



UNMIS

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson**23 March 2005**

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's weekly briefing (12:30PM) by Radhia Achouri, Spokesperson for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan:

Good afternoon,

Secretary-General

The Secretary-General met yesterday with President Al Bashir on the margins of the Arab League Summit. The Secretary-General said in his encounter with the press in Algiers that he had had a good discussion with President Al-Bashir. They discussed the situation in Darfur and the measures that need to be taken to bring the situation under control: the need for the cease fire to be respected by both parties, including the rebels, both parties are to respect the commitments they signed. "We need to make sure there is security for people to go back to their villages to begin preparing for the next crop. We need to insure that the international community stays engaged, not only in the Darfur situation, but also in the implementation of the Naivasha agreements" the Secretary-General said.

They also discussed the UN deployment of troops to southern Sudan to work with the government and the SPLM/A in the implementing of the agreement they signed in Nairobi. The Secretary-General indicated that "we also insist that a political agreement should be reached in Darfur between the rebels and the government, and they did give me the indication that they will work very hard on that, but all of us, the international community and the parties in Sudan, have to work on this".

SRSG

- Following the attack on an International Rescue Committee-US Agency for International Development (USAID)- Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) convoy yesterday in the road between Nyala and Kass (South Darfur) that resulted on the wounding of a member of DART, the SRSG states the following: He deplores the attack that was clearly an ambush since there is no indication that warning shots were fired before shooting at the convoy. The convoy was attacked despite the fact that cars were clearly marked as humanitarian vehicles. He strongly condemns attacks on INGOs and Humanitarian workers, which ultimate victims are the people to be helped. He is deeply concerned that there is ground now to assume that foreigners are being directly attacked. The United Nations is taking precautions measures to face this situation and has declared the road between Nyala and Kass closed for UN movement until further notice. This road has been closed around the month of February and reopened shortly thereafter because of the compelling necessity to provide humanitarian assistance to the large IDP population in the area. The SRSG believes that these incidents are

not likely to stop unless a very robust protection force of at least 8, 000 troops is deployed in Darfur to protect the civilian population and the humanitarian workers and humanitarian deliveries.

- The SRSG is back to Khartoum from his two days working visit to Luxembourg where he met with high EU officials and the EU Ministers of Defense. The main objective of the visit was to mobilize the EU political support and its participation in the forthcoming UN peace support mission as well as the EU support to the AU mission deployed in Darfur.

-The SRSG will be conducting a visit to the Nuba Mountains on 26 and 27 of this month. This visit is part of a series of field visits by the SRSG to the areas where the UN will be playing a role once it deploys its peace support mission.

-The SRSG will be meeting tomorrow with the First Vice-President, Ali Osman Taha. The SRSG will brief the Vice-President on his recent talks in Asmara with the rebels groups of Darfur, SLM/A and JEM as well as with the Beja Congress and the Free Lions from Eastern Sudan.

Security Issues:

- North Darfur: On 18 March, a vehicle belonging to the Government Water, Environment and Sanitation agency (WES) was hijacked in the region of Kafod, about 70 km NW of El Fasher. A passenger who was initially detained was subsequently released but the whereabouts of the driver and the vehicle are unknown.
- South Darfur: Security incidents targeting commercial trucks continue to be reported including an attack on two commercial trucks traveling from Abrum to Kass on 16 March. The perpetrators looted items from the vehicles and reportedly killed one person and injured one. An additional passenger is reported missing.
- In another incident, on 18 March, armed men attacked a passenger bus outside Beliel, which resulted in fighting between the passengers and the attackers. Some of the passengers were reported to have been carrying WFP food ration cards from Kalma camp.
- On 20 March, an INGO team traveling with two vehicles was temporarily detained by militias. The militias reportedly took the staff's communications equipment before releasing them.
- West Darfur: All major roads out of El Geneina town, except for areas north of Sirba have been cleared for UN movement. However, UN agencies are now required to travel in convoys of four vehicles instead of the usual requirement of two per convoy. The UN continues to assess the threat received by militia that they will be targeting foreigners.
- On 20 March, two national staff members working for an INGO were abducted by unidentified gunmen during an attack on their convoy near Dabanera village, 5 km from Golo in Jebel Mara. Although the staff members were subsequently released later during the day, they reported to have been beaten and looted of their personal items, including money and watches. On the same day, it was reported that guards interrupted two armed men who were attempting to enter an INGO warehouse in Zaleingi. The men shot in the air before fleeing the site.
- Unity State: There has been an increase in reports of the looting of cattle by militias and other unidentified armed groups in remote areas Unity State over the last month. This insecurity could lead to armed clashes between militia groups and civilians.

Protection Issues:

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- North Darfur: Agencies commenced identification of IDPs with physical disabilities during the week of 13 March. So far, 77 IDPs have been identified. Agencies hope that this exercise will improve the services provided to these IDPs and address their specific needs.
- South Darfur: The relocation of Kalma IDPs continues to experience delays as agencies are now assessing the appropriateness of Hashaba site, an area indicated by GoS authorities as a possible site. IOM is following up on the issue.
- West Darfur: Protection incidents involving IDPs in Nertiti continue to be reported. In the most recent reports, three women were reportedly abducted by unknown individuals in Nertiti on 12 Mar. Another woman was reportedly shot in the arm in the same area on 16 Mar. The West Darfur Protection Working Group is following-up on this matter with the authorities.

Humanitarian Affairs:

Food/NFIs

- North Darfur: Approximately 200 new households arrived in Abu Shouk between 19 and 21 March. The new arrivals are reportedly from the Korma area and cited insecurity, including lootings by militia, and food shortage as reasons for their displacement. The new arrivals further informed agencies that additional persons were expected to arrive in the camp over the next few days.
- Local authorities have indicated an alternative site to accommodate the approximately 25,000 IDPs that are currently in Abu Shouk camp (North Darfur). Agencies hope that the new site will be the final option and would hold adequate and good water sources so that the relocation could be carried out as soon as possible.
- Following a temporary impasse of about three weeks where access to SLA areas in North Darfur was halted due to the absence of a reliable SLA interlocutor to carry out the notification procedure, access resumed after a meeting with a new SLA interlocutor on 18 Mar. The interruption of access to SLA areas over the past couple of weeks appears to have seriously affected the availability of food in Malha. WFP along with its implementing partners are following up on the issue and planning a food distribution for the month of March. A steady stream of new arrivals to Zam Zam camp is affecting the limited water and sanitation sources in the camp. Agencies are investigating the reasons behind the new displacement, suspected to be triggered by food insecurity in the rural areas around the camp. Due to a break in the WFP food pipeline, planned food distributions in some areas of North Darfur for approximately 45,000 beneficiaries have been postponed until further notice.
- During a coordination meeting on 20 March in El Fasher, WFP indicated that insecurity and logistical difficulties are expected to delay food distributions for the month of Mar. This follows a sharp increase in the number of security incidents affecting commercial transports since the beginning of Mar.
- Humanitarian agencies met on 20 March to discuss assistance to nomadic communities in North Darfur and tentatively agreed to conduct an interagency assessment of nomadic communities in rural Kutum between 2 and 4 April. Agencies have agreed to meet after the completion of the assessment for further discussions.
- South Darfur: An interagency team plans to travel to areas west of Ed Daein in Assalaya area to assess humanitarian needs, particularly the food situation, in the coming week.
- Agencies operating in Kalma have commenced planning for the upcoming rainy season expected in May-June to avoid camp flooding, collapse of latrine facilities and potential

inaccessibility to the camp (one of the largest camps with a population of approximately 150 thousand IDPs)

- West Darfur: WFP's implementing partner, CARE, plans to complete registration of beneficiaries in Garsila, Deleij, Mukjar, Bindisi, Um Kheir, Zaleingi and Um Dukum during the week of 20 March. The registration in Bindisi on 20 Mar. was temporarily disrupted due to some disruptions by the IDPs.
- Upper Nile: The final report of the Rapid Needs Assessment in Akobo, Jonglei has been released and circulated by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EP&R). While the findings do not call for immediate action owing to the volatile security environment, the report suggests that if possible, before the start of the rainy season, assistance should be provided together with WFP food aid distribution to the vulnerable resident population in the area. It was recommended that non-food deliveries, including seeds and tools should be distributed to the approximately 2000-3000 returnees and those who may have lost their assets during the militia attack on Akobo in mid-Feb. A registration/tracking system should also be put in place to monitor the influx of returnees from Ethiopia. Tribal differences between Anyuak and Nuer continue and are hindering access to resources. It was recommended that this issue be addressed by the Protection Sector.
- Equatoria: WFP is now sending food to the Ezo and Tambura camps, while the NFIs released by UNICEF have reached Yambio and should be distributed by World Vision. UNICEF is also following with World Vision to address the health needs. FAO promised to give a feedback on seeds and agricultural tools in the first week of April, while UNHCR and UNICEF are looking at rehabilitation of the water points as suggested in the Ezo and Tambura Needs Assessment report.

Health

- North Darfur: A meningitis outbreak has been declared in the State after agencies confirmed four cases in Saraf Umra, three of them during the same week. A total of five laboratory confirmed cases of Meningococcal Meningitis have been reported in the IDP camp of Saraf Omra in North Darfur since 11 January 2005. According to the WHO, the threshold has been passed and the situation has developed into an outbreak. The total of suspected cases (including unconfirmed cases) is 27, including two deaths within the camp. A micro plan to vaccinate Saraf Omra has been developed and about 160,000 doses of Meningitis trivalent vaccine have been requested from WHO Geneva. WHO provided all laboratory reagent and supplies for the confirmation of the disease together with drugs necessary for case management in all of Sudan's states.
- South Darfur: Preliminary results from a nutritional survey conducted by Tearfund in four IDP gatherings in the Ed Daein area, including camps in Ed Daein, Khor Omer, El Ferdous and Abu Matariq, indicate Global Malnutrition Rates (GAM) of over 20% and Severe Malnutrition Rates (SAM) of around 4%. Although the results have not yet been confirmed, the initial indications are of concern as they surpass the emergency threshold of around 10% GAM. Lack of food and access to water sources appear to be responsible for the high rates. Agencies operating in Kass reported 10 cases of measles during the week of 23 March. Agencies are advocating for a mass vaccination in the area to the Ministry of Health.
- World Vision (WVI) reports an increase in bloody diarrhoea cases in Duma, one of the camps in Nyala town. WVI along with MoH is conducting laboratory tests to check whether the strain of dysentery is the same one reported during the week in Kalma camp. Agencies in Kalma have responded to the increased cases in Kalma with a mass distribution of soap accompanied with a hygiene campaign and a plan to increase water availability in the camp.

- Unity State: The new hospital in Bentiu has not been in use since it was inaugurated by the President of Sudan on 20 February. The hospital was constructed with funds from local oil companies, and the medical equipment is in place inside the hospital. There is, however, a lack of qualified health personnel in Unity State, and therefore the hospital is not operating. The State Ministry of Health previously stated that it does not have the financial resources to attract the necessary health personnel from outside to work in Unity State. The situation was highlighted by the UN agencies on the ground during the visit of the donor mission.

Returns

- Bahr el Ghazal: Sustainable Returns Team South, with support from the Norwegian liaison office, has been able to move forward on finding a solution to land allocation for some 500 returnees who have been living in an encampment behind the Rumbek hospital since last summer. A decision will be taken by local authorities, SRRC, IDP representatives and local community representatives in a meeting on the 22 March.
- Figures released on the 20 March by OCHA suggest that at approximately 1,500 internally displaced are returning to south Sudan each week. The numbers have been collected through a joint GOS, SPLM, United Nations, IOM, and NGO monitoring and tracking system. Between 12 and 17 Mar., 1,531 returnees traveled through Kosti heading to destinations in South Sudan. A comprehensive tracking and monitoring system is currently being established in places of displacement, major return areas and along return routes.

Mrs. JoAnna Van Gerpen, welcome to our briefing and thank you very much for allocating time for us to brief media representatives here on the donor mission that has been dispatched to Sudan. I understand that you played quite a role there so the floor is yours and we are all ears.

Van Gerpen:

First of all, I don't want to repeat the press release that was issued on Sunday summarizing the outcome of the donor mission. I will just give you a brief background and then perhaps open up for any questions that may come from the press statement or from the donor mission

The real purpose of the mission was perhaps two-fold. First of all we are trying to mobilize funds for Sudan for the very many, wide range of needs that exist particularly now that we have an ongoing humanitarian emergency in Darfur and also the post-conflict situation that is emerging in the south with the prospect of the large numbers of return as well as the opportunity to move into the recovery and development phase and helping the south to recover from the 20 years of conflict.

The very complexity of Sudan meant that we thought also it was important for donors to see the wide spectrum of needs that exist in Sudan; that it is not only a humanitarian situation throughout the country but there are also emerging recovery and development needs.

The mission began on the 13th of March and continued until the 19th of March. The first day was a day of briefings with the UN, with the government, colleagues here in Khartoum and international and national NGOs. They spent five days in the field and they were divided into seven teams. Each team visited two locations of all cases. The two locations were generally

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different parts of the country so that somebody who went to Darfur then went to Rumbek, somebody who went to Juba also went to Darfur, and somebody who went to Port Sudan went to Abyei. So it was a total of 14 locations.

We had 34 donor participants. They came from eleven countries across the European Community. After five days of travel in the field they spent a day here. Part of the day on Saturday as debriefing, sharing information with each other about the various locations that had been visited, what their perceptions were and what they saw as the priorities.

I think the press statement did a very good job of summarizing the general theme that came out of the donor visits. This is not intended to be a visit where at the end there will be a pledging. We didn't intend to come up with specific money from this. It was intended to acquaint the donors with the activities that are being done on the ground and the needs, with the contents of the UN Work Plan 2005 which outlines resource requirements for this year and also as a preparatory process for the Oslo conference which will be a pledging conference on 11th and 12th of April looking at the needs of the Sudan for perhaps the next two years

I think with that perhaps I should stop and open up for questions.

Q: The international community has in the past promised development aid to Sudan in the event a final peace deal is reached in south Sudan. Now, the tone has changed and the pledge is now on the realization of a peace deal or solutions to the situation in Darfur.

Has this mission of the international donor delegation reached common grounds with government?

A: Van Gerpen: As I mentioned, this donor mission was not intended to result in any specific pledges at the end of the session. It was intended to acquaint the donors with the situation and the needs on the ground. So there was no formal agreement. We do expect it to result in contributions to the UN Work Plan and we also feel it was a very important preparatory process for the Oslo meeting which is a pledging conference on the 11th-12th of April

Radhia

Is that satisfactory to you or would you like to follow up on your question?

Q: There was an understanding that international assistance for development assistance was pegged to the signing of the CPA. Nowadays, is it still the understanding that the international community will carry on and start providing the assistance or will it still be tied also to the issue of Darfur?

A: Van Gerpen: For sure the international community continues to be very concerned about the lack of political progress in Darfur and the impact that will have, I can't state.

But the Oslo conference, which is a pledging conference for the post-conflict needs, at this time is going forward on the 11th to 12th. It is not possible for anyone to put a specific amount on the table and say this is the amount of international assistance that is going to be available. At the Oslo meeting there is a document that is going to be presented it is called the Joint Assessment Missions. It is a document that has been compiled collaboratively between the

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GoS, the SPLM, the UN, the World Bank and other members of the international community. That document has an estimate of 7 – 8 billion dollars of needs over the coming years but there is high expectation that a large percentage, perhaps two-thirds of that, will be funded by Sudan's own resources and that the international community will step in to contribute to the other one-third of those needs.

I think that it was an important message that came in out of the donor mission that the donor countries are looking for transparency from the part of the government as to which of those needs will be addressed with government resources and what they are going to prioritize with Sudan's own funds and then where are gaps where international support is needed. But that support will take many forms. It can be bilateral assistance directly with the government, it can be support to the UN or to INGOs and it will begin this year and stretch over the coming 2 to 6 years. I think that it is not something that we are going to have a concrete answer to in the next month or so. It will be a revolving process but certainly the commitment of the international community is there and the interest in this donor mission was extremely high I think because of the concern that the international community has to assist the Sudan to consolidate the peace process.

Radhia

Thank you. Just to add something to that question on Darfur. What I can say on this is that of course as Ms. Van Gerpen said, we are extremely concerned, every body is extremely concerned – the UN agencies, programs and all that, the donor community as well – however, so far what I can tell you is that we did not hear anybody tying up meeting their pledges and commitments, as far as the issue that you raised is concerned, to the issue of Darfur. We have not heard anything of this nature so far. So we take it that whatever has been agreed upon before is going to be implemented and we have not heard about any new conditionality put on providing the required financial support for these projects to be tied up to the issue of Darfur. We did not hear anything so I take it that there is no such conditionality.

Q: If I could just quote the last statement of the press release: “the donor mission helped highlight these needs in areas of the country that have been receiving less attention and support ...”. Last Monday we had been in an area of IDPs in north Omdurman, Sheikan and el-Fateh. The people there are really in need of sanitation, water, health facilities and may be all the other basic needs and social services. Has the donor community which recently concluded its tour here visited that area? If not, what made it impossible for them not to visit the area because that area is in need of such support? The situation we saw in that area and as has been described by other people is a lot worse than it was in Afghanistan during the *Taliban* war.

A: Van Gerpen: I should have mentioned that the donor mission was composed of 34 people. One-third of them came from outside and two-thirds came from embassies that are based here so they were collecting information locally. Our sense in planning the field trips was that most of the donors who were participating had actually already had the opportunity to visit IDP camps here in Khartoum. So we didn't have a specific plan to visit the camps as this particularly was providing the opportunity to go to some of the other areas of Sudan to compliment their own current experience.

It certainly is a current concern and a priority for the UN to look at the newly-emerging IDP camp situation here in Khartoum and we see it as a high priority as you do and there was a discussion of these needs during the donor mission briefings as well as the de-briefings.

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Q: If we would concentrate just on the Work Plan, up to now, according to your statement, only 350 million of the 1.5 billion dollars has been received. And you are saying that this mission may be able to get more. But what is new? If two-thirds of this mission are already here in Khartoum and this appeal has been launched at the end of November. And now after four months we are having a new mission to push it forward. It doesn't make any sense to me.

A: Van Gerpen: I think that the fact that only 350 million dollars has been received of 1.5 billion dollars for a plan that is for 2005 only is a topic of concern. And most of that 350 million dollars is in food aid for Darfur. So there has not only been a very limited response to the UN Work Plan but it has been very imbalanced in the fact that most of the money is for food and that very little has come for water, for health activities, very little for education. What has come has been primarily humanitarian, oriented towards Darfur and there has not yet been much response for the other parts of the country.

I think that you could say that the donors here in Khartoum – and as I said, they have had a chance to visit the IDP camps here in Khartoum and are familiar with this situation – but many of them focused their visit primarily on Darfur over the last year. So the important part of the purpose of this mission was to provide an opportunity to see the other parts of the country: the eastern region, the southern regions and the transition areas. And the fact, when the donors signed up, indicated that. We had very few people who indicated interest to go to Darfur and to few other areas that have received a lot of visits. Most of them signed up to go to areas where there have not been a lot of visits. For example Blue Nile was one of the most full trips – we had a full team. We cancelled the North Darfur visit not because North Darfur was not a priority, but we consolidated the three teams into two teams for Darfur.

Q: The question still remains that this appeal has been launched three months ago and the mission has come up now at the end of March.

A: Van Gerpen: Usually the UN organizes this. It is because we do feel that response to the appeal has been slow. We learnt a lot of lessons on that. This is the first time the UN has organized this kind of mission. It was an extremely complex mission and an opportunity for donors to come together and learn from each other because it is difficult for one person to travel to fourteen locations but by traveling at a similar time and spending time together, debriefing, allowing them to share information, we hope will give a more balanced feel of the situation in the country.

But the bottom-line, I think behind your question, is that response has been much slower than expected. We need the money early in the year in order to accelerate implementation before the rainy season and also to show some tangible progress against the peace agreement and the support has been slow coming.

Q: Jan Egeland, in his briefing, said that the needs for South Sudan will need a lot more support. The purpose of the mission of the donor countries may be was to set an agenda for discussion at the Oslo conference. To date there has been no tangible support for returnees in South Sudan and the situation it may seem may require some solutions. What possible measures are there that could be taken to resolve these problems?

A: Van Gerpen: I think the answer is that what we need is not the same resources that we received last year for the UN appeal. We need more than what we received last year. Because now with the peace agreement we have a larger and broader spectrum of issues that need to

be addressed immediately. Many of these are not strictly humanitarian. It is re-building administration, re-building infrastructure or building for the first time roads, rail-roads, supporting the development of a new education system in areas that have never had access to education as well as primary health care and water sanitation.

We need to start tapping into resources that have not been available to Sudan until the peace agreement was signed. The signing of the peace agreement has now opened the door that will allow us to access resources, we have very high expectations. We have gone from an appeal that was I think 7.5 million dollars last year to 1.5 billion this year. And our expectations are based on the fact that we are able to tap into development resources that will help us, that are now becoming available because the peace agreement was signed. But those resources – perhaps we were unrealistic, perhaps other demands on peoples times such as re-funding issues such as the Tsunami – we don't think that the money has disappeared but we do think that the people who had to process the proposals and the approvals for funding may have been diverted.

It is the same answer that I have for Allula – that the funding, I think, is there but it is coming on line slower than we expected and I think that it is for those broader spectrum of needs for the south which are not strictly humanitarian that the Oslo conference is going to be where we will see an indication of what we can expect. That is a conference where we will see not only humanitarian donors but also donors who are prepared to provide support for recovery and for development.

Q: In your report on needs assessment between the GoS and the SPLM, an estimated 8 billion was needed with the government to pay about 65% while the donors pay the balance. Don't you think that the 65% cannot be met from the resources of the state in Sudan?

A: Van Gerpen: I think that the JAM document which was a collaborative effort to estimate the needs, despite the practical difficulties to put together an estimate of needs at a time the country is still at war, is a first step. I think there is a high expectation that now that the war is ended, Sudan will prioritize its own resources to support the activities that are covered in that document, the JAM document. There you will find the resources needed through newly-available oil revenues or through its other resources which it should be able to divert from military spending to support those activities.

For the international community, even one-third is quite a substantial amount of new funding to come into the Sudan. It is a document developed collaboratively based on commitments made by the government and the SPLM and there are all the indications about what they could provide towards these issues.

Radhia

Any other questions for Ms. Van Gerpen?

If there are none, I would like to thank Ms. Van Gerpen for coming today and I hope she should be quite a guest for our briefing.

Thank you very much Ms. Van Gerpen and I hope to see you as frequently as possible.

Now, I am all yours.

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Q: Did Pronk's meeting with defense ministers of the EU states result in agreement to send international forces to Darfur? I would like to know something about the mandate for the mission in Sudan – we have heard it has been extended for a week. What will the position of the mission be?

A: Thank you very much. On your first question, the topics raised by Mr. Pronk in his talks with EU ministers of defense, as I mentioned in my briefing, were two. One main topic was to mobilize and to plead for an EU political support to the UN mission to be deployed in the south but also to plead for an actual contribution in terms of military observers to the UN peace support mission. You know that in our submission to the Security Council we asked for an overall number of 10,000 troops. That number includes 750 military observers. He was pleading for an actual participation of EU countries within that 750 military observer number. This was the main point. You know that the AU that is currently deployed is facing a problem in terms of logistics, money and so on. The AU mission is being financed mainly, if not exclusively but I have to check, through donors' money. So he pleaded also that the EU would maintain its actual support, financially and otherwise, to the AU mission deployed. Also if the AU is going to expand the number of its troops so that it would maintain and continue its support for an expanded AU mission if that AU mission will ever materialize.

Now, on the question that you asked, my answer is no. He did not raise with them the deployment of an international or UN deployment in Darfur because this topic is not on the table for the time-being. Still we are talking about an AU mission in Darfur and if somebody will be deciding on this, you will hear about it from the competent authorities that will be the AU and also the UN. It is not for Jan Pronk to take initiatives if there is no legislative decision by legislative bodies on who is to be deployed in Darfur.

Your second question on the end of the mission, it is just the way we proceed in the United Nations, the Security Council and the legislative bodies in general terms. You know that we have been here to prepare for the deployment of a UN Peace Support Mission and the mission as is, UNAMIS, will technically, legally at least, cease to exist and be replaced by UN Peace Support Mission. That is technically. But on the ground we are going to be just converted from a political mission to a peace support mission. We are expecting the Security Council to issue a mandate for us to convert us to a UN Peace Support Mission. We started expecting this in February, then in mid-March. We are still waiting for a mandate. The mandate was established for an initial duration of three months, then extended for another three months, then since we did not have a mandate, what the Security Council is doing is, what they call in the jargon of the UN, "roll-over resolutions" whereby they would extend the life of the mission for shorter periods like a week or so. Why shorter periods? Because they expect that they will be finalizing the resolution on the mandate shortly. So, nothing is going to happen to us. We are still here and if we are going to have a mandate soon, we are going to be converted from an advanced mission – a political mission – to a peace support mission. If they are still going to need more time they will continue issuing these roll-over resolutions extending the life of UNAMIS for shorter periods until they have the final mandate.

Q: You said something about the returnees. Now the refugees who have started returning in the south may return with different views on the grounds that they are coming back from other countries and this may spark conflict between tribes and these refugees. What pre-emptive measures is the mission planning to take to prevent such conflicts which may jeopardize the peace agreement considering the delay in deployment of the peace support mission?

A: The issues that you raised are things that we are following up. We started working on the issue of return of refugees and IDPs a while ago basically since we started as UNAMIS in here. Many agencies are involved in this work and we are working on plans on how to avoid these situations from happening.

I will have to give you more details once we have them because you know as UNAMIS *per se* we do not access these areas. However the UNHCR and other agencies who are involved in this do have access. You know that the number two of UNHCR has been recently in the area and they are exerting every effort to put all plans required to avoid the situation. However, we would not be able to really make a difference *per se* until first we receive the funds. And you know UNHCR, and I hope we would have somebody from UNHCR here – if we don't I can follow-up for you on this. UNHCR had alerted everybody to the fact that the needs for return in terms of money are really not met so far. So they are making all the noise to mobilize support for financing these efforts in other ways in terms of preventing clashes and all that. That would be part of our work as a Peace Support Mission in terms of assisting in the area of reconciliation between tribes and so on. We would also be working with the government and the SPLM in terms of resettling these refugees and sorting out the problems of land tenure and property and so on.

So to recap what I was saying: yes we do have plans, yes we started working, however the actual results will be seen once we have the money to finance all this. This is going to be quite a tremendous program and also it will be pending our actual presence on the ground as UN Peace Support Mission to undertake anything that is related to this program in terms of reconciliation and in terms of preventing actual clashes by being deployed on the ground, by undertaking and helping the concerned parties make sure that these clashes will not take place and so on. This work is in progress and we will keep you posted on anything that will happen but we are making plans.

Q: Referring to the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur especially after the incident of attacking the IRC and USAID humanitarian convoy?

A: The question you asked, I have more or less covered in my briefing by giving the update on whatever incident related to the three states of Darfur. You referred to the incident, I also referred to it and we have a reaction, I hope you will have a copy of my briefing points.

The latest attack on the convoy of the IRC, USAID and DART -- and all of them are American -- was quite a serious attack. We do believe it was an ambush. There was no warning shot before it, not like the pattern of some of the incidents experienced before, we do believe it was an actual ambush for the purpose of attacking. We do not have any report on any goods looted -- nothing happened except shooting. The results, you know that one young lady was seriously hurt, another individual was slightly injured. All in all, the situation as I tried to describe it today in my briefing is that we continue to experience particularly this month many incidents of looting and attacks on commercial trucks. Some of them are sub-contracted by our agencies, particularly WFP. We had some incidents but not that many involving the government and rebel forces but they are not really wide-scale except for those that took place around Jebel Moon between the government and the NMRD.

The security situation therefore remains quite an issue of concern to us. You heard us talk about el-Geneina and in West Darfur you heard us talking about actual credible threats from some of the *Janjaweed* militias directed at foreigners and they said they will be attacking foreigners. This incident that we have just been talking about involving the INGO and

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American individuals is the latest. So, I would say that the security situation remains quite an issue of concern for all of us. Some areas of Darfur are more quiet than others but I wouldn't make any conclusion because we do not have any particular pattern and nothing, so far, leads us to make any conclusive kind of assessment and overall evaluation of the security situation. Sometimes, if you follow our reports, one month North Darfur is in the spot, the following will be South Darfur and then West Darfur. So it is quite volatile. Sometimes we will have heavy fighting, mainly incidents involving government and the rebels, sometimes the main features are looting and attacks by militias.

Now that we are witnessing something that will lead us to assume that we will, as foreigners, be under attack, we are taking it quite seriously and we are making all what it takes to actually assess the seriousness of the threat and if we are going to be systematically attacked or not. Nevertheless, we have also to bear in mind that we have to continue also to be on the ground because withdrawing, for us, is not an option. We are not here to let down the people we are serving. We will, however, have to bear in mind that we will not be in a position to put the safety of our own people at risk or at stake.

This is the situation as we see it for the time being.

Q: On the 21st we have a news article by AFP that the UN accused the Sudan government of violating the refugees human rights. That is in relation to what happened in the Sheikan IDP camp, a statement was made by the spokesperson of OCHA. I would like first to ask – these IDPs have been here ... I am compassionate to the right of the IDPs but I am interested to know, why the sudden high focus by the UN in this problem? We had this problem of IDPs with the government as a human rights organization and the UN agencies were just paying lip service in a low profile. And suddenly there is this high focus. So what is behind this?

A: First, that reference to that particular news wire and with all due respect to the AFP correspondent who wrote that, that is very misleading. I understand that for some articles to make it to the top news they have to have catchy phrases as a heading, but that is not, and I repeat, is not accurate at all. First of all, the UN has never accused the government of Sudan with anything like this. And for further details you can get in touch with some of our colleagues in OCHA, they can give you more details on this. We never accused the government and when you read the actual report, that is accurate. The substance of the report is accurate. The heading is completely off.

Two: it is not an issue of refugees. We were talking about IDPs. We never accused the government of anything. What we did, and you might know of this and I reported on it personally when I was briefing the press, Jan Pronk went and visited the camps in and around Khartoum. Why this sudden interest? First of all the interest is not sudden. The international organizations that are working here have been trying to tackle this problem of the IDPs in and around Khartoum for quite a while. Now we wanted to deal with it with the government directly. There have been so many discussions between the agencies and the government to try to convince the government to proceed otherwise because demolishing without providing alternatives, viable ones, to these people is not an option.

To my knowledge, and we still will check again, we are not talking about small figures like hundreds or something. We are approximately talking about 2 million people and some of them when we spoke to them told us that their houses or rather the improvised make-shift houses they built themselves, have been demolished more than six times. And it is one of the oldest IDPs problems, the problem in these areas is older than the problems in Darfur because

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most of these people fled during the conflict with the south -- the war between the north and the south. The agencies have been trying to sort out this issue and to convince the government and particularly the planning ministry to do something about it -- it didn't happen. We kept receiving complaints from the agencies, from the NGOs, some of them have even been refused access to these places and I am even talking about UN agencies. So we have been active, it is not a sudden interest.

However why it has been brought to the headlines, we are not responsible for bringing something to the headlines. What we are responsible for is carrying out actual work and that is what we have been doing. If the media caught some interest in what we have been doing, well fine -- I mean, I am not the one to answer it. But we don't have a hidden agenda on this. The only thing that we are there for is to cater possibly to the needs of these people according to our capacity and also draw the attention of the government of Sudan and exert pressure if need be so that they can draw plans for planning of the returns of these communities as soon as possible because it is quite a tragic situation. Other than that we don't have any other agenda.

Q: I know about the other agencies but I am specifically speaking about the UN agencies. We, you know that the international community have been catering to the needs of these people as much as they can like CARE International and the MSF. But the UN has never been involved. Even in their operation work plan Sudan, the IDPs in Khartoum, although they are approximately two million as you say, have been excluded from that plan. They have never been given any assistance. They have been invisible from the UN.

A: I do admit to the fact that we did not play as agencies a major role there and that is self-explanatory why, because we have been already talking about lack of funds. So you would understand that we are experiencing lots of difficulties in that area too. We are not happy about it definitely. We admit to the fact that we could have done better but you know that our work depends mainly on two things: the cooperation of the government authorities to allow us in the first place to visit these places and to do our work; the assistance and the funding provided by the donor community for these kinds of projects. So far, Darfur has taken the biggest part of the donations. I do believe that this situation is not irreversible. Jan Pronk is making it one of the priorities to be undertaken by the UN system.

Q: Two things; first of all you mentioned in your briefing that you have not been in contact with the SLM, has this anything to do with the reports of splits in SLA in North Darfur? Also coming back to the mortality rates in the camps, has the WHO been given permission to carry out a more recent mortality survey in the camps in Darfur especially in light of the MSF reports that came out on Kass and Muahijiriya saying that there were high death rates there. Is there any plan for the WHO -- have they got permission to do an overall Darfur census on mortality rates?

A: On your first question, you know that we deal on the ground with some counterparts. What happened was that the person who was in charge of coordination of humanitarian issues from the side of SLA in that area that I was referring to was disposed of his functions and then we were trying to find out who was the person nominated by the SLA to take the task. For some time we had a kind of confusing information on who is to do business with from the SLA side. It took some time.

I would not speculate, frankly speaking, but I would not exclude that this was one of the results of the difficulties witnessed by SLM itself in its internal organs and so forth. We are

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quite glad that we have a partner to talk to and it helps a lot. This is what I can say on this topic.

On the issue of the WHO, honestly, I do not have the answer to your question. I will check with WHO because now we have a person who is dealing with information and all that and the director of the office is back so I am going to ask him these questions and I will come back to you with the answer.

Q: There are fears nowadays of a renewal of the suffering of the people in Darfur with the approach of the rainy season as Mr. Egeland was quoted as saying. In your opinion, what is required of the international community or the GoS to avert such impending suffering of the people?

Two; you talked of the arrival from Korma of 200 new households to Abu Shouk camp in North Darfur. Meanwhile the government is talking of the return of IDPs estimated at about 72% in North Darfur in particular. The government talks of difficulties on the ground in the implementation of the agreement reached between GoS and the IOM to repatriate the IDPs and refugees saying that the agreement was based on illogical standards. How do you assess this government statements vis-à-vis returns?

Third: the AU initiative on the trial of the 51 before a special trial.

A: On your first question, the concerns raised on the basic setbacks in the situation and the suffering of the people of Darfur and what is expected. The first thing that is expected is for the security situation to be stabilized. That is one. Because lots of things depend on the security situation. Every single effort being exerted there by the UN community or international aid workers or at the national level all depends on what kind of security situation we have there. If the security situation continues to worsen with the rainy season that is expected very soon, definitely that will impact in a very negative way on the situation of the population in Darfur. We might even have a setback because so far we managed to really achieve a lot in terms of assistance. In terms of meeting the needs of the population of the IDPs and also extend it beyond the IDPs and extend it to our assistance to the host communities. So that is what is expected from us as the UN is to continue helping but we can not continue helping in quite a steady manner if we continue experiencing these security incidents. Hence, what is expected from the GoS is to play its role and to fulfill its responsibilities in terms of security. And also securing the humanitarian assistance and arraigning those who are making trouble there. But that is not the end of it. The rebels of course also have obligations. Everybody has to stop fighting and this is what we have been talking about again and again. So everybody has a part to play. As foreigners are concerned, as external actors, we are doing whatever we can and we hope that we could maintain the level of commitment by the donors so we could continue to do what we are doing. As external actors we can not go anywhere in terms of doing our job if the security situation is not dealt with. Who is to be accountable for it? First the government because it is still the one responsible for security on its territory. Two; the rebel groups who do also have the responsibility to bear in mind the well-being and the safety of the people. As I put it today in the statement that I read from you from Jan Pronk, we do believe that the situation in terms of security will not improve as long as there is no robust protection force deployed in Darfur.

I conclude from what I said now, the AU also has a role to play in terms of strengthening its capacities to attacking these challenges.

On what you said on return – our policy on return is very clear and there is an agreement between government and the IOM and UNHCR. There are two cardinal principles. One: the voluntariness of return. But that is not sufficient. If you are an IDP and you say okay you want to return, it is the responsibility of those that are responsible for making return happen to ensure that the conditions wherever these people are to return to are viable. The places of return have to be also assessed in terms of security, in terms of conditions of living and so on. These are the conditions

We do hear about the statements made by the GoS but you do hear also the statements coming out from us drawing their attention to the fact that we are trying our best to make the return happen to certain areas but we are still looking for suitable areas and to meet those two cardinal conditions to ensure their return.

However, please get in touch with me after the briefing, I will get you in touch with OCHA because they are following this issue.

If you want my assessment, I think that was the second part of your question, my assessment of what the government is doing so far in terms of return, we are pleased that the government so far, although we had some difficulty at some time or the other, the government is not forcing people to return – like physically forcing them. We had a couple of incidents before but all-in-all we are pleased to see that the government is not actually forcing people to return but that is in Darfur.

Q: The fifty one suspects?

A: My answer to that is going to be very brief and straight to the point: I do not have any comments on the AU initiative. The only one who would be taking stand on this would be the Security Council.

Q: OCHA has given a figure of approximately 1,500 IDPs returning to their places in southern Sudan each week. When did these IDPs actually start moving back to their places and how many so far have reached their specific places in southern Sudan? Because taking the approximate figure of IDPs living in and around Khartoum at two million of which not all are from southern Sudan, normally how do you figure out this figure because if 1,500 is actually returning home each week, then we will say that may be a quarter or a half of IDPs living around Khartoum have almost all returned.

A: I am not really in a position to answer this question because I do not know what kind of methodology OCHA is following. Unfortunately their spokesperson is not feeling well today but I would refer you to the technical person who is in charge of this in terms of substance and she can answer all these questions and will be in a better position to answer you.

Q: My question is on the humanitarian situation in Darfur following the threats. Are these threats still effective? You said Jan Pronk will meet with First Vice President Taha. When?

A: Apparently you were not there in the beginning of the briefing but I have it in my briefing. For West Darfur I gave an update. We are back where we took ourselves from. So the situation as far as the humanitarian terms, first of all there was no serious impact of the fact that we withdrew our people from those specific locations in the surroundings of Geneina. We did not experience any particularly grave impact. You would ask me why, I will tell you it is just a matter of coincidence that WFP happens to deliver, I think right before they

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relocated their staff to Geneina, they happened to supply these areas with food, so the impact was not that serious. Now everybody is back to their locations. We only have one road that still remains closed. Other than that we are back to business in these areas.

However, we would like all of you to understand this. I tried to explain it a number of times. The UN always faces such dilemmas -- taking care of the safety of its staff and meeting the needs of the population we are catering to. We are always trying to strike a balance. There is also the fact that there were serious threats from militias that they are going to start attacking foreigners. And these threats we received them particularly in West Darfur. So, for the time-being, although we resumed our activities except for one road in the surroundings of Geneina, we are still taking these threats quite seriously and we are assessing them to see how we could proceed from now on. This is the answer to your first question.

On your question about the meeting with Taha, unfortunately I don't have the time with me but I can follow up later. Just give me a call when you go back and I will tell you exactly when it is going to happen but it is going to happen tomorrow.

Q: I would like to refer to the statement by OCHA which said: "the current approach to demolishing, relocation and proper location by GoS constitutes a violation of the fundamental human rights of IDPs including their rights to family, health and education. GoS is obliged to ensure the protection of the rights of the IDPs in accordance to fundamental human rights and humanitarian laws, IDP governing principles and the government policy framework. No person may be evicted from his/ her home". I wonder whether you have exact percentage figures for refugees in Chad and the deaths as Egeland mentioned of the figure of 180,000 in Darfur although earlier it was 30,000.

A: On your first question, what you quoted was accurate and the reference to any provision from international humanitarian law is accurate. So if you take the legalistic approach to it the statement is correct. The current policy of the government is an actual violation of these provisions when it comes to the right of IDPs. And that is international law, and every single member-state has to abide by it.

An actual figure of the refugees in Chad. I think that we are talking of about 200,000 people scattered in Chad but I think it is inclusive also of communities somewhere else in some other neighboring countries but please if you have access to the internet, log on to OCHA's website and then you will have all these figures and the statistics on who is refugee where. You can also, more importantly, log on to UNHCR site and they will give you the actual figure of how many refugees are in Chad from Darfur.

On the Egeland statement on the death rate, please do bear with us because whenever we say something everybody jumps on the figure. We never pretended at any point of time that we are advancing final figures - whoever is speaking on behalf of the UN - when they present figures, they present them as an estimate, something arrived at by, I would say, extrapolation. And everybody is correct when they say that nobody actually studied scientifically, undertook an error-proof kind of study, or counting how many people were dead. The only thing that is scientific of all these figures everybody is speaking about are the figures provided by the WHO in the survey on mortality rate that it undertook in the month of August and the beginning of the month of September. And that figure we are talking about, I am not sure but I think that they did not provide an overall figure but later on they said, according to their study, it is 70,000 and they made an estimate on the average of the mortality rate per month. And that was a rate of I think of about 10,000 per month on

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average. However, we made it very clear from our side when we were asked about the statement made by Mr. Egeland that Mr. Egeland first did not say yes; this is the figure – 170 or 180. He was just saying that first of all we don't know, nobody knows, how many people died. However if we look back at the studies that have been made, the figure might reach that number or could be exceeded – we don't know.

From our side, I can tell you that Mr. Pronk said again that; on factual basis, we did notice that the number of deaths on average per month apparently decreased from the average of 10,000 to a lesser rate. Why? Because of lots of factors. One; mainly the humanitarian assistance – the delivery of food, the delivery of medicine and rescuing people from certain death if they don't have the assistance – the wide coverage in terms of humanitarian assistance, two; because of the deployment of the AU in many areas we could prevent the situation from escalating so we could access and people could have quite a secure environment and people could have humanitarian assistance. This is the situation. So please do not fixate on the figure. For us the priority is not about how many have died. The priority is to make sure that whoever was responsible for the deaths of these people particularly as a direct result of the war – killed on purpose – these have to be brought to justice and they have to be accountable for their act. Those who are responsible for the overall situation that we have quite a huge population of displaced people also have to be responsible for their acts. This is what the priority is. You kill 5,000 or you kill 500 or you kill a million, that is not the issue for us. The issue is you have to be accountable because even 5,000 in our standards is a high number.

Q: About the figure for IDPs in Darfur.

A: Yes, we do have figures for the IDPs in Darfur. The last time I checked it was close to 2 million. But again, if you have access to OCHA's website the figures are there.

Q: What action have you taken following attack at Nyala-Kas road? What about reports on another attack which followed the one on the IRC and USAID convoy?

A: On your first question I already said that as a precaution first we closed the road – that particular road. Two; we are assessing the threats against foreigners. The assessment is not going only to be the routine assessment we do whenever we have an incident. We are going to expand the scope of our assessment to see if we are actually becoming a target as foreigners or not. We have people working on this and after that we are going to take whatever measures required depending on the conclusion that will be drawn after this assessment.

On your second question, I don't have any idea about this unless you tell me the exact location and what were the circumstances what you are referring to.

Thank you very much all and see you next Wednesday.

– End –