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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

TRIPLE EFFORT NEEDED FOR UGANDA

(New York, 15 May 2007:) The United Nations Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), John Holmes, today arrived in Kitgum District in Northern Uganda.

Before travelling to the district, the USG met with the Prime Minister of Uganda, Professor Apollo Nsibambin, as well as the Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Professor Tarsisi Kabwegyere. Mr. Holmes discussed the need for a “triple effort” by the humanitarian community: providing aid to those still in camps for displaced persons, helping those in the process of return, and supplying early recovery aid for those who have already returned to their homes. He pointed out the importance of a seamless transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery and development aid, for which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are invaluable partners. He raised his concern in regard to returnees, including issues of land rights and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Finally, in reference to Karamoja, he noted that the processes of development and disarmament need to be balanced.

In his meeting with the NGO community today in Kampala, he stressed their importance as equal partners both in Uganda and globally. For their part, NGO representatives noted that much had been achieved in terms of assistance to Uganda over the last three and one half years, but noted that many challenges remain including providing services for returnees. They also expressed concern about decreasing humanitarian funding without a commensurate increase in development support.

In Kitgum, Mr. Holmes met with local authorities, who briefed him on the current situation in the area. While appreciating the improvement in the security situation, the USG stressed that the international community needs to continue its support and to help the affected population through the process of recovery.

“We will continue to help in camps for the displaced and in settlement sites, and, with the Government of Uganda, we will help with resettlement and reconstruction,” Mr. Holmes said. “We know it will be a long and often difficult process. There is an awful lot still to do and an awful lot still needed,” he added. He also pledged personally not to neglect humanitarian needs in Uganda.

Later, he visited the new settlement site of Labworomor, where he met the site’s inhabitants. He is also scheduled to visit Namokora camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and meet with NGOs working in the camp.

This evening, Mr. Holmes will attend a traditional gathering in the camp, and hold discussions with elders, ex-combatants, formerly abducted women and children, and community leaders.

Tomorrow, the USG for Humanitarian Affairs is scheduled to return to the capital Kampala, where he will meet donors, UN agencies, and NGOs.

For further information, please call: Stephanie Bunker, OCHA-New York, +1 917 367 5126, mobile +1 917 892 1679; Kristen Knutson, OCHA-New York, +1 917 367 9262; Elisabeth Byrs, OCHA-Geneva, +41 22 917 2653, mobile, +41 79 473 4570. OCHA press releases are available at <http://ochaonline.un.org> or www.reliefweb.int.