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## Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference

*(M'bahiakro, 16 June 2011)*

### **SOME 1,200 EX-COMBATANTS HAND IN THEIR WEAPONS TO UNOCI**

Some 1,200 ex-combatants from the Abobo and Yopougon neighbourhoods of Abidjan last week handed in their weapons to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) during an operation carried out in the first two weeks of June by the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Division of the Mission.

Speaking during UNOCI's weekly press conference which was held in M'bahiakro, 310 kilometres north east of Abidjan as part of UNOCI Days, the Deputy Spokesman, Kenneth Blackman, explained that the collection of arms was carried out in UNOCI's camp in Anyama, north of Abidjan. He said that UNOCI was going to organize similar operations in other parts of Abidjan and the interior. "These actions are being carried out to assist Côte d'Ivoire during this post-crisis period in the security sector, which is an essential part of reconstruction and the revival of the economy," he added.

Turning to humanitarian issues, Mr. Blackman said that UNOCI's forces had provided free medical care for 1,315 patients and distributed 103,000 litres of potable water during the past week. With regard to the forces' operational activities, the deputy spokesman said that peacekeepers had carried out 912 ground and air patrols in the same period. He also said that UNOCI troops continued to protect camps for internally displaced person, especially in Duékoué.

Mr. Blackman said that UNOCI and the *Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire* (FRCI) were carrying out mixed patrols and that the weekly meetings between the generals of the Impartial Forces and the FRCI were continuing. "The aim of these meetings is to find solutions to the current security problems in the country," he explained. He said that this week, the generals meeting had discussed security and the demilitarisation of Abidjan, as well as the deployment of the national police and gendarmerie to provide security in the ports in Abidjan and San-Pedro.

With regard to UNOCI's sensitization activities, the deputy spokesman said that a day of sensitisation on reconciliation and strengthening social cohesion will be held in Bonière, in Bas Sassandra, as well as a regional seminar on the commitment of opinion leaders to national reconciliation and social cohesion for civil society groups.

For the commemoration of International Day of the African Child celebrated on 16 June each year, Mr. Blackman said that UNOCI had organized activities throughout the country, namely in Dabakala, Touih, Issia and Séguéla. "Through these activities, UNOCI and its partners want to highlight issues that affect children, as well as their rights," which is important under any circumstances but more so in a country like Côte d'Ivoire which is coming out of a crisis, the deputy spokesman explained.

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Responding to questions from journalists who focused mainly on the security situation, Mr. Blackman reiterated UNOCI's willingness to help the Ivorian authorities find solutions to the current problems which will greatly improve the lives of the people. On the issue of legislative elections, he reaffirmed the Mission's commitment to supporting the institutions in charge of organizing them, especially with regard to logistical and technical assistance, as it had done for the presidential election.

Asked about UNOCI's contribution to reconciliation efforts in Côte d'Ivoire, the deputy spokesman said that the Mission will continue to support these efforts through the sensitisation sessions it organizes and also through its radio station, ONUCI FM. "Reconciliation between Ivorian brothers and sisters is crucial for Côte d'Ivoire to survive and UNOCI, for its part, will continue to give top priority to these initiatives," he said, adding that without peace and national reconciliation, all efforts to make progress will fail.

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