



UNMIS

Press Conference

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Near-verbatim Transcript of the Press Conference by
**Mr. Haile Menkerios, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the
United Nations in Sudan
UNMIS HQ, Khartoum**

Spokesperson Ashraf Eissa: We welcome you once again to UNMIS.

Today we have the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Haile Menkerios who will be briefing you on what we have been doing in the past few months in preparation for the conclusion of the remaining milestones of the CPA.

SRSR Haile Menkerios: Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you all for coming.

We have reached the most critical phase of Sudan's peace process regarding full implementation of the CPA; the decisions made in the next few weeks are likely to determine Sudan's path for years to come. This is and will continue to be a very delicate period, requiring an unwavering and tenacious Sudanese determination to prevent anything from derailing the process, as well as the continued readiness of Sudan's international partners to assist them in doing so.

Indeed, the leaders that signed the CPA as a wise, peaceful solution to the conflict that led to the loss of so many lives, have stayed the course albeit with some difficulties, and continue to express that commitment to its logical conclusion. On the part of the international community as well, no African issue has received and continues to receive greater attention and support as Sudan has and continues to. The high attention Sudan receives in the agenda of the UN Security Council and its accentuation of such attention through its recent visit to Sudan, the readiness of the UN to provide robust support to the full implementation of the CPA through UNMIS and the UNCT, the Secretary General's propagation of the importance of wider international support to Sudan through multiple efforts in different forums including the recent one on the margins of the UNGA, his appointment of the High Level Panel to monitor the referenda and make interventions to avoid or rectify possible discrepancies during the preparation and conduct of these referenda to enhance their credibility, the engagement of multiple parties such the AU through its AUHIP, IGAD, the EU, the US and other partners in support of a peaceful, amicable completion of the CPA process and preparation for the period beyond, all attest to the high degree of commitment of the international community to assist the Sudanese through this critical period.

As the referenda which are the concluding benchmark of the CPA process approach, it has become more evident that critical issues remain to be addressed that would smoothen their conduct, not as preconditions, but as important issues that address the concerns of all stakeholders in the process for a peaceful future, a future of peaceful cooperation for mutual benefit, as one country and one people, or as two countries and neighbouring peoples whose destiny is interconnected as all other Africans.

It is positive that the leaders of the two parties recognize the importance of these issues, and are determined to find a solution for them. The two parties have decided to meet at the highest level in Ethiopia under the auspices of the AUHIP and the support of other regional and international partners starting 27 October to do just that. We are informed the presidency is scheduled to meet imminently in Khartoum to address technical issues affecting the preparation of the Southern Sudan referendum and other related issues that would smoothen the way for the success of the talks in Ethiopia, and the Joint Defence Board is to meet in the coming days to address security issues and maintain strict adherence to the Comprehensive Cease-fire Agreement and the proper functioning of the joint mechanisms established to see to its proper implementation. We wish them success and are ready to support them.

While we believe this still remains the mainstream, voices from officials of both sides have been heard to express sentiments that cause alarm, that can cause apprehension and tension to grow internally, that send signals of alarm to external supporters and observers alike who can wonder which is the real intension of the Sudanese parties who are the guardians of the CPA and its proper implementation. Recently, there has been a flurry of statements and counter statements regarding a buffer zone, of additional new UN troops to be deployed to this zone or to hot spots along the border. Indeed, the UN is assessing the needs and, and will continue its consultant with the parties on how best it can best assist them respond to these needs. Let me however state categorically, that while the Security Council and the Secretary General have expressed their readiness to consider additional support to address security concerns, no decision has yet been made by them for additional troops, their deployment or conditions of their deployment. So far, UNMIS has been making adjustments to the deployment of its existing troops overstretchedly deployed throughout the ceasefire zone to defuse tensions where they exist consistent with its mandate and with the full knowledge of the two parties – Abyei is an example. Here, I would like to appeal to the leadership of both Sudanese parties to follow the path they have so boldly and correctly charted for peace, and are pursuing on the main, to ensure the calm and proper functioning of the political, security and technical mechanisms they have established while they engage to address challenges that need to be addressed to see the peace process through to its peaceful, amicable and timely conclusion. Our mandate is to assist them do so.

During this critical time, the UN stands ready to support, along with other partners, the parties efforts to address challenges at the political level, to increase its capacity and efforts to address security challenges, and at the technical level to assist the bodies responsible to prepare for and conduct the referenda credibly and on time. It shall continue to better prepare, in consultation with the parties, to assist meeting these challenges with increased capacity and vigour as necessary in view of the short time available for the referenda and the hitches, especially on the security front, that can occur and grow in view of the seriousness of the issues that concern all Sudanese stakeholders, and lead to unexpected sparks that can grow to unwanted confrontation thus jeopardizing the entire peace process the two parties have worked and continue to work for.

Let me stop here to answer your questions. My colleagues here responsible for political, security and technical support are here with me to help answer your questions that may require detail in UNMIS efforts to support the CPA parties successfully conclude their peace agreement.

Thank you.

Q & A

AFP: I would just like to get a clarification about the redeployment of some peacekeepers at the border – where they are and how many have been redeployed?

SRSG Menkerios: As I said in my statement, UN troops are deployed throughout the ceasefire zone in order to assist current preparations for security of the population, security in preparation for the referendum – both in assisting the responsible parties and also in protecting UN personnel and equipment that has been distributed throughout the south in particular; to assist in the preparations for the referendum, as well as in the main area which is, within the security zone, to assist the two parties comply to the conditions of the ceasefire agreement. In this, they work in collaboration with joint mechanisms such as the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee (CJMC), the Area Joint Military Committee (AJMC) – which is more local – in monitoring and investigating any claims of violation to the ceasefire agreement, that is, where they are deployed.

If at any point, there is any need to make adjustments to that deployment in order to reinforce work in certain areas to help defuse tensions or possible tensions, then we do so. I refer to Abyei as one example where we made some deployment from our reserves in order to reinforce continued patrolling which was done, actually, with the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) in the area, other civilian units from the UN and the Joint Integrated Police Units (JIPU) in Abyei in order to defuse any possible tension that may occur in Abyei.

Xinhua: The parties to the CPA are trading accusations over troop build-ups from each side. Do you have any information of these build-ups? Do you notice any activity that may give credence to such accusations?

Given that you are deployed under a Chapter VI mandate, does your mandate allow you to intervene should clashes occur?

SRSG Menkerios: We have heard, in the press, accusations and counter-accusations from both sides about troop build-ups and deployment in violations of the ceasefire agreement in certain parts of the ceasefire zone. We have not monitored these and it should be brought to the joint mechanisms – that is the CJMC – by the two parties. The CJMC is chaired by UNMIS military but includes also representatives from the two

parties and is mandated, in accordance with the ceasefire agreement, to monitor, to investigate any allegations made by either party or, that if itself suspects of, in accordance with the procedures laid down for the CJMC. It has not done so ... there is overall tension. We are very happy that the Joint Defence Board from the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) are going to meet, we hear, within the coming week in order to discuss the security concerns and come up with ways of how they can strengthen the existing mechanisms for verification and monitoring because the two parties are saying they are ready to abide by the ceasefire they have signed and to respect the work of the mechanisms they have established.

Freelance Reporter: You have mentioned that so many UN officials have raised concerns about the referendum in southern Sudan as time is running out. Have you received any appeals from the CPA partners with regards postponement of the referendum in order to finalise the arrangements ahead of the referendum?

SRSB Menkerios: What we know so far is that the two parties continue to declare that they would like to carry out the referenda on time. All we did appeal to both sides is that while we understand and respect the determination to have the referenda happen on time and we shall do everything in our capacity to assist them to do so – we are operating on that basis – we have also advised that no shortcuts should be taken in the process that could undermine or that could jeopardise the credibility of the process and the legitimacy of its outcome. We are working with both sides, on the basis of their decision, on this basis.

Nile TV: What is the future of your mission after the referendum?

SRSB Menkerios: The mandate of our mission ends, as it is right now, with the end of the CPA period which is the six months interim period following the referendum. In accordance with existing timetables, this comes to July 2011. After that, it would depend on the decision of the Parties and the decision of the United Nations Security Council on what continued assistance from the UN the Sudan wants and what the United Nations Security Council decides should be the nature of that support.

Reuters: You said that the UN in New York is assessing the deployment of more troops for the buffer zone. In general, given the UN's history of deployment in Sudan, how long would it take to be able to identify and deploy troops in Sudan?

How many more troops have we got in Abyei now?

SRSB Menkerios: I have not said that the UN is considering deploying additional troops to the buffer zone. I have not talked about a buffer zone. I have just said that talks have been raised about that. I said the UN – not necessarily just New York alone we are an important aspect of the UN – is consistently, constantly, assessing needs as they occur, including the needs now and particularly with the coming of the period of the exercise of the referendum, tensions can be expected to rise and how best do we respond to them on the basis of the mandate that we have which is to assist the Parties to respond to contingencies also.

Those, definitely, we are assessing and we shall be assessing them in collusion and consultation with the Parties. On the basis of the outcome of finalisation of that assessment, we shall make recommendations to the United Nations Security Council and New York to make decisions on what they can do to respond to that issue.

In Abyei, it is a small troop – perhaps a company or a little more than a company - have been deployed to assist those who were already deployed in Abyei.

ENDS
