

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos
Briefing to the United Nations Security Council on the Situation in Côte d'Ivoire
New York, 13 April 2011**

Mr. President,

I appreciate this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Côte d'Ivoire, including findings from my mission last week to Man and Duékoué in Côte d'Ivoire, and Monrovia and Grand Gedah County in Liberia.

Despite the arrest of Laurent Gbagbo, the humanitarian situation in Côte d'Ivoire remains deeply troubling. The crisis that followed elections last November and the escalation we have seen in the last few weeks has had far-reaching humanitarian consequences for ordinary people throughout Côte d'Ivoire, and its neighbouring countries. These effects will not subside without a significant and sustained effort from the humanitarian community, and the combined efforts of the broader UN system in Côte d'Ivoire contributing to stabilisation and reconciliation.

Protection of civilians

In Duékoué, at least 255 people were killed in a massacre between 28 and 29 March during which grave violations of international law took place. People told me harrowing stories of the executions and kidnappings that occurred. More than 27,000 people have been forced to find refuge at the Catholic Mission, and there are another 1,000 displaced people at another site in the city. Some of them have walked 200 km or more through the bush to reach relative safety. The camp exists because of the heroism of the Pastor at the Mission. It is being protected by UN peacekeepers, whose commitment to the mission of the United Nations is commendable. Their focus on the protection of civilians has saved many lives.

You will hear from the High Commissioner for Human Rights that mass killings have taken place in several other towns and villages in the west of the country. These are in addition to the widespread and indiscriminate attacks against civilians that occurred in Abidjan since violence flared up last December, including extrajudicial killings, and forced disappearances. Sexual violence has been perpetrated particularly against women and children. Human rights investigations are ongoing and the Commission of Inquiry requested by the Human Rights Council will deploy soon. It is vital that those responsible are held accountable for the crimes they have committed. There can be no culture of impunity.

Humanitarian situation in Côte d'Ivoire

In Abidjan, many of the city's 5 million people are in crisis. Although open conflict has ceased, there continue to be reports of sporadic violence. Many families in the city are without food and are trapped in their homes - too afraid of the militias and the fighting to leave. Some have been forced by the violence to flee. UNHCR has already

registered more than 130,000 displaced people in Abidjan. Entire neighbourhoods have been without electricity and water for weeks, raising concerns that cholera, which is already present in Côte d'Ivoire, could spread further. Food is difficult to find in the markets, and prices have risen sharply. The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that malnutrition levels in Abidjan and around the country are rising. Many hospitals and health facilities have been unable to operate properly. Those that have stayed open do not have enough doctors, medicines, and other basic equipment to meet the needs. Schools have been closed for months leaving more than 800,000 children without access to education

Outside Abidjan, communities in the centre and north, including Bouake, have had to deal with the influx of the at least 800,000 people who UNHCR estimate have been internally displaced. Many were taken in by host families. Others have gathered in spontaneous settlements. Heavy fighting in other cities has also had serious humanitarian consequences. In Daloa and Duékoué in the west, the south-western port city of San Pedro, Abengourou and Bondoukou in the east, Tiebissou and the capital Yamoussoukro, medical centres have treated many people suffering from gunshot and machete wounds. In all these places, distributions of food and water, sanitation materials and other relief items are still urgently needed.

And we must not overlook the grave psychological impact that these weeks of violence have had. People are immensely traumatised. They have witnessed terrible violence, and many have been directly targeted.

Humanitarian response in Côte d'Ivoire

The humanitarian response to the crisis has so far been severely impeded by the security situation around the country, which has prevented aid agencies from scaling up their operations and accessing those most in need.

Some international UN staff stayed in Abidjan throughout the crisis. Most relocated to Man and Bouake in recent days. Even for those that stayed, their movements were severely impeded by the lack of security. Immediately after the arrest of Mr. Gbagbo, UNICEF was able to make a delivery of medical supplies in Abidjan. They distributed essential medicines, blankets, tents and nutritional supplements to a health centre and a hospital in the Abidjan neighbourhood of Treitchville.

As soon as the security situation permits, it is essential that more aid workers get into all the areas of Abidjan and humanitarian organisations strengthen their presence where they are most needed. A UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team has just arrived in Côte d'Ivoire to strengthen humanitarian assessment, operations and coordination for the ongoing relief effort.

Outside Abidjan, WFP is planning more airlifts in the coming days to provide food assistance to tens of thousands of internally displaced people. WFP, which manages

the humanitarian air service (UNHAS) on behalf of the whole aid community, plans to launch humanitarian flights to northern towns such as Bouaké and Man, where relief agencies have re-located their operations. The World Health Organisation has shipped additional supplies of kits to treat trauma injuries, malaria and infectious diseases to support the people who fled Abidjan. And the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is helping people restart their livelihoods with seeds and tools. Numerous other UN agencies and non-governmental organisations are also active on the ground.

The humanitarian community launched two emergency action plans in January to raise funds for the humanitarian response in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Both appeals have been revised to reflect the greatly increased needs on the ground. Overall, we estimate that around \$300 million is needed to cover priority humanitarian needs. As of today, \$57 million - only 15 percent of what is needed - has been committed. We need to act now to deliver more food, provide shelter and offer better medical treatment to those who are sick. We must not let the people of Côte d'Ivoire and the region down. I hope that Member States will redouble their efforts and respond to the needs in Cote d'Ivoire and the region.

Humanitarian situation in Liberia and neighbouring countries

Côte d'Ivoire's neighbours Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Burkina Faso have between them taken in more than 140,000 people since the crisis began. More than 130,000 refugees are in Liberia. I visited a refugee transit centre in Toe Town, in Grand Gedeh Country, along the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border. Most of the refugees are women and children. They fled their homes with almost nothing.

The Government of Liberia and the Liberian people need to be recognized for the welcome and support they have given the refugees. The majority are staying in host communities that also deserve assistance. People are sharing their homes and their limited supplies. Most of those I spoke to needed more food and non-food items, shelter, water and sanitation as well as agricultural inputs. The ongoing crisis forced many Ivorians to cross into the more impoverished southern counties of Grand Gedeh and Maryland. Access challenges related to the upcoming rainy season are some of the issues which worsen the current humanitarian situation in Liberia.

While we can still count on Liberia to welcome Ivorian refugees, the Government is obviously concerned about the security as well as other economic and social impacts of the Ivorian refugee crisis on the country. Liberian authorities, UN agencies and our partner NGOs are doing their utmost to ensure that the response is adequate. But we still have a long way to go.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

It was clear to me from my discussions in Côte d'Ivoire that there are still many political challenges ahead. These, and the current social tensions which also impact on civilians, are likely to continue for some time. In this highly militarised context, I am concerned about the security vacuum in certain parts of the country. It is important that UNOCI continues to robustly pursue the implementation of its protection of civilians mandate, including by deploying into areas where civilians continue to be at risk, and take appropriate action to deter threats.

It is crucial that we remind President Ouattara that his Government and he as President must take their responsibilities to abide by international law and take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of all civilians seriously. All armed groups also continue to bear responsibilities in this regard. Equally important is the need to avoid retaliation, end impunity and focus on reconciliation and social cohesion.

I have recently discussed with humanitarian agencies and our partners the urgency to scale-up their activities in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to immediately respond to the needs of all affected people. We need to continue to make every effort to ensure that assistance is coordinated and provided in as coherent a way as possible. The people of Cote d'Ivoire deserve our support.

Thank you, Mr. President.