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PRESS RELEASE

UN Top Official visits Homs, calls for confidence building measures

Homs, 21 May 2012 – United Nations Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous visited today Homs, a city in Western Syria and a flashpoint of the 15-month conflict, to examine the progress of the UN Mission on the ground. Talking to the military observers in Homs, Mr. Ladsous expressed his appreciation to the Head of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), General Robert Mood, and his team, as well as the Syrian parties and member states for the record speed in which the deployment occurred and said that the focus now is on the second phase of the mission.

“You have a very important task to help build the space for a political process on the basis of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Anan’s six-point peace plan,” said Mr. Ladsous. “For that the first goal is to obtain a reduction in the level of violence and this you have clearly done here in Homs. Now there is a need to establish bridges to help solve the practical functions of everyday life and gradually establish degree of confidence between the government and opposition.”

Mr. Ladsous conveyed the same message in his meetings with government officials and opposition groups, both of whom noted the diminishing of violence since the arrival of the observers in the city.

During his meeting with the Governor of Homs, Ghassan Abdelaal, the UN Under-Secretary General said that he was saddened by the large scale destruction he saw in and around the city and emphasized the need to return to some degree of normalcy, urging the Governor to provide services to areas under opposition control. Providing services, according the Mr. Abdelaal, requires entering into opposition controlled areas and that “leads to clashes”.

“This is not an easy process when there has been so many killings and all the destruction,” said Mr. Ladsous. “It requires taking steps to build confidence. Authorizing peaceful demonstrations and releasing detainees would go some way towards consolidating confidence, which so far has been lacking, so that the political process can get started and can gain traction.”

Member of the Revolutionary Council expressed their support for the presence of observers and called on the UN to help in ending the cycle of violence in Syria.

UNITED NATIONS SUPERVISION MISSION IN SYRIA



The Governor of Homs and representatives of the Revolutionary Council condemned the violent bombings that took place in Damascus on May 10th and affirmed their commitment to the six-point plan of the Joint UN-League of Arab States Special Envoy.

“It is encouraging to see civilian and military observers together telling us that the willingness for dialogue is increasingly picking up,” said General Mood. “The discussion now is how we can specifically with action on the ground build trust, build confidence, build bridges, and from there move on in a positive direction.”

During his 4-day trip Mr. Ladsous also visited Douma, another opposition stronghold, and met with Ministers and opposition members in Damascus to help facilitate the work of UNSMIS, ensure the safety of the observers and provide them access and mobility to fulfill their mandate according to UN Security Council Resolution 2043.

“There has been enough killing, destruction and arrests in Syria. We all need to work together to stop this,” stressed Mr. Ladsous. “This will only be done when all Syrian parties commit to end violence and to start a political dialogue.”

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