

## **UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF: 2011 IS A TIME FOR OPPORTUNITY IN DRC**

(Kinshasa / New York / Geneva, 10 March 2011): United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos has ended her two-day visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“The humanitarian situation in the DRC remains extremely serious,” she said. “The needs are immense and people are vulnerable, with serious lack of protection in the east and north of the country. This has resulted in large-scale suffering for millions of people.” Ms. Amos also acknowledged the improvements made in several areas during the last few years, including in the north-western Equateur Province. “Hundreds of thousands of people have been able to return home in the last few years thanks to improved security”, she said, “but the number of displaced people in the DRC is still among the world's highest”.

Ms. Amos visited two areas of the country heavily affected by conflict and violence: North Kivu, and the Haut-Uele District of the Orientale Province. She met people affected by violence, provincial authorities, representatives of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and humanitarian aid workers.

“Even in relatively stable areas not affected by conflict, people are suffering due to endemic poverty and a lack of opportunities. Cholera and other diseases are widespread in several areas, and malnutrition rates are high in most of the country. Economic distress is also a cause for migration”, said Ms. Amos. Illegal migration occurs frequently, especially to Angola, and often leads to expulsions that are accompanied by human rights abuses.

In meetings with Government authorities and the international community, Ms. Amos discussed the progress made in promoting stabilisation, as well as the significant humanitarian needs, which are difficult to address due to persistent insecurity and the remoteness of affected areas. Ms. Amos emphasised the importance of accelerated reform of the security sector and the justice system, to ensure that civilians are better protected.

“It is my hope that 2011, a year of elections, will be an opportunity for further stabilization”, she said, “Much more needs to be done to reduce poverty, improve the provision of health care and basic social services, and reduce the vulnerability of civilians”.

In order to respond to humanitarian needs in the country, the United Nations and its partners, through the Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) for 2011, have requested a total of US\$ 720 million. In 2010, out of a requested \$828 million, 63 percent was funded. “We are trying to help people survive and, to the extent possible, live a dignified life. Continued generous donor support is essential to help us achieve this,” Ms. Amos said.

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