



JOINT PRESS RELEASE – UN/Ministry of Human Rights and Disaster Management

COLOMBO, Wednesday 23 July, 2008: The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) completed a review of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) which outlines funding requirements for humanitarian programs during 2008. The review highlighted key humanitarian priorities and also highlighted key operational challenges in reaching those displaced by conflict in Sri Lanka.

The Monday review meeting held in Colombo was convened by the UN Resident Coordinator, Neil Buhne, and attended by the Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, Mahinda Samarasinghe. Of the US\$195.7 million required for humanitarian and early recovery programs in the North and the East of the country, approximately \$64 million has been funded to date. The total funding requirement represents a 10% increase to original projections due to higher prices associated with food and fuel as well as costs for transporting supplies to reach vulnerable people in hard-to-reach areas.

The Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management, Mahinda Samarasinghe called the conflict, “a blot on our political and socio-economic landscape for over two decades,” and he acknowledged the important role of donors and the United Nations in supporting government efforts to reduce the impact of the conflict on Sri Lankans.

The CHAP process is the planning mechanism between the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and donors, to supplement the Government efforts to address humanitarian needs including displacement, as well as the return of displaced populations. It also assists in supporting preparedness and ‘best practice’ initiatives such as the Guiding Principles for Humanitarian and Development Assistance in Sri Lanka. The CHAP, in 2007, which targeted some 400,000 conflict-affected IDP, received nearly \$100 million in funding, representing approximately 76 percent of the projected requirement of \$131 million.

Speaking in Colombo after the review, “Emergency responses must operate side-by-side with development,” said Minister Samarasinghe. “A holistic response has to be not just about responding to conflict but also its mitigation and prevention”.

The Minister took the opportunity to thank UN agencies, particularly WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP and OCHA for their support in complementing government efforts last month when Galle, Gampaha, Kalutura and Ratnapura districts experienced severe flooding. In addition to 260 metric tons of food provided by WFP, UN OCHA provided a grant of US\$ 40,000 to support relief efforts coordinated through the Disaster Management Centre (DMC). Further funding is being considered by the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr Neil Buhne. Samarasinghe added that he is undertaking to establish improved disaster preparedness measures, including buffer-stocks for areas vulnerable to flooding and other disasters. In closing, Minister Samarasinghe said, “I

want to express our government's sincere thanks to the IASC and donors, and to the UN for their support in organizing this review."

The UN's Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Neil Buhne, said that the ultimate aim of the CHAP is to help the most vulnerable in humanitarian situations. "Neither the Government nor we [the UN] want to stop at temporary solutions," he said. "We need to get people back to stable lives, with stable work, and a real future." He further stated that the Government is looking at a National Policy for Durable Solutions for those affected by conflict, and the UN is looking forward to supporting these efforts.