

United Nations Nations Unies

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN SEEKS \$30 MILLION TO HELP CUBAN STORM SURVIVORS

(New York, 23 October 2008): United Nations agencies are seeking \$30 million to help survivors of the four tropical storms and hurricanes that struck Cuba recently, destroying the homes and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people and causing significant damage to the country's infrastructure. These funds will be distributed through an immediate response phase (\$13.8 million) and an early recovery phase (\$16.2 million), as intended in the United Nations Post-Hurricane Plan of Action 2008.

Between 16 August and 10 September, Cuba was affected by four devastating storms-- Tropical Storm Fay, which caused flooding, Hurricane Gustav, the most devastating hurricane in 50 years, Tropical Storm Hanna, which did not strike the island directly, but caused flooding in the eastern zone of the country, and Hurricane Ike, which swept across the entire country.

The requested funding is intended to help UN agencies and their partners to complete the emergency phase of the humanitarian response and support early recovery efforts. UN agencies will implement the Plan in collaboration with their partners to support some of the basic needs of affected people and to promote livelihood recovery projects during the next 12 months. The projects and activities of the plan will complement the actions prioritized by the Government of Cuba and will strengthen local capacities to respond to the impacts of the hurricanes.

Due to the excellent preparedness of the Government, up to three million people--approximately 28 percent of the country's population--were evacuated and very few lives were lost. Many people found shelter in homes of friends and relatives, and 500,000 were provided with temporary shelter.

More than 444,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, and nearly 113,000 hectares of crops were damaged. Stored food, agricultural tools and storage facilities were destroyed. The infrastructure, including the electricity distribution system, sustained significant damage, and schools and health care facilities were damaged or destroyed. The financial losses have been estimated at \$5 billion or about 8 percent of Cuba's Gross Domestic Product.

The \$30 million envisaged within the Post-Hurricane Plan of Action 2008 is in addition to the \$8.7 million contributed already by different UN agencies through their emergency funds and by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

For further information, please call: Stephanie Bunker, OCHA-New York, +1 917 367 5126, mobile +1 917 892 1679, bunker@un.org; Nicholas Reader, OCHA New York, +1 212 963 4961, mobile +1 646 752 3117, reader@un.org; John Nyaga, OCHA-NY, +1 917 367 9262, nyagaj@un.org; Elisabeth Byrs, OCHA-Geneva, +41 22 917 2653, mobile, +41 79 473 4570, byrs@un.org. OCHA press releases are available at <http://ochaonline.un.org> or www.reliefweb.int.