

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL 11.00 AM (NEW YORK TIME)
FRIDAY 22 JULY**

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Statement on Zimbabwe

I have received the report of my Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues in Zimbabwe, Mrs. Anna K. Tibaijuka, based on her recent visit to the country. I wish to congratulate her on this exhaustive report, and also to thank the Government of Zimbabwe for the full cooperation she received.

It is a profoundly distressing report, which confirms that "Operation Murambatsvina" has done a catastrophic injustice to as many as 700,000 of Zimbabwe's poorest citizens, through indiscriminate actions, carried out with disquieting indifference to human suffering. I call on the Government to stop these forced evictions and demolitions immediately, and to ensure that those who orchestrated this ill-advised policy are held fully accountable for their actions.

Criticism, while fully justified, is not enough. We have a duty to help those in need. In keeping with the recommendations of my envoy, the United Nations will urgently seek agreement with the Government of Zimbabwe to mobilize immediate humanitarian assistance on the scale that is required to avert further suffering. I urge the international community to respond generously to this call. For its part, the Government must recognize the virtual state of emergency that now exists, allow unhindered access for humanitarian operations, and create conditions for sustainable relief and reconstruction.

Once the most acute human needs are addressed, the United Nations will play its part, and give whatever help it can, in implementing the report's other recommendations. Among these is the call for dialogue between the Government of Zimbabwe, domestic constituencies and the international community with a view to working together to address Zimbabwe's serious social, economic and political problems.

New York, 22 July 2005