

## **UNICEF CONDEMNS LOOTING OF LIFE-SAVING HUMANITARIAN SUPPLIES IN JOWHAR**

**Statement by Christian Balslev- Olesen, UNICEF Representative to Somalia**

NAIROBI, 20 May 2009 : UNICEF strongly condemns the looting and destruction of humanitarian supplies and its facilities in Jowhar by militiamen and is deeply distressed by the impact this will have on UNICEF's programmes supporting the children and women of Somalia, said Christian Balslev- Olesen, UNICEF Representative to Somalia, in a statement today.

After Al Shabaab took over control of Jowhar town – located 90 kilometers north of Mogadishu - on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2009, reports were received of militiamen raiding UNICEF's compound and undertaking large scale looting and destruction of humanitarian supplies, assets and equipments.

The cold chain (vaccine storage) equipment has been affected, destroying thousands of doses of measles, polio and other vaccines that were meant to prevent serious diseases among Somali children. Supplies of food for the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition among children were also looted.

The loss and damage of crucial supplies for children and women and the break in the supply chain will have an enormous impact on UNICEF's overall programmes as Jowhar is the main hub for the provision of services and supplies to the whole of the Central and Southern regions of Somalia.

"Our programmes, including provision of immunization against preventable diseases like measles and polio, operation of feeding centres for acutely malnourished children, implementation of Child Health Days Campaign, as well as provision of safe drinking water will be severely hampered, putting the lives of vulnerable children and their communities at risk."

Over 50,000 severely malnourished children who are in life-threatening conditions, in addition to over 85,000 moderately malnourished children, will be affected by the break in nutritional and medical supplies. This incident will disrupt the implementation of the second round of the Child Health Days Campaign targeting to reach over 1.2 million under-five children and 840,000 women with a high-impact life-saving health and nutritional package.

"These malicious acts of looting and vandalism that pose a serious threat to the lives and welfare of Somali children must stop," said Balslev-Olesen. "UNICEF urges all parties involved to have children's well-being at heart. Humanitarian operations must not be impeded."

For more information or interviews please contact:

- Iman Morooka, Communication Officer, UNICEF Somalia, Email: [imorooka@unicef.org](mailto:imorooka@unicef.org), Mobile: +254 714 606 733
- Robert Kihara, Communication Officer, UNICEF Somalia, Email: [rkihara@unicef.org](mailto:rkihara@unicef.org), Mobile: +254 722 206 883