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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

CONCERN ABOUT RISING NUMBERS OF PEOPLE DISPLACED BY LRA

(New York, 10 October 2008): The Lord's Resistance Army appears to have resumed its brutal activities in several countries. The number of those who have fled their homes due to attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan has now increased to 23,000, a total that continues to rise. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that up to 150 Congolese are still crossing daily from the DRC into the Yambio region of South Sudan, to the villages of Sakure, 15 kilometres south of Yambio, and Gangura, 30 kilometres south-west of Yambio. According to UNICEF, the LRA abducted at least 90 children in the course of raids on villages in the DRC on 17 and 25 September. Because the LRA also pillaged and burned families' homes, many of those who have fled have been deprived of everything.

"These horrific attacks by armed militias against civilians, including children, bear all the only too familiar hallmarks of the LRA," said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The displaced include approximately 5,000 Congolese in Yambio, South Sudan, and 17,000 in the Dungu area of north eastern DRC. The United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working to assist those displaced in DRC, and in South Sudan the UN, NGOs, and the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) are together assisting the displaced. Attacks also took place in the south of the Central African Republic earlier in the summer.

"The departure of the LRA from northern Uganda, following the Cessation of Hostilities agreement brokered in Juba, Southern Sudan over two years ago, had enabled hundreds of thousands of Ugandans to begin to enjoy the benefits of relative stability and to begin to return home, after many years of displacement." Mr. Holmes said. "These gains must be preserved. I hope the LRA leadership will still sign the Final Peace Agreement negotiated earlier this year."

"Given the threat the LRA pose, with their history of pillage, rape, abduction, forced recruitment of children, torture and murder, countries in the region and beyond must work together to improve the protection of civilians under threat." Mr. Holmes concluded.

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