CHAD: UNITED NATIONS BOOSTS CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

(N’Djamena / New York / Geneva: 17 August 2008): The United Nations has organized two civil-military coordination workshops in Chad last week, in an endeavour to further improve the efforts of civilian and military actors to work together in delivering humanitarian aid and protecting civilians in the country. The workshops, held in the eastern towns of Goz Beida and Hadjer Hadid, are part of a series launched in the capital N’Djamena last April.

“Dialogue and understanding of each other’s mandates lie at the core of effective relations between the humanitarian community and the military”, said Eliane Duthoit, head of the local Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “This relationship requires continuous attention and hard work”, she added.

The workshops, which each comprised 25 participants, aimed to identify and discuss the main issues in civil-military coordination in Chad, including standard operating procedures, roles, and responsibilities. They also served to disseminate United Nations guidelines on humanitarian civil-military coordination, and to use them for the development of a set of country-specific guidelines. The sessions featured simulations that applied the concepts, principles and policies of United Nations humanitarian civil-military coordination to the Chadian context.

Participants included representatives from United Nations agencies, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the Chadian Red Cross, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and members of the European Union Force (EUFOR Chad/CAR), which currently has a military contingent of approximately 3,100 personnel in Chad.

“In order to fulfil our respective mandates for the benefit of refugees, internally displaced persons [IDPs], and other civilians, we must be aware of the sensitivities, capacities, as well as the limitations, that each actor operating in Chad faces”, said Marie-Sophie Reck, Civil-Military Coordination Officer at the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Chad. “This allows us to ensure that our expectations are realistic, to maintain an effective division of labour, to accept our differences and to complement each other’s efforts where possible and appropriate”, she noted.

There are currently seven United Nations agencies and more than 40 NGOs working in Chad, to assist over half a million people, mainly IDPs and refugees, who heavily rely on humanitarian aid for their survival. In order to enhance protection of civilians and improve humanitarian access, United Nations Security Council resolution 1778 of 25 September 2007 established EUFOR Chad/CAR, along with MINURCAT, which comprises military observers and liaison officers, as well as civilian police.

For further information, please contact:
Maurizio Giuliano, Public Information Officer, United Nations, N’Djamena
Email: giuliano@un.org Tel: +235-6053892
Katy Thiam, Associate Information Officer, United Nations, Abéché, Chad
Email: thiamk@un.org Tel: +235-6201542
Stephanie Bunker, Spokesperson, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), New York
Email: bunker@un.org Tel: +1-917-3675126
Elizabeth Byrs, Spokesperson, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Geneva
Email: byrs@un.org Tel: +41-22-9172653