

Statement attributable to the United Nations Country Team in Sudan

Khartoum, 26 May 2011. With tens of thousands of civilians from the Abyei area on the move to southern Sudan, humanitarian organisations are scaling up their response. In this context, the United Nations Country Team is concerned that the premises of humanitarian organisations, both NGOs and UN aid agencies, in Abyei town, have been ransacked and stocks of emergency relief items have been looted.

Items looted include medical supplies, surgical equipment, 800 metric tons of food (equivalent to enough to feed 50,000 people during three months), non-food items and water and hygiene equipment. These supplies had been dispatched to Abyei town in recent weeks to respond to urgent needs of the town residents and the rural population of surrounding villages.

Tens of thousands of people who fled Abyei have arrived in southern Sudan and are in need of urgent assistance. In Turalei, 130 km from Abyei town, 15,000 displaced people are living in the open. An additional 4,000 people have sought safety in near-by Mayen Abun village. Unknown numbers are believed to have fled into the bush between Agok and Turalei.

The Humanitarian Coordinator Mr. Charpentier said “humanitarian agencies are working around the clock to provide assistance. Food and emergency items are being distributed in Mayen Abun and Turalei. Medical and nutritional screening is underway in 11 health posts and seven nutrition centres. Broken water points are being repaired, emergency bladders are being set up and latrines are being constructed. Specialists in child support have also been deployed to help children separated from their families.”

Conditions are difficult in these remote areas but NGO partners are present on the ground and UN agencies had already pre-positioned emergency supplies. However there are concerns that fuel is short and that near-by airstrips may become unusable due to heavy rains.

The United Nations Country Team deplores the looting of emergency relief stocks and calls on all parties to respect the property of UN aid agencies and NGOs, while allowing free and unhindered movement of humanitarian workers and relief items to vulnerable communities that have been displaced from their homes during the recent upsurge in conflict in Abyei and the surrounding region.