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PRESS RELEASE

UNOCI AND UNMIL ADOPT AN ACTION PLAN TO STRENGTHEN JOINT COOPERATION

Abidjan, 7 March 2012... The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Bert Koenders, the interim Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia, Moustapha Soumaré, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Saïd Djinnit, ended on 7 March 2012 in Abidjan, a meeting aimed at evaluating cross-border cooperation between the UN missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, UNOCI and UNMIL.

The meeting, attended by the force commanders of the two missions and representatives of many agencies of the UN system based in the two countries, resulted in the adoption of a plan of action.

After the meeting, Mr. Koenders presented the priorities of the action plan. In this regard, he announced that Operation Mayo, which consists of cooperation between the military, police and gendarme forces of the two missions, would be reactivated. "We believe now that a well-prepared meeting is needed, with an action plan supported by the authorities of the two countries to combat the region's problems, which are impunity [and] the fight against rumours, through mixed patrols. The border is porous but it has to provide citizens with security to return, and belongs neither to mercenaries nor armed persons," said Mr. Koenders.

The head of UNOCI also announced the launch, within the framework of this plan, of a community programme aimed at reducing violence by stepping up demobilisation and increasing arms recovery in a conflict-prevention context. According to Mr. Koenders, a third aspect will involve a joint communication campaign. "Radio ONUCI-FM could work with Radio UNMIL in local languages, but also in French to provide impartial news on both sides of the border," he said.

The humanitarian aspect is also taken into account through the distribution of seeds on both sides of the border so as not to disadvantage any side, Mr. Koenders stated. The regional commissioners and governors will thus receive support within the framework of this action plan, he said, explaining that the idea will be to strengthen the authority of the State on both sides of the border. "It's a very operational programme that we shall begin from tomorrow morning," he said.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa, Saïd Djinnit, expressed satisfaction at having been able to participate in the

coordination meeting. He said he had been able to share with the participants some ideas for a sub-regional strategy that is under preparation with the missions and the rest of the UN system in the sub-region.

“This meeting has contributed to strengthening the cooperation between UNMIL and UNOCI to help Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire confront cross-border challenges on their common frontier and to the adoption of a common roadmap on the best way to accompany the two countries in better controlling threats and challenges,” Mr. Djinnit stressed.

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