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PRESS RELEASE

AMISOM comes to the aid of Somali IDPs

Mogadishu, 17th July 2011: Doctors from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) are helping to tackle an outbreak of measles at a camp for Somalis displaced by the drought ravaging the country.

The camp, which has sprung up in the last two weeks next to the Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu, is estimated to hold 700 people though the number is increasing every day. Many, particularly children, show signs of severe malnutrition and say they have walked for up to five days in search of food.

Living conditions at the camp are also extremely poor and have been worsened by recent heavy rains in the capital.

AMISOM's Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) unit has erected 5 large waterproof tents at the camp to serve as accommodations and a medical centre. AMISOM doctors have begun offering free medical treatment, including distributing Vitamin A pills.

In addition to measles, they are also dealing with other diseases, such as malaria and diarrhoea, resulting from a combination of severe malnutrition and the unsanitary conditions at the camp. Serious cases are being referred to AMISOM's Level 2 hospital at the main base.

"Though we have few resources, we are doing all we can to help alleviate the suffering," said CIMIC head, Lt Col. Kaamurari Katwekyeire, adding that AMISOM planned to provide waterproof

plastic sheeting to cover the refugees' shacks which are currently made of sticks and cloth.

He also called on international aid agencies to act urgently and help prevent a catastrophe. "The need is great and we can only make small emergency interventions. We hope that humanitarian organizations will take advantage of the improved security situation to come to the aid of the Somali people," he said.

Somalia is enduring its worst drought in half a century and the UN estimates that close to 3 million Somalis -a third of the population- are facing the prospect of starvation.

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