



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN MISSION TO SOMALIA FOCUSES ON RETURNEES

(New York: 15 June 2007): The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia led a joint mission to the capital, Mogadishu, yesterday to continue discussions with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and other groups about how to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the country. While in the Somali capital, the mission met with the Minister of Planning, Mayor of Mogadishu and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

An estimated 112,000 of the 400,000 Somalis displaced from Mogadishu between February and May 2007 have returned to the capital since the beginning of May. Most of the returned are attempting to restore their livelihoods, with many having lost property during the conflict; others who wish to return face uncertainty over the Government's future use of public buildings and the destruction of many of the buildings in which they formerly lived. Transport delays of up to three days have also slowed returns.

To date, the majority of those returning to Mogadishu have come from Lower and Middle Shabelle regions, with 65,000 and 34,000 returnees respectively. About 5,000 people have returned from Gedo, 2,000 from Bay, and 1,700 from Hiran, Mudug and Middle Juba. Additionally, some 1,700 people displaced within Mogadishu have returned home. However, the Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that, during the month of June, almost 1,500 people fled insecurity and sporadic violence in Mogadishu anew, with almost 600 of these heading north to Galkayo.

Growing tension and insecurity have also been reported elsewhere in South and Central Somalia. In the area around Kismayo (Lower Juba), UNHCR reports that up to 10,000 people may have moved to Kismayo town as a result of ongoing clan conflict. Meanwhile, tension in Lower Shabelle is high following fighting between the former and the newly appointed regional administrations. Almost 800 people are estimated to have been displaced to Merka because of the clashes.

While in Mogadishu, yesterday's mission underscored that providing basic services to the displaced, as well as the wider community, continues to be the focus of humanitarian activities. In repossessing public buildings in which the displaced had been living, the TFG should respect international standards and provide alternate solutions for the displaced. Moreover, any long-term resettlement of the displaced should be based on the outcomes of the National Reconciliation Conference.

Another recent joint mission to Idaale in Bay region on 9 June revealed serious need for water, sanitation and hygiene assistance, as well as shelter, household items, livelihood recovery, education and health care support for the newly returned. The presence of unexploded mines, artillery shells, hand grenades and anti-aircraft missiles was also of concern; Idaale suffered damage during the conflict between the TFG/Ethiopian troops and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).

On the food security front, the current rainy season has been poor and may result in significantly reduced crop production in 2007, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)'s Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU). Although the rains started well in mid-April, they were poor in May and are predicted to be below-normal or non-existent in June. In late June, FAO/FSAU will conduct its usual food and livelihood security assessment; this year, the survey will include an analysis of the impact of the displaced on local food security conditions.

For further information, please call: Stephanie Bunker, OCHA-New York, +1 917 367 5126, mobile +1 917 892 1679; Kristen Knutson, OCHA-New York, +1 917 367 9262; Elisabeth Byrs, OCHA-Geneva, +41 22 917 2653, mobile, +41 79 473 4570. OCHA press releases are available at <http://ochaonline.un.org> or www.reliefweb.int.