

Remarks to the press by the Head of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria, General Robert Mood

Damascus, 13 July 2012

Good morning,

As you all know, UNSMIS operations continue to be suspended due to the unacceptable level of violence on the ground. The Mission's mandate is to monitor the cessation of violence and the escalation of violence has obstructed our ability to implement our mandated tasks. However, the Observers, still based in the different provinces, have the view of surrounding areas and are engaging with the Parties on the ground.

From our presence in the Hama province we can verify continuous fighting yesterday in the area of Treimseh. This involved mechanized units, indirect fire as well as helicopters.

UNSMIS stands ready to go in and seek verification of the facts, if and when there is a credible ceasefire.

I would also like to share with you that in the aftermath of Kofi Annan's visit, UNSMIS has been engaging in some localities to facilitate local dialogues between the parties as they seek to find a step by step way to build confidence and stop the negative spiral of violence.

In this context, encouraging progress has been made by the parties in Deir Ezzor. We observe a significant reduction of violence and growing confidence in a possible step by step approach to stop the violence.

As you know the international community is now looking closely at the situation in Syria. Discussions are ongoing in the Security Council and in a few days we will see voting on the mandate itself.

For the sake of the Syrian people we now need genuine and effective leadership from the Security Council. The Security Council should unite on a plan that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people – and is accepted by the parties.

Government and opposition must be willing to make concessions and sit down at the negotiating table. If this happens, the presence of the Mission is credible and the Mission can contribute to improving the situation on the ground and facilitate further dialogue.

Thank you.

Q: General, are going to recommend an extension for your mission?

A: The discussion regarding the future of the mission is entirely in the hands of the Security Council. The report of the Secretary-General recommended an approach to the future in which the emphasis is put on local dialogue, a bottom-up dialogue if you want, with a more political orientation for the mission.

We have given our input to that report and are behind the recommendations in that report, which means a continuation of UNSIMS but with a different orientation to make sure that we continue to be on the ground for the Syrian people and with the Syrian people.

Q: You suspended your activities because you could not manage with the absence of a ceasefire. How can you manage to do political dialogue when the violence has not stopped?

A: When we arrived on the 29 of April, the situation was that we came to assist the parties in monitoring a cessation of violence that they agreed to and that they were committed to implement.

The violence has escalated; hence the tool that was deployed towards the end of April is not the most relevant tool for the future. So, what we are looking at now is the situation in which the political dialogue has to be brought inside Syria and we have to build on the progress that we are seeing on the ground, noting in particular the encouraging process as we speak in Deir Ezzor. Through that dialogue, and lifting it to the national level, we will then achieve a cessation of violence. That is the approach and for that you need a tool on the ground that is more politically oriented, that is more flexible in use and able to build on local initiatives, local engagement, that can facilitate the Parties' will to go step by step in the right direction, as we doing in Dier Ezzor and from that we can go toward action on the national scale.

Q: Will you be visiting Treimseh to report what happened to the Security Council?

A: We are going to report on the situation in the Hama province as well as the situation in the other provinces. We do that on a daily basis. The facts that we already have, related to the situation in the Hama province and the village Treimseh, are already reported to New York. If we have credible cessation of violence and a local ceasefire, we stand ready to go in with a larger team to verify the facts on the ground. What we have verified today is that there was on going fighting yesterday involving mechanized units, involving indirect fire impact and involving helicopters. This is what we have seen from a distance of 5 to 6 kilometers.

Will it be more possible to verify more facts in the coming hours and days? I don't know. I sincerely hope so. Because everyone not in the least the Syrian people are really served better by having these facts established.
