

**The United Nations Mission In Sudan****Date: 7 December 2005****Office of the Spokesperson****PRESS BRIEFING**

Good afternoon ladies and Gentlemen, before I proceed with the briefing, I would like to inform you that we have today with us Mr. Jim Pansegrouw, Director of Mine Action Sector, who will be briefing you on what is being done in terms of mine clearance, one of the main priorities for the UN in Sudan.

I will proceed now with my briefing starting from the activities of the SRSG and the senior leadership of the Mission.

SRSG AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

- In the context of his regular visits to UN sectors of deployment and operations areas of the UN system, SRSG Jan Pronk is conducting a visit from 7 to 9 December to Rumbek and Wau. His activities include meetings with the UN staff, the NGOs as well as with representatives of UN agencies. He will be meeting also with the local authorities in both Wau and Rumbek.

- The SRSG will head to Abuja on Sunday 11 December and he will meet with representatives of the negotiating parties as well as with the AU mediation team of the Abuja talks. He will meet also with the partners who are also attending the talks as observers and supporting the AU efforts. The visit of the SRSG aims at assisting in boosting the negotiations process in order to achieve a decisive outcome by the end of the year.

-The SRSG met yesterday, together with the Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs (PDSRSG), Tayé Zerihoun, with Mr. Tomlic Vraaslen, the Chairman of the Evaluation and Assessment Commission. Discussions focused on cooperation between the Commission and UNMIS in monitoring the implementation of the CPA.

- PDRSG Tayé Zerihoun met the day before yesterday with Mr. Deng Alor, Minister of the Council of Ministers of the Government of National Unity (GNU). The meeting is part of regular contacts between the Mission and the GNU officials to discuss issues relating to the implementation of the CPA.

SECURITY**Darfur**

- The security situation in Darfur remains characterized by banditry activities, looting, inter-tribal fighting as well as clashes between the SLM and tribes and fighting between the Government forces and the SLA.

-The United Nations is concerned that the parties continued to violate the Ceasefire Agreement in what seems to be a resumption of the vicious circle of attacks and retaliation of attacks that we witnessed in earlier months.

On 3 December, the Government forces and militia reportedly attacked jointly the villages of Hemmeda, Um Boru and Koka in the Um Nkunya area (approx. 40 km north east of Nyala). The fighting, which resulted in civilian casualties, displaced about 7, 000 people to Um Nkunya. According to reports, the attack was launched against the SLA in the area.

The SLA attacked on 4 December Donkey Dereisa (approx. 60 km south of Nyala) in what seems to be retaliation for the attack of Sudanese Armed Forces and militia on the Um Nkunya area.

In West Darfur, Arab militia attacked the town of Congo Harasa yesterday and destroyed all the wells that had been constructed by the humanitarian workers to address the dire need of the population for water. The UN condemns these attacks that targeted the very livelihood of the people. Such attacks add to the difficulties that the humanitarian community is facing in West Darfur, where all roads outside El Geneina are still closed for UN movement. The NGOs operating in the area were evaluated by the UN as well the ones operating in Masteri where fighting between the SLA AND THE Government forces took place on 4 December.

Harassment and threats, and beating in some instances, of UN agencies' staff as well as INGOs staff (mainly national staff) continues to be reported. Ambushes on UN, NGO and commercial humanitarian convoys continued unabated, while the worrisome trend of deliberate destruction of farmland and crops continued to cast a shadow over the optimistic agricultural output expected for this season. Re-displacements of large groups of civilians to IDP settlements or to the outskirts of towns have also continued throughout Darfur. A national staff member of an NGO (a driver) was shot dead on 1 December in Abu Shouk camp by two unidentified armed men who entered the premises of the NGO in the camp.

HUMANITRIAN

Some progress with regard to relocations in Khartoum IDP sites

Over the past week, a meeting between the Office of the Governor of Khartoum State and the UN was held to discuss the relocation of some 2,000 families from remote sections of the El Fateh 3 site to areas in El Fateh 1 and 2 that are better equipped with basic services such as running water, latrines, health centres and schools. Among other measures, it was agreed that a public information campaign would be undertaken to inform residents of El Fateh 3 of the relocation.

Also in Khartoum, a community radio workshop will be held in Wad Madani on 13-14 December. Participants include men and women from community radio listening groups and from the state radios and six northern states where the UNICEF-radio listening project is being implemented

The World Health Organization, WHO, reported that as at Tuesday 6 December, they had registered a total of 565 reported cases, including about 150 related deaths. This represents a case fatality rate of 25.3%. WHO noted that the number of reported cases has declined, but said they could not yet be certain why. On one hand, the decline could be due to the prevention and control measures undertaken by aid agencies and Sudanese government counterparts. On the other hand, the decline could be due to underreporting of cases.

The vaccination campaign supported by WHO and UNICEF in Kadugli town had reached 77,820 people (representing about 80% percent of the target population) by Sunday. Meanwhile, in rural areas, the vaccination campaign was starting slowly due to transportation difficulties of vaccines, which must be kept refrigerated to remain effective. Furthermore, aid agencies have been confronted by security issues, as some of the localities in Southern Kordofan are in Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) controlled areas. As a precautionary measure, a yellow fever vaccination campaign has been launched in Abyei to prevent any possible spread of the disease.

Update on the mass migration of Dinka IDPs in Southern Sudan

Humanitarian response to the mass migration of Dinka IDPs and their cattle from Western Equatoria in south-western Sudan to their home areas in Bor, Jonglei State increased significantly over the past week, as UN agencies, several NGOs and Government of Southern Sudan provided:

- transportation of the most vulnerable
- food
- health care
- a dedicated way station

Aid will also be delivered to affected host communities in Western Equatoria to help them to recover in the coming weeks.

The movement, which involves an estimated 12,000 people and 250,000 – 400,000 cattle, was spurred by inter-communal conflicts that have recently plagued the region.

As the IDPs move towards their home areas, humanitarian agencies will be providing assistance and monitoring the situation in an effort to minimise potential conflict with resident populations. The GoSS has provided military escorts to reduce potential tensions between the Dinka and agricultural communities whose land they will be passing through, as well as to prevent attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Furthermore, humanitarian agencies cautioned that once the Dinka arrived in Bor, it would be crucial to ensure their peaceful reintegration, as they could face hostilities from other groups living in the region. Meanwhile, about 1,100 Bor Dinka who arrived in Yei over the past month have been registered. UN agencies have called on local authorities to provide full protection of these IDPs – over 70% of whom are under the age of 18 – to avoid any outbreak of inter-communal violence from occurring in Yei. The IDPs were reported to be in need of transport arrangements and food/NFI assistance. UNHCR and OCHA will coordinate the assistance programme and begin planning with authorities for the movement of the IDPs to Bor.

Although the security situation in the South is more stable, humanitarian activities continue to be hampered. A team from NPA is trying to conduct a crop assessment in the areas of Terekeka and Kajo-Keji have had their activities limited by LRA movement. NFIs donated

by UNICEF for the local populations in Kirikwa, Yei County, are still being stored in Yei and will be distributed if all remains calm on the Yei-Meridi road. In a raid in Maridi town on Sunday, alleged LRA combatants broke into the offices of two NGOs and stole communication equipment. A commercial company was also raided and a number of adults and children abducted.

A public peace rally was held in Yambio on Friday, including the slaughtering of bulls to encourage reconciliation between the Zande and Dinka IDP communities.

Kalma camp

Yesterday, the Wali of South Darfur announced in a meeting with OCHA, the AU and the NGO Norwegian Refugee Council that it would lift the commercial blockade that has been imposed on Kalma camp for almost six months, in response to riots in the camp that took place on 20 May. The road between Kalma and Nyala will be opened for commercial traffic as of 15 December. The UN and its partners are very pleased about this positive step forward as it has long been our concern that the commercial blockade subjected the entire population of Kalma to collective punishment and deprived IDPs of much needed fresh food and economic opportunities.

COMMEMORATION OF UN DAYS

HIV/AIDS

Week-long activities on HIV/AIDS continued on 5 December with religious leaders discussing their role in awareness-raising. The state Ministry of Health organized a talk with government officials on how to protect themselves and their families from contracting the virus. UNMIS organized awareness sessions for the peace-keeping force in Kadugli. The activities will end on 8 December with a march through the main streets of Kadugli and an evening vigil at the local cinema in solidarity with the 60,000 Sudanese children already orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

International Volunteer Day

Hundreds of young and old men and women from all over the country celebrated the 2005 International Volunteer Day on 5 December in Al-Wahda Souk Sitta in Al-Haj Yousif. The celebration was a full-day activity attended by the Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Harun, and Paul Crook, Head of UNDP's Trust Fund Management Unit. By celebrating the International Volunteer Day in a popular and highly-densely populated area of Khartoum's suburbs, volunteers brought the Millennium Goals to Sudanese into focus building on the successful launch of Sudan's first interim MDG report in 2004. The MDGs campaign also took place in 5 schools in Al-Haj Yousif, with lectures, quizzes and prize awards, tree planting and distribution of leaflets on MDGs to all pupils.

Human Rights Day

The UNMIS Human Rights Office in Juba is holding a three-day workshop, from 7 to 9 December on promotion and protection of human rights, attended by 70 members of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly.

This will be an important occasion for the new Parliamentarians of the new Southern Government to discuss their roles and responsibilities in promoting and protecting human rights in the region. Key participants in the workshop will include Awut Deng Acuil, Advisor to the Presidency on Gender and Human Rights; Michael Makuei, Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development; David Deng, Minister of Labour, Public Service and Human Resource Development. James Wani Igga, Speaker of the Parliament, will open the workshop; James Ellery, UNMIS Head of Office, Southern Sudan, will also make opening remarks.

Elimination of Violence against Women

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is partnering with six women's NGOs is organizing today a gender forum on ending violence against women in Sudan as part of the 16 days of Activism Campaign. The event is being organized with support from Sweden and Norway. A total of 120 participants are expected including Members of Parliament. The Forum is taking place at the Male Business Association Hall, (Near AFRA shopping Mall).

The Gender Forum's objectives include a) exchanging information with partners who have been implementing projects in Sudan aimed at eliminating violence against women, b) initiating dialogue on the extent to which the interim national constitution protects women's rights, especially in relation to addressing violence against women, c) engaging with stakeholders on the role of parliament in protecting women's rights and d) strengthening networking among NGOs and parliamentarians.

MILITARY UPDATE

Strength

Deployment of Military Observers and Protection Force Elements is in progress and as of now, strength is of 4008, including 373 Military Observers.

Activities

-On monitoring and verification issues, UN Military Observers in Juba have reported that situation in YAMBIO was still tense; however there was no incident of fresh fighting in the area. The UNMOs in Juba have also reported movement of two SPLA Brigades, with a strength of approximately 3000 soldiers carrying heavy weapons like tanks and artillery guns into Juba on 03 Dec 05. In line with the provisions of the CPA, some of these troops will become part of JIUs, whereas the remaining will join SPLA Forces.

-Currently, on the JIU formation issue, UNMOs have reported assembly of 7109 SAF soldiers and 9901 SPLA soldiers at different locations in the south. For the formation of JIUs, both the parties have to contribute equally for a JIU force of more than 39,000 soldiers.

-Training of new batch of UNMOs is being conducted in Nairobi and as of now, there are 117 military observers being trained in Nairobi under UNMIS arrangements. These newly trained UNMOs will be joining the mission area next week.

I am done with my briefing and I am sorry if it took me lots of time to finish this and, without further ado, I am going to call on my friend and colleague Mr. Jim from UNMAS who will be giving you a briefing on mine-clearance activities.

Jim Pansegrouw, Director of Mine Action Sector: Thank you very much.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I think mine action is one of the topics that are discussed in various forums and in various places around the country. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the topic with you today and may be able to answer some of the topics that you may ask.

I am going to start by discussing more or less the extent of the problem in Sudan and I just want to explain one or two abbreviations that we may use and that may be in the papers. The first one is ERW; that is Explosive Remnants of War. The other is UXO that is Unexploded Ordnance – that is ammunition that has not exploded during use.

In terms of our work when we are looking for mines, we are not only looking for mines, we are looking for all explosive remnants of war that have been left behind. So even if we are the Mine Action Service, you must see us a bit wider and we have got more activities and duties to perform.

In Sudan, the main areas of contamination are in the south where about 70% of the known contamination currently is. Then we have in the central area a fairer number of contamination. We have contamination in the east and we have some problems in Darfur. Darfur is not a really mine affected but there we talk about Explosive Remnants of War. The bulk of our activities, due to the problems, are therefore focused more to the south and the central area of the country.

Most of the known mine casualties are occurring when we have people travelling on vehicles or edges of roads that have not been cleared. The statistics in this country differs remarkably from other countries where in other countries you find a very high percentage of anti-personnel mine casualties and in this country it is not really the case. Most of the casualties are from anti-tank mines then followed by Explosive Remnants of War and then we get anti-personnel mines.

WFP estimated that there are about 2 million people whose food security has been directly influenced by the mine problem.

The contamination in the Sudan is not on a level as you would experience in place like Afghanistan but the impact of this contamination is quite significant because it has a serious impact on the infrastructure and movement of people and goods in the country. The casualties, again, is not as high as you would have expected or experienced in other countries where people would have worked before. In the handout you will see the geographical distribution of casualties in Sudan. One of the reasons why it may not be that high is the fact that we may not have all the statistics of the casualties. I think we must take into cognizance the fact that there was a war raging for a long period of time and certain structures may not have been in place for us to pick up on the casualties that may have been caused. The other

thing that is definitely a factor is that the people in most of the highly or most contaminated areas have become extremely streetwise. They have lived with this for a long time and they know how to handle themselves within the areas where this is a menace. Our major concern is the return of IDPs and refugees to areas where they have left 20 years before and don't really know what has changed during the period that they left.

The background and the current structure of Mine Action in Sudan is the Mine Action Programme in Sudan started in September 2002 so it is a relatively young programme. We really only started on mine action activities on a bigger scale in 2004. And in 2003 we were mostly working in the areas of the Nuba Mountains where we started to build cross-line relations and where we established a mechanism for the north and the south to work together. I think this activity was one of the first activities that succeeded in organizing forums where we could have discussed these problems between the people from the north and the south long before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed.

the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed at the beginning of this year brought into being three different structures that is currently either being formed or partly formed and that is a national or mine action authority for the north there is a mine action authority for the south and then there is a mine action office that is comprised of all the United Nations mine action actors in Sudan. The National Mine Action Authority consists of people who are based in the same building as us. There is a director and a deputy director and they are working closely with the government to expand the capacity and take ownership of certain activities in the north. In the south, by decree of the late Vice-president John Garang, an organization called the New Sudan Mine Action Directly was established and is still functioning. They have a few members to staff the organization. They have moved from Nairobi to Juba during November this year and they are currently busy setting up their office in Juba together with other regional offices in Juba.

The United Nations Mine Action office is an office consisting of all the United Nations mine actors in Sudan. It is in the paper but the people or the main actors with regards to mine action in the Sudan are: the mission UNMIS itself, the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR. More about the UNDP, they are responsible for the capacity-building side of the program and they are working closely with the Government of National Unity and with the Government of South Sudan to establish sustainable organizations. UNICEF is mainly responsible for education; the mine-risk education part of mine action and they are working right throughout the country with various organizations to achieve this goal. WFP is working mainly in the south where they are opening up and rehabilitating roads for the movement of humanitarian food aid to different areas. Unfortunately, their work has been stopped due to LRA activities in the areas south of Juba. It has not resumed yet and has put the program back quite significantly. The two roads specifically have been influenced by this and these are the roads from Kenya via Naurus, Kapoeta to Juba and the one from Nimule to Juba. All work on those roads has stopped. UNHCR has appointed a technical advisor as well – this is the first country where UNHCR has done that – and they are starting their own mine action program in coordination with us and they should have their own survey teams on the ground very soon.

The United Nations Mine Action Office has got its office here in Khartoum. You are free to come and visit us to get more information about the mine action programme. Then we have got a regional office that is responsible for the north in Kadugli. They have sub-offices in el-Fasher in Darfur, Kadugli itself, el-Damazin and then in Kassala. We have got a regional

mine action office which was the southern regional mine action office that was based in Rumbek that is moving to Juba and they have sub-offices in Wau, Rumbek, Yei and Malakal. Just a point of interest in terms of Kassala; up to now it was one of the areas that didn't have a lot of activities but the activities are heating up in that part of the world. I think the possibilities of hostilities between some of the neighbouring countries is just emphasizing the need for mine action in that province and in the Red Sea state should refugees start coming across the border.

Currently, we have 7 international organizations working in the country with more coming in. all these organizations have teamed up with national partners – that is one of the requirements to work in the country. They are operating with 42 teams in different parts of Sudan but mostly in the south. Because of the fact that the problem is mostly in the south you will find that most of the activities in the south. This program is expanding; we still need more assets to make a bigger difference on the ground. In mine action, to plant a mine is quick and easy, to find it and take it out is a long and laborious process. We are bringing in new technology; things like mechanical equipment. We are using dogs; we are using sensors and a lot of other advanced technology to speed up this process. The mission itself is committed to mine action as well and they will be bringing in soon to be deployed, hopefully in January, five de-mining companies from five different countries that will contribute de-mining troops and that is from Egypt, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya and Pakistan. We have visited all these countries and we have either accredited or are going to accredit the companies in terms of international humanitarian de-mining standards so that they would be on the same standards as all the commercial and the NGOs that are working in this country.

I have mentioned that we had serious setbacks in the south with the LRA activities. Some of you recall that the two de-miners that were working with the SFD and were killed was the main cause of the work shortage in the south.

Some of the key achievements during the last year is in the handout that you guys got – I am not going to go through that. We have received about 45% of the budget that we have requested for 2005 and we hope that in 2006 things will go better. According to the work plan, we have requested 54 million dollars for 2006. Our priorities for this year and for 2006 are emergency survey marking and targeted clearance. Due to the size of this country we can't do everything and we have targeted the highest priorities and areas and activities. Route verification for the flow of humanitarian goods and people as well as a ring road that the mission can use for their activities. Targeted mine-risk education; that we go to specific communities and target specific people and educate them which is probably the cheapest to save people and lives. And then lastly capacity-building in order to establish sustainable capacity that can take over from us in due course because this program is not going to go away overnight.

That is more or less the overview, if there is any specific question then ...

Spokesperson: Thank you very much, Jim. It was very educational even to me because I was always very curious about these activities and know bits and pieces but the comprehensive picture is always welcome to all of us and, definitely, to those of our colleagues from the media who have been asking me many times on issues related to mine-clearance.

As usual when we have a guest and in order not to take much of their time, I would like for your questions first to be addressed to my colleague here and once we exhaust your questions to him, then I will take over when you have questions for me.

Q & A

Q: Mr. Jan Pronk, in Abuja ...

Spokesperson: Mohamed, the first questions are for Mr. Jim if you have any for him.

Q: A lot of reports say that mines in Sudan are in 458 areas. Is that true? We want to know the number of victims.

There are difficulties faced by the mine action process in eastern Sudan in the Tokar area in a village called Adarat. There are lots of problems between international organizations who work in mine action. We want to know about these.

Director of Mine Action Sector: You will see in the handout we have given an indication about the dangerous areas that we have reported and it is more than what you have mentioned. On the one map you will be able to see, more or less, the extent of that. And this may increase or decrease as we do more surveys in the field and we give more reports of dangerous areas. If you look at the maps, it is only one dot on the map and that may be a single item that has been identified or a cluster that has been identified but that has not been removed yet or it may be a larger minefield. So the dangerous areas do not give an indication of the size nor of the items that we talk about. But there are more than what you have mentioned.

In terms of the victims, again, there is a colour handout that will give you the victims that have been reported to us. It is not only mine victims. Here we talk about people that have been injured by stray ammunition and unexploded ordnance as well and that is the victims that we have confirmed and got on the database. Again, it may not be totally correct and in all probability it is not correct because that is the stuff that has been reported and we could verify.

As far as eastern Sudan is concerned, we are only now making inroads in eastern Sudan. As you would have known, eastern Sudan had a lot of restrictions in terms of movements and other issues. We know about the problems in the Tokar area. It has been reported to us. We have now established the office in Kassala and we will be sending survey teams to that area very soon. The EU has granted us some funds to be able to send international survey teams to that area so that we can make a thorough assessment of all the possible contamination and problems in the area. There are no other international mine action organisations working in Tokar or in the Red Sea area nor in Kassala. There may be some MRE organisations that had been there before but in terms of mine action, there is no international organisation. There was one local organisation called SLIRI that had offices in Kassala and worked up as far as the Tokar area.

Q: Nowadays, de-mining is focussing only on the main routes. You have said that five companies will come down in January to Sudan. Are they going to be based in the south? If so, exactly when will the whole areas where the IDPs are going to be settled be de-mined as

there are many IDPs going back to the south specifically in Juba and other places and they may risk being blown after going back home?

Director of Mine Action Sector: Yes, the main focus currently is on the roads and that is where the people are moving on when they go south-north, north-south, east-west or west-east. That is where we get the points where people are going through and that is where we are concentrating on. We have received from the Returns and Reintegration people the areas where most of the IDPs will be going and are currently busy with an assessment to determine which of those areas and what we know of those areas. One of the things that I must make very clear is that there are vast areas in Sudan which we don't know anything about. We have not visited the whole of Sudan; we have not made an assessment of the whole of Sudan. We are in the process of doing that and we are concentrating in the areas where we know IDPs will be going to.

The five companies that I talked about are military companies that will be mainly to support the mission but can be used for humanitarian activities as well. They will be based in Wau, Kadugli, Damazin, Malakal and Juba and will work from there and will be here for extended periods of time. Their taskings are being at and we are looking at all the different priorities for them to work.

In terms of our mandate, this is the first peacekeeping mission where humanitarian de-mining is part of the mandate. In the past, all military assets which that were used in DPKO missions were used in support of the mission itself. This is the first mission where mission assets can be used for humanitarian de-mining and they will be used as such.

Q: You mentioned that only 45% of your projected budget for 2005 was availed. Has this caused an obstacle in your de-mining operations especially since there has been no awareness program carried out to enable the citizen detect mine areas apart from the capacity building programs in Rumbek and the attempts at training some animals in mine detection.

Director of Mine Action Sector: The amount of money which we do receive is an obstacle. Obviously, if we do receive more money we could do more in terms of various actions. When you don't receive all the money that you request you have to concentrate on the highest priority and the things that make the biggest difference. We are concentrating on the training of de-mining teams, area teams and teams that will make a difference currently. On the capacity building side, there are two (*indiscernible*) one is the capacity-building to form the formal structures north and south and that is being handled by the UNDP. There is also an informal side to the capacity building and that is where we use and train Sudanese nationals to perform some of these tasks. Most of the de-miners that we have and most of the people that are employed physically on the ground are national people. For certain tasks and certain technologies we are using internationals but, hopefully with time, we will be able to phase out some of these people.

As far as our office is an obstacle to de-mining, I think you would have found a bigger obstacle to de-mining if we were not around in this country. We don't think that we are an obstacle. We think that we are an asset to the Sudanese people and I think we have saved quite a few lives and assets up to this stage.

We would like to have more money especially for the education side so that we could send people to various areas because that is the cheapest form of saving people and saving lives and livestock.

Q: When you talk about national mine action office, do you mean that one on Street One? When this was constructed, there were three partners: the Mine Action Office, the Sudan and the SCBL that is the Sudan Campaign to Ban Landmines. You made no mention about these groups which have actually played a major role with the support from the UNICEF and some other organisations in the ratification first of all of the Ottawa Convention.

The second thing, you said that in Kassala nothing has been done. Actually, for some years de-mining has not been done by de-miners' education has been conducted by the UNICEF through the Sudan Red Crescent Society with support also from Save the Children (UK). The same thing in the Nuba Mountains; the first activities and even when the European Union had funded 2 million – and that time it didn't have any connection with the government – they funded it through the Sudanese Campaign to Ban Landmines and then OXFAM was charged to meet the funding expenditure. I don't think that you are being fairing your briefing on these campaigns.

Director of Mine Action Sector: I think if I have to give a thorough briefing about every organization that has been involved in mine action, we will be here for the rest of the afternoon. This is an overview of the actions in Sudan and not down to specifics. It is true; UNICEF has been active in mine action with regards to MRE not only in Kassala, not only in the Nuba Mountains but in Damazin, Darfur and down to south Sudan in various places. The organization that you talked about in terms of OXFAM, OXFAM with the Landmine Action started also the organization called SLIRI that has quite a few offices through the country and they have given us quite a lot of information. In actual fact, some of the information that is in the maps that you have got came from these organizations especially those from the Tokar area which they have done very well.

So, yes, I did not mention each organization by name; I did not mention all their activity – it will take us quite a while – but these organizations did play a role.

It is true that the office that was established in Street 1 originally had three partners; it was the United Nations, the Government as well as ICBR. ICBR did play and is still playing a vital role and they still do have an office in that building and they are our partners in various activities. This briefing did not concentrate on neither did I mention the lots of advocacy that we are doing and that is where they are playing a role. They are still in the building and they are still working with us.

Q: In 2003, the Danish Church Aid carried out a good job in the Nuba Mountains area. There was, by then, a joint venture from the government and the SPLM? Will you follow the same way in other parts of the Sudan?

Director of Mine Action Sector: The organization that you are talking about is the Danish Church Aid (DCA). They have started with cross line in 2003 and in actual fact we funded the first two teams in that training. We are, in various places, not on exactly the same basis but extending these concepts. Some of the commercial companies working the south have got teams that have been recruited in previously government-controlled areas as well as teams that have been trained in areas that had been controlled by the SPLM. This is something we

encourage to all the organizations working in the country to be able to recruit people from all sides and from different groups in order to be able to move around the country and work everywhere. If you don't do that, you can be stuck into one specific geographical area and it does happen with one or two organizations.

So, yes, it is a principal that we encourage and in all the scopes of work that we do issue from the Sudan, we encourage people to follow this principle.

Spokesperson: Any other questions to Jim? If there are none, thank you Jim for this briefing and hopefully you will be one of our regular guests if need be because definitely this is quite an issue and quite a priority.

Jim: Thank you. I would be happy to come back anytime if you want me to come back for further discussions. But I would like to issue an invitation to any of the press in any of the papers that wants more information to come to the office in Street 1 where there is more information available specific maybe to groups of areas or people who are of interest for your papers and your readers.

Thank you very much.

Spokesperson: Thank you and I think that in the paper that we distributed today from our colleagues from Mine Action, there is a contact number and that contact number includes our colleagues Takutu who is dealing with public information and press relations in mine action, I guess. This is his phone number, the e-mail is there; feel free to contact him; feel free to visit the office where you'll find quite a wealth of information there.

Thank you very much Jim.

Jim: Thank you very much.

Spokesperson: Now I am all yours. Mohamed Saleh since you were the first.

Q: Mr. Pronk is off to Abuja to give impetus to the talks. My question is: does he only carry with him requests and hopes or does he also carry with him tools for legitimate pressure on the parties that may result in a signing as happened in the Declaration of Principles?

Mr. Pronk had warned against introducing the agenda of other states in the sixth round of talks. Now, in the seventh round, what is your message to those states that intend to safeguard their interests in Sudan and in Darfur through the current round of talks?

Spokesperson: The main purpose for Mr. Pronk's visit is, as I said, to help give impetus to enable this round of peace talks to be decisive if not final. Mr. Pronk will not only go there with hopes and pleas. The idea, to use your expression, is to exercise legitimate pressure. I will not go into details on what kind of pressures he will exercise but you do know that before the start of this round of talks in Abuja there were a number of meetings – London, Khartoum – between all the parties in the international community (the AU, the UN, the EU, the Arab League, donor states) who back this process and reached a common understanding in these meetings that all pressure must be used in order to bolster this process and to enable the parties reach decisive solutions. We hope it will end in a final peace agreement but if it doesn't, then at least a framework agreement that can develop into a final peace agreement in

the weeks following such a preliminary agreement. We are committed to pushing for a complete agreement but if that is not possible then a framework agreement.

I will not go into the details of what pressures will be used – you are aware that this is a very sensitive process and we have to wait until Pronk's return to hear from him what he did there.

On your second question, our position remains the same. The only framework that remains for resolving the Darfur issue is Abuja. All countries, whatever they are, must support the African mediation and avoid creating other processes that may be parallel to the Abuja process. We hope that all these states that want to assist do so through the framework of the Abuja process and to support the AU. This remains our position in principle and we call upon all such states through this forum to make their efforts compliment and assist the efforts of the AU.

Q: My first question is in relation to the recent incidents in Darfur. You spoke about the cycle of violence and that this was similar to 2004 in some ways. Can you elaborate on that?

In the event of a peace agreement, or some of agreement, is signed in Abuja, what obstacles or what issues will still have to be resolved on the ground in Darfur before there is peace?

Spokesperson: Jonah, I am sorry I did not understand your question clearly. What issues should be resolved ...?

Q: Assuming there was a peace agreement and something was signed, what issues will still be outstanding in Darfur that obviously still has to be resolved?

Spokesperson: To start from your first question, what I referred to as you saw in our monthly reports to the Security Council and in our weekly briefings is that in the months that we are talking about, and in general terms in 2005, we had fewer clashes between the parties themselves. They were less in terms of number and also in terms of scope. Now lately, particularly these incidents that we are talking about and starting from Masteri and the incidents I mentioned today, they seem to have the same pattern as we had before. We talk to one party and they say, "no we did not attack; we are retaliating to an attack." And that is exactly the pattern. If you remember you, or *Reuters*, I think, interviewed Mr. Pronk and he explained this vicious circle. And that is what we wanted to break and this is what we want the parties to do. If you remember right from the beginning, even when we worked on the Darfur Plan, the core issue was to make sure that the parties do not make this circle continue – one claims that they were attacked unlawfully by the other party; the other party retaliates for the attack and the other party would retaliate against another retaliation and so on. And it seems that from this pattern, at least on the incidents that we had lately, we are back to that kind of pattern of exchange of accusation and everybody says, "I did not attack first – they attacked first and I am retaliating for that attack," either on a village or on the forces. So, in terms of pattern, we are back, at least for these particular incidents in Masteri and the incidents that I mentioned, to the same pattern. That was a priority for us and we asked the parties, if you remember at the time, that even if they are provoked by the other party, not to retaliate. And we made that clear to the government and we made that clear to the SLM and the JEM. And we told them if somebody attacks you or attacks an area that you claim that it is yours or under your control according to the ceasefire agreement and the security Protocol, report to the AU because that is what the ceasefire commission is for, instead of retaliating back and perpetuating violence. Unfortunately, this is what we are seeing for the time being.

On your second question on what major challenges; the challenges, I think, are quite obvious. Because if we were only talking about clashes within the parties as we know them, we would expect that as soon as there is an agreement, all hostilities will cease and things will go back to normal at least in terms of security. But the situation, as we keep describing it and as you know it yourself, is far beyond that. You have militia all over the place and it has to be reined in; it has to be stopped. You have inter-tribal fights that have to be stopped. You have clashes between the rebel groups and the tribes and that also has a background of retaliation amongst other things. We have also to secure that all groups and individuals who belong to the parties respect the agreement. That is something that Jan Pronk addressed in his speech before the opening of the current round of Abuja talks – he said that we need guarantees that all parties, all individuals belonging to the parties, can not claim that they are not bound by agreement signed. You have to control also the people and secure that everybody belonging to the SLA, to JEM, or whatever, also have to be bound by the signature of the agreement. The challenges are numerous; it is not going to be easy. And we never said when we referred to the peace agreement, and Jan Pronk elaborated on this on of his press conferences and individual interviews, that an agreement, whatever agreement we are talking about, is not an end in itself. It has never been meant as an end. It is just a starting point for addressing these types of challenges because if you secure agreements at least between the main parties, then you have a platform on which you can work to address other issues. That is what is expected but let us first have the peace agreement.

The other challenges, just to tell you – and this is why we have the Assessment Mission by the AU and this is why we had the meeting in Khartoum of all the Special Envoys – that was to start working on a post-agreement scenario in Darfur because you would have to tackle so many other issues in terms of return and securing the returns (providing security for the returnees and to have enough manpower there by the AU) among other things, to secure the areas and secure the returns and to make sure that it assists in terms of containing the other threats caused by bandits and by the tribes and by the militia and any rogue elements that might show up from the rebel groups who would say that, “we were not part of it and thus we can continue doing what we were doing.” There are so many things and the challenges are quite numerous.

Q: I understand that as part of these discussions on the post agreement structure, Jan Pronk has been briefing NGOs about how the UN will assume the lead role and probably take over the African Union role in Darfur and the AU’s Phase III will probably not now go ahead and that the UN will now then take over. We wonder if you can give us some more detail of what has been talked about.

Spokesperson: I don’t think that Mr. Pronk briefed the NGOs about the UN taking over. That is not the issue. The question has been asked to me many times and I reiterate again: the AU-led assessment mission is taking place currently and if you remember the decision taken by the Peace and Security Council – the last decision, you remember it – when they decided to have the different phases of their deployment. And now we are talking about the last phase of the deployment of the AU – last, not in terms of time but in terms of strength and the ceiling of the strength. And, you remember, the Peace and Security Council of the AU said that when there is a peace agreement, they have to increase their presence to up to 12,000. And you know that the UN has always been invited by the AU to be part of their assessment missions. So the assessment mission is taking place and it is going to be considering the scenario to reach the 12,000 and whatever will be needed, and the AU is going to reach its conclusions.

However, on the UN, I don't know who told you this from the NGOS but Mr. Pronk, when he briefs the NGOs, the NGOs brief him first about their security concerns and Mr. Pronk tries to explain to them what is feasible today, what can be done to improve the situation as it stands at the time when they are discussing it and what are their prospects for the future. I can assure, you since I accompanied Mr. Pronk in many of his trips and his NGO briefings, that he never mentioned that the UN will be taking over.

Q: Last week you said that you haven't heard about this UN coming in ...

Spokesperson: Still we haven't. Yes, there are discussions and we know there are discussions somewhere in some capitals but the UN is not officially part of it. The UN is not involved in these discussions and we have not been informed by the AU that this scenario is going to be considered. Again, I reiterate, the AU is key to this issue. They were the ones who mandated their mission here and they are the ones to say whether they want to stay or not. As the UN, we are not part of it – yes, some statements were made including by some diplomats and some high officials in some countries talking about the scenario, but we in the United Nations don't have anything official on this issue. The Security Council itself has not been seized by this matter and assuming that there would be such a scenario, I would say it will be put on the agenda of the Security Council but in the Security Council there is no such item as the UN taking over. That is not the case today.

As far as we are concerned, we do support the AU role; we do think that they are doing a good job; and we are not officially part of any discussions of this nature. Some are doing it – then address the questions to the countries and not the UN.

As for the AU-led assessment mission, they are here already. UN will of course be part of it at the invitation of the AU and that, by the way, is part of the assistance that the Security Council asked us to provide for the AU in terms of planning, organizing its mission and its deployment. And that is traditional; it is usual and there is nothing new about this. We have a team that came from New York and we have a couple of colleagues who will be joining them from the mission here and the rest, it is the AU and others who were invited by the AU to take part in the assessment mission as for the terms of reference for the assessment mission, I really don't know what they are exactly but the terms of reference are going to be based on the decisions of the Peace and Security Council. I would rather have you ask the AU because they are the ones who set it up in consultation with those who participate in the mission but they are the ones who lead it.

Again, Jonah, we are not part ...

Q: (*interrupting*) You are the ones who, outside the environment of the press conference, your people are all talking about this and briefing people about this ...

Spokesperson: (*interrupting*) Like who?

Q: I am not going to name names but you say categorically people in this mission are not discussing this issue.

Spokesperson: No, we are not – with anybody.

Q: Hand on heart?

Spokesperson: Hand on heart. The UN has a Secretariat; we in the mission are part of it. If we're asked to get ready or start considering this option, we will consider it. So far, nobody asked us to do so. When you talk about the United Nations, you have to make differences. There are member states of the United Nations who are talking about this scenario. The Security Council as a whole as the legislative body is not seized by the matter. We, the executive part of the UN – be it the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York or the mission here – are not part officially of any discussion of this nature. Whether something will come up or not following the assessment, I don't know. But then, you have to ask the AU what kind of scenarios they would foresee.

Q: The US has formally discussed a bill to request the UN Security Council to send international troops to support the AU enterprise. This may not necessarily mean the replacement of AU with UN troops but does indeed fall in the region of assisting the AU in completing its deployment to 12,000 which it has found difficulties in so doing. But it may seem that the UN...

Spokesperson: Please, again, you are referring to the statement attributed to Ms. (Jendayi) Fraser. Please get in contact with the Embassy of the United States of America. I speak only for the United Nations and as such I can tell you that the Security Council has no such issue on its agenda. The US, as a member of the Security Council, may formally suggest to the Security Council to look into the issue but we do not know whether they will indeed forward such a proposal or not. But, officially for the meantime, there is nothing in the agenda of the United Nations titled 'UN to replace the AU.' There is no such thing.

So if you do have any question on Ms. Fraser's statements please ask the US embassy. I do not speak for the US and I saw the report in the press and do not know whether those were all her words or part of what she said or something else. I don't know. Please, on such issues concerning States, contact the embassies of the relevant states.

Q: As far as Darfur is concerned, we know that Mr. Pronk is responsible to report to the Security Council every month on the situation in Darfur. Talks are taking place about the capacity of the AU and that sometimes even the government received a report about the building up of its capacity. Are you reporting this to the Security Council and then the Security Council will see what it can do? If the AU can not handle it and now, from your briefing, it seems the situation is getting every day worse.

Spokesperson: No, Alula. It does not really work that way. Of course we do report to the Security Council on a monthly basis. And if you look at our reports particularly on the AU, we always applauded the AU on what it is doing. And actually the AU is doing a lot even in these incidents that I am referring to. The AU has managed to handle many of these situations and has been quite valuable to us in terms of escorting us and protecting humanitarian convoys and protecting us because the UN, as you know, doesn't have a protection forces in Darfur. So it is not an issue to be decided by us. SRSR Pronk can not and is not mandated to put in his report that maybe the Security Council should think about changing the AU into something else. That is not it. He is not mandated to it.

We have two institutions here. One is the African Union that decided to establish its mission in Darfur and that is a total sovereign entity by itself. It is totally independent. Yes, theoretically speaking, the Security Council, based on the Charter, has the authority to decide whether it wants to have a peacekeeping mission of the UN based on its prerogative in

maintaining peace and security, which is the primary responsibility of the Security Council. The other organizations can play a role in peace and security but, eventually, the ultimate and primary role is the one of the Security Council – that is legally speaking. However, in terms of how we work out these arrangements, the Security Council values a lot the role of regional organizations particularly the AU that has been very helpful in Africa – it is not the first time that they are doing this. So, there are rules to be observed when we are talking relations between international institutions. So, based on the Charter, assuming the Security Council wants to the UN to take over in Darfur, it could do so under chapter VI or VII- *theoretically speaking still so don't print out tomorrow that the Security Council plans a Chapter VII-* I am just trying to explain how things work between organisations in terms of maintaining international peace and security. Say there is a situation in a country where the AU, or any other organization for that matter, is deployed. The Security Council decides that the situation is serious enough for it to change that arrangement to a UN presence. The Security Council then will have either to get the consent of the Parties so that they deploy the Chapter VI, or if the situation is serious enough to enforce and impose peace, the Council could decide to establish a Chapter VII UN Mission that does not require the consent of the parties. However, the Security Council uses its prerogatives in imposing peace when it is absolutely necessary and when all other means to establish or restore peace are exhausted. So far, it has not been the case in Darfur and our relations with the AU are relations of cooperation, complimentary and of mutual respect between two organizations.

Finally, again, please do bear in mind that the AU is the one to decide if it wants to continue or not. For the time being, many scenarios could be explored on the way forward by the AU-led assessment mission. I don't know what the future holds but, again, as far as we are concerned, the Security Council is not going to be taking over in disregard for the Peace and Security Council of the AU.

Q: But you still are responsible for the report to the Security Council. The main objective of the AU being in Darfur apart from protecting the humanitarian workers is to protect the civilians. From the incidents we are reading everyday and even from your briefings, this is not happening.

Spokesperson: You are right because the AU actually does not have enough manpower. Although they reached almost 7,000 they still do not have the capacity to be deployed everywhere plus, the problem is that in many areas they just do patrolling because they don't have the capacity to be present somewhere, add to it that whomever is doing the attacking are being innovative. They attack different place and the AU does not have the capacity to prevent it and most of the time we don't know that these attacks – the AU does not have the information that these attacks will be taking place. It is quite complex and definitely you are right. The AU, when you talk to them, is more frustrated than anybody else by the situation and they are saying, “We need more people, we need more resources and we need more cooperation from the parties”. By the end of the day, I come back to what I always have been saying that the AU or anybody else can not succeed if the parties themselves do not do their part. The AU has been targeted. And that is something to be put to the parties; they are responsible for the overall security of the African Union. Yes, the African Union has the power to protect itself - that is for sure. But not the African Union, nobody wants to be party to the conflict. The African Union tries as much as it can not to fire back unless there is an absolute necessity for it but, based on the principles that we work with, the host country and the parties to the conflict are supposed also to provide protection for the peacekeepers be it from the African Union or be it from the UN.

Thank you very much. We have lots of material for you today. We have our own press release issued by my colleagues from Juba on a workshop on Human Rights, we have a press release from UNDP, we have a press release from the Human Rights office on Torture and Terrorism please read it carefully and the High Commissioner for Human Rights is going to be briefing the media today at 11:00, New York time on the issue of torture and terrorism and her statement is actually available to you. Ms. Louise Arbour, the High Commissioner for Human Rights is going to make that statement – use it. Hopefully, I will manage to get an Arabic version of this document and I will give them to you.

Thank you and I thank the interpreters.