



UNITED NATION

الأمم المتحدة

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson

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PRESS BRIEFING

(Humanitarian information included in UNMIS briefings is provided by OCHA and the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes operating in Sudan).

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

SOFA

-In an official ceremony held this morning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNMIS and the Government of National Unity of the Sudan signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). This Agreement regulates the relationship between the host country and Mission. It lays out the rights, responsibilities and procedures for both parties with respect to deployment, presence and operations of the Mission in fulfillment of its mandate. The agreement was signed by DSRSG Manuel Aranda Da Silva, for the UN and the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ali Ahmed Karti, for the Government of National Unity. In his speech, Mr. Da Silva welcomed the signing of the Agreement, indicating that this positive development will be reported to the Security Council in early January. DSRSG Da Silva stated that UN staff will continue to be trained on their responsibilities as guests to the country and underlined the importance of all levels of government being made aware of the provisions of this agreement to ensure in smooth implementation. The statement of Mr. Karti is available in the room.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL

In its last scheduled meeting for the year, the Security Council on 29 December, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, decided unanimously to extend until 29 March 2006 the mandate of the four-member panel of experts appointed to assist in monitoring implementation of the travel ban and assets freeze on those impeding the peace process in Darfur, committing human rights violations, and violating measures set out in previous resolutions. The Council also requested the panel to report and make recommendations to it, through the Committee established by resolution 1591 (2005), on the implementation of the measures imposed. The text of the resolution 1651 (2005) is available both in Arabic and in English in the room

The Security Council adopted also the same day a Presidential Statement, in which the Council members, welcoming the commencement of the seventh round of the African Union-

led inter-Sudanese peace talks on Darfur, called on all parties to the conflict to fulfill their commitments to conclude a just and full peace accord without further delay.

The Council also demanded that all parties refrain from violence and put an end to atrocities on the ground, especially those committed against civilians, including women and children, humanitarian workers, and international peacekeepers.

The Council demanded, in particular, that the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Government of the Sudan immediately cease violence, comply with the N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement, end impediments to the peace process, and cooperate fully with the African Union Mission in Sudan, and that the Government of the Sudan disarm and control militias. It further demanded that those responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law be brought to justice without delay.

In addition, the Council recalled its concern that the persisting violence in Darfur might further negatively affect the region, in particular the security of Chad. It firmly condemned, in that context, recent attacks perpetrated by armed elements within Chad and, in particular, the attack on 19 December on positions of the Chadian national army in the town of Adré, and supported efforts to reduce tensions on the border.

UNMIS ACTIVITIES

UN police

UN Police Yei attended the closing ceremony of the basic police course at Corps Training Centre. Maj. Gen. Watch, Director of Equatoria State Prison, was the Guest of Honour. In his speech the General stressed the need for more courses for the prison warders and requested the UN Police to arrange the same.

The strength of UN Police stands currently at a total of 265. Forty five (45) officers are attending induction courses and five waiting for deployment.

So far, there are a total of 534 GoS and SPLM/A police have taken part in the training courses and workshops held by the UNPOL, among them 91 are females, taking 17% percentage.

Eleven training courses have been carried out; subjects were focused on Introduction to Democratic Policing, Executive Management Seminar, Crime Investigation Course, Basic Policing Principles. Five workshops were held, the subject were about Executive Gender and Child Protection Sensitization, On-job Refresher Training, Crime preventive Techniques.

Military update

Deployment of Military Observers and Protection Force Elements is in progress and as of now, the total strength stands at **4325**, including **467** UN Military Observers. The next CJMC meeting will be held on 3 January 2006 in Juba..

Gender

On 21 Dec., UNMIS Senior Gender Advisor was invited to address the Northern DDR Commission during a three-day workshop on gender and DDR, held in Khartoum. The briefing, which focused on women, peace and security issues in general, and SCR 1325 in particular, as well as the work of the UNMIS Gender Unit, generated discussion on, among other issues, sexual exploitation and abuse and HIV/AIDS. Commission members expressed interest in participating in the monthly coordination meetings on SCR 1325, to begin in 2006, which were agreed to at a strategy session on SCR 1325 attended by government ministries, UNMIS sections, UN agencies, and women's civil society organizations, held on 20 Dec. at UNMIS HQ.

SECURITY

Darfur

The security situation in the Darfurs remains volatile. Insecurity in the form of intertribal fighting and GoS-SLA tensions, banditry and looting continued across the Darfurs, having a debilitating effect on the basis survival of the population and the provision of assistance by humanitarians, most prominently in West Darfur, where many organizations are operating only from the capital, El Geneina.

In South Darfur, militia activities seem to be on the increase. A number of attacks on villages have been reported. Harassment, beating and killing in some instances of IDPs grazing their cattle outside camps' areas continues to be reported. There are reports of rape and attempted rape of women and girls allegedly by GoS elements in Tawila (North Darfur).

Violation by the SLA of the Ceasefire agreement reportedly continues. On 20 Dec., eleven vehicles of SLA reportedly attacked Marla. Five people were allegedly killed and four wounded. Some believe the attack was retaliation for the GoS attacks on Bajo on 13 Dec. and on Duwana on 18 Dec. Fighting continued the following day. Two GoS helicopter gun-ships were observed patrolling over Marla. On 24 Dec. Armed men suspected to be SLA reportedly ambushed a GoS army administrative convoy on its way from Nyala to Rockero. 14 GoS soldiers were reportedly killed and 18 wounded. The attackers looted the ration of the soldiers and their 2 months' salaries. In North Darfur, fighting took place allegedly between the SLA and a GoS administrative convoy on 23 December in Kura village (40 km East of Kabkabiya).

South Sudan

Over the last week, security incidents attributed to the LRA were reported in BUDUGE and NYONKI, in GUMBO area. On 24 Dec., a SAF patrol was allegedly ambushed by an armed group suspected to be LRA. According to SAF, two soldiers were killed and one went missing. The incidents could not be confirmed by any other source.

HUMANITARIAN

Khartoum

Forty metric tons of non-food items (NFI) supplied by the Italian Embassy for IDP camps in Khartoum arrived on 20 Dec. INGOs are to distribute the NFIs, The supply includes

generators, water tanks, jerry cans, plastic sheets, blankets, health and kitchen kits, summer tents and latrine inputs.

Darfur

-The intertribal fighting that took place in the Zalenjei area (West Darfur) has resulted in approximately 3,800 news arrivals to Zalenjei two camps with another 5 to 6 thousand displaced reportedly stranded north west of the conflict area. Humanitarian workers and the AU have not been able to access the area due to continuing insecurity

-The fighting between Rezeigat and Birgid which started since March 2004 has led to the displacement of an estimated 36,000 Birgid to Edaein and Nyala (Kalma camp).

-On 24 Dec., representatives of the Nomadic Executive Office (NEO), set up by the Governor of South Darfur to pursue Arab nomadic tribe interests, expressed to UNMIS that the international community is neglecting the humanitarian needs of Arab nomadic communities, branding them as 'Janjaweed'.

-On 20 Dec., Relief International, UNICEF and OCHA conducted a rapid assessment in Tawilla in response to reports received that the temporary site adjacent to the AU Group Site had once again swelled to over 5,000 individuals following recent insecurity. The assessment found that the security situation had stabilized with the arrival of the new GoS Military Commander and that reconciliation activities are being conducted by the AU with both SLA factions. No assistance shortages or needs were identified.

-Due to continuing attacks across South Darfur there has been an influx of new arrivals to the Nyala camps. SUDO, camp coordinator for Bilel, reported the arrival 36 households from Kuka and Kuwala; and an unknown number of new arrivals from Sheria are also reported at Dereige camp. Further, the SLA Field Commander reported to OCHA North Darfur the arrival of 4,500 persons from Sheria (South Darfur) in Wasa'ah (North Darfur).

-On 20 Dec., HAC conducted a rapid assessment to Tiwal (South Darfur) following the 18 Dec. attacks there and report that there are 150 displaced households and that the populations are currently seeking refuge under trees. HAC plans a food distribution (a total of 15 MT of sorghum, wheat, oil and tea). NRC has also already dispatched additional food to the area. UNDSS, WFP, OCHA, NRC, NCA/Act/Caritas are planning a joint assessment on 22 December 2005, to follow-up with assistance soonest.

-The technical agreement for the construction of additional schools in Kalma has been signed between NRC, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and HAC Nyala. An additional teacher training component will also be included.

-A Number of roads in Jabal Marra have been declared "GO" for UN agencies on 22 December. Since early 2004, UN Agencies had access only to Gilgo, Golo, Turrah and Rokerro by air, thus limiting the amount of support by the UN Agencies to the NGOs in the region.

Southern Sudan

UNMIS participated in an inter-agency assessment mission to Bor in view of arrival of the Bor Dinka IDPs who are traveling from Western Equatoria to Jonglei. The Assessment's findings indicate lack of basic services: health care, water points and infrastructure.

UNMAS has scheduled a mine assessment survey of the proposed sites for a way station in December 27. WFP is already operating in BOR, UNHCR and PACT are committed to provide Non Food Items (NFIs) and SFM is investigating the possibility of drilling bore holes at the way station site and within BOR town. Out of the entire group of people, as of 21 December, a total of 3,240 vulnerable IDPs were identified and registered at Lologo way station, close to Juba. UNMIS has enhanced public health services by constructing additional latrines, deploying physicians at the medical clinic and supplying the camp with additional water.

Health

-The yellow fever outbreak in Southern Kordofan has officially been declared over, with the last case reported 9 December.

-A measles campaign was completed in Jebel Marra, Wadi Salih, Zalinjei and Mukjar localities from 3-10 Dec with a coverage rate of 95 per cent. The outbreak of whooping cough in Jebel Marra a few weeks ago has risen to 516 cases with Gildo registering the highest cases of 298, Katti 127, Rokero 67 and Golo 24. GOAL and MSF-Spain are following up on the cases in these locations.

Spokesperson: That it for my briefing for today, I'm sorry if I stumbled in some abbreviations of some NGO's names, but hopefully you understood what I was talking about. So, the floor is open for you for questions and answers.

Q & A

Q: (*Al Sahafa*) The United Nations has not set out up until now any plan, strategy or even undertook coordination with the GoS, National Congress Party, SAF, or SPLA/M to eradicate LRA?

A: I repeat again - and you can refer to our previous press briefings - LRA is not our responsibility. But based on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), LRA is the responsibility of the two parties who signed the final CPA. The United Nations has not any role to undertake in settlement of the LRA issue. However, we - as United Nations - are keen to have the two parties concerned to hasten initiation of plans to address this issue in particular. As far as I know, there were meetings held between representatives of the GoS and SPLA/M. These focused on LRA issue. The United Nations attended these meetings, but actually we have nothing to do with this matter. And if you can review again the Resolution 1590, you will find out that we are not mandated to address this issue.

Q: (*Sudan Radio service*) Thank you. I would like to have an update on the IDPs returning back home to the South and to other areas. You have just mentioned about the Dinka Bor arriving back from Western Equatoria to Bor. I would like to know the total number that has been established for those who have gone back to Bor, and which areas is part of Bor?

Because nowadays IDPs are going back to this area, or IDPs are going back home, to which specific areas? I mean number by regions, like Baher el-Gazal, Upper Nile, and Equatoria?

A: I understand your question. However, I'm not in a position to answer it. I would direct you to UNHCR and to OCHA. Because this information is provided to me by the United Nations' agencies. They will be in a better position to give you an overview of the situation as far as the return in general is on-going. The UNHCR gave you a briefing in the last week, and they can update you. As for the IDPs situation, the best party to contact will be the OCHA colleagues.

Q: Can I have further things to rely on Bor? Because you mentioned during your briefing that (Interruption by Spokesperson).

A: The only thing I have on Bor is only what I gave you on the briefing. I don't have further. But again even that information and any thing that has to do with return, then your best bet is to talk to OCHA. I will get you in touch with them later.

Q: OK then, it's good also for me to know the reasons why Dinka-Bor are going back at this moment since they are all in Southern Sudan ..

A: Sorry to interrupt you, but we briefed you thoroughly on the movement of the Bor-Dinka and that there was a press-release issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization that was quite of a nature of concern for us, not that we would obstruct the movement, but the problem was the problem of a movement of many thousands of people and thousands of cattle without prior organization and we are coping with the situation and if you go back to my previous briefing you would see why these people are moving in this time in particular.

Q: OK. Finally, you have mentioned only that the communities going back to their places are only being assisted by the United Nations' agencies and NGOs. What is the GoS doing, and GoSS doing since these IDPs are their own people? You have never mentioned any kind of assistance being offered to these people by them. I think it's the Government's primary responsibility to take care of its own people? Thank you.

A: I would rather have you ask the question to the GoSS. We are reporting on our own activities. Whenever any government or any authority does something, we report on it. But I would rather have you ask the question to the GoSS. My understanding of the situation is that the GoSS does not have the capability required, so far, to deal with such challenges in full or partially, although the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRC) is trying to assist and trying to help at least in terms of registration of returns, but on the details I would rather have you ask the GoSS.

Q: With respect to the Sudan-Chad crisis, does the United Nations have any mediation role, or an initiative to settle it? Or do you believe what is going on between the two countries can be resolved as part of Abuja Talks? My second point is that about the security situation in Jebel Moon?

A: With respect to Chad issue, there is African Union mediation taking place, and the respective file being under consideration of the African Union now. As I mentioned, the Security Council had given statement that it would support all efforts exerted in order to address the Sudan-Chad tension. But we, as UNMIS, we have no any role to undertake in this

connection. And the United Nations in general will not get engaged in a mediation process, by reason of the current mediation being undertaken by the African Union. We are only following up the African mediation, and my answer to this question ends here. Regarding the affect on Abuja, I can not answer the question. But what I would like to say in this connection is that the negotiation in Abuja was resumed after the Charismas break. The talks were resumed yesterday and still continuing. However, the point under consideration has no affect on Abuja Talks so far.

Concerning your question made in relation to the situation in Jebel Moon, we do not have access to any information about the situation there. Because, as I earlier mentioned, we were not able to visit that area. Firstly due to security reasons and incidents that had taken place in the area that we earlier told you about them. And secondly, because we were threatened by Gabriel – Commander/Chief of the Reform and Development Movement – who confirmed that he would open fire on any United Nations or African Union’s airplane(s). Such threats were repeated during last week. For that reason we don’t have access to any information about that area in particular, which we had actually wished to, and actually sought to visit. Because we had earlier been informed that the humanitarian conditions in Jebel Moon area are significantly bad. We wanted to reach those areas in order to be able to assess the humanitarian needs there, but we were not able to go there and I have just given you the reasons in the connection.

Q: (Al Samani Awadallah – Al Wihda Newspaper) Based on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by the GoS and SPLM during last January, the SPLA should hand over Hamshkoreib area (Eastern Sudan) to the United Nations, who in turn should hand it over to the Government. However, we came to know from the statements given yesterday by the Free Lions Movement or Eastern armed groups that this area does neither belong nor fall under control of SPLA, but actually it falls under their control. What is the role undertaken by the United Nations in connection with handing over of those areas under control of GoS or SPLA/M?

Q: I, in person, did not review such statements. But, generally speaking, the role of the United Nations is basically on monitoring the withdrawing processes of SAF and SPLA troops from the areas specified in the final Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and more particularly those included as part of the Ceasefire Agreement. As regarding the other armed forces, this matter basically concerns the respective two parties, i.e. the National Congress party and SPLM. We are talking about the National Congress now, because it was representing the previous government during the signing ceremony of the final Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Therefore, as far as this issue is concerned, i.e. who is the party that exercises control over this area or that, or being actually positioned in certain area(s), this matter mainly concerns the principal parties. We, as United Nations, are only observing the situation. If there is any problem raised with the Free Lions Movement or with any other party as to whom should exercise control over this area or that, such an issue should be settled at the level of the parties engaged, not at the level of the United Nations.

Q: (Follow-up question) Will you undertake participation in the East Talks that will be held in Tripoli – Libya next month? Have you been invited by any party?

A: No. I mean my answer is “No” to both questions. Since we have not received an invitation from any party, we will not participate.

Q: about the panel of experts, and whose mandate has been extended, can you tell us - if you have an idea – what they did up until now?

A: Well, what they did so far was they came to Darfur on many occasions, they did their own investigations on the ground, they submitted a report to the Committee established by the Security Council by virtue of the Resolution 1591, and obviously they did not finish their work. There are so many other things to be finished in terms of fulfilling their mandate. Because, when you go back to the resolution establishing this panel, you see the different tasks they are supposed to undertake. And obviously their work is not finished. Their work actually in terms of – in particular – identifying names of the people who would be hindering the process or affecting the security situation or committing atrocities is an open ended kind of work. Because as we see it, and as we keep reporting it to you, the atrocities are continuing one way or the other, violations of human rights are continuing, attacks on IDPs are continuing and so on. So it's not something that they can do and they conclude and they go. They have to continue doing this work until they finish completely. And I would assume that their work would not end until the Security Council decides so on the basis of the situation on the ground. But this is what they have been doing, and this what they are supposed to do.

Q: Are they not replicating the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court?

A: No, they are not. There are two different mandates. There are two different issues. And when you look again at the – you remember I distributed to you the speech of the prosecutor of the ICC – when you look at that speech, he made sure to differentiate between the mandate of the International Criminal Court, and the mandate of the Panel of experts on Darfur and the Committee of the Security council.

Q: My question is about what happened on Friday in front of the UNDP. Why the protestors attacked UNDP? And what was in the memo presented to the UNDP on Friday? And what is your reaction about it?

A: I really do not know. I mean I know that, concerning the attack on the UNDP, there was a protest staged in front of the UNDP. Yes, they handed to us a memo, except that they forgot to give us the entire memo. They gave us only one page and the rest of it was not received. Our understanding is that the protest was basically started based on a report put by a Sudanese newspaper that was quoting the Director of Police report saying that – among other things – two United Nations staff-members were caught while they were undertaking activities relating to prostitution or something of this nature, and that was what started the protest. The protestors, based on that report and the behavior allegedly put in that media report of United Nations staff, and the memo – the page at least that I saw – it had nothing to do with us. It had to do with the general protest on other issues that are not related to Sudan. But anyway, thank you for asking this question, because I want to put it on the open for all of you who are here today. And I'm going to finish in Arabic for the benefit of everybody and I hope that you understand Arabic. If you can't communicate, we have someone who can follow in English.

The media report that quoted the statement given by the police director was produced by Alwan Newspaper. However, I have forgotten the name of the Police director, but you can refer to Alwan edition dated 23 December 2005, you will find the name of that police

director. In addition, you will also find the media report that quoted some pieces of information from the communiqué given by the above said Police director. This stated that the Community Security Police had caught and convicted two persons working for the United Nations, who were accused of running, or participating in running prostitution business in Sudan. I would like to take this opportunity to entirely refute such a statement, and entirely refute such news. No when working with the United Nations has actually been convicted in relation to any case whether under prostitution, within the general ethical pattern, or even any other things. For the sake of honesty only, there was a person who – this took place during the year 2004, i.e. at the beginning of our UNMIS work – was actually been arrested by the Sudanese security police due to mere misunderstanding. Because, the charges of which that person was accused were overall dropped after about 24 hours. And that the overall matter was attributed to mere misunderstanding only and nothing else. That person, who was working with the United Nations, was not convicted on basis of any of the charges that he/she had earlier been accused of. This the sole incident related to security ones that took place here in Khartoum.

Q: What was the nature of the accusations?

A: In fact I have almost forgotten what the accusations were about, but these were of such a kind of that above said person was available in a place where some Sudanese girls were there too. However, I don't want to get into details in this connection, because I have almost forgotten it, and you can review the case under consideration. But that was the only person who was mistakenly accused of some charges, which were latter dropped by the Sudanese police itself and that person was released without any trouble. In fact, the person was actually released not as a result – as some will presumably assume – of pressure been exercised or the like, but he/she was so released because the charges proposed were merely based on misconception only. By the reason that the police was actually planning to arrest other suspects, i.e. the respective UN officer was staying in the wrong place and the wrong time and that's all. Accordingly, I hereby absolutely refute the contents included in the report that was attributed to the Sudanese Police Director, and having in mind that I actually neither read nor listened to the report given by the police director, but would want to refute report as given by Alwan newspaper.

Generally speaking, I would like to remind you that we – as United Nations – adopt strictly zero tolerance policy towards ethical issues in particular that goes in line with our respect to the Sudanese social values, legislations, and laws given in the connection. Anyone of you who would like to review these guidelines and directives that have been set out by UNMIS since its early beginning, these are made available on our English Website: UNMIS-Code of Conduct.

Special attention is being given by our part to enable have a close and precise follow-up made to avoid occurrence of such matters. However, at the event that such incidents will take place, the United Nations will apply a tough zero tolerance policy. And you know that the Security Council issued a Resolution last year in relation to sexual exploitation and harassment within context of peacekeeping operations. And we are following up such matters very carefully. If someone will be involved in such violations, measures will be taken against such person at the levels of UNMIS or the United Nations will be very tough and highly strict. Therefore, people should not include the name of the United Nations in every business. Because it has been clearly evidenced at many cases that the name of the United Nations would randomly be included as part of media reporting. We are very keen in maintaining good relationships with

our sisters and brothers in the entire Sudan. We are not promising you that all UNMIS staff-members are perfect and will not make mistakes. In fact, everyone can sometimes make mistakes. But we promise you two things: We will undertake overall preventive measures required to avoid occurrence of such disgraceful incidents. However, at the event that such incidents will take place, and we promise you to be very strict and harsh in dealing with such matters. Because these do not only worsen our relationship with the Sudanese people for sake whom we are here to serve, but also reflect a bad picture about the United Nations. For, the United Nations should represent the uppermost humanitarian values, and anyone that works under the name of United Nations should be strictly committed to the code of conduct in his personal life, or at least when works within communities that have conservative social traditions and values, etc.

I urge you communicate this picture, God's blessings, because I have come to see the reactions that took place as a result of the news released by Alwan newspaper, to the extent that such reactions even were associated with senior GoS officials. This does neither help us nor help you. If UNMIS had made a mistake, and at the event that piece of news had been accurate, I would have declared right from this floor that such news were true. And would have let you know of the actions undertaken against such person(s). We do not conceal over anyone, and any one commits any violation shall be made responsible for it.

Q: In relation to UNMIS forces, there was an item of news given by ALwihdda newspaper about Norwegian and Netherlands forces arriving next month in order to be deployed in Darfur. I got in touch with the Norwegian Embassy and was informed that such forces will arrive in mid 2006, but failed to contact the Netherlands Ambassador. Can you give us a clarification in this connection?

A: Actually we are talking about military observers and not troops or armies. Regarding the Netherlands military observers, they will participate in terms of a very limited number, I have forgotten the number, but any how this is approximately counted in tens and not hundreds. With respect to the Norwegians, I have forgotten the proposed number and also their designated tasks, but anyhow they have nothing to do with Darfur. Anyhow, thank you for asking the question and you can directly contact my colleague Major Mahdi Hussanien, who is made responsible for militant affairs/flags for detailed information in the connection. But generally speaking, these military observers will be coming under UNMIS, and therefore will be mainly concerned with Northern and Southern Sudan, and have nothing to do with Darfur absolutely.

Q: Since you have distributed UNMIS Mandate Resolution; so far there is a great confusion between UNMIS mandate and other things, just like the repetition of the question about LRA. I think that you should do something to clarify such things?

A: God's willing; we will see to it that efforts will be exerted to make more explanation not only in relation to the LRA, but also with respect to other several things. It's our duty to better educate our brothers and sisters in Sudan about these things. Not only at the level of the media, but through holding direct meetings to this end. We have already set out a program for the year 2006. But actually when we have UNMIS Broadcasting Station opened, it will be the best way to communicate our message directly to as many people as possible within broadcasting area. But you also have the right to ask such a question, and we are keen in cooperating with our sisters and brothers in the media in order to communicate the message to the Sudanese citizens and readers, and we are under your entire disposal to this end.

I would like to conclude by stating that – up until now – information about UNMIS mandate as well as the Final Comprehensive Peace Agreement has been delivered to citizen by our part only. The most important point here is that the Sudanese citizens should, compared with UNMIS mandate, be more concerned with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, they have not been adequately educated about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which is the basis of our presence in Sudan. Therefore, we hope that all parties concerned undertake their assigned duties to deliver the picture to Sudan peoples. Because, at the end of it, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement has basically been made for the benefit of the Sudanese people, who will be the sole safe-guard and custodian of the agreement. So if the people will not come to fully understand the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, they will not be able to be in a position to give support to it as required, and you can see what will be the case with UNMIS mandate.

Q: Just what you have been seriously explaining to people about reports appearing in the newspapers in a kind of indictment or allegations against the United Nations, I think this is not the first time such reports appear; many reports have been appearing. Now my question is what is the stance of the United Nations towards these reports that are coming out? They may be true, they may not be true. How are you going to justify your position that these reports are not true in the real sense of the word? In Sudan people say there is no smoke without fire. So we would like to know exactly what the United Nations is going to do about such reports to justify its position. Because members of the United Nations are very many in the city; in the hotels, everywhere you see the United Nations. You can not control what is happening in the hotels or anywhere else in Sudan.

A: Well, we can not control it, yes; but anything that happens we know if it happens. Particularly if somebody is arrested by the police. Because if somebody from the United Nations is arrested by the police, the police has to notify the United Nations; we are notified. And without even being notified, if somebody goes missing or whatever, I mean we look for them and we track them down. The staff members of the United Nations, if they arrested by the police, they have the right and they are allowed to make phone-calls, and they have to get in touch with the United Nations' security. So we know. It is not like things happen in terms of arrest and they take place and we do not know; it is impossible, anywhere where the United Nations is acting. Because the United Nations has the responsibility to assume the responsibilities of its staff members and to protect them as well. Because if somebody is charged with something or arrested, we have to provide them with the legal advise and attorneys and so forth. In terms of responsibility, like for instance, if assuming that somebody works for an embassy of the Sudan somewhere, and if something happens to that person – is arrested or something, the first entity that has to be notified is the Consulate or the embassy of Sudan in that particular country. So it is a legal responsibility; right. Now how we do deal with the media. Frankly speaking, some reports we do not care to respond to them; honestly. We do respect the freedom of expression. I mean, we saw many articles that are not particularly friendly to the United Nations. But we stand for freedom of expression. What we try to do is in the long-term or medium-term is to try to give more explanation to educate better the public opinion, to even people who do reports based on misunderstanding of what the United Nations is, we try to get them a better picture, but we stand for freedom of expression. You can write whatever you want on the United Nations. In terms of factual reporting that is wrong, we try if it is serious enough like major issue like what happened for instance when the SRGS was misquoted referring to the African Summit. Yes, we take it very

seriously, and we send corrigendum and we disseminate it through the media. If it is not serious or too serious, we can call the newspaper concerned, try to clarify the issue and ask to correct it latter-on on other edition. But many other articles, particularly the ones that are definitely based on the wrong information and particularly the ones when you give them the actual information, they do not care, and they still continue. Well, we just disregard it. Freedom of speech is there; by the end of the day, people will know by themselves. And we would like for the people in Sudan to judge us by our actual actions, but not based on media reporting. Media can play a role, but still we would like to reach out to the people straight. And this is why actually I keep referring to the radio. Because the radio can explain to you wherever you are. So those who are still say having some reservations about the United Nations in good faith – because many out of patriotism, and out of just because they are afraid for their country, and of course there are good articles there – we try to explain to them bit by bit that we are not here to threaten the country or its sovereignty or its independence or its values. And that we have to do bit by bit and we are just asking for the patience of the people in Sudan, and we ask them to judge us on our actual actions that they see for themselves not by reports in the media that in many cases, if are not in all cases, that they are not based on any truth.

Well, having said that; thank you so very much, and thank you to our colleagues the interpreters, and I wish you Happy New Year.

I will go on a one-week leave; Mr. George Somerwill will undertake coordination of forthcoming weekly Press Briefing that will be held on 03 January 2006. But also, though we are not yet sure, there is a possibility that SRSG Pronk will hold a Press Conference at above referred to date. We will also arrange for a Press Conference for UNMIS Force Commander, Major General Fadhze Elahi Akber, who will be leaving back home after finalization of his mission in Sudan, and who is very keen in holding a Press Conference with you before he leaves. This will probably be held in mid-January, 2006.

Thank you, and happy New Year to you.