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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos: Statement to the Press on Libya Mission
New York, 20 April 2011

I have just returned from a two-day mission to Libya, during which I was able to visit Tripoli and Benghazi. My purpose was to secure an agreement to establish humanitarian presence in Tripoli and to push for a cessation of hostilities so that those trapped by conflict could leave and so that we could facilitate the delivery of much needed humanitarian aid. I also wanted to have an opportunity to look at coordination efforts on the ground in Benghazi.

In Benghazi, I met representatives of humanitarian agencies, member states, and the relief committee of the Transitional National Council. While in Tripoli, I met with Libya Government officials, ambassadors of Member States and heads of the humanitarian community.

In Tripoli, we signed an agreement with the Government of Libya ensuring protection for humanitarian aid organizations and granting access to those in need, especially in areas where fighting is taking place. Specifically, the Government agreed to facilitate the establishment of a UN humanitarian presence in Tripoli to coordinate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, to provide the security guarantees necessary for UN humanitarian presence in areas under control of the Libyan government, and to facilitate the entry and exit of humanitarian staff and the import of all material and equipment necessary to support the UN humanitarian presence in Libya.

We need humanitarian teams on the ground so that we can get a sense of what is actually happening and to assess needs to enable us to plan and respond effectively. We plan to send a team into Tripoli as early as this weekend in addition to humanitarian staff already on the ground in Benghazi and in Egypt, Tunisia and Niger.

The humanitarian situation in parts of Libya is acute, and remains of utmost concern for the humanitarian community. Fighting continues in several locations inside Libya. We have received but have been unable to verify the numbers of reports of civilian deaths, injuries and displacement.

The situation in Misrata grows more serious every day, and although the UN is unable to obtain verifiable numbers, clearly hundreds of people have been killed and wounded

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during the almost continuous fighting. In addition, the reported use of cluster munitions in Misrata is extremely worrying. Some people in the city are short of food, water, medicines, electricity and other basic supplies and although several thousand people have now been evacuated, thousands more are still unable to leave, including third country nationals, refugees and Libyans. Our humanitarian efforts are focused on reaching those who urgently need our help.