

United Nations Nations Unies

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(New York: 6 June 2008): In response to a directive from The Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe instructing all private voluntary organizations and non-governmental organizations to suspend all field operations until further notice, John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, commented as follows:

“This is a deplorable decision that comes at a critical humanitarian juncture for the people of Zimbabwe. Much of the UN’s own humanitarian aid in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, is programmed through non-governmental organizations. If voluntary organizations and NGOs are not able to work, humanitarian aid for at least two million of the most poor and vulnerable of Zimbabwe’s people, particularly children, will be severely restricted, although we will do our best to make up for this. I therefore strongly urge the Government to reconsider and rescind this decision as soon as possible. The organizations concerned are engaged in vital humanitarian work fully respecting the principles of impartiality and neutrality, which are fundamental to all they and we do. They need unrestricted access, and guarantees for their safety and security. That is what we will continue to seek in our contacts with the Government of Zimbabwe”.