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United Nations Operation in
Côte d'Ivoire

Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference

(Abidjan, 17 March 2011)

UNOCI DID NOT ESTABLISH THE EXISTENCE OF A MASS GRAVE IN D'UN N'DOTRE, SAYS MISSION

UNOCI has not identified any mass graves or traces of mass graves in N'dotré, its Spokesman Hamadoun Touré said on Thursday during the Mission's weekly press conference.

In giving the results of an inquiry into allegations of the existence of a mass grave in this area that were made in December 2010, the spokesman explained that two investigation teams had not found any bodies at the morgue in N'dotré where it had been claimed that bodies were being kept.

"Given that this morgue is an incomplete building which does not have facilities such as a cold room, it would not have been possible to keep bodies there during this long period", stressed Mr. Touré, who was reading from a press release. However, he added, with regard to the existence of a mass grave or of a massacre in N'dotré, inquiries could be continued in order to find possible proof.

With regard to the increase in the violence which started with the political impasse, Mr. Touré announced that UNOCI had noted a growing number of victims with 18 new deaths including four women. This brings the number of persons killed in the country since mid-December 2010 to 410, he said.

The Spokesman said that UNOCI would like to highlight the case of children who were suffering as a result of the post-electoral crisis. "Some have been killed or mutilated and often forced to leave their families and abandon school in order to escape the fighting," said Mr. Touré. In addition to this, he said, there is the great psychological trauma these children, some of whom have sometimes seen their parents killed, are suffering.

Mr. Touré recalled that UNOCI's position when faced with such violence is to condemn these serious violations against children and demand that those responsible be held accountable and brought to justice.

The Spokesman also reiterated the UN Mission's willingness to provide support to initiatives to protect children all over the country in accordance with its mandate and resources.

Turning to military issues, the Spokesman announced that a new Force Commander, Major-General Gnakoudè Béréna from Togo had been nominated to replace Major-General Abdul Hafiz du Bangladesh, whose mandate ends on 22 March 2011. With regard to military operations, Mr. Touré said that the Force had carried out 841 ground and air patrols last week before recalling that the MI 24 helicopters had started flying since 3 March 2011.

He said that a UNOCI patrol comprising three APCs had gone to Attecoubé, close to the Mission's headquarters where unidentified individuals on board a vehicle had thrown a grenade on civilians, injuring 18 people. The injured were treated at UNOCI's clinic said Mr. Touré, adding that the clinic had treated 55 people, four of whom had died of their injuries. He also mentioned that one of the Mission's convoys had been ambushed but had succeeded in continuing his journey.

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