



United Nations MINURSO

United Nations Mission for
the Referendum in
Western Sahara

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Ladsous and Malcorra highlight the current challenges of peacekeeping

The head of the DPKO Hervé Ladsous (seated on the right) underlined on 21 February 2012 before the General Assembly Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations the challenging diversity of work undertaken by DPKO's various field missions, stressing that peacekeepers are a valuable tool in global efforts to respond to threats to international peace and to prevent the recurrence of conflicts.

He pointed out that the global membership of the UN provided peacekeeping with a universal legitimacy and a global reach, adding that it remains a highly-cost effective policy tool for the international community, relative to the costs of conflict. Mr. Ladsous highlighted that the total expenditure on peacekeeping from 1948 to 2010 is estimated at \$69 billion. In comparison, some estimates indicate that the defense expenditure for 2010 of the 15 highest-spending countries amounted to about \$1.6 trillion.
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To address some of the challenges facing peacekeeping missions, such as the shortages of the military helicopters that are crucial for the fulfillment of the civilian protection mandate, Mr. Ladsous said DPKO is exploring the use of modern technology to fill some of the gaps. For her part, Ms. Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support (DFS) , told the Committee that her office is dedicated to sustained efforts to "deliver proactive, effective and responsive support to all field operations." The UN Department of Field Support (DFS) currently provides support to 16 DPKO-led missions and one political mission. It also supports 15 special political missions of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA). The department also leads support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and UN Political Office for Somalia. The complete remarks of the Under-Secretary General for DPKO and that of DFS are available on www.un.org/peacekeeping.



Support to CBM

MINURSO continues providing logistical support for the UNHCR humanitarian family exchange program.

The family exchange visits by air which is a part of UNHCR Confidence Building Measures (CBM) program for Western Sahara separated families and which is a strictly humanitarian and non-political program was resumed this year on 07 January 2011 after a suspension of more than three months (on 17 September 2010).

In January 2012, Hany Abdel-Aziz, the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of MINURSO together with the SG Special Envoy to Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, UNHCR officials, Moroccan and POLISARIO representatives met in Geneva to discuss mainly how to improve the CBM program and increase particularly the number of beneficiaries. The meeting ended with the agreement on expanding the program to benefit tens of thousands of refugees from Western Sahara territory, in enlarging the number of beneficiaries on each trip by utilizing a larger aircraft almost six times the actual aircraft capacity.

This humanitarian program, launched in March 2004 by UNHCR with MINURSO logistical support, has facilitated family visits between refugees living in camps near Tindouf, Algeria with their families in the Western Sahara territory.

The program has met the humanitarian needs of the Sahrawi families who have been separated by the conflict for more than 35 years and allowed them to communicate and stay in contact with each other. Sure enough, beneficiaries, have the chance to spend time with their mother, father, son, daughter, husband, wife, brother or sister. Celebrations takes place each time family members re-unite be it in Western Sahara or in the refugee camps. Crowds surround the UN cars when the beneficiaries stop outside hosts' houses, embracing one another, not seen for a generation and for the younger ones, for the first time. It should be recalled that the number of people benefiting from this humanitarian program, since its launch in March 2004 till October 2011, has reached 11,569.

MINURSO military component held three conferences during February 2012



February was a particularly busy month for MINURSO Military Component. On 08 February 2012, MINURSO Force Commander Major Gen. Abdul Hafiz hosted a Senior National Officer's (SNO) Conference where 30 attendees from participating Observer Contributing Countries received updated briefings on the political and security situation and discussed national issues. The conference was an opportunity for the SNOs to meet with Military Section Chiefs and discuss different issues.

On 15 February, the Force Commander (FC) hosted a Teams Site Commander's Conference, which was attended by all nine team site commanders. In his opening remarks, FC underlined that the aim of the conference was to discuss how to further improve the operational efficiency, promote the ability of commanding, manage effectively the team sites and ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and properties. It also provided team site commanders a good opportunity to communicate with MHQ, receive briefings on the current political, security and aviation safety situation other than guidance from MHQ. Military Section Heads at MHQ also briefed the conference on current issues regarding personnel information, field operations, training, logistics and medical.

On 22 February, FC chaired Military Information and Operations Conference attended by all G2/G3 officers from all the team sites. FC stressed the importance of G2/G3 matters for the effective monitoring of the ceasefire, pointing out that it is vital for the United Nations Military Observers serving at G2/G3 appointments in team sites to be aware of their duties and responsibilities. The conference was a good opportunity for all to learn about their roles, discuss daily problems with MHQ staff and interact in particular with Military Chief Information Officer and Chief Operations.

MINURSO Greening activities



Recycling Point

Receptacles

With the continued support from the MINURSO JLOC and Engineering Sections, the Green Committee has initiated another long awaited greening effort in the form of installation of a recycling point, located behind the MINURSO cafeteria. These clearly labeled receptacles would enable personnel to safely discard all forms of refuse except liquids, food wastage and paper. It is proposed that these discards would be collected centrally and stored to a decent quantum and then sent for recycling. Your earnest cooperation in supporting this initiative would go a long way in the MINURSO Green Committee's greening endeavors.