UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY HUMANITARIAN CHIEF STARTS FIVE-DAY VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

(Kinshasa / New York, 1 June 2011): The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Catherine Bragg, started a five-day visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) today, aiming to draw international attention to one of the world’s most serious and chronic humanitarian crisis.

Protecting civilians, preventing and responding to sexual violence, and humanitarian access to people in conflict areas are among the priorities that the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator will raise with the authorities, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and the humanitarian community. The country is affected by a complex humanitarian crisis with intertwined causes and dynamics within a background of widespread poverty, chronic instability and serious abuses against civilians.

“This crisis receives far less attention than it deserves. We call on the Government to step up its relief efforts. We also urge donors and the rest of the international community to continue supporting humanitarian response, notably in the north-east, to alleviate the suffering of thousands, while working with the Government to promote peace and stabilization”, said Ms. Bragg.

Ms. Bragg is scheduled to travel to South Kivu and Province Orientale, two of the provinces worst affected by the crisis, to meet local communities as well as with humanitarian organizations and international partners on the ground.

It is estimated that almost 1.7 million people – 670,000 of whom are in South Kivu – are currently internally displaced in the DRC due to armed violence. In the north-east Province Orientale, an increasing number of lives and livelihoods are affected by the abuses and insecurity posed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Throughout the country, many thousands face significant and chronic protection and humanitarian needs.

In a meeting today in Kinshasa with Raymond Tshibanda, Minister of International and Regional Cooperation, and Ferdinand Kambere, Minister of Social and Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Bragg welcomed the close cooperation between the Government and the international community in addressing humanitarian needs, protection concerns, and the safety of humanitarian workers. The ministers and Ms. Bragg also discussed the peace process in the east, and the crisis involving the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in the north-east.

For further information, please visit: www.unocha.org and www.facebook.com/UNOCHA