

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CALLS FOR STRONGER TIES  
BETWEEN GULF STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS**

(Dubai/New York/Geneva, 8 April 2008): John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, commended Gulf States for their support of humanitarian assistance efforts in many crises but called for increased UN-Gulf collaboration to address growing humanitarian needs more effectively and more multilaterally.

“In many countries across the globe, the combined humanitarian efforts of Gulf countries have made a life-saving difference, reaching communities that, at times, the UN and other aid actors could not,” said Mr. Holmes, while delivering the keynote speech at the opening of the fifth annual Dubai International Humanitarian Aid & Development (DIHAD) conference. “But if we are to meet the growing array of humanitarian needs, we must work together more cohesively not only to respond to crises, but also to reduce their impact before they happen,” he said.

Mr. Holmes predicted that global demand for humanitarian assistance would grow both from ongoing internal and civil conflicts and from more frequent and intense natural disasters. “The biggest single cause, for my money, will be climate change, and the increased incidence and severity of extreme weather events associated with it,” he said adding that recorded disasters doubled from 200 to 400 per year over the past two decades, with nine out of ten disasters now being climate-related. “Mitigating such trends requires not only improving our ability to respond to humanitarian crises, but investing in preparing disaster-prone communities, many of which are poor, to withstand their impact.”

At a time when close to 60 percent of UN emergency assistance is provided to countries with Muslim populations, close engagement between the countries of the Gulf and the UN system would also help build a more diverse system that demonstrates that shared commitment to ending suffering can outweigh political and cultural differences.

“Partnership between Gulf States and the UN would not only reinforce our current activities, but also help build a more fully-representative and universally accepted humanitarian movement that is better equipped to meet the challenges of both man and nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” said Mr. Holmes, “Without this balance, there is a risk that humanitarian assistance will continue to be viewed as a Western enterprise.”

Mr. Holmes’ participation in the DIHAD conference is part of a six-day mission to the Gulf region to meet with government officials, senior representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Red Crescent societies and private sector companies to strengthen partnerships between Gulf States and the United Nations in addressing humanitarian issues worldwide. In addition to the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Holmes is visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. Mr. Holmes is travelling together with Abdul Aziz Muhammad Arrukban, the United Nations Special Humanitarian Envoy.

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