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**Statement from the United Nations in Somalia on abduction of UN staff
in South Central Somalia**

(Nairobi, KENYA) 16 March 2009 – Four UN staff members were abducted early this morning by unknown armed men in Waajid, Somalia. They were on their way to the airport when their convoy was stopped by gunmen. No violence or shooting was reported to have occurred during the incident.

While the general location of the four staff members is known, no contact with the abductors has been established so far.

The United Nations and the local authorities in Waajid are doing everything to secure the unconditional release of the staff.

For more information, contact Dawn Elizabeth Blalock, UN spokesperson, Mobile: +254-734-210-102 or email: blalock@un.org

Note to Editors: Experience in previous cases of abduction has proven that sensitive handling by the media can assist in leading to the early release of abductees. We are grateful for the media's understanding and assistance in the careful reporting of this issue.