

Media Release**Somali children at high risk as escalating hostilities against aid work cause postponement of life-saving supply delivery**

NAIROBI, KENYA, 13 August 2009: UNICEF has today had to postpone the dispatch of hundreds of tons of life-saving nutritional supplies meant for the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition in over 85,000 Somali children in certain areas in the central and southern regions of Somalia due to increased hostility towards aid organisations. Distribution of malaria prevention bed-nets to more than 100,000 women and children has also been disrupted. In areas of these regions where security assurances are provided, UNICEF continues to deliver its humanitarian supplies and programmes.

“We need concrete assurances from local authorities for the safe delivery and storage of supplies to ensure that we can carry out programmes for the survival of Somali children and women. We hope these assurances will be forthcoming very soon so that we can continue our operations at a level that matches the needs of children and women and prevent the deaths that will otherwise certainly occur,” said Ms Rozanne Chorlton, UNICEF Representative to Somalia.

UNICEF’s compound in Jowhar (Central Somalia) - the main hub for its programme operations in Central South Somalia - was taken over on 17 May 2009 and large volumes of life-saving humanitarian supplies and communications equipment were destroyed or taken from the compound and from UNICEF warehouses in Jowhar. In addition, reports indicate that UNICEF emergency supplies stored in a partner’s warehouse in Jammame (Lower Juba region) were taken in early August.

UNICEF is the lead agency in the provision of vaccines and essential drugs for maternal and child health clinics and health posts targeting 1.2 million children under five and 1.4 million women in Central South Somalia. The lives of these children and women will be at high risk if UNICEF is not able to operate fully and deliver supplies without disruption.

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