

**Statement by John Holmes, Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and
Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the occasion of the Sudan Work Plan launch**

20 November 2008

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Thank you for this opportunity to speak this morning. The Work Plan for Sudan that we're launching here today is valued at \$2.2 billion. More than a quarter of that has already been secured, but it still leaves a net appeal of \$1.56 billion for 2009. Four years after warring parties in north and south Sudan signed a deal to end their conflict, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, this fifth annual Work Plan remains the largest predominantly humanitarian appeal in the world. Almost half of the total requirement, some \$1.05 billion, is for Darfur, where an estimated 4.5 million people continue to be in need of assistance after six years of conflict. The extent of the appeal to donors is even more ambitious given the global economic environment and the parallel needs swelling in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, and elsewhere.

But now is not the time to slacken or reduce our efforts in Sudan. More than ever, the international community and the governments concerned need to pull together to ensure that millions of people are afforded access to relief and recovery assistance. Otherwise we risk undermining achievements to date or jeopardizing critical events ahead. In the past four years, the UN and partners have been successful in delivering basic services such as food, water, and shelter in many parts of the country. We have built clinics and schools, cleared mines and helped thousands displaced by conflict to return home. But the scars of decades of war take a long time to heal. Where we have made advances, we need to maintain them, and where lives are still at risk, we need to continue to protect them.

The conflict in Darfur will soon enter its seventh year. Out of a population of more than six million, some 2.7 million people have been displaced, mostly into camps, and millions more remain dependent upon life-saving assistance of some form. The region is volatile: flare-ups in violence prevent people from moving freely to fields, markets, clinics and schools, and have made it increasingly challenging for aid workers to reach them. Significant donor funding is needed in 2009 to ensure critical life-saving activities continue. We are also striving to increase rural outreach programmes to reach communities cut off by the protracted conflict. Meanwhile the search for lasting peace has to continue to accelerate. Leaving Darfur in its present state is not an acceptable option for anyone.

Elsewhere in the country, too, there is an urgent need for humanitarian support, not just to save lives but also to shore up a peace process that remains fragile. In the past year, fighting in Abyei has been a painful reminder to all of just how quickly underlying tensions can boil over; the border region between north and south remains volatile, and the need for quick wins and peace dividends that improve people's lives is becoming ever more pressing as

crucial CPA dates for elections and a referendum on the relationship between north and south come closer.

Conflict and natural disasters have contributed to massive levels of displacement in Sudan: in the last four years, an estimated two million people have returned to their native towns and villages, but at least double that number have yet to be able to do so in safety, and with basic services assured. In some regions, more than half of people still do not have access to clean water, and many less have access to proper sanitation. In the east, malnutrition rates are over the emergency threshold; in parts of Blue Nile, diarrhoea is still a leading cause of death. Conditions in South Sudan remain dire for far too many people. A higher percentage of women die in child birth and fewer children are fully immunized than almost anywhere else in the world. Despite a massive expansion in primary school education, enrollment rates remain some of the lowest on the continent. This give us some idea of how far we all still have to go, and should serve as a stimulus to all our efforts.

The Work Plan has shaped UN and partners' humanitarian, recovery, and development operations in Sudan since 2005. Much has been achieved. In the first six months of this year alone, more than 600,000 households received food aid, half a million received livelihood support; more than nine million children were vaccinated against polio, more than 2.8 million people were provided with safe drinking water. The Work Plan helps to bring all humanitarian actors together, forging partnerships between government and aid agencies, between NGOs and local communities that will far outlive the one year life of the plan. The Work Plan also helps to lay the groundwork for recovery by supporting opportunities *within* the humanitarian context for activities that represent the first steps towards the development strategies contained in the four year UN Development Assistance Framework for Sudan. This is primarily evident in South Sudan, now almost four years removed from war and where great possibilities exist to deliver the development peace dividends for more than 1.4 million returnees – a task where we cannot afford to fail.

As I have said, a huge amount remains to be done. What the 2009 Work Plan proposes is a carefully selected range of projects in 10 sectors that capitalize on and accelerate existing programmes. The extent of the plan is testament to the huge amount of expertise and commitment on the ground in Sudan, and its strength comes from the partnerships embedded within it. This year, more national and international NGOs are taking part in the Work Plan than ever before, and throughout the plan there is evidence of the commitment to develop the capacity of governments, engage communities, and increase the confidence of all Sudanese to rebuild their country themselves. For all these reasons, the Work Plan is worthy of your support, and I strongly urge you to support it.