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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**UNITED NATIONS TEAM ON STAND-BY FOLLOWING TSUNAMI IN
SOLOMON ISLANDS**

(New York: 2 April 2007): A full United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team is on standby to respond to the disaster in the Solomon Islands, which was struck by a tsunami on 2 April 2007 generated by a large underwater earthquake. The tsunami has caused damage in the Pacific countries of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

According to the latest reports, 12 people have been killed in the provincial capital of Gizo town, while the local branch of the Solomon Islands Red Cross (SIRC) reports that 2,000 people (about 10 per cent of the population) have been made homeless. The SIRC also reports widespread damage to infrastructure, while Oxfam reports that more than 500 houses were damaged in the town. In addition, many people remain missing. The town of Gizo is 45 kilometres from the earthquake's epicentre.

The Natural Disaster Management Office (NDMO) in Western and Choiseul provinces organized a preliminary assessment today comprising representatives of the NDMO, Government ministries, police department, Solomon Islands Red Cross, New Zealand Aid and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). While results of that assessment are awaited, preliminary information suggests that immediate needs include food, water and shelter.

The Solomon Islands Red Cross plans to carry out an initial distribution of first aid kits in Gizo and has dispatched a boat carrying tents to the affected area.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has pre-positioned emergency medical supplies in the Solomon Islands for up to 10,000 people, including ten emergency kits, five "school in a box" kits, and three recreation kits. The UNICEF will also deploy its Pacific Emergency Focal Point -- a trained member of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team -- to the country tomorrow.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has contacted the Permanent Mission of the Solomon Islands to the United Nations in New York, as well as the Deputy United Nations Resident Coordinator in Suva, to offer the Organization's assistance in responding to this disaster.

Australia has extended over \$1.6 million (AUS\$ 2 million) in emergency and reconstruction assistance to the Solomon Islands, as an initial step.

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