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UNOCI Press Briefing on the events in Nahibly/Duekoué
(Abidjan, 21 July 2012)

On Saturday 21 July 2012, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Côte d'Ivoire, Arnauld Akodjénou, briefed the media on events in the Duékoué area since Friday 20 July and actions taken by the UN. Below are excerpts from the briefing:

On Friday 20 July 2012, at around 9 a.m., a crowd of more than 300 persons, some of them armed, mainly with machetes, approached the camp for internally displaced persons in Nahibly [near the western town of Duékoué]. There were about 10 members of UNOCI's military force there. About 20 other UN soldiers later came to reinforce them, but they were surrounded and blocked by the crowd which forced its way into the camp, some of them passing through the gate while others tore down the wooden fence surrounding the camp. The investigation will provide us with more precise information on what happened.

The primary responsibility for the security of the camp lay with the Ivorian authorities. UNOCI had put in place a light arrangement to enable the humanitarian actors to come to the assistance of the displaced persons by ensuring the security and that of the humanitarian equipment and installations. As I have just stated, the Ivorian authorities were in charge of the general security of the camp. That had been decided when the camp was being established. I would like to reiterate that at no time was the security of the camp under UNOCI's responsibility. [...]

Unfortunately, the incidents of Friday 20 July cost the lives of seven persons among the inhabitants of the camp. Many people were injured. With the support of UNOCI, they were evacuated to the Duekoué Hospital, where they were taken care of. The hospital treated more than 50 injured persons. With the support of Doctors without Borders, the hospital has been working at full steam since yesterday to help provide help and assistance to the population.

After the attack, UNOCI took a certain number of actions. First of all it beefed up its military strength in Duékoué. Supplementary forces were sent there yesterday. Others have been placed on stand-by ready to be deployed to the area if necessary. Yesterday, our forces conducted day and night patrols in many parts of the town, and they will continue to do so in order to contribute to the security of civilians. However, it should always be borne in mind that the primary responsibility for the

security of the men, women and children who are in Duékoué, and elsewhere in Côte d'Ivoire – whatever their ethnic background, nationality, religious beliefs or political affiliation, lies with the authorities of the country.

UNOCI has launched an investigation to determine the exact circumstances surrounding this incident and to ascertain where the responsibilities lie. At the same time, we activated our humanitarian contingency plan to assist the affected people, some of whom have fled to the forests and others to certain localities. [...] A humanitarian team led by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Ndolamb Ngokwey, who is also the Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs, will leave Abidjan tomorrow for Duékoué to see how we can assist the internally displaced persons as effectively as possible.

In the meantime, the United Nations are in the process of gathering information on the populations which have been scattered as a result of the attack, with a view to finding out where they are and to assess their needs so as to be able to provide them with assistance. We have already begun to register people who have sought refuge in front of State buildings, such as the Duékoué Mayor's Office and Prefecture.

Here in Abidjan, along with the Humanitarian Coordinator, I met the Prime Minister and had discussions with the regional authorities. The mission has been in constant contact with the national authorities. In these meetings and discussions, we have continued to underline a certain number of priority issues, of which I shall name a few:

- Whether the national security forces are able to fully assume their responsibility to protect persons and goods, in particular in areas where the internally displaced persons are ;
- The basic rights of internally displaced persons must be fully respected ;
- Everything must be done to prevent a deterioration of the situation in Duékoué ;
- UNOCI remains willing to fully play its role in supporting the national forces with regard to the security of the internally displaced persons;
- Humanitarian agencies and NGOs are ready to pursue the provision of food and non-food aid to the vulnerable of Duékoué and, for that, a peaceful environment would need to be guaranteed.

Thank you.

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