

**The United Nations Mission In Sudan****Date: 21 December 2005****Office of the Spokesperson****PRESS BRIEFING**

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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 ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the press briefing. Before I start my press briefing we have some new colleagues which I would like for you to know but we will make the introductions a bit later. One of our newcomers is Ms. Jihan ElAlaili and she will be working, in UN Radio and she will be the chief of the News Section for UN Radio and will be dealing with you extensively later on.

I have a guest also today and he will be briefing you after I finish my briefing as usual. Our guest today is Mr. Sajjad Malik and he is the Senior Coordinator for Returns and Reintegration from UNHCR and I know that many of you were following very closely the issue of the repatriation of refugees to the southern Sudan and he will be giving you a briefing updating you on that particular issue.

Without further ado, I will start my briefing with the latest from the Secretary-General on Darfur.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ON DARFUR

In a statement issued yesterday, the Secretary-General condemned the latest attack on Abu Sorouj village in West Darfur. Reports indicate that approximately 500 armed men over horses and camel back suspected to be Arab Militias entered Abu Sorouj village on 19 December and started shooting indiscriminately, killing around 20 civilians and burning dozens of huts. The attackers looted livestock.

The Secretary-General urged the Government of Sudan to take immediate measures and to pursue those responsible. 'The perpetrators of this and other attacks against civilians must be brought to justice' the Secretary-General said.

The Secretary-General condemned all the violent clashes, instances of banditry and inter-tribal fighting that has continued in Darfur in recent days. He called on the parties to the conflict in the strongest terms to respect their agreements and the provisions of international humanitarian law, and to accelerate their efforts to reach an early, negotiated settlement in Abuja.

The statement is available in the room.

U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council held a meeting on 19 December on the humanitarian situation in Africa and heard in this regard a briefing by Jan Egeland, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator. Jan Egeland focused his briefing on the crisis in Darfur and its impact on Chad, and the regional crisis caused by the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, Sudan and most recently the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On Darfur, he noted that unless measures taken by the Security Council have a real impact on the ground, the wound will continue to bleed, and appealed for an expanded and more effective security presence on the ground as soon as possible.

He made proposals to the Council to address the crisis caused by the LRA including a creation of a panel of experts to explore the sources of funding and support of the group.

ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSION AND ITS SENIOR LEADERSHIP

-The DSRSG for Humanitarian Affairs and Development and the UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator, Manuel Aranda Da Silva, took part in the recent UN Development Group / UNDP mission to Southern Sudan. The mission, headed by Kathleen Cravero - Head of UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recover - and Sally Fegan Wyles - Head of UN Development Group - sought to examine the coordination mechanism during the transition from relief to recovery and development. The mission included meetings with the UN Country Team (UNCT), UNMIS, UNDP, OCHA, Ministry of International Cooperation, NGOs and donors. It also met with NGOs, UNDP, UNCT and UNMIS and government in Juba and Kadugli.

-On 15 Dec., UNMIS participated in the 'Darfur program for training on Sexual exploitation and abuse,' organized and hosted by UNFPA in Khartoum and attended by UN agencies and NGOs. The Gender Unit provided feedback on a draft training manual to be delivered to humanitarian aid workers in Darfur, and discussed the appropriate steps for ensuring that humanitarian aid workers are held accountable for any acts of SEA.

MILITARY UPDATE

Strength: Deployment of Military Observers and Protection Force Elements is in progress and as of now, the total strength is of 4316, including 467 Military Observers.

Activities

-After successful completion of their assigned peace keeping tenure in Khartoum, the Italian Soldiers have handed over the responsibilities to newly arrived Rwandan contingent. The Italian contingent is due to leave Sudan by 21 Dec 05. Rwanda is contributing 254 personnel for UNMIS who will perform protection duties in Khartoum.

-The UN Military Observers have reported that WAU – TONJ road has been cleared by UN Mine Action Office for movement of UNMIS personnel.

-The first batch of Pakistani troops (protection forces) comprising 400 Soldiers is expected to arrive in Damazin between 28 and 31 Dec 05.

-A Bangladeshi de-mining company comprising 130 personnel will be joining the Bangladeshi Contingent in Juba shortly to undertake de-mining tasks in the mission area.

SECURITY

Darfur

-The Security situation in Darfur remains volatile. Militia attacks on villages continue. Besides the attack mentioned earlier on Abu Sorouj, a number of villages were reportedly attacked this week in South Darfur, and in all three Darfur states and continuous displacements of people have been reported. According to the SLA, 5,000 people have arrived in Dar es Salaam (North Darfur), following the fighting earlier this month in Shearia (South Darfur).

-Following the fighting that took place on 18 December between Chadian armed forces countered an Chadian opposition groups in Adre (22 km west of El Geneina within Chad), the local population in Adre area fled towards south-west Darfur (Mastri, Kongo Haraza and Baida).

-Banditry, looting and ambushes on trucks continue and casualties continue to be reported as a result of banditry, which is increasing in intensity. Destruction of crops continues to be a matter of concern.

-There are reports that an attack on a nomadic camp in a village located 47 km from S/E Nyala (S. Darfur), confirmed by the AU, was carried out on 13 December allegedly by men in military uniform supported by armed tribesmen. Reports indicate that 9 persons were killed and 5 girls abducted. The attackers looted a large number of cattle of the nomads.

-As for the rebel groups, the SLA confirmed that the attack on 5 WFP- subcontracted trucks in the Jebel Marra area on 11 December, which led to the death of one of the drivers, was perpetrated by one of its men, stating that it was an act by a single drunken soldier. The SLA apologized for the incident and is reportedly seeking to compensate the family of the victim.

-Regarding the NMRD, there are continuous reports implicating the movement in security incidents. The latest report is on an attack carried out on 15 December on two commercial trucks and an INGO vehicle in Jebel UM, an area close to the one where the AU patrol was attacked on 29 November, by an armed group suspected to be NMRD. It was reported that 4 persons, including 2 soldiers traveling on the commercial trucks were killed.

Last week, another INGO vehicle and driver were abducted in broad daylight from an IDP camp in North Darfur. The driver was released safely, but the vehicle is still missing

-Attacks on IDP camps and harassment and intimidation of IDPs continue unabated. An OCHA/UNMIS assessment to Mershing (South Darfur) confirmed reports by IDPs of

continuous beatings, lootings, rapes and kidnappings by armed nomads surrounding the camps. Inhabitants of two nearby villages, Dar El Salam and Erli, have fled to Mershing, alleging they escaped from the continuous harassment and attacks by camel herders, including animal grazing on cultivated land.

HUMANITARIAN

-Humanitarian access in West Darfur has somewhat improved this week, when the Geneina-Kerenek and Geneina-Mornei roads were declared 'go' by the UN, following a meeting earlier this week with tribal leaders who control the route and who pledged to use their influence to allow safety of passage for humanitarian traffic. However, INGOs have still not relocated to the Silea/Kulbus area in the northern part of the state, nor to the Kongo haraza/Masteri area, where GoS troops have been reinforced, supposedly to protect the border from Chadian infiltration.

-Following three violent incidents in Tawilla (North Darfur) last week, all INGOs operating in the area have withdrawn their staff, and all humanitarian assistance has been suspended. A UN mission to Tawilla on 15 December revealed that the town was deserted and that the inhabitants had either fled to the surrounding areas or flocked to the AU group site. According to the AU, the number of displaced Tawilla residents sheltering at the temporary displacement site adjacent to the AU Group Site remains at around 5,000 and in need of water. OCHA, UNICEF, WHO and Relief International will conduct a rapid assessment of the area on 20 December in collaboration with UNDSS as it is a NO GO for UN agencies.

-“The Child Alert Darfur”, a report by UNICEF, is out. The report details the impact of conflict on children's lives in Darfur, almost three years after the violence began. There is a press release on the issue which indicates that every day more than 3 million children are affected by the ongoing conflict in Darfur. An estimated 1.75 million children in displaced persons camps and surrounding towns now have basic social services, largely as a result of humanitarian aid, despite continuing insecurity that plagues their daily lives. However an estimated 1.25 million children remain who cannot be reached because of insecurity and their situation remains largely unknown.

Funding figures for the 2005 Work Plan for Sudan

Ten days shy of the end of the year, the almost final funding figures for the 2005 Work Plan for Sudan in detailed sheets are available. Here is a summary of the key figures:

Sudan received more than \$1.1 billion dollars from the \$1.98 billion in estimated humanitarian needs, meaning that over all the Work Plan for 2005 was 56% funded. An additional \$300 million was received from sources outside the Work Plan so the total reported multilateral funding for Sudan was nearly \$1.5 billion in 2005.

Looking at the funding **geographically**, Darfur received 66% of requested funds – or about \$570 million while Southern Sudan received 51% -- or about \$348 million.

If we look at the funding by **sector**, food aid made up the bulk of aid, with \$673 million spent, covering 74% of the needs. Rehabilitation of the transportation infrastructure was also well-funded, with 66% of the \$126 million required covered.

One of the greatest difficulties in 2005 was not the amount of the funding, but the timing. Funds are needed early, so agencies and NGOs can plan their programmes, particularly in Southern Sudan, where the onset of the rainy season can literally stop aid operations in their tracks.

As you may remember from the press conference with the Deputy SRSG and Humanitarian Coordinator, Manuel da Silva, earlier this month, the 2006 Work Plan call for \$1.7 billion in humanitarian and recovery needs. It's the largest humanitarian needs in the world.

HEALTH

-The Yellow Fever vaccination campaign is ongoing in South Kordofan, and appears to have been effective as the outbreak is no longer spreading. So far, 589 suspected cases have been registered, including 173 related deaths.

-On 15 December, the State MoH, supported by UNFPA, Practical Action and SRCS, completed a 14-month village midwifery training course in El Fashir for 85 women from Kebkabiya, Kutum, El Fashir, and El Waha nomadic locality.

Abyei

On 17 December there was a meeting to discuss the water situation in Abyei town as well as villages surrounding these locations. The shortage of water for the resident population, nomads and their livestock has always been a challenge and a source of conflict during the dry season. The need is direr this year than in the recent past due to the return of large numbers of IDPs and a shorter rainy season this past year which has resulted in a decreased water supply from nearby rivers and streams. Even where there is access to rivers and streams, the water is not safe for drinking. Abyei town (15,000 individuals) has three water yards which, if working properly, can provide for 12,000 beneficiaries. Many of the households do not have jerry cans or buckets to collect and store water. Only two of the nine old villages around Abyei have operational water yards.

Teams also continue to assess the situation in newly established returnee villages in Abyei. MSF-Switzerland commenced on 14 December a rapid health assessment in the Abyei area, which targeted three new returnee villages (Majak, Mabok and Rumamir), Abyei town, Agok, and three villages in the Agok locality.

Kassala:

UNICEF began a three day assessment of area IDP camps in Kassala on 19 December. The locations to be covered include Tahjer, Dabalawiet A and B, Gulsa, Togaly, Hadalia and Matatiab. The objective of the assessment is to review the problems that may arise with a possible IDP influx with regard to the provision of assistance in terms of water, health, education, and child protection.

YEI

The NGO GTZ, SRRC and UNHCR distributed NFIs to 107 Dinka IDP families in Yei on the 15 and 16 December. Norwegian People's Aid began food distribution to the same population on 17 December after having completed a vulnerability assessment on 15 December. The movement of the Bor Dinka through Juba to Bor continues with the assistance of UN agencies, including FAO, UNHCR, WFP and UNMIS.

That concludes my briefing for you today. As usual, I will have my guest briefing you on his topic. After he finishes his briefing, please address first your questions to him if you have any and then I will take over with your questions to me.

Mr. Malik, please ...

Malik: Thank you very much. Very briefly and then if there are any questions you can ask I will answer after that.

Briefly to let you know that the first organized convoy of refugees with a total of 131 returned to southern Sudan with UNHCR assistance on Saturday from the Kakuma refugee settlement in Kenya. This marks the first repatriation movement from the neighbouring countries after a number of years. For this first movement we used two planes to fly some 67 people to Bor in Jonglei State from where they walked to their nearby neighbouring villages. We also took some 20 people to Kapoeta and 44 to Shugdum – both in Eastern Equatoria – from where they walked 4 to 6 hours to reach their villages.

All the refugees had previously been advised of the situation on the ground. They had been part of the ‘go and see visits’, they had relatives and friends waiting for them and it was quite a cheerful event when they reached home; families waiting for them, friends waiting for them in a very emotional manner. Many of them were returning for the first time after 10 – 12 years living in exile. All the returnees were given household goods as part of their reinsertion, reintegration package. WFP provided food assistance initially for the first few weeks and a follow up food distribution will take place for them to restart their lives and livelihoods.

In addition to the first returnees, a small group which has happened now which was received at the border by the Vice-president of South Sudan and other dignities from both sides of the border of Kenya and Sudan. We have a further 1,600 refugees in Kakuma camp who have signed up to return to southern Sudan. These are mainly returning to Upper Nile as soon as the situation improves in terms of road conditions and security. There are another 10,000 southern Sudanese refugees who want to come back home from Kakuma camp, plus some 50,000 from the neighbouring countries – DRC, Central African Republic, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt who would like to come home. We did intention surveys and many of them have shown strong desires to return home.

We plan to start repatriations from DRC in January for which arrangements have been put in place and from Ethiopia in February next year. We stress here that we are not promoting the return of refugees yet but are helping refugees repatriate if they ask us. The beginning of organized return should send signals to southern Sudanese refugees whether the time is ripe for them to go back home and start rebuilding their lives and livelihoods back home. In addition to the small and symbolic number UNHCR took home over the weekend, an estimated 75,000 demonstrated their faith in the future of the Sudan by coming home on their own this year mainly from the DRC and the CAR.

UNHCR and other agencies spent much of this year helping communities in southern Sudan prepare to receive those returnees; to anchor those who returned home their return; and to prevent further displacement. Our role is that whenever refugees and Internally Displaced Persons go back home, they will find someone to welcome them. UNHCR has opened up now 10 offices, we have built schools, dug wells, built hospitals to help entire communities better receive those returnees and anchor their return. Clearly it will take a long time to

provide the same services to these people who are receiving the same services in the refugee camp but this is a start for these returns and it is encouraging a lot of spontaneous returnees coming back home.

UNHCR south Sudan repatriation operations have been under-funded this year with only 50.16 million received for the needs as against 76.3. We hope that with the repatriation now underway and the refugees keen to return home, that donors will be generous with their support in 2006 as many, many more are willing and ready to return home and if the resources and means are available, this process, as we anticipated in 4 – 5 years, we will be able to bring these refugees home.

Thank you very much.

Spokesperson: Thank you very much.

Do you have questions for Mr. Malik?

Yes, Sudan Radio Service...

Q & A

Q: Nichola, Sudan Radio Service. My question is regarding the repatriation process. This is what people have been waiting for quite a long time, and now Sudanese in exile and in diaspora are coming back home. Now what precautions have you taken with regard to the repatriation process? Because we are told that southern Sudan is one of the areas heavily full of mines more than in any other country in the world. Have you taken into consideration the presence of landmines in the other areas in southern Sudan before the start of the repatriation process? If not, what is your office going to do regarding this process, because landmines are another problem waiting for returnees in southern Sudan?

Mr. Malik: Landmines and UXOs is one of the main aspects that we look into whenever we plan repatriation operations. UNHCR has a mine advisory team which we have experts are coming in from different agencies and that advisory team then provides the expert opinion on repatriation operations. This advisory team works very closely with the mine action officers – especially UNMAS – and we look at all these aspects.

For the repatriation from the DRC, for example, we have to look at the Lasu-Aba road which was the main road of return from the DRC. Mine survey was done and the areas which were expected were mapped and that actually is taking place. Similarly, now we are doing the same in the Blue Nile area where refugees from Ethiopia are coming back.

This is one of the main aspects that we look at in terms of repatriation. We do not encourage repatriation to take place even if there are suspicions that there are mines or unidentified other objects.

Q: Is there a specific timeline or figures for refugees' returns?

Mr. Malik: Yes, we do have a timeline. We are looking at between now and towards the end of May which is the dry season and then during the rainy season, obviously we will not be able to have any movements, and then the second half of the dry season. For the first part

between now and May we are looking at about 60,000 refugees to be returned through this repatriation process and this then is from different countries where we have different numbers that we mentioned. From Kenya we are looking at about 10,000 to return home this year; another 50 thousand from the other 6 neighboring countries.

Q: Your paper says you are under funded but if you have received 50 million out of 76 that is about 65% so you should now least have been doing the work equivalent to that xx3725.

Mr. Malik: We have looked at it; we have worked it out and, as I said, the spontaneous returns number from the neighboring countries – refugees – that number is 75,000 that are of returns spontaneously. Then there are large numbers of IDPs also returning to those same areas and then there are those communities who never move but are equally in need of assistance because the services are very low. Our input that have gone out to areas of return so far has been to support both host communities, IDPs returning there and those who have returned from neighboring countries plus, as was mentioned in the briefing, supporting IDPS who are moving through those areas.

So those enormous challenges which require equivalent amounts of money to meet those needs. We are saying that 50 million is good enough but is not good enough to meet the total needs that we are projecting for 2005. The return has started now; there were issues related to security, issues related to the rainy season and other related elements. In 2006, once repatriation starts, our experience from other countries is that it picks up then because the others also want to come back and that needs to be matched with the resources because if the desire is there we should be able to respond in terms of services and support then.

Spokesperson: To the friends from the media here, I just would like to ask for your indulgence to get some questions from some colleagues who work for UNMIS Radio. They are under training.

Q: Phillip James from United Nations Radio. On returns of refugees to areas in the south, are the conditions favorable for their return and is the infrastructure in place favorable for the returns?

Mr. Malik: Infrastructure; this is what all agencies, NGOs and everybody working in that area would highlight that the services have been almost non-existence. Whatever we do is absolutely a minimum that we are putting in right now. The level of services to the ratios which have been set globally and what is in south Sudan is far less than that - schools, health clinics, water points, all of them. What we are trying to do is at least to provide the basic minimum that is required to sustain this population when they return home. In terms of conditions on the ground, we have criteria which we apply which include protection of populations, security, mines are another one. If those issues and conditions are fulfilled, only then would we promote repatriation to those areas. Otherwise, we would inform our staff in refugee camps to inform refugees that certain areas are not yet secure for them to return. Where repatriation is taking place are the areas where we think the situation has improved.

Q: I think we need here some clarification. You are speaking about UNHCR conducting this whole operation. What we know is that other UN agencies are also conducting these operations. For example if we speak about UNHCR's role in schools, we know that this is the domain of UNICEF.

Mr. Malik: We are working with all agencies together – it is all a hands on back kind of a situation. UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, all the other United Nations agencies are all working together on that. The only aspect of returns which is across the border is where the UNHCR is responsible agency to bring refugees home. In areas of return, all our operations are worked together with other agencies. OCHA is coordinating these activities – if I give the example of Yei, OCHA is coordinating operations there; in terms of coordination mechanisms, we are giving the lead in coordinating other operations. We do water activities which are in connection with UNICEF; education is with UNICEF, WHO provides all the help. It is an interagency – United Nations agencies and NGOs – working together on that.

Repatriation, as I mentioned, is something that is UNHCR to bring these refugees from across the border back into the Sudan. If I gave the impression that UNHCR is working alone, that is not the case. It is working with all agencies together.

Q: Maybe your mandate is bring in people but the other agencies are responsible for them.

Spokesperson: Absolutely, Alula. Whenever we have somebody to brief you on an issue it does not mean that they are the only ones working on the issue – no agency can do something on its own. But in many instances we bring you the lead agency in one activity so they will be briefing you not only on what their agency *per se* is doing but what the activity is about. Returns, for instance, is the out coming example of the coordination of every single effort and everybody does his or her own share.

Any other questions to Mr. Malik?

If there are none, I would like to thank Mr. Malik very much for his contribution today and of course if anything comes up, we will have him as a guest again as we know that the issue of return is going to be one major topics for the months and weeks to come. Thank you very much.

And now I will proceed with you if you have any questions for me.

Q: In the last meeting of the CJMC, the SAF and the SPLA were requested that they hand over the lists of those factions not affiliated to them. The SPLA was also requested to set up a scheme for their withdrawal from eastern Sudan.

To what extent the situation in the border areas with Chad affect the United Nations and what contributions does the United Nations have to ease the situation?

Spokesperson: On your question on the briefing I gave based on the CJMC meeting, in fact no information has reached us because the meeting took place last week. You recall, sir that I said that these requests to the parties were to have been met and this information handed to the United Nations immediately before the next meeting which will take place next week. So there still is another week ahead. The parties still do have the time to present the United Nations with this information and I will check with my colleagues in the military section if the information on the lists and the other issues you talked about have started coming in.

On Chad, we have completely no role as Mission on issues pertaining to the ongoing situation around the common border region between the two countries. We only monitor what is happening as a precaution of what may happen as a result of the situation and its effects

inside Sudan. You are aware that as the United Nations, we do not have a military observing role. Our role is only confined within the borders of the Sudan and we do not have any role on other issues. I speak about UNMIS.

Q: The effects of these clashes on the situation in Darfur...

Spokesperson: The only effect we have seen so far is that the population affected with the incident in Chad, as far as we know, entered villages in Sudan as they fled. We do monitor the situation from this perspective and from the security perspective should the issue slip out of hand and enter Sudanese territory. We do have measures to ensure the safety of our workers operating in Darfur. On the current situation, nothing changes for us. All the humanitarian agencies operating in West Darfur and the other areas are still there. We have not been affected so far but are monitoring the situation in light of any developments that may occur and affect the security situation there in such a manner as to force us to take measures to protect our people and we will do so should the need arise. But, to date, nothing of the sort has happened. Generally, the United Nations always has – as a permanent measure – steps to follow when it comes to evacuation of its employees and so on. We also monitor the effects on the humanitarian situation if people have entered the Sudan and are in need of humanitarian assistance and so on

Any other questions?

Q: A very special question because I have not been present for the last three weeks.

My question is with regards Sudan is going to host the AU summit in 2006 in Khartoum. Debates are going on amongst Sudanese from different parts especially in east Africa where I have just come from. People are saying that Sudan probably may become the head of the AU in the coming year or in the summit that will be held in Khartoum and the violence is still going on in Darfur. The situation is that the government in Sudan is being accused of what is going on in Darfur and how comes that Sudan is going to host the AU summit and may probably lead the AU? The problem of Darfur is in the hand of the African Union to be solved and if Sudan happens to be the head of the African Union in the coming year and still the problem of Darfur is not yet solved, how is this going to be and you, as the United Nations, as you stated clearly that your presence here is to monitor the humanitarian situation in Darfur? How do you look at the situation if Sudan is going to host the summit and perhaps become the head of the African Union and the African Union is the one responsible for solving the problems of Darfur and the United Nations is an international body that is supposed to monitor the humanitarian situation as you stated.

So how do you look at this situation? Are you and the African Union going to allow Sudan leads the African Union and the problem of Darfur that is in the hand of the African Union remains unsolved?

Thank you.

Spokesperson: My answer to your question is going to be very short. The issue of Sudan or an African country presiding over a summit is an issue that belongs to the African Union. The UN has absolutely nothing to do with and it is not for the UN to interfere in the issues related to the African Union. They are the ones to decide – that is up to them, and the UN respects any decision that comes from that body and that is the answer to your question.

Q: In your briefing about Mr. Egeland, you said that he asked for more security presence on the ground. Can you elaborate on this? What does he mean by that?

Spokesperson: I really can't like to speak for Mr. Egeland but his statement is clear actually and we sent you the statesmen, which also available in the room. He was alluding to the fact that in Darfur there is way less security presence than humanitarian workers – and you know the number of humanitarian workers there. There is a need to need to increase security measures and apparatus substantially in Darfur. And we spoke about the AU many times and the presence of the African Union. Increasing its size is part of this and it has to do with two things: one; because we have been reporting to you time and again that humanitarian workers are being targeted and are being the victims. We lost a number of humanitarian workers and unfortunately all of them happen to be Sudanese, due to banditry and even sometimes actual targeting of humanitarian workers. That is one. But more importantly, we need an increased security presence in Darfur so as to protect civilians. So far, as you see, civilians – and we report on this regularly to you – the civilian population is still under threat, under attack and we reported to you specific cases and that should be addressed and this is what was meant by Mr. Jan Egeland but you can refer to his statement. I think he elaborated in his statement on what he meant when he said that.

Q: Alfred Soka from the *Khartoum Monitor*. My question is specifically about Jonglei state. I went down there and I found that the role of the UNMIS is not effective there. There are many roads that need to be de-mined and the militias seem to be causing problems down there. What plans does the UN have for that specific state and other states in Sudan where UN forces are not deployed?

Thank you.

Spokesperson: I think we briefed you extensively last week on the de-mining issues and we told you what are the possibilities, what are the plans and what we did and so far what we plan to do. I am not going to be repeating what we said.

On the militias, time and again, we told you many times that our forces are not here to engage the militias. This is not what we are here for. In terms of engaging anybody, the United Nations has a very limited role and we explained it again and again that the only possibility for us to do it is within that provision in resolution 1590 which is basically that we can resort to Chapter VII measures in the three following scenarios, one; to protect the United Nations mission personnel and assets , two to protect humanitarian workers and humanitarian convoys; three; to protect civilian populations under clear and imminent threat without prejudice to the responsibility of the sovereign authorities of the Sudan. So we don't have a role with the militia militarily. If we talk militarily, we don't have a role with them except in these particular areas.

We are not effective; you have to understand also that so far we are not deployed to full capacity. Yes, we could do better and hopefully we could finalize deployment soon, but we are not in full capacity. The issue of militia is ours to deal with. These are the responsibility of the parties to rein militia or to deal with the other armed groups whoever they are if they pose a threat to the civilian population.

But if you have any specific about the area that you just mentioned, please let us know so that we could follow up the problems you've raised and we will come back to you.

No other questions from the media? So my colleague from UN Radio - still on training with us although Beatrice is a former colleague of yours so she is not really to be trained but still we will give her the time to ask questions but first let us get the gentleman first.

Q: What is your assessment on the Abuja process and is it going on as you would have like it compared to the ongoing Darfur conference?

Are there any diplomatic efforts to resolve the problem between the Sudanese and Chadian governments vis-à-vis the rebels in the west?

Spokesperson: On the Abuja process, you have to request an assessment from the African Union. We here do have some people from the mission in Abuja to monitor the development in the process but any assessment has to come from the African Union.

I keep sending you the AU press releases. What I know of the Abuja talks is what the AU brings out in its press releases. Our understanding is that all the negotiators still continue to talk – and that is good in itself. It seems that the negotiations process, at least on some issues, does not take place at the required speed but we do understand the difficulties of negotiating some points and, at the same time, urge the parties – as Kofi Annan said in his statement – to hasten ahead to reach a solution to the issue of Darfur as soon as possible. I do not have any other details on the Abuja talks.

With regards your second question; again, on anything concerning bilateral relations between Sudan and Chad or any other state, we as a mission, do not interfere in these issues. If there are other diplomatic efforts I personally am not aware of them. The UN, or at least the mission here, does not interfere in such issues of bilateral relations between two countries.

Q: Basically, I just would like an update on the SPLA troop movement in the south – the troops that are turning up in the south for the Joint Integrated Units. I would just like an update.

Spokesperson: I need to get the figures for you if there are any or you can get in touch with our Military Public Information Officer later and he will give you the update in terms of figures if any..

Thank you very much and I thank also the colleagues the interpreters.