

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF URGES CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR
HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH SUDAN**

(New York/Khartoum, 28 November 2008): John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, assured the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) of continued support in confronting critical humanitarian issues, particularly in the health sector. He urged continued donor support for this and for the huge construction and development effort still needed in the south, as well as accelerated efforts and investment in key areas from the Government of Southern Sudan themselves.

“A lot has been achieved since I was last in Juba less than two years ago but a huge amount remains to be done. The UN must be here for the long haul, to support government leadership, while the international community as a whole has to keep up its spending. Too much rests on the development of the south and the continued health of the north-south relationship for there to be any other option,” said Mr Holmes.

Concluding a two day visit to Juba, Mr Holmes highlighted the necessity of putting in place basic services in health and education, and investing in infrastructure, particularly building up rapidly the road system. Government of Southern Sudan capacity also has to be built further to enable them to take over the lead in all these key areas. “People still need to see more dividends from the hard won peace,” added Mr Holmes.

Southern Sudan still has some of the worst child and maternal health indicators in the world. One child in every seven dies under the age of five. The most common causes of morbidity and mortality are preventable and treatable, with malaria accounting for over 40 percent of all health facility visits. Children remain particularly vulnerable as Southern Sudan has one of the lowest routine immunisation coverage rates in the world. One out of seven women dies as a result of child birth related causes. The majority of births are unassisted, as there are only 10 registered midwives in the whole of Southern Sudan.

“It is simply unacceptable in the twenty first century that women continue to die in childbirth at such rates, and that children and adults die needlessly of preventable diseases like malaria,” said Mr Holmes after visiting Juba Teaching Hospital. “Distributing mosquito nets to all the population, training enough staff and qualified midwives, and getting them out to the rural communities who are in dire need of primary health care; these must be top priorities.”

Earlier Mr Holmes met President Salva Kiir. As well as discussing the continuing scale of the needs confronting the south, they also expressed shared concerns for the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as well as mutual commitment to a rapid and successful negotiated

solution to the Darfur conflict. Both men also hoped that the LRA leadership would this time go through with their promise to sign the peace agreement, on 29 November.

“The fate of many innocent people, not least thousands of children, may depend on this signature and its implementation, as well as the further stabilisation of the region. So all my fingers are crossed,” said the ERC.

Prior to visiting Juba, Mr Holmes travelled to Agok in Southern Kordofan where he met some of the 30,000 internally displaced persons who fled Abyei when fighting broke out on 14 May. They made clear their desire for assured security before they could return home fully. In Abyei, Mr. Holmes met the new Administrator and his deputy and assured them of the continued commitment of the humanitarian community to assisting the displaced and helping them return to their homes as soon as conditions allow. He urged them to promote inter-community reconciliation and the full implementation of the agreed road map designed to do this, and hoped that the necessary resources to enable them to do so would be forthcoming as soon as possible.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator departs Juba for Khartoum for meetings with Government, UN agencies and NGOs before concluding his six day visit to Sudan on Sunday evening.

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