



Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference

(Abidjan, 02 June 2011)

UNOCI CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHWEST OF COTE D'IVOIRE

The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) is extremely concerned about the situation of more than 2,000 students in the southwest of Côte d'Ivoire who have still not returned to school, UNOCI Spokesman Hamadoun Touré said on Thursday in Abidjan at the mission's weekly press conference.

He explained that the students, who are from the localities of Mabehire (in the San Pedro area), Meagui (near Soubré), and Djouroutou, Para, Nigre and Okrouyo (in the Tabou area) were still hiding in the bush with their parents for fear of acts of reprisals and the resurgence of communal violence.

UNOCI continues to receive complaints of human rights violations, including executions, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, abductions, arbitrary arrest, as well as cases of extortion and racketeering, mainly in Abidjan, San Pedro, Daloa and Doukouya (74 km west of Yamoussoukro), the spokesman said.

Mr Touré announced that ONUCI-Tour, a series of sensitization activities organised by the mission in small towns and villages, would be held in Tiémé, in the Odienné Department – northwest – on Friday 3 June 2011. He said the discussions, question-and-answer sessions and information sessions would be held in the Traditional Chiefs Square and would be attended by the administrative authorities. After that, ONUCI Tour will travel to San Pedro on Saturday 4 June while communities in Soubré Department will send representatives to an awareness-building workshop on the theme of reconciliation.

On the military plane, UNOCI's Blue Helmets carried out a total of 3,338 land and air patrols in May. They continue their mixed patrols with the Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI - Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire). "These mixed patrols contribute to a better security situation in the country," Mr. Touré said.

Similarly, he said, a demining team currently cleaning up bombs and unexploded ordinance would continue its mission throughout the country. The team "has collected and stocked unexploded bombs and ammunition in the city of Abidjan and in the hinterland," the spokesman disclosed. "Out of 60 sites identified thus far, 45 have been cleaned up".

Within the framework of its humanitarian activities, Mr. Touré said, the UN Force provided free medical care for 3,894 patients and distributed 414,000 litres of water over the past month. The Jordanian battalion distributed food rations and schoolbags to pupils of some primary schools in Abidjan.

Earlier, the mission's spokesman had announced that the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Y.J. Choi, would be meeting, also on Thursday, with the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Erik Solheim, who is visiting the country. According to Mr. Touré, the two men would discuss priorities for the future, now that the post-election crisis has ended, such as security, human rights, legislative elections and national reconciliation. "Some of these points will also be discussed at a meeting this afternoon between the head of the UN Operations in Côte d'Ivoire, and the Ivorian Justice Minister Jeannot Kouadio Ahoussou," he said.

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