



The United Nations Mission In Sudan

Office of the Spokesperson

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of the press conference of 28 November (12:00 PM) by SRSJ Jan Pronk at UNMIS Headquarter, Khartoum, Sudan :

Spokesperson: Welcome everybody. The Special Representative will be briefing you today on his latest activities. The press conference is scheduled to last for an hour and a half maximum. Mr. Pronk has other commitments to attend to before two o'clock. So without further ado I leave the floor:

SRSJ Pronk: Thank you. It is good to see you again. The thing I am at the moment most concerned about is the spread of the yellow fever in South Kordofan. It is a kind of a pandemic. At the moment I understand that more than 130 people have died and that is in a rather short period. We also understand that there is a high mortality rate – about 30% of the people who get the yellow fever are dying of it. This is a reason for major concern. We are working hard – the UN, the WHO in particular – to bring all the necessary vaccines in the region in order to stop the spread of the disease. We have launched a specific appeal through the WHO to the international community. I think at the moment nearly 5 million dollars have been made available by the international community to finance the vaccine. I understand that (and I am not an expert in that field) the vaccine for, for instance, Dengue Fever or Yellow Fever, is much more expensive than, for instance, polio. It is also a more difficult exercise compared to stopping the spread of polio which could be given orally while the vaccine for yellow fever have to be made available to people through injection. So it is a matter of high alert for us. We are working together of course with the Ministry of Health very constructively and also within the UN system as a whole to help the Sudanese to tackle their problems. I do read sometimes articles in the press that the UN is only helping itself. This very expensive activity by the UN and the WHO is another example that that is a wrong impression. I even would dare to say that without the activities of the UN, including in particular the WHO, the death toll would have been much higher. I don't ask you to love us but please portray the facts and say exactly when we are working to the benefit of the Sudanese people.

Going from this very severe short-term worry to a number of political issues, I would like to say something first about the Abuja talks. I understand – I say I understand because I have not yet received an official communication – that the parties and the international observers assume that the opening of the talks would take place on the 28th of this month. There is no official postponement; however, various participants in the talks at the moment are having bilateral discussions among themselves and with others in order to guarantee a smooth start, possibly on the 28th. You have been told that, for instance, there was a meeting that had been

organised by the American delegation at the AU quarters in el-Fasher. I don't know the particulars of it because the UN did not attend that particular meeting to which it was not invited, but that has not to be the case all the time – the UN being invited. I only got some telephone information after the meeting from my good friend and colleague, Mr. Kingibe, but the meeting was chaired by the Americans and we didn't get any concrete information about it. Which is okay in itself because we did have, on my initiative, a meeting with all the special envoys – there are many special envoys now for many countries to Sudan – ten days ago, here in this building, in order to coordinate our activities. We decided that we would urge the parties to start soon and that we still thought that the 31st might still be a possibility and that we would stick to the deadlines which had been agreed upon in the final communiqué by the parties – GoS, JEM, SLM – at the end of Abuja VI which was on the 20th of October, that the talks should be concluded at the end of this year. You remember that always has been an objective which I was putting on the table that as desirable and even necessary. That is the position also of the international community and the international community wanted everybody to be in Abuja in order to jointly reach that goal. We also know that of course there were internal discussions within SLM that led to the Haskanita conference and that specific outcome of the conference in Haskanita whereby there was an election and a choice of new leadership which also was contested by those who were not present in Haskanita.

The UN does not take sides in an internal dispute within a movement. The UN is totally impartial and independent. We do not take sides. We were not present in that conference. We were very much in favor of the conference but if that conference would lead to a desirable unification result which we thought at the beginning of that conference would not be probable so we were not present at the conference. There was one observer, a former staff member of the UN who now is a consultant to the AU, just to inform us what was going on – not an official representative of the UN. After the conference had concluded its deliberations resulting in elections in their terminology, I sent a messenger to Haskanita which was the highest representative of the UN in el-Fasher, Ambassador Mubarak in el-Fasher, in order to deliver my message to Mr. Minnawi who in that conference had been elected. The core message was that there is not alternative than negotiating in the AU framework in Abuja. In my terminology, Abuja is the only game in town. Don't go for separate talks. That is something which the international community will not endorse. Abuja is the only game in town. Parties are adhering to Abuja, JEM is adhering to Abuja and despite any internal difficulties within the SLM, SLM also has to adhere to Abuja. Abuja is the only game in town. That is the message which I did say to the conference after they had taken their decisions.

I went myself also to Muhajiriya last week where I had extensive talks with Mr. Minnawi and the people who he said were the council and also many people who are being called the politicians and also many people who were also there as their commanders. There were dozens of people whom I saw and discussed with. It was a meeting, I am very pleased to say, on the AU premises in Muhajiriya – it was good. The AU provided us with that opportunity and provided also some security and facilitation for that meeting. There were extensive discussions whereby I brought that message. I also brought the message that we don't take sides. I had many other questions but my main question was: if the objective which I always did say – please, the end of this year, the 31st of December – is still possible, if that an agreement is signed, will everybody adhere to will other commanders would want to continue fighting? well our position was that you can not bet on two horses. It is not shooting, it is talking. And if there is a change in the SLM structure, would everybody adhere to it? The

answer was: everybody who was in Haskanita and in Muhajiriya thereafter will abide to the outcome; those who were not present in Haskanita, will they also? And there you never get a good answer because they pleaded no. They had assumptions also that those who were not in Haskanita would abide – but those were assumptions. And they also said that those who, perhaps, at the moment who do not think that they are going to abide by the signature of Mr. Minnawi, “we are going to talk with them. We will go to the Jebel Marra west to talk with them”. It is good that they talk.

I also want to have a discussion with AbdelWahid who, by the way, also was present in the el-Fasher meeting. So far, I must be very frank with you, he didn't pick up the phone. So I tried day after day – somebody in my office will always call but he just doesn't pick up the phone. I am not only talking with Minni Minnawi but also with Mr. AbdelWahid but so far that was not possible and I want to ask him the same questions. I told Mr. Minni Minnawi that if Mr. AbdelWahid comes to Abuja, which I want him to do; which I understand he also plans to do, and I and also the international community as a whole will talk with Mr. AbdelWahid. I was pleased with the answer from Mr. Minnawi that of course he does not resent that and does not object to that. He hopes Mr. AbdelWahid can come back to SLM – in his terminology; Mr. AbdelWahid, I understand, says, “I am still the SLM” that Mr. Minnawi will come back to him. We have a kind of a stalemate situation. If both are present in Abuja – and both will be present in Abuja with their people behind them and with the commanders – in one way or other they will have to talk; and in one way or another they will have to sign something. I am not so much interested in names and not so much interested in claims – I am only interested in signatures which mean something; which imply that everybody will abide by a signature after an agreement that is a really feasible, sustained ceasefire so that we can continue with other activities. For instance, the Darfur-Darfur dialogue; for instance start of return activities at the same time. We don't take sides; we want everybody to be there. And, of course, we look at the power situation. And the power situation may have changed but that can only be shown on the ground also after internal talks within SLM. I understand that the government is going to Abuja, the JEM also, AbdelWahid and Minni Minnawi too. So the meeting (Abuja Talks) can, though a bit later, start anyway. And I still think it is possible to reach some good conclusions. I will go on Wednesday, which is tomorrow, again to Muhajiriya to again have talks with Mr. Minnawi to continue to keep the pressure for constructive talks in Abuja and I plan, if possible, to also have such a discussion with Mr. AbdelWahid but I do not know where he is at the moment – it is difficult.

By the way, from Muhajiriya I will fly to el-Geneina tomorrow evening and I want to stay there until Friday morning in the framework of my regular visits to Darfur. I got an invitation a couple of weeks ago from the new *Wali* in West Darfur and I want to honour that invitation and to make use of the opportunity to have talks with the authorities on the present security situation in West Darfur which worries us a lot, I must say. In addition to what I discussed with you a couple of weeks ago -bandits and attacks which had brought us to the decision that we do not drive on the roads in West Darfur because it was not safe enough – we deliver the assistance by helicopter in western Darfur – that is still the same- there has been fighting in and around Jebel Mun. I get different reports about this. We have been approached by the JEM, one of the parties in the talks in Abuja, who said they were attacked by the government. That worries me a lot because just before the start of the Abuja talks, parties should not, should never attack each other. That is my position that, in particular, it's not very wise to launch an attack on another partner just before a new round of peace talks. We were also approached by representatives of the civilians who are living in the Jebel Mun asking for international intervention – but that is not possible. They were also asking for a kind of safe

corridor outside Jebel Mun because they feel attacked and threatened. For me, that was a reason to approach the government and to ask what is going on. The answer which I received was, “we are not attacking the JEM; we are not attacking civilians. We are attacking Chadian rebels which are in the Jebel Mun area.” And we all know that there are Chadian incursions in the Jebel Mun and in West Darfur and I said in previous meetings that much of the unrest in West Darfur is the result of what is going on in Chad. I believe the government is after Chadian rebels but I have the impression that at the same time there are JEM and civilians also involved in the attacks. Both stories are there.

I would like to send a mission to the Jebel Mun but the *Wali* said that is not allowed and moreover not necessary; and then he said that it was not secure. I would like to know what exactly the reason is: it's not allowed, it is not necessary or it is not secure? That will be one of the subjects of my discussion with the *Wali*. Why do I want to send a mission? In order to know who is right because I have to report to the Security Council on attacks and violations of the resolutions and I do not want to just say that somebody is violating the provisions of the Security Council resolutions but I only want to say that after I have received information from both sides – not only from one side; not only from JEM and not only from the people who are living there. I also want to have information from the government and thereafter check the information. I can not just say in my report that group A said this and B said that. I have to check the information and that is also the task of the UN together with the AU. There is a complication because there is JEM, civilians, Chadians, government, AU and there is also the NMRD. It is a very complex situation. There is Djibril (leader of NMRD- National Movement for Reform and Development)– some people say he is no longer there and others say he is still there. It is to be checked. We got a warning from Djibril, which I take very seriously, namely that he will shoot down any helicopter that flies over there. This is a security risk and a threat to the UN. I still do not know what the NMRD really is. Some people say they are very close to the government and others say they are independent. I want to know. If they are very close to the government, then a threat coming from the NMRD could also be interpreted by some as an indirect threat from the government. I want to know because this is quite a serious situation at the moment and is also hampering us in delivering humanitarian assistance to people. I am mentioning it to you as assumptions, as issues. I have not yet taken any position – I want to know. I want to know from all sources. I want to get information from the authorities in West Darfur and also from the *Wali* before I pass a judgement on what is going on which is very soon to be written down by me in my report to the Security Council next week before the 1st of December. Also for that reason, my visit to West Darfur is quite opportune.

Let me go to southern issues. I was last week in Juba and I had decided that there would not be a press conference here because there would be a press conference in Juba and we invited all of you to go to Juba. And I was waiting for about 60 journalists. Two showed up and I gave the press conference to these two. The others thought at the last moment that it was not important enough to come to Juba. I deplore that very much, I must say. Because we made available a plane, seats, we had planned everything in advance. It is quite an operation for us. I had promised the journalist not only to bring them to Darfur – not only female but also male journalists to Darfur – I promised you to make it possible for you to go to Juba and people for one reason or other thought that it was not important enough to skip a breakfast which, in my view is preposterous. You must know, by the way, how many people never get any breakfast in the south. So I was quite annoyed, I must say. We are not going to do that again anymore for the time being because the investment in time, money and resources in order to help you to see some other part of your own country is enormous. And if you think that you can not

make use of that opportunity at the last moment because you didn't have your breakfast – many of us don't have a breakfast when we go on the plane to Juba or to Darfur – then, I think, it is out of line. No information, as far as I am concerned, with regards to the press conference because I gave the press conference on the plane to those who were present at the time. I think it was a very important visit. Everything which I discussed with regards to the LRA and my talks with President Kiir and also with regards to the CJMC, you can ask your colleagues who did ask me questions in that press conference in the plane.

Two other things finally also related to Sudan as a whole: first thing; there was an IMF mission here which is very important at the moment because the IMF is helping Sudan to prepare itself for a budget next year on the basis of the assessment of the economic situation here. It is also important for the consortium meeting – you know the consortium meeting which is the UN initiative; World Bank and IMF-led – will take place early next year. The decision now has been taken to have the first meeting of the Sudan consortium – which is Sudan as a whole; north as well as south – on the 8th of February in Paris. Why Paris? Because the second headquarters of the World Bank is in Paris and there are more donors in that part of the world than in Washington. That is a pragmatic reason to organise that meeting on the 8th of February in Paris. There will be preparations by the donors and also by the government of Sudan on its budget for next year and also what has been done this year in economic terms. Of course the government needs to have a stable micro-economic situation which means no huge budget deficit, no inflationary pressure, a good international investment climate which is important for Sudan after peace. At the same time, the government also needs to show that indeed there is a good development in governance and that the resources of the government are not only going to be spent to the benefit of the middle-class and rich people in this country but also to the benefit of poor people; there are many poor people, to the benefit of the people of the south where never any investment took place due to the war; to the benefit of the people of Darfur, for instance. So if there is no poverty chapter, a strong regional chapter and a strong southern chapter in the budget then there is no good development policy for the next year. It is also part of my mandate to see to it – and that is why I also had discussions with the IMF and the World Bank to get international resources. You need that. But also with IMF to guarantee transparency and justice with regards to the use of domestic resources.

May I give some examples: education to children in Darfur. The education budget for Darfur is nearly zero. If you have more money in the country, please for children in Darfur, water also. You can not say to the international community that the international community has to finance all the new water points for the nomads when they trek to the areas where farmers are living. We can help but this is a domestic problem. You have more money, oil. Use it for yourself. I would say oil money for water. Water is scarce, oil is not scarce. Water is more logical in order to spend in the Sudan – oil money also for water and for food and for education. If you do so for poor people and not only water and food to the rich people in Khartoum, but to the poor people in the country as a whole, then you can count on the assistance of the international community. If not, many of these donors will say, “can't they use their money for their own people?”. Many tax payers will say so and that is an important issue. That is why the IMF was here also to get information about the utilization of oil resources. I don't know exactly how long the oil resources will be available for Sudan but there will be many for quite a number of years. And the oil price is extremely high which means that the dollar is flowing in the country. Make use of it in order to combat poverty and in order to create peace dividends not only for Khartoum which is booming at the moment – I see all these construction sites each time new roads, new buildings, it is beautiful – but the

peace dividends in particular for the poor people in the country. That is wisdom and it is also justice. Both are important.

That is an issue which will of course be taken up by the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) which is the top commission which has now been established on the basis of the CPA. There are many: the oil commission, the boundary commission, the CJMC; it is all there and there will be more but the AEC is the most important one. I am very pleased that it has now been established by decree. There was the first meeting and I understand that Mr. Vraaslen, the chair of the commission, has given a press briefing at the Hilton Hotel here. I had a meeting with Mr. Vraaslen after his first meeting and before his press conference – he may have mentioned that to you, I don't know. We have offered him cooperation and assistance. At the same time, of course, the UN has to monitor the work of all the institutions on the basis of the CPA. So we are monitoring whether the Border Commission is doing its job in accordance with the CPA; we will be monitoring whether the Joint Defence Board – by the way it is a pity that the Joint Defence Board has not yet been established. I don't want to say more about it because this is what I said to your colleagues at the press conference last week. We are monitoring all the institutions including, of course, also the AEC and we will report on the work of all these institutions in our independent report to the Security Council. Our third report to the Security Council on the implementation of the CPA is presently being drafted. It is each three months, as you know, so it will have to be presented to the Security Council in the nine months after we got our mandate which means on the 23rd of December this year.

Thank you very much.

Spokesperson: Thank you very much. Now the floor is open for your questions.

Q & A

Q: (Starts by saying that the SRSG should not generalize when he talks about the Sudanese media and that himself was invited by the Spokeperson to take part in the trip to Juba but he couldn't since he was on a mission to eastern Sudan – *indiscernible*)

On the Darfur issue, it seems to me that Mr. Pronk is no longer confident that a breakthrough will be reached on the issue of Darfur by the end of this year. It is clear that the issue now is some infighting within one of the rebel movements. Why does the international community seem to have failed in pressuring the SLM? The UN was very instrumental in checking government activities in Darfur and international pressures paid dividends on the GoS in Darfur. Why has the international community failed to put a check these two rebel leaders to the extent that the US Assistant Secretary of State has traveled to Darfur and met these people but with no results?

You also said that you sent a clear signal to Minnawi that Abuja is the only game in town. Why specifically Abuja and why the message to Minnawi.

SRSG Pronk: Three points. I do not generalise. I spoke about 14 journalists. I didn't speak about you. I spoke about those 14 journalists and you were not part of them. What I did say is that if you have 14 journalists who are already on the plane and then leave the plane, I think that is not proper. I do not say that you have to go to Juba – definitely not. But if you said you are going and you are on the plane and then you leave the plane because you didn't have your

breakfast yet, I think that is out of line. That is what I meant. And of course if you can't go because you were busy somewhere else – and I want you to be busy in the whole country, we can help you to go also to other parts of the country if you want to – then I commend that and that is another issue.

On Darfur, yes sir, I did send that message because there is always talk that perhaps an agreement could be reached between the government alone and AbdelWahid alone; the government alone and Minni Minnawi alone or the government with the JEM. There is always talk about that and you know it. And I have said very often in this press conference that will not be sustainable. We need a peace agreement which is not too detailed but which is inclusive. Not inclusive of everybody who is in Darfur but inclusive of everybody who started the talks after the N'djamena ceasefire agreement in 2004. That is what I meant. People can not opt out. People can not find their own channel outside because, then, you do not have a sustainable peace. And there are so many rumours outside. Also, and I am not going to mention any names, other governments who stand their own talks inviting some people and not others to talks. It is not useful. You remember my statements in another press conference that the international community meaning all countries, African and non-African, should also work together. Not individual countries with their own talks. And that is not conducive to something which is inclusive and sustainable. That was the reason I sent that message which is a message which I am also sending to others. Abuja is the only game in town. Let us not forget it. The Security Council has said that Mr. Salim and the AU are the facilitators for these talks. Moreover if other parties, the government for instance and the JEM for instance, would like to continue in Abuja, then I think it is only proper that the other parties will also continue in the same framework.

Secondly; did I express less confidence? I said it is still possible and that is what I continue to say and I am saying it also to my colleagues in the international community. I love football, soccer. And the Dutch are quite good. Our big adversary is always Germany and the Germans are sometimes even better because they never give up until the last second. And they have won games also against Holland because they score a goal in the last minute of the match. That is a good political lesson: never give up until the last moment. I am confident also because I am confident in the strength of the international community to put pressure. But I must also admit, sir, that it is never certain to which extent pressure will work out. Because we are able to put pressure – you did say that we are no longer able to put pressure –. I am still able to put pressure and that is why I am going again tomorrow to see Minnawi; that is why I went there last week; that is why the Americans did call for that meeting which also did take place in Nairobi as you know. Putting pressure is something different from enforcing an outcome. That is not possible. We also put pressure on the government definitely but we can not enforce peace from outside; that is what the Sudanese parties themselves have to do. Pressure continues but the final decisions are for the Sudanese.

Q (SUNA): First of all, I would like to point out that I am one of those 14 journalists referred to by Mr. Pronk. First of all the facts were not clear from the UN staff. It seems that Mr. Pronk is not aware of the details of what happened. We did not get into the aircraft and then walk out – that is one. Secondly; we did not refuse to go to Juba just because we did not have our breakfast. That is not true. I am sorry for the details but we arrived at the airport at 0800 hours as required and were at the airport until 1015 – that is two hours fifteen minutes – until even the flight schedule itself was changed. We were supposed to arrive in Juba at 1300 hours but the schedule was changed as the flight had to pass through Malakal. We were told at the airport that there is neither food nor drink on board the aircraft. It was only natural that

we go to have breakfast and get water for ourselves. The bus was still there at the airport. One of our colleagues was informed we could not get into the bus. Even the officer responsible who was a lady refused to send back the bus despite the fact that the aircraft did not take off until 1100 hours. This is what did happen. We, the reporters, did nothing wrong and did arrive on time and only exercised our right to food and drink which I don't think was wrong. I personally have an ailment which causes me problems if I do not eat. Before this, we travelled to Juba with the UN during the Secretary-General Koffi Annan's trip there and were supposed to fly back but were taken to the Italian camp instead but did not complain about that. This is not a problem.

Thank you.

SRSB Pronk: Thank you. I am grateful for your comments. When I provoke you, you can answer me. You had to wait long and you were not on the plane you were at the airport. My point is that there are difficulties. You should know how many hours my staff members have to wait very often. When I was in Juba many of my staff members said: we went to Juba airport last week because we had an important job to do in Abyei and the plane was to arrive and the plane didn't come. We went there for nothing and we had to come back and there was no food and no water and Mr. Scott (ocha) who is always in el-Fasher has very often waited somewhere at an airport to no avail. I have sometimes sat at the airport without water, without food, in the plane and your authorities refuse me just to go to the air. We all have that problem – journalists or staff members. That is the issue for all of us in this difficult situation. My point is: accept that like I am accepting it; like Mr. Scott is accepting it. We do our very best to improve the situation but we can not always do so because the authorities do not always allow us to use the spot which we have been given. There is always something. Accept that, solve it together rather than saying, 'sorry we are no longer interested,' that is what I don't like. That's all. But of course you have the right to go; you have the right to say you are no longer interested. I don't deny you that right. I only tell you that because we do invest money, time and resources and we have to treat each other in a different manner. And I am not only saying that to you. I am also saying that to my staff members who sometimes also are angry. But that is the way it is because it is due to difficulty of operations.

Okay, let us stop this discussion on this issue and go farther to a number of the political issues which are very important but if you want to continue the discussion it is possible of course. It is up to you.

Q: What are the developments on Mr. Pronk's efforts to build bridges on the conflict in Abyei?

My second question is that to date, the fate of the Abuja talks is not yet clear. It is not known whether the SLM will go to Abuja with one delegation.

SRSB Pronk: On Abyei; the report of the Boundary Commission is in the hands of the Presidency. I have not been informed that the Presidency has taken a decision. There were some rumours but I have not been informed about it. And the Presidency has to take a decision. I did have a discussion with Vice-president Kiir on it. He informed me about his point of view. I gave him some advice and at that point the decision had not yet been taken. It is important by the way that there will be in Abyei a government authority because so far there is only some administration but no political authority. And that political authority has to

be decided upon also by the Presidency and I am urging the Presidency also to take and implement a decision so that, indeed, the authority over there can take a decision.

What are we doing separate from the discussions here in Khartoum and in Juba on that implementation? We are working on the ground. I give you a couple of examples: there are, in comparison to a couple of months ago, quite a number of development activities to the benefit of the people of Abyei. UNDP is doing a lot as part of assistant in terms of schools and water activities in Abyei and also in villages around.

Secondly; I did mention water. Nomads, farmers; that is an issue. You know that nomads and farmers in the Abyei region belong to different tribes. We have brought the leaders of the Dinka and the leaders of the Misseiriya together for meetings by helicopter. We brought them along the routes of the nomads where they could land and see what the situation was like on the ground in terms of water shortages and of possible security threats and that has had quite an effect – bringing the representatives of the nomads and farmers of the Dinka and the Misseiriya together. That is an important activity which we did. As you remember from my discussion about this a couple of months ago, the final problem is not so much a Khartoum problem but are people able to live together where they live? Is coexistence possible in one way or another? Nomads are not there always because they are nomads. And when they are, can they be there. Farmers, who are always there, can they still have access to what they are entitled to in terms of land and water? And if there are disputes, can they be solved peacefully? That is what we are doing and it works out.

Thirdly; militarily, the Force Commander, in the CJMC meeting, has said to both parties – SAF and SPLA – that they have to notify of their troop movements 7 days in advance before they move. I have added to this, when I was in the CJMC last week, that if parties do not do so and move without prior notification, it is a violation of the CPA and I will record that as a violation of the CPA. Some of these movements have to take place in order to fulfill the commitments to reduce the troops to those figures in the CPA. I said that if a movement takes place without prior notification, I don't know whether the movement took place, so I can not count it against the target for both the government and the SPLM in terms of deployment. That is important also, I go back to the example of Abyei because both SAF and SPLM want to go there and they they are in their right to do so. But there is tension in Abyei and we might have escalations because people do not understand yet what's the deployment of troops is for. UNMIS Force Commander (Chairman of the JJMC) also has said, "I do not only want you to pre-notify us seven days in advance but I also have the right to say to you don't go. If I, as the Force Commander, think it is not a wise thing to bring more troops because of security considerations then I can request you not to go," and both parties have accepted that which is also very positive by the military.

These are some of the activities we are carrying out with regards to Abyei. I must add to this that we have not solved everything because military intelligence is denying the UNMOs (UN Military observers) access to an important part of the Abyei region – the northern part – a decision which I am disputing. That problem has not yet been solved. My position is that we, the UN, have freedom of movement everywhere as of our mandate but government officials, in particular Military Intelligence, are denying us access. And I call don't yet call that a violation of the CPA and I want to discuss that in the Ceasefire Political Commission which has not yet met. But my position is that we have the right to move. In the CJMC, the promise was made by the SAF to inform us today whether they changed their position or not. If not, then the CJMC will send a joint mission at the end of this week to Abyei to try to solve the

problem. If not, then I will report this to the Security Council in my report we submit to it every three months.

Finally, my deputy Mr. da Silva, came back from Abyei yesterday from a visit and he said to us that the situation in Abyei city is peaceful and there is no tension. There is much less tension at the moment than two or three months ago; that is an improvement and another signal that good activity on the ground without politicizing the issue does really help. And that is what we consider to be our task throughout the country.

Did you have a second question?

Spokesperson: It was not really a question but a remark and expecting your comment. It was on Abuja and that it is very bleary and nobody knows what exactly ...

SRSB Pronk: I explained already. I said both Minnawi and Abdulwahid have to go with their people. I don't take sides. If one says I am the SLA and the other says I am the SLA, it is a bit of a problem. Both have to be there. Everybody has to be there and I hope it will be possible to find a solution during the talks. If the parties stay there, they would find a creative solution. Let us not set preconditions in advance. That is my approach.

Q: You talked about the Abuja peace deal being reached by the end of this year and your main concern is only to put pressure on both parties at least to go on. My question is: if they fail to achieve peace by the end of the year and still the situation remains in that disastrous manner, what are you going to do as the UN and as the international community?

SRSB Pronk: Thank you very much. That is the million dollar question. I can't be naïve and say that I don't think about that because the last second of the football match is not yet been played. But, of course, it is important.

One comment I still should make by the way, in the previous round, the sixth round, in the government delegation, there was nobody from the SPLM. The government can take its own decision of course about the composition of its delegation and the government is a Government of National Unity and consists also of members of the SPLM. If they took that decision to send that delegation without a member of the SPLM, that means that the SPLM was indirectly, of course, represented. I had a discussion with President Kiir and I said I think it is much better if you go there also with SPLM people to Abuja. Why? Only for psychological reasons because SLM wants SPLM to be present. I told SLM that they can not make that a condition because the Government of National Unity can take its own decision. But it is politically wise to have also the SPLM represented. They promised to do so and at the moment the SPLM is having talks with the NCP on a joint position on a joint offer. But they said 'we will go anyway' and that is very helpful. I am grateful that they took that decision because it may create a somewhat better climate in the talks than in the previous round.

In the 1st of January we have the big African Union summit here that will coincide with the celebration 50 years of independence of Sudan -you remember -. And I have always spoken myself about the date of 31st of December 2005 to have a peace agreement on Darfur because if no agreement is reached at that time, your feast to celebrate your independence could be spoiled if there is still a big civil war. You were the first big African country to become independent - you were an example for Africa. You were the first big country to become

independent after decolonization. That's something. If the civil war will be still ongoing while you celebrate your independence and host the AU Summit, then you would no longer be an example for the second 50 years of this first century after decolonization. Some Heads of State might not come, if the civil war continues, I told the SLM. If this happens because no peace is achieved, it would be a black spot for the country. You understand this, as journalists and people of this country, the government understand that, and SPLM also understands. I am putting pressure constantly on SLM also to understand that also and I am telling them that if there is no peace because you are not working with us – UN and AU- and with the government and with JEM, then you, the SLM, will regret it. I am saying of course the same to government and the same to JEM but at the moment I have more reason to say that of the SLM. And then I can speak for the international community. We will report to the Security Council and then members of the Security Council will draw their conclusions. I did read in the newspapers that the United States representative, Fraser, said to the SLM, 'you can forget our (US) political support if you don't make peace on the 1st of January' which is quite a statement. Maybe other countries will say the same. And I hope the SLM will draw its own conclusions. Of course if somebody else is to be blamed then somebody else will be blamed. So then there will be a kind of reconsideration of the UN position. Of what type? I don't know.

I am telling SLM and I want to repeat that: they claim to stand for their people and in a previous press conference I quoted figures, you remember, with regards to mortality rates and nutrition rates which have improved a lot. That will not be sustainable without peace and security next year because the support will go down. Tsunami, Pakistan, Niger, New Orleans, etc. will require more funds and donors are no longer able to sustain the same level of assistance to Darfur. If SLM is not helping to make peace, they also forget their own people and then they also will be held accountable for it. I said it explicitly to all the SLM leaders whom I am meeting regularly. There also will be consequences. And then some international partners may say "We no longer see you as the sole representative of the other side in the talks. We may wish to find others with whom we want to talk who perhaps are being seen as more responsible." So we tell them: please find a common platform even if you don't reconcile or reunite, it is up to you, but find a common platform. Come with the same objectives and make peace not for power-jockeying purposes but for your own people in Darfur.

Is there a plan 'B' for peace talks? No, there is not yet a plan 'B'. I only know that if there is no peace, there will be no Security Council Chapter VII intervention because that always will be vetoed and is totally impossible. So, if SLM is betting on intervention that they hope will take place because there is no peace, they are betting on the wrong horse. If there is peace, then there may be the possibility that the Security Council may accept the invitation to improve the security arrangements for instance by ensuring, on the basis of the United Nations budget, a security arrangement – African Union/United Nations – for a longer period and bigger. That is a possibility also to the benefit of making the peace agreement sustainable. These are options to consider after the meeting of the Heads of State of the African Union on the 1st of January in Sudan.

Q: My first question is about the CPA. There are supposed to be more CPA commissions to be formed and so far there are only about 4 CPA commissions formed. The mission of the UNMIS in Sudan is to monitor the implementation of the CPA in the Sudan. I believe that the delay in the formation of the commissions also delay the implementation of the CPA. So

what do you think are the reasons for the delay in the formation of the commissions that have not yet been formed?

The second question is somehow technical and is about the ongoing investigations over the causes of the plane crash that killed Dr. Garang. It seems nobody is talking about it these days. What can you as the UN and the international community tell us about this?

My last question is on Yambio. Last week there was violence in Yambio and many people died. We tried to ask your Spokesperson last week what were the causes of the conflict but they were not yet established. So this week at least could you tell us something about what happened in Yambio and the causes of the conflict that caused many to lose their lives?

SRSB Pronk: Thank you for your very concrete questions. As far as the investigations into the helicopter crash with the tragic consequence of the death of Dr. Garang are concerned, I can not give you any information. We are not part of the investigation and we have not been receiving any information from the investigation team. Just like you, I know that there are discussions and that there are visits. My last information which is completely indirect is that I was in Entebbe when also the commission of Mr. Abel Alier was also there in Kampala. I don't know the outcome of the talks, I don't know anything, I can not speculate – that is not my right to do. I can only say that I deplore that there is not yet a finding which has been published because I did urge the parties to make sure that the investigation is concluded soon. As far as plane crashes is concerned in general, the delay you're talking about is not disproportionately long. I was asking for speeding up; I am not an expert on the issues but all plane crashes which are being investigated take about a year after the crash to be concluded. I think it is a pity that it always has to be the case and I wanted this to be fast. It is now three and a half months but that is not disproportionately long of course. But I understand the worry. That was question number one.

Then your question on Yambio. I was in Juba at the time. It was very worrisome and you know yourself of course a lot of what was going on. Like in many places in the south, there are conflicts between groups of people. Sometimes there are conflicts, as I said, because of access to water and land. Then it is an economic conflict and it gets a tribal dimension – Misseiriya-Dinka is an example. Sometimes there are labour conflicts. Sometimes conflicts between people who live somewhere and new people who are new comers to the same place. Sometimes it is just a personal conflict between two people or two families belonging to a different group or tribe with a violent incidence as a consequence and then the personal conflict explodes into a group conflict and the group conflict may explode into a tribal conflict. In our reading that is what happened in Yambio. There was a personal conflict resulting in the death of one person and that created tensions because the others who belonged to his tribe went home in order to get their weapons out and go for of a sort of revenge and then the other people also fearing that they will be attacked did the same thing and that exploded into a tribal conflict – Zande, Dinka. The government was not able to manage the conflict. Maybe it saw it too late which happens also in other countries – look at Paris. There was a conflict which I call a tribal conflict because there are also different tribes in Europe, and the government saw it too late. Sometimes the government has a police force which is not completely balanced in terms of its own composition. This did play perhaps a role.

We were involved also because some of our staff members who belonged to one of the two groups were chased and they fled to our compounds and one of the compounds was also set

on fire and that meant that the international community, at a certain moment, feared for their own safety and that is why we took them out temporarily. We are not just waiting. We are sending people; security people, UNMOs, protection people and people who could also help the authorities to contain the conflict in order to avoid further escalation, which is very important because the conflict in Yambio had apparently spread also to other smaller towns in the region. That is my reading of the conflict. There is always a combination of factors behind clashes.

It is also important to say what it was not a political issue. It was not an LRA issue. It was not an issue of political character, for instance other armed groups against the SPLA, it was not. It was also not frustration against the government in Juba. It was not of a political character. In all conflicts on the ground, a conflict which is personal, or family or tribal or economic may become a political conflict. Paris, I continue because you must have read everything on it, became also a political conflict. It was an economic conflict and also a personal group conflict. Some people were killed in a transformer house and then others became angry and fought. And it became also a political conflict. So what is not a political conflict can become a political conflict and you have to be very soon on the spot talking, and talking, and talking in order to avoid escalation of violence and to avoid spreading of the conflict to other places and to avoid a conflict of a specific character to get multi-dimensional – both cultural and economic and political and tribal – because then it is getting out of control.

On your question on the delay of the formation of the commissions, to a certain extent of course the death of Dr. Garang did result to a certain delay in particular of the formation of some of the new commissions. And that is not so bad because that was just a couple of months in terms of delay. But then you have got a new government in the south, a new leader who had to become acquainted with it. I am pleased that some new institutions have been established. They should meet and that is important. The CPC was established, I understand, but didn't meet yet. That is not good because that has a consequence for the implementation of CPA provisions. The fact that there is no CPC means that I can not in the CPC discuss political dimensions of military issues. I can not discuss the LRA, I can not discuss Abyei, and I can not discuss the political consequences in the east. The political dimensions of military issues could not so far be discussed in a joint institution. I can discuss it with SPLM; I can discuss it with Vice-president Kiir; I can discuss it here in Khartoum but I can not discuss it in a joint institution. So far that has not been very worrisome but it may become worrisome. The Joint Defence Board has not yet been established. I hope it will be established very soon because the Joint Defence Board is necessary for instance to organize the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) and that is in the CPA. It's important also to consider other issues like the fact that the SPLM is not able to pay their soldiers who are part of the JIUs. And I would say it is an interest both for the SPLM and also for the government here that you have soon a regular process towards the establishment of the JIUs whereby the soldiers from both sides are part of a regular unit and are being paid also. Not paying at a certain moment could also lead to a sort of instability and this issue is of general interest.

These are examples of possible consequences of the delays.

So far, please again please understand me well, there were no negative consequences of the delay. But I am warning against possible negative consequences which may come up.

Q: On Friday I was in Muhajiriya and the Secretary-General of the SLM said that the AMIS needed peace by the end of December but for them they demand it at the beginning of

December. Now UN and AMIS have the same proposal. My question is, following the negotiations and the mediation carried by AMIS and the US delegation; yesterday in the newspapers we had something from the government that there is no specific time for the talks. What pressure are you giving the government because I see that there is more pressure on the SLM while government is not facing the same pressure because the SLM was divided. Suppose that the government delayed, what would you do?

SRSB Pronk: It is a good question, sir. I think that Minister Khalifa (you were referring to him) did say that he had not been informed about postponement or the new date. And I am saying exactly the same – I never got any official announcement by the AU with regard to the new date. Both he and I assume that the opening can take place on the 28th and I know the government is going and I know also that the JEM is going so I don't have to put pressure on the government to go. They are going – they promised that. The pressure on the position of the government, if need be, will take place within Abuja Talks. Of course there was pressure from our side, from me, on the government also to include the SPLM in its delegation so there is pressure on both parties but of a different character.

I know now that both Minni Minnawi and AbdelWahid will go – they promised that. So that everybody is there and then we can start to do business. This is the present situation and I still think it is possible if you start on the 28th to do it in one month. But that is my confidence. I put pressure where it belongs to and where it is needed. I don't irritate parties who said that they will go to the talks.

Did I answer your question sir?

Q: What will you do supposing that the government delays?

SRSB Pronk: They are not delaying so why should I go to answer such a hypothetical question? They promised to go so why shouldn't I believe the government? I am always cynical, etc. but in this specific situation I do not discuss the government. But as soon as something of this nature happens you will see me on the door of the Presidential Palace knocking. And if I invite you to be there on the press conference which I will deliver afterward, please be there – breakfast or not breakfast. But seriously, I trust that the Government will be in Abuja and I have no reason to pressure them to go because there are going.

Thank you.

Spokesperson: Thank you very much.

Please don't leave I have some housekeeping things. We have some material for you, take it with you including a media advisory in Arabic and in English so please take it with you, it is very important. It's on media issues and misrepresentation of facts relating to the UN.

Thank you and I will see you again next Wednesday.