



## JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

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### UN AND LEADING HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS LAUNCH APPEAL NOT TO FORGET MILLIONS OF FLOOD SURVIVORS IN SOUTH ASIA



Geneva, October 01, 2007-- Sir John Holmes, the United Nations Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, and leading international humanitarian organizations, including CARE, World Vision, Save the Children, Oxfam and Mercy Corps, are calling for increased attention to the continuing flood situation in South Asia.



A new wave of floods in the last few weeks has submerged vast tracts of land that were just beginning to recover from earlier flooding. The latest inundations stranded another 100,000 people in Bangladesh, and left millions homeless in India. Overall, the floods which have struck with devastating effect in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, have now killed more than 4,000 people, and disrupted the lives of more than 66 million - a number larger than the population of France. The floods have killed livestock, ruined prime agricultural land, destroyed livelihoods and put tens of thousands of children at risk. Stagnant flood water, food shortages and the lack of drinking water are contributing to the outbreak of disease.



“Thousands of villages have been wiped out,” says Graham Strong, the country director for World Vision Pakistan. “The situation is grim, and as in most humanitarian disasters, it is the poorest and most vulnerable people who are being affected the most. Without assistance, these people will be driven deeper into poverty, and they may never be able to rebuild their lives.”



Northeast India has been hit with three successive waves of floods. In both India and Bangladesh, millions of people now face acute shortages, and are being forced deep into debt just to feed their families. “If we do not respond to the need for food,” says Suman SMA Islam, CARE’s emergency coordinator in Bangladesh, “there will be an even greater crisis.”

Even after the flood waters recede, families will be living in the open and will be in need of more permanent shelter before the arrival of winter.

In Pakistan, where the flooding has subsided, more than 40,000 people are still crowded into camps and temporary shelters. Disease is a constant threat. More than 86,000 cases of malaria have been reported and 70,000 people are suffering from gastroenteritis - mostly from drinking contaminated water. There is concern that as the weather gets colder, there will be a surge in acute respiratory infections, particularly in children. The July Flash Appeal for Pakistan, calling for \$38 million, has been only 29% funded so far.

Supplementing the efforts of the governments of the countries affected and development organisations, humanitarian agencies from around the world have been providing emergency relief since the flooding began in Pakistan in June this year. However, additional resources are needed, and the potential is increasing for a deepening humanitarian crisis.

The widespread destruction caused by this year's floods has motivated humanitarian agencies to highlight a number of areas where a more vigorous and focused approach to disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness on all levels is needed. International humanitarian organizations look forward to working much more closely with national governments in the region both on reducing the risks from future floods and on helping national governments develop better procedures to react quickly and to coordinate relief operations when a disaster does take place.

“We cannot forget that the wellbeing of millions of people is at stake,” says Gareth Owen, Emergency Director of Save the Children UK. “The international donor and humanitarian community must agree on different ways of working in order to be better prepared for this cyclical yearly monsoon flooding throughout the region. New and proportionate funding is critical to ensuring that the people who so desperately need our help receive it.”

The leading non-governmental humanitarian organizations stress that while they have started relief operations with their own financial resources and some international funding from governments, UN and EU, and have coordinated their relief work and cooperated with governments, the Red Cross, UN and other NGOs, they have still not been able to mobilize adequate attention and resources that are needed to provide the assistance planned. A more forceful international response is necessary to prevent an even greater catastrophe that will have debilitating social consequences for the affected populations.

"The Governments of the region have worked tirelessly for many weeks to aid their people," said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. "For its part, the aid community has been a steadfast partner in those relief efforts, where it has been allowed and encouraged to act. We need to reinforce these efforts, and to look to the protracted process of recovery for those affected this year and above all to improved disaster risk reduction and preparedness for those who will be affected in the years to come," he added.

OCHA is the UN agency mandated with the coordination of humanitarian affairs.

CARE, World Vision, Save the Children, Mercy Corps and Oxfam are international non-governmental organizations devoted to the elimination of poverty and the protection of civilian populations at risk.

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