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**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL BY UNDER-SECRETARY-  
GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
RELIEF COORDINATOR JAN EGELAND**

**15 September 2006**

Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief on the humanitarian situation in the DRC and Uganda, where I visited in the last week.

In DRC, I visited Kinshasa and then went into the field in Katanga, South Kivu and Ituri. I would like to share three main conclusions from my mission to the DRC.

First, the UN and the transitional government have made a lot of progress, with increased security and successful elections, but we have not been able to make enough of an impact on impunity. Sexual abuse has become a cancer in Congolese society that seems to be out of control. Military and civilian authorities are still virtually unaccountable for crimes against civilians. I told President Kabila and the military and civilian leaders that I met that they had to publicly condemn impunity, and act firmly to fire or demote perpetrators. President Kabila replied that the “contradictions” in the Transitional Government had made the latter difficult for him, but that one could act more firmly after the elections.

In South Kivu alone, more than 1,000 raped women have been treated so far this year at the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, where I visited. We don't know how many more suffer without treatment in inaccessible parts of the province. I was deeply shocked by the stories of the women who had been abused by the members of the national army – the FARDC – and by militia groups. One woman told me how she had been raped repeatedly for more than a week by a group of soldiers who kept her bound so tightly by hands and by feet through the week that she had permanently lost the use of her hands. Dr. Mukengere, the heroic director of Panzi Hospital, told me that mutilations often followed the rapes. These require extensive surgical interventions.

I do not believe that the FARDC is systematically addressing this issue. Although some military prosecutions have occurred, often because of the efforts of MONUC, far too little is being done. This Council, and the member states involved in security sector reform in the DRC, must exert more forceful pressure on the FARDC to end this pattern of abuse and violence against civilians.

Second, I am concerned about the impact of FARDC military operations on the civilian population. Since the beginning of the year, more than 500,000 people have been newly displaced in eastern DRC. In most cases, the displacements follow a Government army operation against a militia group. Too often, civilians flee because of the fighting, and then are victimized by the FARDC who blame them for supporting the militias. In the Kivus and Ituri, MONUC provides logistical support for these operations. The only long-term security solution

in the DRC is, of course, through one competent national army with the exclusive right to bear arms. Nonetheless, we cannot accept such a huge cost on the civilian population caused by the recent operations to disarm. The MONUC Force Commander has invited the humanitarian community to look at ways to reduce the humanitarian impact of these operations and we take up this offer.

Third, the humanitarian situation in the DRC has improved. Compared to my last visit three years ago, there are more humanitarian staff working in more areas, including some areas that were totally inaccessible for years. When we went out to meet with IDPs in remote locations in the bush -- Pweto, Luhago and Gety -- I was impressed with the work done by UN and NGO colleagues, often under very difficult circumstances. However, the humanitarian effort still lacks the resources it needs to meet the overwhelming needs. For example, we do not have money for the food pipeline beyond the next three months. In 2007, we will expand our humanitarian programmes, and intensify early recovery efforts to meet the needs of the more than 1.6 million IDPs who returned home in the last year, often with little assistance.

The national disarmament and reintegration programme, run by CONADER, is not working effectively. In Pweto in the south-west, I met with a group of Mayi-Mayi who had voluntarily disarmed weeks before. However, CONADER claimed that it no longer had resources to serve them, and MONUC military observers had to take it upon themselves to share their rations to avoid looting by the Mayi-Mayi of the civilian population. Other Mayi-Mayi groups who were ready to come out of the bush have not because they want to be sure they will be taken care of. In Ituri, MONUC has been successful in disarming militia members, but the programmes needed to reintegrate them into civilian life have been insufficient. Unless these problems are quickly fixed, these fighters will return to the life of the gun.

Mr. President,

The challenges ahead in the DRC are enormous. It will be a marathon, and we are only yet half way. We cannot stop now or we will lose what we have gained. The Council should show its strong commitment to the DRC by maintaining MONUC's strength and maintaining the pressure on the government to end impunity and promote the rule of law and good governance. The conclusion of the elections is the beginning of the rebuilding process, not its end. The DRC has seen the worst haemorrhage of human life in this generation. Four million people -- six Rwandan genocides -- is the death toll to war and preventable disease in the last eight years. We must not fail to stop, once and for all, this tragedy.

Let me turn now to Uganda.

The picture in northern Uganda is more promising than it has been in years. We can see improvement on almost every indicator. Since the negotiations between the Government and the LRA began in Juba earlier this year, security has increased dramatically, allowing us to do much more on the humanitarian front. We can now reach 54 of the 102 IDP camps without military escorts, up from 34 in May. I was able to spend a memorable night in a family hut in Opit IDP camp, something no UN staff member had been able to do for many years. IDPs in Acholiland are cautiously beginning to move towards their homes. We stopped along the country road to

talk with a family who were making bricks for a temporary house 2 kilometers from their ancestral lands so that they could begin farming again. If peace continued, they would finally move home in January.

The number of night commuters has fallen to 10,000, from a high of 40,000 last year, when I reported to you. Few of the remaining children are moving due to insecurity now. Most continue to move to the towns every night because of social problems at home related to prolonged displacement, such as domestic violence and overcrowding.

We will use the better security environment to continue to improve the situation in the IDP camps and to prepare for the return of more than 1.5 million people. The Government will need to rapidly increase social services in the north, including the return of teachers, doctors and nurses. The Prime Minister told me that the Government was working on this through the Joint Monitoring Commission and the Government's Peace, Reconciliation and Development Plan. The international community must soon make the necessary investment in peace, and hold the Government accountable for an effective protection of the civilian population and a real reconciliation process.

Mr. President,

As the Council is aware, Riek Machar, the Vice-President of the Government of South Sudan, has been facilitating talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA. On 26 August, the two sides signed a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. I visited Juba on 11 September to address the humanitarian aspects of a possible peace agreement. I met with Vice-President Machar and his mediation team, the Government and the LRA delegations and with the Acholi religious and cultural leaders who are observing the talks. I commended Vice-President Machar for the progress of this African-led peace process, and offered increased UN support for the South Sudanese mediation efforts.

OCHA and UNICEF already have staff members providing technical support to the mediation team, and DPA will dispatch someone over the weekend. Norway has provided financial support for the peace talks through OCHA, and several other European donors have indicated their willingness to also support these efforts. This is critical to keep the process moving forward. The Government of South Sudan does not have the resources to support the rapid progress of the talks. In addition, Vice-President Machar asked that the UN provide monitors for the cessation of hostilities agreement and the assembly areas for LRA fighters, along with the monitors from the parties and the African Union. I have transmitted this request to the Secretary General.

The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement requires the LRA to move to two assembly points in Southern Sudan by 19 September. These are shown on the map that we will distribute to you. Reports from the field confirm that LRA units are moving from northern Uganda towards the assembly area at Owiny-Ki-Bul, and from northern DRC into Ri-Kwangba. An estimated 400 combatants and non-combatants have so far arrived at the two assembly points. DSS reports that most LRA members have now left northern Uganda for southern Sudan.

The UN has already assessed the situation in the two assembly points and is prepared to provide assistance to the women and children with the LRA, whom the parties have agreed can be separated from the LRA fighters. We will also help the surrounding communities. The Government of South Sudan has moved some food supplies to the areas. The UN Country Team in Uganda re-confirmed to me that they have the resources necessary to receive ex-combatants and women and children and begin their reintegration into northern Uganda, when agreed by the parties.

While in Uganda and South Sudan, I received several telephone calls from Vincent Otti, the second in command of the LRA. He invited me to meet with him at the western assembly point. I told him that I could only come if the LRA made a “humanitarian gesture” and released some of the women and children they are holding. The LRA did not agree to such a release yet, but we will continue to press for the quick release of the Sudanese and Ugandan captives.

It is important for the Council to know that the ICC indictments were the number one subject of discussion with the IDPs in Uganda and the parties and civil society in Juba. All expressed a strong concern that if the indictments were not lifted, they could threaten the progress in these most promising talks ever for northern Uganda. I said I believed the indictments had been a factor in pushing the LRA into negotiations, that the indictments should not disrupt the talks, and that there could be no impunity for mass murder and crimes against humanity. The parties should look now at the different ways to develop a solution that meets local needs for reconciliation and universal standards of justice and accountability. I believe this can be done, and that peace and justice can work together. For the Council’s information, I have discussed this approach with Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo, who repeated that the UN should indeed support the peace talks, aiming for the return of women and children, demobilization of fighters and a solution that makes peace and justice work together.

Mr. President,

This is the best chance we have ever had for peace in northern Uganda so far. We must pursue it to the end. As a woman asked me around the camp fire in Opit IDP camp, “if we cannot find peace now, who will we blame for another 20 years of war?” The Security Council’s interest in this issue has been crucial for the progress to date. The Council should show its support for the talks, and encourage the Government and the LRA to reach a final agreement soonest. The Council should also express its support for the Government’s effort to develop a recovery plan for the north, while stressing the need for the affected communities to be fully engaged in this process. Finally, the Council should stress the need for a reconciliation process that addresses the root causes of this long and terrible conflict and ensures the future protection of the civilian population.

Thank you Mr. President.

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