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United Nations Agencies hold the first Humanitarian Reporting Workshop in Kuwait

(Kuwait, 2 November 2008): The United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, in partnership with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office for the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), today hosted a unique training programme designed to provide journalists with key humanitarian references and reporting techniques.

The two-day, interactive training workshop was conducted by experienced UN representatives and focused on the main principles, players and mechanisms of humanitarian assistance. In addition, there was a session on the tools and techniques needed by journalists who report on humanitarian issues.

Speaking from Kuwait, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Valerie Cliff, said: "The media in Kuwait play a central role in disseminating information about humanitarian crises, and we welcome all journalists to this event. It is of great importance that the humanitarian and development work of the UN is represented to the Arabic-speaking world, and we are fortunate to have many knowledgeable speakers joining us from IRIN, OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR and UNDP to make this workshop a success".

Representatives from national and regional media participated in the workshop. Journalists discussed the best ways for them to cover issues such as the implications to civilians of food insecurity, health issues, and vulnerability to conflict and natural disasters.

Mr Khaled Khalifa, Head of IRIN's Middle East/ Asia Bureau in Dubai, said, "IRIN is very pleased to have the opportunity to enhance the role of the media in humanitarian reporting, and we have been greatly encouraged by the interest shown by Kuwait-based journalists in enhancing their skills in this area".

Following Mr. Khalifa's comments, Mr. Wolfgang Friedl, Communication Specialist for UNICEF MENA, said, "When humanitarian access is hampered by the increase of instability and confrontation, the media constitute an ideal bridge to ensure that the rights and immediate needs of women and children are properly voiced and action is taken to revitalize their continued wellbeing".

The organizers hope that Kuwait-based media houses will invest more of their resources to send reporters to the field to cover humanitarian stories, especially the forgotten ones in disaster-struck areas.

"A strong dialogue with the media is more crucial than ever if we are to be successful in our mission to highlight the situation of civilians whose lives have been overturned by conflicts and natural disasters in this region and beyond," Mr. Khalifa added.

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