudi Government, the Saudi Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and the United Nations in emergency settings. Mr. Holmes, in particular, was keen to see greater recognition of the important humanitarian contributions, both in-kind and in cash, of the Saudi Government and non-governmental organizations, as well as more intensive mutual engagement between the Kingdom and the multilateral humanitarian effort.

“I have been much encouraged by the constructive and valuable meetings I have had during my visit and look forward to following up intensively so that we can create the kind of structures and relationships with the Government and the Saudi Red Crescent which will help us meet together the huge humanitarian needs in the world,” Mr. Holmes said. “I was impressed by the commitment of all those I met to making sure that the help we give reaches those in need quickly and reliably,” he added.

Following their visit to Saudi Arabia, Mr. Holmes and Mr. Arrukban will visit the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar as part of a six-day mission to the Gulf region to meet senior political figures in four countries to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between Gulf States and the United Nations in addressing humanitarian issues worldwide. In addition to government officials, they will also be meeting with senior representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Red Crescent Societies to encourage their active support of UN humanitarian activities. On Tuesday, 8 April, Mr. Holmes will deliver the keynote speech at the Dubai International Humanitarian Aid & Development (DIHAD) Conference.