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Retranscription du point de presse hebdomadaire de l'ONUCI

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Hamadoun Touré (Porte-parole de l'ONUCI) : Mesdames et messieurs, bonjour. Bienvenue à ce point de presse. Le premier point va porter sur les résultats de l'enquête que nous avons menée à N'dotré, où il y avait des allégations d'existence de charnier. Nous avons préparé un communiqué de presse en anglais et en français qui vous sera distribué tout à l'heure.

Le samedi 12 mars 2011 et le lundi 14 mars 2011, l'Opération des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) a dépêché deux équipes chargées de mener des enquêtes sur des allégations d'existence de charnier à N'dotré. Les deux équipes ont observé ce qui suit: Il n'a été identifié aucun endroit pouvant abriter un charnier ni des traces de charnier. Les équipes d'investigation n'ont pas trouvé de corps à la morgue en voie d'achèvement de N'dotre où l'on avait fait état de l'existence de corps conservés. Etant donné que cette morgue est une construction inachevée ne disposant pas d'infrastructures comme une chambre froide, des corps n'auraient pas pu y être conservés pendant une longue période. Pour ce qui est de l'existence d'un charnier ou d'un massacre à N'dotré, des enquêtes pourraient être poursuivies pour réunir d'éventuelles preuves.

Dans le cadre de la flambée de violence actuelle née de l'impasse politique, l'ONUCI a noté un accroissement du nombre des victimes. Suite aux violents affrontements, en plusieurs endroits d'Abidjan et à l'intérieur du pays, notre Division des Droits de l'Homme a documenté 18 nouveaux cas de décès, dont 4 femmes, portant à 410 le nombre de personnes tuées dans le pays depuis la mi-décembre 2010.

Dans le même cadre, l'ONUCI voudrait mettre un accent particulier sur le sort des enfants qui souffrent de la crise postélectorale. Certains d'entre eux sont atteints dans leur intégrité physique, tués, mutilés à vie et souvent contraints de quitter leur famille et d'abandonner l'école pour fuir les combats. A cela il faut ajouter les énormes traumatismes psychologiques de ces enfants dont les parents sont parfois tués sous leurs yeux.

L'ONUCI condamne ces violations graves commises contre des enfants et demande que leurs auteurs soient comptables devant les juridictions compétentes.

L'ONUCI voudrait appeler toutes les parties ivoiriennes au respect scrupuleux de la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux droits de l'enfant et du droit international humanitaire applicable en période de conflit armé dont les dispositions s'étendent à la protection des enfants.

L'ONUCI rappelle par ailleurs que conformément aux résolutions 1612 (2005) et 1882 (2009) du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies sur les enfants et les conflits, elle continuera à surveiller et à communiquer les informations sur les violations graves des droits des enfants.

L'ONUCI reste disponible, conformément à son mandat et à ses ressources à apporter son soutien aux initiatives visant à la protection de tous les enfants sur le territoire ivoirien.

Au vu de tout ce qui se passe, la Mission poursuit sa campagne de sensibilisation pour la préservation d'un environnement postélectoral apaisé à travers le pays.

Dans la région du Worodougou, l'ONUCI rencontrera demain vendredi 18 mars 2011 les populations de Tieningboué, une ville du département de Mankono, Le même jour, un atelier de suivi destiné à la société civile se tiendra à Tengrela sur le thème : « Préservation de l'environnement postélectoral apaisé et renforcement de la cohésion sociale ». La campagne se poursuivra le 22 mars dans la Vallée du Bandama à Languibonou et enfin dans la région des Lacs et précisément dans le village de Kami et à Yamoussoukro les 19 et 22 mars 2011. Comme vous le savez, l'objectif de ces rencontres et de cette campagne, c'est de continuer de plaider pour la paix, la cohésion sociale et la réconciliation nationale.

Sur le plan militaire, la force de l'ONUCI a exécuté 841 patrouilles terrestres et aériennes la semaine dernière. A ces patrouilles s'ajoutent des escortes de convois et de personnalités de la mission, exécutées par les Hélicoptères armés Mi 24 qui ont commencé leurs vols depuis le 3 mars 2011.

Le mardi 15 mars, après que des individus non identifiés ont lancé une grenade sur les civils à Attécoubé faisant un mort et 18 blessés, une patrouille composée de 3 véhicules blindés a sillonné la zone jusqu'au 16 mars à 01H30 pour protéger les civils et éviter que la situation ne dégénère. Les blessés ont été pris en charge par la clinique de l'ONUCI. Au total entre mardi et mercredi, la clinique a reçu 55 blessés et quatre personnes malheureusement ont succombé à leurs blessures.

Les attaques contre les convois de la mission continuent. Ainsi, hier mercredi matin aux environs de 5h20, un convoi, livrant de la nourriture aux casques bleus stationnés à Adzopé, est tombé dans une embuscade à 4 Km au nord d'Abidjan. L'escorte a immédiatement riposté et le convoi a pu continuer sa route. Nous ne déplorons aucun blessé mais le camion frigorifique a reçu 9 impacts de balles.

Avant de terminer, je voudrais vous annoncer des changements à venir au niveau du leadership de la mission. Le numéro deux de l'ONUCI, Abou Moussa,

est nommé Représentant spécial du Secrétaire général pour le Bureau des Nations Unies en Afrique Centrale qui est basé à Libreville. M. Moussa, pour ceux qui ne sont pas familiers avec le dossier ONUCI, est arrivé à l'ONU en 2005 en tant que Représentant spécial adjoint principal.

L'autre changement concerne la composante militaire. Le Général Gnakoudé Béréna du Togo, sera le nouveau Commandant de la Force de l'ONU. Il remplace le General Abdul Hafiz du Bangladesh dont le mandat s'achève le 22 mars 2010. Le Général Berena est le 4^e Commandant de la force de l'ONU depuis son déploiement en avril 2004.

Le Général Béréna apporte à ce poste, l'expérience d'une brillante carrière militaire dans son pays. Il a également une expérience dans le maintien de la paix, parce qu'il a servi en qualité de Commandant de secteur au sein de la Minuar (Mission des Nations unies pour l'assistance au Rwanda). Après il a occupé diverses fonctions notamment celles de Chef d'Etat major de l'armée de terre pendant 10 ans. A sa nomination, il était le conseiller du Président togolais Faure Gnassingbé. Il a 58 ans et il est marié. Merci, j'ai l'impression que ça a été un peu long comme introduction mais il y avait des informations à vous livrer en attendant de prendre vos questions. Si vous avez des questions, je suis à votre disposition pour y répondre. J'ai aussi mon collègue Augustin Somé de la Division des droits de l'homme que j'ai amené ici pour des questions difficiles.

Monica Mark: My question, Hamadoun, is we're hearing reports of ONUCI coming to pick up bodies in neighbourhoods where there's been fighting

...

HT: To pick up what?

MM: To pick up bodies in neighbourhoods where there's been fighting. Like Yopougon yesterday; I don't know if you can confirm, but we haven't got any reports of ONUCI actually staying in a neighbourhood when there's fighting, or, after there's fighting, doing patrols in the neighbourhoods. So I'm just wondering, as part of the peacekeeping mandate, shouldn't ONUCI be doing that? Or if they are not doing that, why? Why are they not doing that?

HT: Well, it's not part of the mandate. I don't know where you got it from. We're not picking up bodies. All bodies and all injured people were brought here. We don't have facilities to store bodies.

MM: What about patrolling neighbourhoods when you get reports of ...

HT: Well, we do. We patrol. We do. If you followed my introductory remarks, I told you that when we heard of the Attecoubé problem, we went there and we spent almost all night there to patrol, to make sure that it wouldn't degenerate, and of course we didn't prevent it from happening, because it was a grenade; but we did a kind of – I would say – damage control.

MM: *Sorry, actually, at the moment, is ONUCI in Yopougon?*

HT: Yes.

MM: *OK, because we're getting reports of house-to-house searches.*

HT: No, we don't do that.

[...]

Tim Cocks (Reuters): *It seems to be becoming increasingly clear that you have a problem with some of your staff who work for ONUCI, who are Ivorian, but who also work for Gbagbo. That's how a document, a classified document, about these helicopters that you are getting in, was leaked to the FDS and eventually to the Fraternité Matin. Also, someone took all of your number plates and published them in the Fraternité Matin, so that the Young Patriots could know who is doing what, and I just wondered what you are doing about the problem of this enemy who is working within your building.*

HT: Well, we don't think we have internal enemies here. The rules and regulations are very clear. Any UN staff is free to have a political position, but you leave it [behind] when you enter the premises of the United Nations. You [...] are not expected to express your political opinions within the premises. You are not expected to work for another government or to receive orders from another government, so those are the rules and that's what we are reminding our colleagues. But, of course, in such a big organization, it's difficult to protect everything, although we are very transparent; we don't have anything special to hide, when things like that are established, because we have a [Conduct and Discipline] unit dealing with these cases.

TC: *[inaudible]*

HT: Well, I don't know what you mean by helicopter ...

TC: *There was a classified document about ONUCI [inaudible] ...*

HT: Well, we announced it. That was not a secret.

TC: *But there was a leak. [...] a document ... and it was leaked to the FDS by someone inside this building, and someone gave out the number plates.*

HT: Well, it's very easy to have the number plates. They were given by the gas station where we used to [...] receive our petrol supply; so that was very easy to do. Of course, we took the relevant measures regarding this issue. Of course, if the leak came from inside, it will be investigated and I told you that the [Conduct and Discipline] unit would deal with that. I don't think I should disclose more.

Oche Ocheegwa (NAN): *Good morning, Sir. Please, can you give us an idea of the number of towns that are directly under the control of the rebels? And what are the situations in some of these areas? [...] Thank you.*

HT: I am sorry Oche. This is not a question for UNOCI. Maybe you should direct it to those concerned. I'm sorry.

[inaudible]

HT: Yes, please!

OO: *I am asking this because I know ONUCI has talked about it severally. I have read interviews over time [in which] the ONUCI chief, particularly, has been talking about it. The rebels keep encroaching and they've been taking over so many towns. I'm just asking for ...*

HT: He did say "according to reports reaching us", people are saying that their control over some cities is increasing, but we don't have to give you details of towns controlled by the so-called rebels or not. That's not our job.

David Smith (The Guardian): *Could you just give me an idea of what sort of communication you have with Mr Gbagbo and Mr. Ouattara, or the people close to them. How is that evolving over time? Could you talk about the mood, the sort of indications you are getting from them about their thinking and the future?*

HT: Well, we have two different types of communication. I mean, at least the quality of communication we used to have with President Gbagbo's camp is very weak now. It's difficult to have contacts with them. As late as, maybe, last week, we were having phone contacts; we were having meetings, with Gbagbo's camp. We are still in a position to wait for their calls because one of them wanted to talk with us, even to meet with us, but it could not materialize and we are still waiting. And, as you know, Mr. Choi has repeatedly said that he was still ready to meet with President Gbagbo, so the ball is in his court. Regarding Alassane Ouattara's camp it's much more, I would say, fluid. It's easier. We have [...] daily contacts and we have good communication channels, as we used to have with President Gbagbo before the elections. Of course [...], we think it will improve, but time will tell. So far it's been very, very severe....

Marco Oved (AP): *Monsieur Toure I just wanted to do this for broadcast media in the United States. I was wondering if you might be able to repeat just quickly the facts regarding your investigation of the alleged mass grave in N'dotre that you said was done by two teams. And then my question regarding this investigation is that these allegations first surfaced many weeks ago, I would say even more than a month ago and this is the first time the UN has been able to reach the spot and investigate. Don't you think that the bodies may have been moved in the ensuing time?*

HT: Well let's say it surfaced in December I think, mid-December. We heard the first [...] allegations and we failed to get there. We tried twice at least and we were prevented from accessing the area and we were only able to make it on Monday, as I told you in my report. So we went there on Saturday and we went there again on Monday to establish what we told you. We didn't find any site of mass graves. We didn't find bodies in the morgue, in the mortuary. So we are not in a position to confirm any allegations of mass graves in N'dotre. That's what I told. So, if the bodies have been moved or not, this would be speculation. I don't want to get into that.

MO: *Just moving on to the last two days, you mentioned in your introductory remarks that Tuesday and Wednesday there was quite a lot of fighting just across the street here in Attecoube. Would you be able to just say again in English what exactly the UN did during this time, involving taking care of the wounded, patrolling. And can you confirm the fact that the market, the market place there was set ablaze as well as one of the police stations?*

HT: Well I told you a group of people was travelling in 4 by 4 car and they threw a grenade at a group of people also there, a crowd. 18 of them were injured, wounded and taken to UNOCI clinic. We took care of them. Unfortunately one of them died just before coming to UNOCI premises. As I told you we don't have these facilities to store bodies. Well, the person didn't come here. We also sent robust patrols in the streets of Attecoube to make sure people are protected, also to make sure it won't degenerate because there was a group of young people also erecting barricades when this thing just happened. So between Tuesday and Wednesday we received 55 injured people. Unfortunately four of them died from their injuries. So that's what I said. The market place I cannot confirm, I'm not in a position to confirm if it was ablaze or not.

John James (BBC): *Could I just get your assessment of the conflict in Abidjan over past few days. Is it fighting between different organized armed groups or is it the targeting of the ordinary population? Is it fighting between militias? What sort of fighting are we seeing over the last few days? And also what sorts of calls are you getting to your helpline, what are people saying, what are people reporting to UNOCI over the telephone?*

HT: The second part of your question is easier for me. We are receiving calls from people who are scared. They say they are going to be attacked. They are very, very scared. That's mainly what we receive. But what kind of fighting? It's all of that, it is all of what you mentioned. It's between armed groups. It is between demonstrators and armed groups. It's sometimes between the so-called invisible commandos. So it is difficult to confirm what an invisible commando is about because by essence it is invisible. So it is very difficult to characterize the kind of fighting we are witnessing. But it is serious. It's dangerous for the population. We are having a very worrisome death toll due to the fighting. So it is difficult to say it is between two armies, it's difficult to say it is between armed groups and civilians. It is very difficult to characterize. That is why we have been calling for restraint because it could degenerate and get out of hand

and that would be very complicated. Not only for Cote d'Ivoire but also for the neighbouring countries. As you know it's been spilling over now. We have over 90,000 refugees only in Liberia, not to mention other countries.

Evelyn Kahungu (Al Jazeera TV): Are you feeling overwhelmed with some of the duties that you have to do for the population as these attacks continue?

HT: Well overwhelmed, challenged I would say. We are not overwhelmed we are trying to cope with it. As you know maybe things are happening everywhere at the same time. That's a bit complicated and that's why we requested additional troops. That's why we also requested these combat helicopters that we received 12 or 15 days ago, two weeks ago. It is very very challenging. We can't be everywhere. We are bit overstretched so it's difficult to be in a position to assist everywhere. As you know we have a call centre. We are receiving many many calls at the same time and it is difficult to cope. But of course we hope with the arrival of the additional troops we will expand our deployment. We will be closer to the population, according to our military planners, and may be it will be easier for us to cope with the situation. But that's what peacekeeping is about. You will never get the necessary troops to face the situation. It is not an easy task. It is daunting, but we are not daunted by the challenge.

Hélène Despïc Popovic (Libération) : Vous dites que vous n'avez pas trouvé de trace de charnier. Est-ce qu'il suffit de faire deux petites visites sur un territoire assez restreint pour pouvoir affirmer comme cela qu'il n'y en a pas ? Ou est-ce que ça mérite encore une série d'enquêtes ?

HT : Nous n'avons jamais dit qu'il n'y en avait pas. Nous avons dit que nous n'avons pas pu identifier. Si vous avez bien écouter la dernière phrase, l'existence ou non de charnier pourrait être prouvé par des recherches ultérieures...

HDP : Cela veut dire que vous allez continuer ?

HT : Cela ne veut pas dire que nous allons continuer. Cela veut dire que nous avons fait notre part et s'il y a nécessité de faire des recherches supplémentaires, d'autres le feraient. C'est ce que je voulais dire. Deux petites visites mais ce sont des endroits qu'on nous avait bien spécifiés. Thank you, merci, see you on Thursday.

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