

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN Humanitarian Chief Calls for Coordination Between Gulf Countries and the United Nations in Addressing Global Humanitarian Challenges

(Doha, Dubai, New York, Geneva, 10 April 2008) — John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator called upon Gulf States to work with the United Nations and other international actors to address both individual humanitarian crises and complex global challenges of rising food prices and the effects of climate change.

“The deteriorating humanitarian situations in countries such as the occupied Palestinian territories, Iraq, Somalia, Kenya and Darfur, and the humanitarian consequences of rising food prices and climate change require a fully coordinated international response,” said Mr. Holmes, during the last day of his mission to the Gulf region, which also included visits to Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

“I was encouraged by the clear evidence of common goals and shared principles and values behind humanitarian relief. There is a real opportunity for strengthening collaborative efforts between the Gulf countries and the international humanitarian community to achieve a more systematic, organised and prioritised approach to delivering emergency relief,” he said.

Mr. Holmes reported to his interlocutors that food price increases are already resulting in rising humanitarian needs, and in some instances unrest, while the impact of climate change has already caused an increase in the number and intensity of natural disasters.

While in Qatar, Mr. Holmes met with the Qatari State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmad Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, to discuss ways to build on Qatar’s support for humanitarian crises and increase further its engagement in multilateral efforts. Mr. Holmes also met with a senior representative of the Qatari Authority for Charitable Activities, which has taken a pivotal role in coordinating and developing the activities of humanitarian and charitable organisations in Qatar and is working more widely with NGOs across the Islamic world.

Mr. Abdul Aziz Arrukban, the United Nations Special Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General based in the Gulf region, who accompanied Mr. Holmes throughout his mission, praised the bilateral assistance given to communities in crisis by all four countries he visited and encouraged Gulf States to channel and coordinate more of their assistance through a multilateral and transparent system.

“The Gulf States are active and generous in providing humanitarian assistance, contributions that are not always reflected in official multilateral donor tallies, and hence remain unrecognized by the wider international community” said Mr. Arrukban, “This mission was a unique opportunity to identify the priorities and concerns of Gulf Countries and assist them in coordinating with the UN and other international partners to make sure those who are in most need are helped quickly and effectively,” he said.

The meetings in Doha conclude Mr. Holmes six-day trip to the Gulf region, where he met with Government representatives, including His Majesty King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, and senior representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council and national Red Crescent Societies, to strengthen partnerships between Gulf States and the United Nations in addressing humanitarian issues worldwide.

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