

**HELP NATIONS COPE WITH CLIMATE DEVASTATION, SAYS UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF**

(New York, 3 September 2009): “We are coming down to the wire, with less than 100 days left before the United Nations Climate Change Conference begins in Copenhagen on 7 December,” said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Holmes, the global humanitarian chief, noted that climate change is now a major driver of disasters, with increasingly frequent and intense floods, storms and droughts affecting millions of people worldwide. Weather-related events are affecting or displacing more people year by year: more than 65 million people were affected by floods and storms in 2008, or one percent of the global population. This trend is expected to continue and accelerate if unchecked.

“Right now, people are dealing with high visibility disasters--such as Hurricane Jimena off Mexico, and Typhoon Morakot, which affected over three-quarters of a million households in Taiwan and left over 700 people dead or missing. But many overlook the less visible, but even more grave weather related crises, such as the severe droughts affecting Kenya and Ethiopia. In addition, after a poor start to the June-to-September monsoon season, more than one-third of India's 625 administered districts have declared drought,” Mr. Holmes warned.

Unless drastic reductions in global emissions are in place by 2020, major catastrophes involving floods, storms or water scarcity – combined with other factors such as population growth, urbanisation, food insecurity, environmental decline and poverty – may lead to major migration and forced displacement in many parts of the world. Such unprecedented population movements could overwhelm national governments and global disaster management systems, as well as planting the seeds of future conflicts.

“If it is challenging for humanitarians to cope in today’s circumstances, the future could be much more difficult. To avert or reduce the worst humanitarian consequences of climate change, we know what needs to be done, and we must do it. At Copenhagen, we must see an ambitious, fair and binding agreement that will not only cut global emissions but also help nations cope now with the harmful effects of climate change,” Mr. Holmes concluded.

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