



UNOCI – 1020

PRESS RELEASE

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITS CAMP FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Abidjan, 22 May 2011.... “I am very happy to meet you but also very sad because you have witnessed and lived through terrible things. But my heart is with you and I am here to show my solidarity and give you hope of a normal life”. These were the words used by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to greet internally displaced persons at a camp in Cocody, Abidjan, on Sunday, 22 May 2011.

In his message of hope, Mr. Ban assured the IDPs that UNOCI and UN agencies will continue help them and measures will be taken to ensure that those who feel threatened would not have to return to their homes prematurely. “I want you to know that all my heart is with you. I am here to show my solidarity, offer you help and give you hope that life will quickly return to normal, » he said, adding that the UN was already helping to provide water, electricity, shelter, health care, food, sanitation and other essential services in IDP camps.

For the UN Secretary-General, the arrival of a new President, installed by the will of the Ivorian people announces a promising new start for the country which has a lot of potential which that is yet to be exploited. Appealing to the IDPs to remain hopeful, Mr. Ban said: “You have the support of the UN and the international community. We will help you to re-establish a country where democracy and human rights are respected so that Côte d'Ivoire can once again become what it was”.

The IDP camp which provided shelter for 284 people at the height of the post-electoral crisis, today has 159 men, women and children living in conditions which could be described at barely acceptable. The camp receives support from certain humanitarian agencies, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP). In addition to shelter for the IDPs, the UN agencies also provide food and medical care.

The IDPs spokesman, Hubert Tonga, welcomed the visit of the UN Secretary-General which he said showed the interested he had in the displaced. “We have suffered a lot of harm and we have been victims of pillaging, destruction of our homes, loss of employment and an end to all lucrative activities. We would like to be given social reinsertion projects and kits to help us return to our homes,” he said.

For his part, Gibert Gouentoweu, President of *l'Union des Eglises Evangéliques Services et Œuvres (UEESO)*, who is in charge of the camp, said that the

presence of the head of the United Nations in the camp highlighted his commitment to ease the pain of those who had suffered. “This crisis put us in a terrible situation and we can only thank the Secretary-General and his team for their support,” he said at the end of the visit.

Before his visit to the IDP camp, the UN Secretary-General had met personnel of the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and UN agencies at the Mission’s headquarters.

The UN Secretary-General was in Côte d’Ivoire to attend the inauguration of President Alassane Ouattara, which took place on Saturday, 21 May 2011 in the political capital, Yamoussoukro.

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