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OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

Guidance on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA)
to Support Humanitarian Operations in the Context of the
Current Food Security Crisis in the Horn of Africa

- The Horn of Africa is currently in the midst of a serious food security crisis. The United Nations has declared a state of famine in the southern Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions of southern Somalia. There is concern that famine could quickly spread in Somalia and may affect other areas of the Horn if not addressed through rapid action. Many civilian humanitarian resources are being mobilized, but it is necessary to plan for the possibility that certain civilian capabilities could become exhausted. The present document is issued to guide considerations in requesting, mobilizing and integrating foreign MCDA to support humanitarian operations.

- In a humanitarian operation, priority should always be given to the use of civilian assets in responding to needs. When foreign MCDA are used to fill specific capability gaps in a humanitarian operation, this should be done in response to a specific request from the humanitarian community or an Affected State, after having identified such a requirement. In view of the magnitude and severity of the present food security crisis, and the urgency with which humanitarian organizations must act to assist people in acute distress and prevent further deterioration of the situation, there may indeed exist capability gaps that cannot be filled using civilian assets. As humanitarian actors are assessing and responding to the present crisis, they are also working to identify civilian capability gaps, some of which could be filled using foreign MCDA.

- Any utilisation of foreign MCDA to support humanitarian operations in the Horn of Africa should be done in accordance with the principles and criteria set out in the 'Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Activities in Complex Emergencies'. Although the food security crisis triggered the current disaster, it is occurring in some areas where there is a complicated security environment. In particular, any foreign MCDA should:
    - complement civilian capabilities;
    - be used to meet a very specific requirement;
    - be used for limited duration only;
    - provide unique advantages in terms of capability and timeliness;
    - be provided at no cost to the humanitarian budgets of Member States or humanitarian organizations.

- Any utilisation of foreign MCDA, including that provided bi-laterally, to support humanitarian operations in the context of the current crisis should be done in consultation with the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), through OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Section, and in coordination with the appropriate Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator(s) and their Humanitarian Country Team(s). Should there arise a requirement for foreign MCDA to support humanitarian

operations, OCHA, on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team(s), will communicate the requirement to Member States and assist them in ensuring appropriate use of any MCDA that they may provide in response to the requirement.

- In order to ensure the safety and security of those affected by the crisis and humanitarian actors, and access to people in need of humanitarian assistance, lines of communication between humanitarian actors and Member States and their military actors, must be maintained. OCHA has been tasked by the humanitarian community to fulfil this responsibility, to facilitate required information flow, and to establish appropriate liaison, where and when necessary, between humanitarian and military actors.

- In accordance with Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on the Use of Military or Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, only under the most exceptional circumstances are humanitarian actors requesting or using military or armed escorts, under the leadership of the appropriate Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator(s) and Humanitarian Country Team(s).

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