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PRESS RELEASE:

As Goma falls to rebels, displaced young girls and boys face increased risk of rape and recruitment

Geneva, November 2012: *As Goma falls to rebel group M23, and tens of thousands are forced to flee their homes, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) highlight critical concerns regarding internally displaced girls and boys who face an increased risk of rape, abuse and recruitment.*

At the weekend, an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp of over 50,000 people emptied in just a few hours as the rebel group closed in and people fled to Goma in search of safety in the city. 'With 300,000 people displaced by M23 since April, the equivalent of the population of Venice, what we are now seeing is that the fighting between the rebel group and the Congolese army is displacing the displaced again, stretching the coping abilities of an already exhausted community' says Sebastian Albuja, IDMC's Head of Africa Department.

With reports that Goma has fallen to M23, its population of up to 500,000 people now caught up in the conflict are facing the risk of being forced from the safety of their homes. IDMC and NRC are particularly concerned about the consequences of the current conflict on children; boys are at increased risk of recruitment and girls are at increased risk of rape, with the majority of victims of sexual attacks in DRC being between 8 and 17, 13.3% are younger than 10.

'Internally displaced children and specifically boys in North Kivu are at particular risk of being recruited by a variety of armed groups' says Olivia Khallis, Policy and Advocacy Advisor for NRC office in DRC (currently in Kigali). 'IDPs are locking up or hiding their children fearing attack and forced recruitment with girls and boys will be taken by armed actors.'

'The UN Security Council needs to do all within its capacity to prevent the conflict from escalating even further, and put serious pressure on all parties to the conflict to find a resolution' says Elisabeth Rasmusson, Secretary General of NRC. 'Particular attention should further be drawn to the recently adopted resolution on children and armed conflict by the Security Council that aims to protect children from armed groups, with a particular focus on the needs of young internally displaced girls and boys.'

Notes to editors:

- There are 5 IDP camps surrounding the city of Goma: Kanyarucinya, Mugunga I, Mugunga II, Mugunga III and Lac Vert. Combined, they host roughly 95,000 IDPs (data missing for Mugunga II and Lac Vert, need to confirm total). People have fled to these camps since 2009, when the government launched large-scale military operations against the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda FDLR, and more recently in 2012, fled fighting between government forces and the M23.
- The Kanyarucinya camp, located north of Goma, is the largest of these five camps, hosting up to 60,000 people who settled there as they fled ongoing fighting. All IDPs in the Kanyarucinya camp have reportedly fled following M23's attack last weekend, and have found shelter in schools and parishes. Authorities have reportedly encouraged them to resettle in one of the other four camps.
- According to IDMC analysis, there are at least 772,500 IDPs in North Kivu (as of 30 September, 2012). There are over 2,435,000 IDPs in all of DRC.
- Since fighting between the Congolese army and M23 erupted Saturday at the Kanyarucinya IDP camp north of Goma, affecting some 60,000 IDPs residing in the camp, people had to flee very quickly to Goma and to Mugunga camp and other towns and villages in the south of the province. Those who fled to Goma and the civilians in Goma were forced to evacuate their families as the fighting was brought to the city. The people arriving at Mugunga are in poor state, in desperate need of aid but due to ongoing fighting, humanitarian access is extremely limited. In September the Security Council resolved to hold responsible all parties to armed conflict which commit grave abuses against children, including those who recruit and use children, kill and maim, commit sexual violence or attack schools and hospitals, immediately halt such practices and take special measures to protect children.
- Since 2008, LRA has been abducting children in North-Eastern DRC to use them as soldiers, porters, sex slaves and cooks. Girls represent almost 50% of children abducted by LRA in DRC in 2009

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The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (<http://www.internal-displacement.org>) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in 1998. Monitoring internal displacement caused by conflict, violence, human rights violations and

natural disasters in over 50 countries, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is widely respected as the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement throughout the world.

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