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**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**UN RELEASES EMERGENCY GRANT FOR FLOODS IN URUGUAY**

(New York: 10 May 2007): With the worst flooding in 50 years having driven some 12,000 people from their homes and affected more than 110,000 people overall, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has made an emergency cash grant of \$30,000 available to support relief activities in the South American country of Uruguay.

With the flooding affecting seven of the country's 19 departments, the central Uruguayan departments of Durazno, Soriano and Treinta y Tres report the worst effects. Thousands of houses have been damaged, as has much of the public infrastructure, including the water supply, sewer and drainage systems, power and telephone lines, roads, agricultural land and municipal buildings. The majority of the affected population includes the poor and vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly.

Coming in response to the Government's official request for United Nations assistance, the OCHA grant will support relief efforts and strengthen the capacity of the National Emergency System. The funds will be channelled through the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Uruguay and used for the purchase of relief supplies and to provide logistical support for national and local authorities.

An initial damage assessment is underway in country, and emergency needs are being addressed and public services restored. Most of the displaced are being housed in Council shelters and local sports clubs. Most schools in the affected areas have been closed.

Of particular concern is the water and sanitation situation in the affected areas. Some 30,000 people currently have no access to clean drinking water. In Durazno, the overflow of the Yi River led to the flooding of the provincial capital's water supply. Water is now being trucked in from nearby cities. Additionally, there is a heightened risk of waterborne diseases and related conditions spreading in vulnerable communities.

Preliminary needs have been identified such as food, blankets and mattresses for those displaced by the flooding, chlorine, soap and other cleaning equipment to prevent the spread of water-borne disease, and transportation of these goods to affected areas.

Weather forecasts indicate that adverse conditions will persist in the coming days. The number of people affected by this flooding is expected to rise further, especially as flood waters reach lower-lying areas.

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