



## WFP / CO EMERGENCY SITUATION REPORT

### Ecuador

Date: January 11, 2008

Reporting period from 2 January to 11 January, 2008

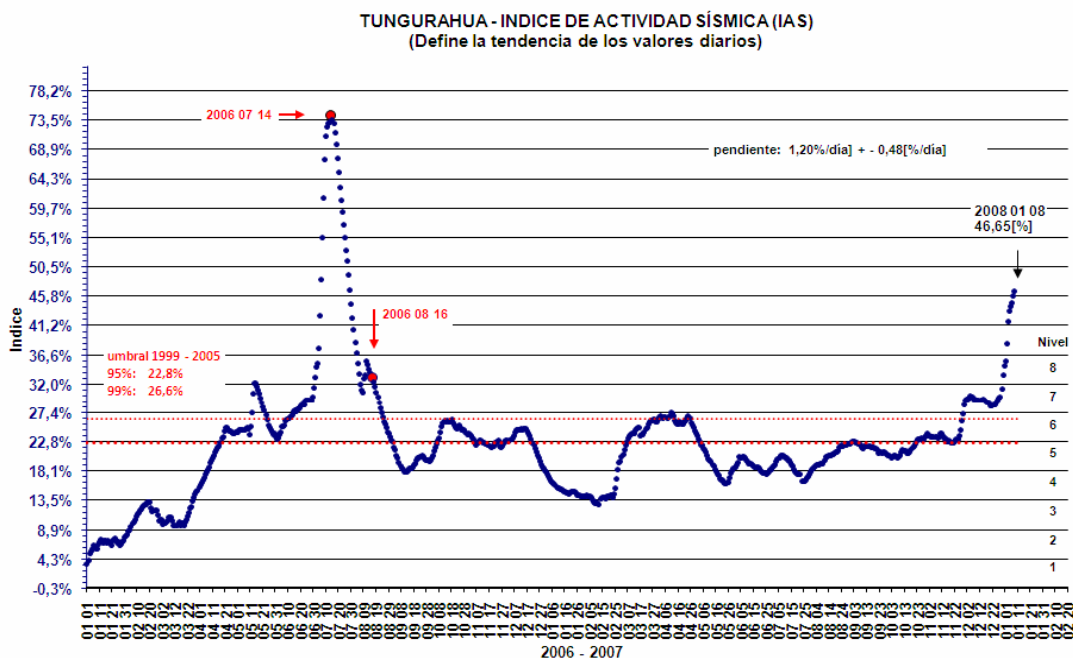
#### 1) Situation Update

##### General Context

The Tungurahua Volcano started its seismic activity in 1999. Two eruptions took place July and August 2006. After them, several different periods of volcanic activity have been accounted.

On October 2007, an increase of the seismic activity was observed. It was constant until last week when the volcano presented similar periods of activity as the ones presented in May 2006 (shortly before July's eruption).

Currently, the population of Cusua, Bilbao and Chacauco spend the night in hostels located in safer areas while during the day, they carry out their usual activities, in their locality. In Baños, several preparation activities have been developed, consisting especially on early alert systems and drills. The local COEs have had some meetings.



## **Volcanic Activity**

Since October 2007, the Tungurahua volcano has been showing sustained increased activity, particularly in the number and size of explosions. This activity increased on December 29<sup>th</sup>, when the number of explosions registered in one day exceeded 100. On January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008, the highest number of explosions was registered, since September 2006. The Ecuadorian Geophysics Institute said that this increase in activity shows similar conditions to those presented during the period before the eruptions and pyroclastic flows, in 2006.

The current state of the volcano is highly active, with ash and gas emissions registered reaching up to 2.5km high above the crater. At the same time, the constant release of gasses implies that there is no blockage in the main chamber of the volcano, which could cause an accumulation of pressure, reducing thereby the probability of a large and unexpected explosion. Loud noises or roars have been heard in sectors near the volcano. On January 7<sup>th</sup>, falling ash was reported in communities located to the southwest of the volcano, in Choglontus, Manzano and Palitahua. The thick grey ash has covered crops and incandescent molten rock has also been seen. On January 7<sup>th</sup>, in Runtún, loud roars and earth tremors were felt.

The overall activity of the Tungurahua volcano appears to be intensifying particularly as increased explosions have been registered in the last few days. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, nearly 1,000 people were evacuated due to the intense volcanic activity, as a preventative measure.

Authorities are currently working at stage 1 of their Response Plan, which corresponds to normal to moderate explosive volcanic activity, accompanied by permanent gas emissions. As the volcano is currently showing an intense activity, this stage might be increased to stage 2 to respond to more intense activity including pyroclastic flows.

The National Civil Defense System is coordinating actions together with local governors and mayors. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the area are also cooperating hence joining existing capacities.

## **UN Response**

9 January –UN, National Police, Civil Defense, Red Cross and cooperating organizations were informed by the Geophysical Institute about the actual situation of the volcanic activity. As a result, another meeting is scheduled on January 11<sup>th</sup>, and will include authorities and members of other cooperating organizations working on emergencies in Ecuador. The objective of this meeting is to establish the capacities and resources available from each entity that will be helpful in case of an emergency.

10 January – United Nations, the Ministry of Security, the Director of the Geophysical Institute and the Ecuadorian Red Cross have a meeting to evaluate the situation and to coordinate activities. In agreement with the Ministry of Security Coordination of Ecuador,

United Nations is going to establish Situation Information Center for the eruption process of Tungurahua volcano. It will be established on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of the UN building. WFP will be in charge of its operation with the support of UNETE.

11 January – The Situation Information Center is established. Coordination must exist among the following actors: Government, UN, Red Cross for gathering, processing, analyzing and publishing information related to the event.