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Press Release

UN OCHA/ IRIN hold the first humanitarian reporting workshop, in partnership with the International Humanitarian City and the Dubai Press Club

(Dubai, 24 March 2008): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), in partnership with the International Humanitarian City (IHC) and the Dubai Press Club, today hosted a unique training programme designed to provide journalists with key humanitarian references and reporting techniques.

The one-day, interactive training session was conducted by senior UN representatives in the country, and focused on the main principles, players and mechanisms of humanitarian assistance. In addition, there was a session on the tools and techniques needed by journalists who report on humanitarian issues.

Speaking from Dubai, the head of OCHA's regional office, Mr Abdul Haq Amiri, said: "Dubai's strong commitment to international social responsibility, combined with the emirate's growth as a regional information hub, made this the ideal location for such an event".

Maryam bin Fahad, Executive Director of Dubai Press Club, said: "We consider it our priority to provide UAE based journalists with key enabling tools that will help them effectively handle challenging field assignments and ensure the accurate dissemination of information.

"The workshop is in line with our efforts to enhance the role of the media in humanitarian reporting. Providing useful guidelines, the event highlighted the right approach to maintaining objectivity while filing human interest stories."

Representatives from national, regional and international media newspapers and broadcast stations participated in the workshop. Journalists discussed the best ways for them to cover issues such as the implications to civilians of food scarcity, health, and vulnerability to conflict and natural disasters.

"We are delighted that representatives from such a broad range of media outlets were able to attend. A strong dialogue with the media is more crucial than ever if we are to be successful in our mission to highlight the situation of civilians whose lives have been overturned by conflicts and natural disasters in this region and beyond," Mr Amiri added.

Mr Khaled Khalifa, head of IRIN's Middle East/ Asia Bureau in Dubai, said, "IRIN has been greatly encouraged by the interest shown by Dubai-based journalists in enhancing their skills in humanitarian reporting. We intend to hold similar workshops in future in other countries in the region based on the experience of the Dubai workshop."

The organizers hope that Dubai-based media houses will invest more of their resources to send reporters to the field to cover humanitarian stories, especially the forgotten ones in disaster-struck areas.

Official Websites:

IRIN: www.irinnews.org

UN OCHA: www.unocha.org

International Humanitarian City, www.ihc.ae

Dubai Press Club, www.dpc.ae

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