



UNMEE PUBLIC INFORMATION

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STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE SPOKESWOMAN OF UNMEE

It appears that a statement attributed to the Spokeswoman at the UNMEE Weekly Press Briefing of Thursday 24 February, which appeared in an article entitled “UN Concerned by Resettlement of Eritreans Near Ethiopian Border” has found its way into several newspapers both regionally and within the Mission area. UNMEE would like to clarify the following:

1. The headline of this article is misleading, as UNMEE has never expressed concern about the resettlement of Eritreans near the border. This is in fact an internal issue that was dealt with by the Government of Eritrea with assistance from the UN Development Programme and de-mining assistance from the UNMEE Force. Indeed UNMEE at the same Briefing expressed its pleasure at the fact that over 18,000 internally displaced persons have been resettled. The Spokeswoman’s response at the press briefing was to a question from a journalist as to whether UNMEE was concerned about the resettlement of the Internally Displaced Persons in the Temporary Security Zone. Her response was as follows:

“We are just concerned that some of them may be a little too close to where we are located, because we have a number of operations there, including Mine Action, and the Military also have operations there. So we do have some concerns about that, but I think we will raise those concerns with the appropriate authorities.”

2. This statement was in no way expressing “fear for the safety of the IDPs” nor alarm that they were in the vicinity of our operations, as appears in a news story dated 26 February from the same source. Nor is it linked in any way to expressions of concern about military build up of troops along the border attributed to the European Union and the United Nations the week before. These two stories are in no way connected. They are the writer’s interpretation of what was being said.

3. Attempts to have the story corrected at the source have proved futile, as the amended story has been re-printed with an even more sensational headline: “UN Fears for Resettled Eritreans’ safety, close to UNMEE operations.” This again is incorrect.

4. We would ask journalists to please take note of the above and to contact UNMEE for any further clarification needed on this issue. We would hope that journalists would be careful in using information that could be potentially inflammatory at this point in time in the peace process.

For additional information contact the UNMEE Public Information Offices:

Addis Ababa, phone: 251-1-726895; Asmara, phone: 291-1-151908

E-mail: unmeepublicinformation@un.org

Website: <http://www.unmeeonline.org>