

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs****OCHA LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN ON HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

(New York, 2 December 2008): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) today launched a campaign to raise awareness of the humanitarian implications of climate change and to call for improved disaster preparedness and response measures in countries that suffer most from extreme weather events.

While many view climate change as a future threat, humanitarians are seeing its impact now. In the last 20 years, the number of recorded disasters has doubled from about 200 to more than 400 per year. Disasters caused by floods are more frequent (from about 50 in 1985 to more than 200 in 2005) and damage larger areas than they did twenty years ago.

From 1988-2007, over 75 percent of all disaster events were climate-related, and accounted for 45 percent of deaths and 80 percent of the economic losses caused by natural hazards. In 2007, OCHA issued an unprecedented 15 funding appeals for sudden natural disasters, five more than the previous annual record – all but one resulted from climatic events.

The United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes, said:

“This campaign highlights our huge concerns about the humanitarian impact of climate change. Any credible vision of the future must recognise that humanitarian needs are increasing and that climate change is the main driver. We are already seeing its effects, in terms of the numbers of people affected and in the rising cost of response.”

“Improving our ability to respond effectively to increasing and increasingly extreme climatic events is now a priority part of our business. This calls for a systemic shift of attention, resources and expertise to improve disaster preparedness,” Mr. Holmes added.

The campaign messages are detailed in a separate document and can be summarized as follows:

- Humanitarians are seeing the effects of climate change now;
- The most vulnerable are impoverished people living in risk-prone ‘hotspot’ countries, where the risks from extreme climatic events overlap with human vulnerability;
- We have a responsibility to provide an effective response, and this means a far greater investment in preparedness (within the broader context of disaster risk reduction);

- Floods, storms and droughts need not be disasters, but countering these extreme weather events means we must ‘act sooner and act smarter’.
- The campaign calls for a greater investment in disaster preparedness for an effective response; Mozambique and other countries provide recent examples of good disaster practice.

Campaign materials – including slideshows, videos, reports, key messages, photos and other resources – can be viewed at <http://ochaonline.un.org/climatechange>

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