



## **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR THE PRESS CONFERENCE**

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*(Abidjan, 11 March 2011)*

As we enter the fourth month since the 28 November 2010 presidential election, the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, unfortunately, shows few signs of abatement. It is darkest just before the dawn. I have never doubted that the will of the people would prevail in the end and the end will arrive sooner than expected. However, for the moment, the suffering of the Ivorian people increases day by day, the number of casualties continues to rise and a clear vision in terms of the evolution of the situation is lacking.

Under the circumstances, I find it necessary to clarify UNOCI's role, which consists of three essential tasks: protecting civilians, protecting the Golf Hotel and safeguarding the result of the presidential election.

### The protection of civilians

With regard to the protection of civilians, UNOCI will continue carrying out its patrols, especially in those areas where civilians are in imminent danger. Since the outgoing President demanded the departure of UNOCI on 18 December 2010, harassment and hostile acts against UNOCI's civilian and military personnel have become part of the game.

As such, UNOCI has become one of those rare, if not the only, peacekeeping mission, that continues operating despite the request for its departure by the de facto military authority of the host country. In order to better protect civilians, UNOCI's military capacity will be reinforced with 2,000 blue helmets and three armed helicopters as authorized by the United Nations Security Council. At this point, I want to stress that this force will be used as a force of peace and protection within the principle of complete neutrality and impartiality.

Let me make one more point on the protection of civilians. Besides our patrols and direct interventions in case of imminent danger with regard to the civilian population, UNOCI is documenting, analyzing, investigating and accumulating evidence of abuses and human rights violations with a view to making those who are responsible for such acts, accountable, no matter which camp they belong to. We should not forget that, as it is clearly laid

out in Security Council resolution 1962 (2010), “the Ivorian leaders bear primary responsibility for ensuring peace and protecting the civilian population in Côte d’Ivoire.”

I would like to highlight the unforgivable killing of women who were expressing their opinion peacefully last week in Abobo by the special forces of President Gbagbo’s camp; I unequivocally condemn these killings by machine gun; I assure you that the death of these seven innocent women will not go unpunished. With regard to the human rights violations since the post-electoral crisis, let me reiterate UNOCI’s warning against those perpetrators: “do not have any illusion that you can commit human rights violations with impunity; the days of reckoning are fast approaching; UNOCI is documenting your violations.”

### The protection of the Golf Hotel

With regard to the protection of the Golf Hotel, UNOCI devotes a significant portion of its Abidjan-based military capacity for this purpose. Without our presence at the hotel, those who are under our protection may be forced to move to Bouaké, thus most probably resulting in the division of the country and an immediate resumption of the civil war. Such is the importance of our protection of the Golf Hotel. Despite this significant contribution that UNOCI is making to the Ivorian peace process, President Gbagbo’s camp makes all sorts of allegations of collusion between UNOCI’s protection force and Forces Nouvelles elements present at the Golf Hotel.

Let me stress once again that UNOCI’s military impartiality applies in this instance as well: it has been strictly forbidden to UNOCI to transport or arm the Forces Nouvelles elements, including those at the Golf Hotel. The presence of Forces Nouvelles elements at the Golf Hotel is consequential to the agreement between the FDS and the FN. Thus, President Gbagbo’s camp should face this issue, which is of its own making, without involving UNOCI.

### UNOCI’s impartiality

Since the eruption of the post-electoral crisis, there has been innumerable stories and propaganda aimed at questioning UNOCI’s impartiality, especially in the military domain. They include: UNOCI is transporting and arming Forces Nouvelles elements as well as pro-Ouattara civilians; UNOCI has a secret attack plan which includes the use of newly-acquired armed helicopters, etc. All these stories are pure invention. There is not a shred of truth in them.

UNOCI’s military impartiality is one of the cornerstones of its existence in Côte d’Ivoire. UNOCI has been, is, and will continue to be, a force of peace and protection, and never a force of aggression and attack. Since they can only return fire only when they are shot at, UNOCI’s peacekeepers are constantly in harm’s way. But this shall in no way discourage us to remain

soldiers of peace, and not of aggression. How could it be otherwise when UNOCI's most current mandate includes "to continue observing and monitoring the compliance by the parties with the comprehensive ceasefire agreement of 3 May 2003 in order to prevent the resumption of hostilities?"

Safeguarding the result of the presidential election as recognized by ECOWAS and the African Union is a crucial element of UNOCI's mandate as defined in Security Council resolution 1962. It goes without saying that safeguarding the result is also part of my certification mandate of the Ivorian elections. The respect of the will of people is the most fundamental principle of democracy and any respectable political game. UNOCI and I, as certifier, shall continue safeguarding the result of the election as expressed on 28 November 2010.

Here, I want to clarify one important aspect related to UNOCI's safeguarding of the result of the election, as confusion and unrealistic expectations exist in this regard. All UNOCI's actions must be based on our military impartiality. In others words, under the current mandate, UNOCI's actions in this regard can only be peaceful: no attack or occupation of any facility or area in Côte d'Ivoire is on the cards.

In this regard, I would like to underline that one of the crucial elements of UNOCI's mandate as defined in Security Council resolution 1962 is "to facilitate, as appropriate, political dialogue between the Ivorian stakeholders in order to ensure peace in Côte d'Ivoire and respecting the outcome of the Presidential election as recognized by ECOWAS and African Union." With this in mind, UNOCI is open to and has been maintaining contacts with all the Ivorian parties, both civilian and military. Our ONUCI FM radio is open to all the parties. UNOCI's leadership is available for interviews with the media of all the parties. Such is the extent of UNOCI's impartiality in the political domain. UNOCI's certification of the result of the elections, which is telling the truth, is not to be confused with UNOCI's impartiality in all other domain.

#### Telling the truth and acting with impartiality

"Telling the truth and acting with impartiality" which sums up UNOCI's position, has proved to be a challenging proposition for the Ivorian protagonists. This is so because each of the two opposing camps in the Ivorian crisis wants UNOCI to take a different position: one camp wants UNOCI to "tell the truth and act partially in line with the truth" whereas the other wants UNOCI to "act impartially and not tell the truth." Indeed, we, at UNOCI, do not have the luxury of complacency.

Recently, direct and hostile acts against UNOCI have been on the increase. At times we are witnessing extreme measures such as peacekeepers being directly shot at, the kidnapping of UNOCI staff, ransacking of their residences, hijacking their cars, etc. These extreme measures are based and motivated by a series of propaganda invented by President Gbagbo's

camps' partisans themselves, questioning with no basis UNOCI's military impartiality.

History teaches us that moderation is the essence of power. Faced with multiple acts lacking moderation on the part of President Gbagbo, one can legitimately ask whether these signify that he is losing control of his forces. If not, he would have ended the totally unfounded propaganda broadcast with the aim of inciting hostile acts by his partisans against UNOCI. I strongly warn those who invent and propagate those hate stories: do not have the illusion that you can do it with impunity; UNOCI is currently gathering information documenting your acts which constitute war crimes; we will have all the evidence allowing the judge to make you accountable; on your side, you will have nothing to build your defence on because you have invented everything.

If anyone believes that I am a vengeful person, they are mistaken. On the contrary, when the will of the people prevails, I will ask for magnanimity, following Churchill's advice: "Defiance in defeat, magnanimity in victory". I simply ask those who invent hate messages to facilitate my task of being magnanimous when the moment of truth arrives.

Before concluding, let me stress that no matter what the intimidation, harassment, or hostile acts against us, UNOCI shall continue doing its job, including the protection of civilians, the protection of the Golf Hotel, and safeguarding the result of the presidential election.

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