

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF BEGINS TOUR OF GULF STATES IN SAUDI ARABIA**

(Riyadh, Dubai, New York, Geneva, 5 April 2008)-- John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Abdul Aziz Arrukban, the Special Humanitarian Envoy for the Secretary-General, began a six-day visit 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.

Speaking from Riyadh, Mr Holmes said, “It is important to reinforce our cooperation as part of a wider long term effort to strengthen international humanitarian response. Needs are increasing both from the man-made disasters in so many countries, both in the Middle East region and the Muslim world as a whole, and new challenges such as climate change and the structural rise in food prices. Working together multilaterally gives us the best chance to address these needs in a transparent and coordinated way.”

This morning Mr. Holmes and Mr. Arrukban met with HRH Prince Faisal Bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, President of the Saudi Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and discussed mechanisms of reinforcing the UN-SRCS partnership to improve responsiveness to humanitarian issues worldwide.

Mr. Holmes and Prince Faisal agreed on the need for improved coordination in providing the right assistance at the right time, while recognising the work and resources put by both the SRCS and the UN in emergency settings. Mr. Holmes pledged to work to highlight better on the international scene the important humanitarian contributions, both in-kind and in cash, of the Saudi Government and SRCS.

Later, Mr. Holmes and Mr. Arrukban met with the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Assaf, to discuss Saudi Arabia’s continued support of humanitarian activities, both directly to Governments as well as multilaterally. In this regard, Mr. Holmes highlighted the “cost-effective and timely” nature of UN coordination mechanisms such as the Consolidated Appeals Process, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the United Nations Disaster Coordination and Assessment Teams, which are designed to provide rapid response and funding to life-saving activities in both sudden and protracted emergencies.