

THE UNITED NATIONS WELCOMES THE CLOSURE OF MENIK FARM IN SRI LANKA BUT IS CONCERNED FOR THE LAST REMAINING DISPLACED PEOPLE

(Colombo, 25 September 2012): Menik Farm in Sri Lanka, once the world's largest camp for people displaced from the conflict in Sri Lanka in 2009 has closed, as the last remaining inhabitants leave the camp.

“This is a milestone event towards ending a chapter of displacement in Sri Lanka some three years after the civil war which ended in May 2009. But there are still some people who are unable to return to their homes and a solution urgently needs to be found,” said the United Nations (UN) Humanitarian Coordinator in Sri Lanka, Mr. Subinay Nandy.

The UN is concerned about 346 people (110 families) who are returning from Menik Farm to Kepapilavu in Mullaitivu District, who are unable to return to their homes which are occupied by the military. Instead, they are being relocated to state land where they await formal confirmation about what is happening to their land in the future, and plans for compensation if they cannot return.

“While these last residents have not been able to return to their former land the Government is providing them with land in another area The Government is looking for solutions but it is important that the displaced people should be able to make an informed and voluntary decision about their future including being part of the planning and management of their resettlement,” said Mr Nandy.

The Government-run Menik Farm was set up in May 2009 to shelter thousands of people fleeing from the final stages of the civil war. At its peak Menik Farm housed 225,000 people in 700 hectares of land. International organizations have been providing basic services such as shelter, food, water and sanitation, schools and primary health care along with other services.

“The closure of the camp is a significant sign of the transition from conflict to sustainable peace and the commitment of the Government to resettling tens of thousands of people back to their homes,” said Mr Nandy.

“But there are still many people living with friends and relatives particularly in Jaffna and Vavuniya, or living in welfare centres. Some of these people have been displaced for years and they also need a lasting solution,” said Mr Nandy.

Mr Nandy called on the Sri Lankan authorities to fully implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) concerning the rights of people displaced by the conflict. “Allowing people to settle anywhere in the country and resolving legal ownership of land for those who have resettled away from their original homes is a key part of the reconciliation process.”

*For further information, please call: **Brendan McDonald**, OCHA-Sri Lanka, +94 (0)114528689 Ext: 203,
mobile +94 (0) 773237519, mcdonaldb@un.org
OCHA press releases are available at <http://www.unocha.org> or www.reliefweb.int.
OCHA on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/unocha>*