

**130,000 FLOOD-AFFECTED WEST AFRICANS NEED CONTINUED
SUPPORT**

(New York, 10 September, 2008): An estimated 130,000 people in several countries in West Africa have been affected by severe flooding following several months of heavy rainfall, and are in need of continued assistance. Villages have been submerged and homes, crops and infrastructure destroyed. Thousands of people have been exposed to water-borne diseases.

The most affected countries are Togo, Ghana, Niger, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal. Floods have also affected Liberia and Mauritania, though with less humanitarian impact. The floods have compounded the problem of high rates of malnutrition in some of the affected countries, such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Guinea and northern Ghana and Togo, which have also been suffering from the impact of the global food crisis.

Immediate requirements include maintaining high levels of alert to avert major disasters in the coming weeks, having equipment ready to redirect flood waters away from settlements as opposed to incurring costs relocating people, providing required health kits to prevent outbreaks of water-borne diseases, including malaria, and delivering food aid to the most vulnerable.

“In spite of the tremendous challenges we face currently in our efforts to respond to all these weather-related emergencies around the world, we must strive to ensure that all those in need of humanitarian help receive it,” said United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes. “In West Africa, flooding has hit some of the most vulnerable people who have a limited ability to cope. The international community must not forget them,” he added.

A series of workshops on flood preparedness and management held by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the affected countries ahead of the rainy season this year helped reduce the adverse impact of the flooding compared to 2007. Some 800,000 people were affected by floods last year compared to 130,000 this year. More than 200 people died as a result of flooding in 2007 compared to slightly over 30 this year.

Regionally, the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed emergency teams to affected areas in Togo and made cash donations to help the government in its response effort. ECOWAS, in partnership with OCHA, is also in the process of setting up a regional stockpile of non-food relief supplies in Mali as a disaster preparedness measure.