

UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire deplores murder of 5 people, urges support for probe

29 April 2006 – United Nations peacekeepers and their counterparts from a French force in Côte d'Ivoire have discovered the bodies of five people slain in violence that prompted others to flee the area, located by the zone separating the Government-controlled south from the rebel-held north.

The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) issued a statement today deploring the crimes committed on Friday in Dieouzon village, near Bangolo, where the dead were discovered by a joint patrol of UNOCI and the French Licorne forces.

The incident “resulted in the movement of the inhabitants of the village,” according to UNOCI, which said impartial forces reinforced monitoring in the area by additional mixed patrols aimed at restoring confidence among the local population.

An investigation is underway to identify the perpetrators. “UNOCI invites all witnesses to collaborate so as to assist in stopping these criminal acts and calls on the inhabitants of the area to remain calm, recalling that violence does not resolve ethnic or economic conflicts,” the mission said.

In a related development, on Friday, UNOCI's Acting Force Commander, General Fernand Amoussou, called on the Ivorian Chiefs of Staff to resume their military dialogue.

Speaking in Abidjan during the mission's weekly press conference, Gen. Amoussou said that the resumption would make it possible for the chiefs of the national Defence and Security Forces and the rebel Armed Forces of the Forces Nouvelles to agree on accords they had signed jointly.

Giving a brief assessment of the mission's activities, he said that since the beginning of this year there had been approximately 9,000 day and night patrols by battalions as well as military observers throughout Côte d'Ivoire.

While these activities “contribute to the security of the country,” he said stability in Côte d'Ivoire was the responsibility of its authorities. “These patrols also help with reconciliation at the local level, more precisely in the villages where people always lived together, so as to bring back a climate of fraternity and serenity.”

Gen. Amoussou explained that the presence of the Force in the zone of confidence was justified by the mission's wish to prevent any resumption of hostilities. He said UNOCI would support the Government of National Reconciliation in all the operations aimed at restoring peace and holding elections.

Meanwhile, in Bouaké, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Pierre Schori, on Thursday inaugurated a UNOCI-financed Quick Impact Project run by a non-governmental organization (NGO) called "Notre Enfance," which helps women and the children.