

**Office of the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia****MEDIA RELEASE****Nairobi, Kenya, Wednesday, 10 September 2008****UN and NGOs condemn attacks on Somali students, teachers and schools**

UN and humanitarian aid agencies working together to support education in crisis-affected areas of Somalia have condemned recent attacks on students, teachers and schools in Mogadishu.

The comments from agencies working together in the 'Education Cluster for Somalia', come in response to the recent upsurge of such incidents including an attack on the SYL Primary and Secondary School and Imam-Shafici Primary School in Hodan District in which five children and two teachers were injured.

The 'Cluster' - which comprises over 20 agencies including UNICEF and UNESCO - say that any attack on children, teachers and education facilities is unacceptable.

According to Cluster Coordinator, Maulid Warfa, "School premises must be respected as safe and protective environments for children and young people. Such attacks are a violation of children's rights and a breach of international treaties, conventions and Somali norms and values."

The agencies are also appealing to traditional leaders, religious groups and other stakeholders to ensure the protection of children and teachers and the safety of school facilities.

"Education is fundamental to the rehabilitation of Somali children and the continuation of education and the safety of school children must be priorities even during armed conflict and crisis. This is why schools must be violence-free zones. We call on all parties to the conflict to ensure the unhindered and safe passage of school children and teachers to education facilities" said Warfa.

The attacks occurred just as schools were re-opening after the holidays at a time when the provision of education in Somalia is already severely affected by drought, insecurity and economic crises.

The Cluster comments come a day after news reports that two teachers were gunned down in Mogadishu on Monday.

ENDS.

Editors Note

The 'Education Cluster for Somalia' comprises over 20 UN & non-governmental humanitarian and development agencies which work together to support the provision of primary education in crisis-affected areas of Somalia. Central and Southern Somalia is an area of the country with a primary school enrolment rate of approximately 20% - the lowest in the world.

Education Cluster members include representatives of UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP, the Somalia Ministry of Education, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, Africa Rescue Committee (AFREC), Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Water for Life, INTERSOS, Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli (CISP), Coordinating Committee of the Organisation for Voluntary Service (COSV), Somali Education Umbrellas, International Aid Sweden (IAS)

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