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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OCHA HOLDS TWO-DAY CERF WORKSHOP FOR FRENCH-SPEAKING WEST AFRICA

(Dakar, Senegal: 31 May 2007): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Regional Office for West Africa has organized the first workshop in French on the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), from 31 May to 1 June 2007 in Dakar, Senegal.

The CERF was established to save lives by providing quick initial funding for life-saving assistance and rapid response in sudden onset emergencies, rapid deteriorations, and neglected emergencies.

The CERF, which is accessible by the United Nations agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has allocated \$429.6 million for 510 projects in 44 countries around the world since its launch in March 2006. African countries have been the recipients of 78 per cent of funds disbursed.

Among the West Africa countries that have benefited from CERF funding are Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Just over \$40 million has been dedicated to projects designed to reduce food insecurity in the Sahel, provide nutritional assistance to children in Niger, fight epidemics, and respond to health needs resulting from the recent political crisis in Guinea.

As manager of the Fund, OCHA organized this two-day workshop in order to draw upon lessons learned and to clarify the CERF's rules and procedures for its users. The workshop aims to improve the quality of CERF requests and thereby reduce delays in the disbursement of CERF funds.

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