

"In the south, the security situation obliged the United Nations to evacuate its international staff from Mogadishu in September. However, given the enormous loss of lives and the intense suffering of the people of Mogadishu, the Secretary-General has decided that in spite of the continuing critical security situation, the United Nations should resume a more active role in relieving the plight of the population.

"For that reason, he has now requested a small team of international staff, initially made up of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) members, to go back to Mogadishu immediately to work alongside relief agencies and local United Nations staff currently working in the city. At the same time contingency plans have been made to expand the relief operations with more food and other supplies to affected populations as soon as the security situation permits.

"The Secretary-General appeals to those involved in the fighting to provide all possible assistance to enable relief operations to reach people in need and to ensure the security and protection of international and local relief workers.

"In that connection, he asks that all parties respect the key principle which governs United Nations emergency relief assistance, namely that such assistance is purely humanitarian in nature and has no political implications. The Secretary-General emphasized that the sole aim of the above operation is to provide urgent assistance to victims of the conflict wherever they may be."

In that connection, Mr. Giuliani said that James O.C. Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, who was overseeing United Nations efforts in this regard, would be travelling to Africa on Monday night and expected to enter Somalia on 2 or 3 January.

Regarding the United Nations representation of the Russian Federation, Mr. Giuliani confirmed that Ambassador Yuliy M. Vorontsov of the former Soviet Union had delivered the following letter from Boris Yeltsin to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on Tuesday evening. Mr. Giuliani read the following excerpt of the letter, copies of which were available in room 378:

"I have the honour to inform you that the membership of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the United Nations, including the Security Council and all other organs and organizations of the United Nations system, is being continued by the Russian Federation (RSFSR) with the support of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In this connection, I request that the name "the Russian Federation" should be used in the United Nations in place of the name "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics".

"The Russian Federation maintains full responsibility for all the rights and obligations of the USSR under the Charter of the United Nations, including the financial obligations.

"I request you to consider this letter as confirmation of the credentials to represent the Russian Federation in United Nations organs for all the

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- 9 SEP RECD

- 1 -

- 3 -

27 December 1991

DPI Briefing

persons currently holding the credentials of representatives of the USSR to the United Nations."

Anticipating questions about the new Russian flag, Mr. Giuliani said that Ambassador Vorontsov had presented the United Nations with the new flag which was now being altered to conform with U.N. specifications so that it could be hoisted along with all of the flags of the United Nations. In that connection, Mr. Giuliani drew attention to the statement which had been made yesterday by the Secretary-General on the resignation of Mr. Gorbachev (Press Release SG/SM/4681).

Questioned about the physical preparation of the new Russian flag and when it would be hoisted outside the United Nations building, Mr. Giuliani said that he had no definite information on the hoisting of the flag; he would look into the matter. (After the briefing, it was announced that the prototype of the flag of the Russian Federation would be hoisted at approximately 2 p.m. today.) The regular flag was still being readied and would replace the present one in due course.

Regarding the status of the overall hostage situation, Mr. Giuliani said that it had been confirmed to Giandomenico Picco during the night that the body of William Buckley, a United States hostage later executed by his captors, had been identified in a Beirut hospital and handed over to the United States Embassy. In that connection, he said there would be a ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base for Colonel William Higgins on Monday, 30 December, at which the United Nations would be represented by Mr. Picco.

Questioned about efforts to recover the body of Alec Collett, Mr. Giuliani said that the Secretary-General's intensive efforts were continuing in that regard, but they had not been successful so far.

Questioned about the whereabouts of Herbert Okun, an aide to Mr. Vance, Mr. Giuliani said that he would check.

Asked whether he had any "reaction" to the Security Council's inability, last week to adopt the Secretary-General's report on Western Sahara, Mr. Giuliani pointed out, that the reason why the Report had not been adopted at that time was not because of its substance but rather due to that fact that a member of the Council had introduced a number of amendments.

Asked whether the Georgian Republic would be represented at the United Nations by the Russian Federation, Mr. Giuliani said that, as far as he had seen from the press reports, the Georgian Republic had not joined the Commonwealth and was expected to apply for United Nations membership on its own.