



Dynamism

United Nations MINURSO

Volume I - Issue 9

May 2012

United Nations Mission for
the Referendum in
Western Sahara

Message from USG Ladsous and ASG Banbury on International Day of UN Peacekeepers, observed on 29 May 2012

Inside this issue:



Message from USG Ladsous and ASG Banbury on International Day of UN Peacekeepers 2012 1

AOAV/Mechem helps camel herders access Water in Mijek 2

Leyla Khalfallah : Renovation of the Library is the fruit of a collective work 3

MINURSO newsletter

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Today is a solemn day for all of us in UN Peacekeeping, as we pause to reflect and honor the over 2,900 peacekeeping colleagues who have lost their lives serving the cause of peace since our first mission in 1948. We honor the memory of 112 colleagues who lost their lives in 2011 and the 31 who perished in the service of peace already this year. Today is also a day to celebrate our achievements, and to reflect on the significance of the work that each and every one of you do, every day. This morning we participated in New York in a solemn wreath-laying ceremony led by the Secretary-General. And we will have other events throughout the day for the peacekeeping family. We know that in each of our 17 operations around the world you are marking this solemn day in your own way, and that you are also celebrating with host governments and communities your joint efforts to bring stability and peace. We wanted to reach out and thank each and every serving peacekeeper for your daily efforts to help bring stability and peace to some of the most vulnerable people on earth. Peacekeeping is not glamorous work. We go to some of the most troubled places to help people restore their lives and communities after the horror of war and armed conflict. We are separated from our own families and communities. We are called to work in extremely challenging and often dangerous situations. You have our pledge that we will continue to spare no effort to ensure that all UN peacekeepers have the best security possible. We also convey our special thanks to our colleagues serving at this time at headquarters - for your dedication and tireless efforts to support our brothers and sisters serving on the front lines of UN peacekeeping. This year, the International Day of UN Peacekeepers focuses on peacekeeping as a vital and effective global partnership. Today, we pay tribute to all those who make UN peacekeeping a viable tool for international peace and security - the legislative bodies - Security Council and the General Assembly - Member States who contribute troops, police, resources and training, and increasingly with regional organizations, who bring added legitimacy as well as regional knowledge and focus, and greater efficiency and effectiveness. Whether military, police or civilian personnel, wherever and however you serve, you all have the privilege to serve a noble cause - to make a difference to the lives of millions of people, every day. And, it is through our collective and personal efforts and through perseverance in the cause of peace that we all best honor our colleagues who have gone before us and pay tribute to their memory.

AOAV/Mechem helps camel herders access water in Mijek



Camels drink from well in Mijek, Western Sahara
©MINURSO MACC 2012

When a camel shepherd struggled to access water for his herds in the Mijek area, the MINURSO Mine Action Coordination Centre (MACC) and its implementing partner, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)/Mechem were there to help. There is not a lot of water for the camels out here and oftentimes the herders have to travel at least 25 km to find

water. Given the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) along with a lack of water, livelihood opportunities are limited. Humanitarian mine action activities, however, not only save lives but increases access to scarce resources, such as water, allowing for local populations to enjoy more opportunities for socioeconomic growth and development. In October 2011, the MACC tasked AOAV/Mechem to address landmine/ERW threats in the Mijek area as several hazardous areas were known to be blocking access to water. Thanks to the tireless efforts of AOAV/Mechem deminers, over 1.8 million sqm of land in the Mijek area (the equivalent of 252 football pitches) has been cleared as of June 2012, and camel herders such as Mr. Embarac are now able to construct wells, safely access water and graze their animals. Demining teams will continue to work in the area until all known threats are addressed.

UNMAS established the MACC in 2008 in to address landmine/ERW threats throughout Western Sahara and to serve as focal point for mine action issues within MINURSO. Since then, the MACC, in partnership with its implementing partner AOAV/Mechem has cleared over 15 million sqm of land on the East side of the berm, significantly reducing the threat and impact of mines and ERW throughout the region. addressed.

The Chairperson of Welfare and Recreation Committee Ms. Leyla Khalfallah speaks about the renovation of MINURSO Library



Question: How did you come up with this idea of renovating MINURSO library ?

Answer : When I took the responsibility of the library , I noticed that we have books in the mission but they were not available for borrowing or reading for the simple reason that a few staff members were aware of the existence of the library and there was lack of enthusiasm which I think was due to its former location which I believed was not suitable. Many colleagues did not even know the place. When I visited it for the first time I was shocked: it was dark without windows! I just wanted to get out.

Q: How did you proceed to achieve this goal?

A: I committed myself to refresh the interest in reading as we already have many books and magazines which I think are worth reading. I decided to make every possible effort to make the room suitable and to assist in making every reader feel comfortable. Despite the budgetary constraints I convinced the former CMS of the need to renovate the place and got his full cooperation as well as the support of CCITS and Engineering Section colleagues as well as many technicians, contractors, handymen and cleaners. The number of colleagues who participated in this renovation is incredible! I would like to thank all of them very much for their good work and their valuable efforts. This renovation is the fruit of a collective work.

Q: Was it an easy task?

A: It was not easy to achieve but it was very challenging! When I found the room, it was not only untidy and dim but it looked far from being ideal for a library. Then I had to seek the approval of the administration to mobilize sections mainly engineering and request staff to donate additional books. I was as busy as a bee.

Q: Are you now satisfied with this accomplishment?

A : I believe it was a fruitful experience. Still, we are in the beginning and I strongly believe that through sharing opinions and ideas we could certainly improve this Library. I would like also to find a way to give to our UNMOs in team sites the chance to get access to the library. We will find the best way to make this possible. I remain open to any suggestion from our military colleagues.

Q: How do you think this idea could be improved in the future?

A : I believe that the library could serve as a place for staff members to read, to relax and share ideas. Also, it could be a visiting area for our UNMOS who worked in team sites and who are temporarily in Laayoune HQ to use computers, and research materials. It also could be a place to host special events such as cultural competitions on a small scale.