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PRESS RELEASE

GENERAL HAFIZ LOOKS BACK WITH PRIDE AT HIS RECORD AS HEAD OF UNOCI'S FORCE

Abidjan, 22 March 2011... Major-General Abdul Hafiz stated on Tuesday in Abidjan that his term as commander of the force of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) was successful.

Speaking of the mandate and actions of the force during his stint in Côte d'Ivoire, he said: "My stay here was divided into two periods: the pre-election part and the post-election crisis".

With regard to the former, General Hafiz said, referring to UNOCI's mandate, that "the Force's mission, which included providing logistical, material and security support for the organization of the presidential election, was undeniably a total success for UNOCI".

"In addition to providing support to the Independent Electoral Commission, our units were deployed permanently and visibly on the ground; we carried out intensified day and night patrols in sensitive and potentially violent areas, and protected civilians and humanitarian workers in immediate danger," said the Force Commander, recalling that the election was conducted in peaceful conditions with a participation rate of over 80%.

With regard to the post-election crisis, General Hafiz indicated that the Force continued to carry out its mission. "We are protecting the Golf Hotel, where the elected President, the members of the Government, and UNOCI installations, personnel and equipment are located," he stressed. He added that, on the ground, the UN force continued to ensure its freedom of movement, kept up its patrols and, as far as possible, ensured the protection of civilians in imminent danger of violence.

The Force Commander feels that acquiring the new military material will give UNOCI the capacity to act, move and react rapidly. "This is really an important and significant weapon for UNOCI," he said.

Asked about the situation in the west of the country, General Hafiz indicated that the clashes between the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) and the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) were essentially "an affair" between the two ex-belligerents. "We noted that it was the FDS who first crossed the line of the former zone of confidence, thus violating the cease-fire, and the FRCI then started advancing eastwards," he explained.

"We are almost at the end of this crisis," noted the Force Commander, who said he was returning to his country, Bangladesh, after a one-year mission that he described as a "total success".

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