



Statement attributed to the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect on the Situation in Côte d'Ivoire

(New York - 19 January 2011) Since we expressed our grave concern about developments in Côte d'Ivoire on 29 December 2010, the incidence of violence and serious human rights violations has not abated. We remain gravely concerned about the possibility of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing in Côte d'Ivoire. We believe that urgent steps should be taken, in line with the "responsibility to protect", to avert the risk of genocide and ensure the protection of all those at risk of mass atrocities.

We are disturbed by allegations that the armed forces and militia groups that back opposing camps in the current political crisis are recruiting and arming ethnic groups allied to each camp. We are also deeply troubled by reports of continuing hate speech that appears to be aimed at inciting violent attacks against particular ethnic and national groups. In the past few days, ethnic clashes have occurred in Duékoué, Gambia and Lakota. As noted by the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Valerie Amos (on 13 Jan 2011), over 23,500 Ivorians have fled to neighbouring countries and 16,000 others are internally displaced as a result of these ethnic clashes. There is a real risk that such clashes could spread across the country. If not checked, they could culminate in mass atrocities.

We urge all parties in Côte d'Ivoire to refrain from inflammatory speech that incites hatred and violence. Those responsible for committing atrocities or their incitement will be held accountable.

We wish to, once more, remind all parties of their responsibility to protect all populations in Côte d'Ivoire, irrespective of their ethnicity, nationality, or religion.

Francis Deng, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Edward Luck, the Special Adviser who focuses on the responsibility to protect, work together to alert relevant actors where there is a risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, to advocate and mobilize for appropriate action and raise awareness of the causes and dynamics of these atrocities.

They have been following the situation in Côte d'Ivoire from the perspective of their mandates and issued their first statement on 29 December 2010.

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