

United Nations Nations Unies

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF ARRIVES IN HAITI

(New York / Port-au-Prince, 23 October 2008): United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes arrived in Haiti today to review progress in addressing the overall humanitarian situation in the country, as well as in responding to the needs arising from the hurricanes and tropical storms that hit the Caribbean island nation recently, and to appeal for more and faster assistance. He will also discuss natural disaster preparedness with the Government.

Mr. Holmes is due to meet the country's leaders, including President Rene Preval and Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis, as well as representatives of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), of UN agencies, and of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the country. On Friday, 24 October, he is scheduled to visit the city of Gonaives, one of the areas worst affected by the storms.

"Even before this latest series of hurricanes and tropical storms, Haiti was particularly vulnerable to extreme weather. Now people desperately need not only immediate humanitarian relief but also major recovery assistance to help them get back on their feet again," Mr. Holmes said. "In addition, we need to take a serious, fresh look at the country's development needs," he added.

Haiti, already struggling with the impact of heavy rains during Hurricane Fay in mid-August, was struck by Hurricane Gustav and Tropical Storm Hanna. Gustav, which hit Haiti on 26 August, devastated five regions in the west and southwest, while Hanna, which made landfall on 2 September, affected all 10 regions of the country. Subsequently, the country was also hit by Hurricane Ike. At least 790 people were killed by the storms and hundreds injured. An estimated one million people around the country have been affected.

This year's hurricane season has dealt a severe blow to efforts to combat poverty in a country whose people had already been made more vulnerable by the sharp increase in food prices.

Humanitarian agencies have jointly appealed for \$106 million to provide humanitarian and early recovery assistance over the next six months to survivors of the storms. Only \$24.8 million of that appeal has been committed so far.

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