

UNITED NATIONS



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**Office of the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia**

**Statement from the United Nations on the Incident outside Marka**

(Nairobi, 7 October 2008) Last night, 6 October, around six o'clock in the evening, a UN rented vehicle was hit by an explosion while traveling along the road from the Marka airstrip to Marka town. The driver was killed by the explosion and two UN personnel, an Italian and a Somali national, riding in the vehicle were slightly wounded. They were treated at the local hospital and will be taken to Nairobi at the earliest possible time.

The incident took place about 4 kilometres outside of Marka. It is still too soon to determine the exact nature of the explosion. Pending a full and thorough investigation of the incident, the UN will temporarily relocate some of its staff from Marka.

“The primary concern of the United Nations right now is the safety and security of the staff on the ground and we are very grateful to the local authorities for their proactive support in responding to this incident,” said Mr. Graham Farmer, acting UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. “Once we have a clear understanding of exactly what happened and why, we can focus on preventing any interruption of life-saving assistance.”

Further statements will be released as more information becomes available.

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Note to Editors: Marka is located about 100 km southwest of Mogadishu and is an important logistical hub for UN operations. There are six United Nations agencies present in Marka with approximately 50 personnel. The World Food Programme uses the port for delivering food. Other agencies, such as UNICEF and WHO are supporting the local hospital and health clinics, and are involved in vaccination campaigns. The Food and Agriculture Organization is currently implementing a cash-for-work project supported by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) rehabilitating irrigation infrastructure in Lower Shabelle region. The UN Office for Project Services is supporting peace building activities. There are also many international and national NGOs working in Marka.

Overall, the humanitarian situation in Somalia is continuing to deteriorate. The number of people in urgent need of food and other humanitarian assistance is now a staggering 3.2 million. This is an increase of 77 percent since the beginning of 2008, representing approximately 43 percent of the total population. The death toll of aid-related workers in Somalia since January is 23, with 25 others kidnapped, and 12 remain in captivity inside the country.