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PRESS RELEASE

(For immediate release)

AMISOM Urges All Forces In Somalia to Spare Civilians

Nairobi, 20 September, 2012. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, has once again reiterated AMISOM's commitment to minimizing the impact of its operations on the civilian population in Somalia and urged all forces active in the country to follow its example.

“AMISOM takes its responsibility for the safety of the people of Somalia very seriously and fully understands its obligations to conduct operations without causing undue risk to the local population,” Ambassador Diarra said, adding that it was only with the support of the Somali people that AMISOM had been able to achieve success in the capital, Mogadishu, and elsewhere.

AMISOM's overall objective is to enhance security of the population, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and free Somalis from Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab's inhumane treatment.

“The nearest AMISOM forces are about 50km from Kismayo at Janaa Cabdalla,” he said.

“We urge all other military forces active in southern Somalia to exercise due restraint in areas with a substantial civilian population,” he said.

“On our part, we will investigate any credible reports of AMISOM troop's indiscriminately harming civilians and take appropriate action where this is proven to be the case,” he added.

He said that all AMISOM personnel had been trained in the relevant aspects of International Humanitarian Law and that the Mission had adopted a policy on the use of indirect fire which establishes No-Fire Zones in areas of civilian concentration.

He added that AMISOM's successful efforts to reduce harm to civilians, including steps to establish a Civilian Casualties Tracking Cell, had been recognized by the UN Security Council as well as by international human rights agencies.

Amb. Diarra also expressed his concern for the humanitarian plight of those displaced by the fighting in Kismayo. "AMISOM, as per its UN Security Council mandate, stands ready to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to areas under its control," he said.

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