SENIOR UN OFFICIALS WARNS OF DESTABILIZING CONSEQUENCES IN INCREASINGLY OVERTURNED CRISIS IN MALI

(New York, 28 April 2017): Following a three-day mission to Mali last week, the Director of Operations for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, John Ging, today drew attention to the complex emergency in Mali and the deteriorating humanitarian situation as a direct result of the conflict.

Humanitarian and development needs are escalating across the country, with the greatest vulnerability in the conflict and violence-affected areas of northern, and now increasingly, central Mali. The conflict has created a humanitarian crisis caused by increasing violence. People are cut off from access to basic services, including water, health and education, prompting an intensification of needs.

Since February more than 10,000 people have been displaced, reflecting the deteriorating security in central Mali. Radical groups threaten teachers and communities, and as a result 507 schools have closed across central and northern Mali, leaving 150,000 children out of school; this is 70 per cent more schools closed than at the same period in 2016.

“Nearly two years after the signing of a peace agreement, Mali is again at a critical turning point with devastating implications for its people and the region,” said Mr. Ging. “As an international community, we must intensify our engagement.” This year, nearly one in five Malians are in need of humanitarian assistance, and 3.8 million people are expected to be food insecure in the coming lean season as violence reduces access to land. Malnutrition rates are on the rise due to decreased access to food and the country now exceeds the alert threshold for global acute malnutrition.

Mr. Ging, accompanied by several key donors, visited Mopti in Central Mali. There the delegation met with the Governor, and visited a nutrition unit for acutely malnourished children, a primary school, and a community health center. During the visit the delegation observed first-hand how isolated life has become for people in the center of the country. “The most alarming thing is the plight of Malian women,” said Mr. Ging. “Nine in ten women between the ages of 15-49 have been subjected to the horror of female genital mutilation. We must do much more to protect innocent girls from this brutality.”

“The resilience of the communities themselves is remarkable,” Mr. Ging remarked. “In Mopti, we visited a school that was built and paid for, half by the local community, and half by the international community, for 300 children. This is a true partnership but the international community must continue to fulfil its part.”

In meetings with officials, including Prime Minister Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga, Mr. Ging emphasized that a comprehensive response is required to tackle Mali’s growing challenges, not just a security response. Mr. Ging encouraged authorities to engage more closely with affected communities and work to re-establish basic services.

Mr. Ging called on the international community for an urgent increase in funding to humanitarian action, noting that the steady decline in funding to support vulnerable communities is costing lives and immeasurable needless humanitarian suffering. The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017 for $293 million is only 11.6% funded.

“We must raise the visibility on Mali’s complex emergency at this critical juncture. The focus and support for the security sector alone will not solve Mali’s crisis. The key is to support and empower the people of Mali. We must meet the immediate humanitarian needs, strengthen resilience, empower Mali’s women, invest in children’s education, and reopen schools before this generation is lost to the conflict.”