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Transfer of Authority ceremony

Abéché 15 March 2009

Address by EU Operation Commander, Lt. General Nash

Ministers, Excellencies, Commanders, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to stand before you here today in Abéché on the occasion of the Transfer of Authority from EUFOR to MINURCAT and to address you on behalf of the European Union and the Secretary-General/High Representative of the European Union.

A Transfer of Authority ceremony is also taking place in Birao in Central African Republic at this moment with the Deputy Operation Commander, General Pacek, making the address on behalf of the European Union.

Today marks the closure of one chapter and the opening of a new one in the international presence in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic, a presence committed to ensuring peace and security for the benefit of the people of these two countries.

Our journey started in September 2007 with the adoption by the UN Security Council of Resolution 1778 providing for a multidimensional security presence in Eastern Chad and North-Eastern CAR. As part of that presence, the European Union undertook to deploy a military bridging operation for one year, pending the possible deployment of a UN Follow on Force.

Today the UN flag is flying proudly in the camps of N'Djamena, here in Abéché, in Iriba, Guereda, Forchana and Goz Beida and in Birao in the Central African Republic, marking the successful culmination of months of intense joint planning and hard work between the United Nations and the European Union to secure the seamless hand over from Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA to MINURCAT.

To this end approximately 2000 EUFOR troops are coming under UN command with a further number of European troops supporting the UN for a period. This is clear proof of Europe's commitment to this part of the world and to laying a solid foundation for the continuation of operational tasks by MINURCAT.

Moreover, let me recall that EUFOR was not alone a part of a multidimensional international security presence but was also part of a multifaceted comprehensive approach by the European Union involving humanitarian aid, development assistance and political and diplomatic efforts to secure peace in the region together with our partners. EUFOR will leave but the other strands of the engagement by the European Union in Chad and the Central African Republic will continue at undiminished strength.

Minister, Representatives of the Republic of Chad

EUFOR has been a guest in your country for more than a year and on behalf of the European Union, I wish to pay tribute to Chad for hosting EUFOR and facilitating the deployment of the force; to the local authorities for their welcome of the troops into their region, prefecture or municipality; and to the Chadian population for its acceptance of EUFOR and friendliness towards the troops everywhere in our Area of Operations.

Indeed, the commitment of Chadian authorities at all levels and in all locations to co-operate with EUFOR and the troops throughout the duration of the operation has been deeply appreciated. May I in this regard especially commend the work of CONAFIT.

It is our sincere hope that EUFOR's contribution towards providing security to civilians in Eastern Chad and towards creating the security conditions conducive for the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes will have been of assistance to the overall efforts towards reconstruction and long term development of this part of the country for the benefit of your population.

Under Secretary General, Special Representative, Representatives of the United Nations and MINURCAT

The co-operation between the United Nations and European Union has been unique both in scope and in depth. On behalf of the European Union, I wish to thank sincerely the UN and MINURCAT leadership and all the staff involved for your excellent and dedicated collaboration.

Our joint venture in Eastern Chad and North-Eastern CAR truly marks a new step in the co-operation between the two organisations. Indeed, it has been a challenge to make two very different organisations work hand in hand but through a sense of purpose, commitment and hard work, the common goal has been achieved.

There will be many lessons to be learned from the EUFOR – MINURCAT experience but I have no doubt that the mutual understanding developed and all the various arrangements concluded in order to frame the co-operation and mutual support at both strategic and practical level can serve as a solid basis for future co-operation.

Minister, Excellencies, Representatives of the European Union and Troop contributing Nations

EUFOR is today in a position to report "mission accomplished" to you.

I wish to take this occasion to pay tribute to EU Member States and other EU actors involved for responding to the spill over of the Darfur crisis into Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic by deploying a European Union force and for the unflinching support to this force which has been key to making Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA a reality on the ground.

To those Nations that have provided troops to EUFOR, let me say that without the dedication and professionalism of your troops, EUFOR would not be where we are today. They do us all proud.

A special mention should be made of the significant contributions made by our non-EU partners Albania, Croatia and Russia that have played an important part in making this Operation a success.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the EU Force Commander, General Ganascia for his dedication and leadership on the ground. General Kandji, let me take the opportunity to wish you the best of luck as the MINURCAT Force Commander.

Ministers, Excellencies, Commanders, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today the journey of EUFOR that began more than one and a half years ago in New York and Brussels is coming to an end, here in Chad, here in Stars Camp in Abéché. It is only fitting that we acknowledge the contribution made by those who initiated that journey and had the foresight to see that it was one worth making.

A new journey has now begun for MINURCAT and I wish all involved every success with their important endeavour.

Let my final words be to our two Host Nations, the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic. I wish you the best for the future of your countries and the well-being of your peoples.

Thank you.