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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

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UNEP to lead environmental recovery efforts in Haiti

Port-au-Prince, 20 January 2010 - One week after the powerful earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January, a major humanitarian operation is underway, with search and rescue teams working to find those still trapped in the rubble. Immediate priorities remain medical assistance, clean water and sanitation, emergency shelter, and food.

As noted by Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, "OCHA will lead on overall coordination, while UNEP will ensure the integration of environmental issues into the respective cluster response plans."

A Flash Appeal for USD 575 million, covering a period of six months, was launched by the UN and international partners on Friday 15 January. The Appeal includes USD 1 million for environmental interventions during the early recovery phase of operations.

Thanks to senior staff members on the ground, UNEP continues to provide emergency assistance to the UNCT and to the local government. Since last week, UNEP staff has actively assisted UN colleagues on technical matters including structural assessments of buildings and emergency environmental assessments of destroyed sites.

Initial assessments conducted by UNEP have not indicated acute environmental emergency situations, but major issues are anticipated in the early recovery phase. The most urgent issues include waste management, mass burials and disposal of demolition material.

The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and the Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB) are working closely with partners in WHO, UNDP, the World Bank and European Commission and the NGO community to deliver what is needed.

Muralee Thummarukudy, a senior environmental expert from PCDMB with extensive experience in disaster management, traveled to Port-au-Prince on Tuesday to reinforce the UNEP team on the ground. Subject to needs and logistical challenges, additional UNEP staff is on stand-by to be deployed.

In addition to post-disaster interventions, UNEP will continue to develop the Haiti Regeneration Initiative, a long-term programme to be implemented by a wide range of partners, aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards

through the restoration of ecosystems and sustainable natural resource management. Well planned, concerted action will be required over the next 20 years and beyond to halt the ongoing degradation and to gradually restore the Haitian environment and related livelihoods.