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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**MORE THAN 4 MILLION FACE FOOD SHORTAGES
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

(New York: 5 June 2005): More than 4 million people in southern Africa are facing serious food shortages, according to a UN report.

The report, issued by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), estimates that by September, about 2.1 million people in Zimbabwe will struggle to meet their basic food needs due to crop failure and the country's economic crisis, and that by the height of the hunger season in early 2008 more than double that number will be at risk, which is more than one-third of the population. The situation is expected to be most critical in Matabeleland (North and South), Masvingo, Manicaland, and Midlands, as well as specific areas in the northern provinces.

According to the report, 352,000 tonnes of cereals and 90,000 tonnes of other food assistance are required to meet their basic needs. An acute shortage of foreign exchange, hyperinflation of more than 3,700 percent, and high maize prices in the region pose challenges to the importation of cereals.

Due to drought conditions in the region, other countries and localized areas will also face food shortages in the coming months. More than 400,000 people in Swaziland will soon be unable to meet their basic food requirements due to one of the worst harvests in a decade, according to a FAO and WFP assessment. In Lesotho, early figures indicate that the 2006/07 cropping season has also been severely affected. National-led vulnerability assessments are also underway in Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

“No country in the region has escaped the brutal consequences of either too much or too little rain. In fact, several countries, such as Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zambia, have suffered from both,” said Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Sir John Holmes. “These new and worrying reports on food security mean that we must quickly support governments where needed to ensure that people are able to feed themselves and their families and quickly recover their livelihoods.”

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