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**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**Press Release**

**West Africa needs 361 millions to fight off food crisis**

**Dakar, 24 November 2008**—The United Nations launched today an international appeal of 361 million dollars to finance humanitarian projects that will help stem off the impact of the high food prices crisis on millions of people in West Africa, one of the world's poorest regions.

Launched in the Senegalese capital Dakar, the appeal aims to support humanitarian needs in five key sectors that could be affected by the hike in food prices- food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, protection, health and coordination and support services- in 15 member-states of the Economic Community of West Africa States and Mauritania.

“Our appeal to the generosity of the international community is more than just asking for money. The food crisis and its adverse effects call for more collaboration with states so that, beyond short-term solutions, more durable solutions are adopted to combat issues linked to socio-economic development, inequities of the free market notably with regards to access to basic needs for the poorest, and the negative effects of climate change”, said Herve Ludovic De Lys, OCHA's regional representative for West Africa.

The appeal serves as a strategic forum between humanitarian and development partners for durable solutions to help some 250 million people who are also threatened by new, emerging crises in the region, he also added.

The World Food Programme, who has been one of the agencies on the forefront, deems that West Africa has been particularly hit by the high food prices crisis earlier this year, especially in countries highly dependent on imports to feed themselves.

"WFP and its partners have been able to respond and are continuing to act to make sure the most vulnerable households did not fall into undernutrition", said Thomas Yanga, WFP's Regional Director for West Africa. "The continuous support of the international community is therefore crucial especially for our work in urban areas if we want to sustain the benefits of this response", he added.

The crisis has sapped the financial revenues and further weakened food and nutrition habits of millions of households in a region where income is among the lowest in the world and malnutrition is widespread. By focusing on the food crisis, humanitarian actors wanted to preserve gains made over the last few years in fighting poverty, particularly in the areas education, access to clean water and nutrition.

So far in 2008, the West Africa appeal has received over 289 million dollars, amounting to over 63% of the total aid requested when it was launched a year ago. Since 2003, West Africa has received close to 1 billion dollars in humanitarian aid.

The West Africa appeal is part of a global appeal for 7 billions dollars for 31 countries launched in Geneva on 19 November 2008.

The CAP is an action plan developed by different UN agencies with the participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The plan presents the strategic priorities for the humanitarian action in 2009 and includes 86 projects. It will be revised in mid-2009 in light to the evolution of the socio-political situation in West Africa.