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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

HAITIAN HURRICANE SURVIVORS TO BENEFIT FROM ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM UN HUMANITARIAN FUND

(Port-au-Prince / New York, 24 October 2008): United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes during a mission to Haiti to inspect hurricane damage and humanitarian needs expressed his willingness to make an additional allocation for Haiti from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for urgent humanitarian needs.

In the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes in September, the Fund had allocated \$4.3 million to three UN agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Mr. Holmes, who arrived in Haiti on Thursday for a two-day visit, spoke of the expected additional funding at a meeting with the country's Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis, and the Ministers of Planning, Interior and Social Affairs.

Mr. Holmes visited the seaside city of Gonaives, which was devastated by the hurricanes, and met with local authorities and families in urgent need of continued humanitarian assistance. Conditions in Gonaives have been made worse by stagnant water and mud.

Mr. Holmes met with President Rene Preval and discussed with him the need to find alternative locations where displaced people who sought shelter in schools can be accommodated before any definitive plans are made to reopen schools.

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, but response to the funding request has been slow, with only \$24.8 million of that appeal committed so far.

Haitian officials urged Mr. Holmes to help the Government to reach out to donors and partners with the message that the country needed more support for recovery and reconstruction programmes, which, they said, were often not well funded, increasing the vulnerability of people affected by successive storms on the island nation. Mr. Holmes stressed the importance of having a well managed transition from relief to recovery and development.

Haiti, already struggling with the impact of heavy rains during Hurricane Fay in mid-August, was later 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 where people had already been made vulnerable by the sharp increase in food prices. The cumulative effect of the storms and high food prices has increased food insecurity for a large proportion of the population. An estimated 2.3 million people are in need of food aid, and many

more could fall into that category if the Government of Haiti is not helped to rebuild the country's agricultural sector.

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