



UNITED NATION

الأمم المتحدة

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson

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PRESS BRIEFING

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

I'll start with the latest from the UN Security Council.

UN Security Council Presidential Statement

Reacting to the 12 January 2006 Communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) in which the PSC expressed its support, in principle, for a transition from the African Union Mission in Sudan to a United Nations operation, and requested the Chairperson of the African Union's Commission to initiate consultations with the United Nations and other stakeholders on this matter, the UN Security Council, in a Presidential Statement adopted on Friday 3 February, commended the efforts of the African Union for successful deployment of its Mission and for its significant contribution to the provision of a secure environment for civilians and the humanitarian situation in Darfur. The Security Council welcomed the African Union Peace and Security Council's recognition of the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa.

On the AU-UN transition, The Security Council asked the Secretary-General, to initiate immediate contingency planning on options for a possible transition from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to a United Nations operation.

The Security Council instructed that such planning should be undertaken on the basis of a unified, integrated approach; of maximum use of existing resources of AMIS and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) subject to the agreement of troop-contributing countries; of an assessment of the essential tasks to be carried out in southern Sudan and Darfur with a view to re-allocate existing troops and assets to the maximum extent practicable; and of a readiness to review and adjust the current structure of UNMIS to make best use of available resources when the African Union deemed a transition feasible and agreeable.

The Council emphasized the importance of maintaining strong support for AMIS until the completion of any eventual transition.

Stressing the importance of successfully concluding the Abuja peace talks, the Council reiterated strongly the need for all parties to the Darfur conflict to end the violence and atrocities. It also demanded that they cooperate fully with AMIS and fulfil all the obligations to which they had committed themselves.

I've already sent you the Presidential Statement electronically. Copies are available in the room in English and we will send you the Arabic version as soon as available.

SG Monthly Report On Darfur

In the latest monthly report on Darfur, the Secretary-General notes that another year had ended without a major breakthrough in efforts to resolve the crisis in the region and urged the parties to reach a negotiated settlement without any further delay.

In the meantime, he said, everything possible should be done to support and strengthen the existing African Union operation and provide it with the necessary funding. In this regard, the Secretary-General said that he and African Union Commission Chairperson Alpha Oumar Konare have agreed to convene a pledging conference for the AU force in Darfur in the second half of this month. The latest information we have is that the conference will take place in early March instead.

The Secretary-General also drew attention to the violence along the Chad-Sudan border, which has considerably exacerbated instability in Darfur. He calls upon the two governments to take immediate and resolute steps to defuse the tensions.

Panel of experts report

The report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1591 (2005) has been issued as a public document yesterday. In this report, the Panel reported on the work it conducted in four task areas: a) assisting in monitoring the implementation of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 1556 (2004) and 1591 (2005); b) assisting in monitoring the implementation of the targeted financial and travel-related sanctions that may be imposed against individuals designated by the Security Council Committee established by resolution 1591; c) provision of information to the UNSC Committee on individuals who impede the peace process, commit violations of international law or are responsible for offensive military over flights; and development of recommendations on actions the Security Council may wish to consider.

The report is available in English in the UN website:

<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/Sudan/SudanselectedEng.htm>

UNMIS Activities

SRSG

-SRSG Jan Pronk is back from Abuja where he undertook a three-day visit from 3 to 5 February. During his visit, he met with the negotiating parties as well as with the AU mediation team and the AU chief mediator Salim Ahmed Salim. The SRSG addressed the Plenary of the inter-darfurian peace talks convened on Sunday 5 February by Dr. Salim

Ahmed Salim. In his address, SRSG Jan Pronk expressed concern over the increasing deterioration of the security situation in Darfur compounded by the Chad-Sudan tension, the continued massacre of innocent civilians, the proliferation and omnipresence of armed bandits, the relentless attacks on and looting of humanitarian convoys and NGO staff – all forcing the withdrawal of UN staff from some parts of Darfur and the continued narrowing of the humanitarian access space. He stressed the need to rethink the strategy so far implemented in Darfur, by strengthening and speeding up the negotiations, imposing sanctions if need be, on those hindering the peace process; and by establishing a more robust peace force that will be “big, strong, of long duration and with a broad mandate”. On the transition from the AU to a UN operation in Darfur, the SRSG indicated that the modalities of such a transition have to be worked out in full partnership with all the stakeholders in accordance with the directives of the UNSC in the Presidential Statement it adopted on Friday 3 February. He, however, emphasized that “the UN will not come in against the will of the Sudanese”. The SRSG urged the Sudanese Parties to speedily and seriously pursue the peace talks, while offering them a seven-point recommendation to bridge what he described as the credibility gap between Abuja and the events on the ground in Darfur, namely : “do not bet on two horses” - stop fighting and talk”; refrain from internationalizing the conflict in Darfur, and don’t ally with neighboring countries; stop attacking or looting humanitarian convoys and commercial vehicles; stop the militias and refrain from provoking one another; stop the outlaws using joint patrol units, if possible; respect the AU Force; and bring perpetrators of the ceasefire violations to justice so as to end impunity.

A copy of the AU press release on the plenary meeting is available on the shelf.

- The SRSG is currently in Damazin and will be returning to Khartoum tomorrow. This visit is part of regular visits the SRSG undertakes together or in alternation with his two deputies and the Force Commander to UNMIS areas of operation to oversee the activities of the Mission.

-The SRSG will conduct a visit to South and North Darfur States from 10 to 12 February. He will be meeting with AMIS, the local authorities, the UN and NGOs’ staff. He will also meet with SLA commanders. The SRSG will visit the village of Daya where the UN helicopter crashed to pay special tribute to the local community which played a heroic role in rescuing the passengers of the plane and preventing loss of life.

Military update

Military Strength

As of now, on the military side, except for Russian and Chinese Contingents, all other troops have joined the mission area and are well established on the ground. The Chinese troops are likely to join the Mission by the end of this month. Currently UNMIS has **593** Military Observers, **168** Staff Officers and **5196** Protection Force and Enabling Personnel deployed throughout the mission area. The total number of Peacekeepers in Sudan presently stands at **5957** personnel.

CJMC Meeting

The last CJMC Meeting was held on 02 Feb 06 in Juba. The Following are some of the important decisions reached during the meeting:-

- a. The Area Joint Monitoring Committees (AJMCs) have been directed to draw up a timetable for the movement of SAF and SPLA troops into the Assembly Areas.
- b. The CJMC asked for an early convening of Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee (OAGCC) Meeting to help resolve pending OAG issues.
- c. Parties agreed to provide lists of detainees prior to the next CJMC Meeting.
- d. About situation in OBUDO, AJMC Sector 3, Malakal, have been directed to re-address the issue. However, in order to diffuse the situation, the SAF has agreed to confer with their higher authorities with a view to getting permission to instruct their local commanders to disengage and return to their locations. The SPLA also agreed to comply with the disengagement request without reference to higher authorities. AJMC will confirm their disengagements by 09 Feb 06.

Security

Darfur

On the ground, the security situation in Darfur remains volatile with continued armed banditry. Armed tribesmen are also reported to be active and they attacked on 2 February 3 villages under SLA control in South Darfur (15km south of Gereida) resulting in 10 people killed and several wounded. One village was torched. Harassment and some instances detention by SLA members of INGOs and drivers of commercial companies delivering UN humanitarian assistance, is also reported.

Hamashkorieb

Situation at present is calm, but tense due to the proximity of the SPLA and SAF troops as well as the opposing armed militias in the area of Hamashkorieb. Owing to this development UNMIS has deployed a Joint Monitoring Team comprising Military observers along with SAF and SPLA representatives since 13 Jan 06.

The JMT in addition to monitoring the situation endeavors to maintain a close liaison between all forces to ensure that there is no escalation of tension while the Cease Fire and Monitoring Mechanism, ie AJMC and CJMC are discussing the issue for a amicable resolution.

CJMC on 02 Feb and AJMC (Kassala) on 07 Feb 06 have asked the parties to work out the programme and the logistical support required for the SPLA to move out of Eastern Sudan and redeploy south of line 1-1-56 as per the CPA. (SPLA was to redeploy by 09 Jan 06). The issue was expected to be discussed at the Joint Defense Board –JDB- (which belongs to both parties) on 05 Feb 06. However for unknown reasons the JDB did not meet. We hope the JDB and Ceasefire Political Commission will assemble soon and give focus to the early resolution of redeployment issue.

Upper Nile State

The recent violence in Upper Nile state at Ganal/ pangak ,Yuai and Doleib Hill (all in UNMIS sector 3) have a direct relationship with the JUBA declaration when a part of SSDF

force under Paulino Matiep joined SPLA. This caused a number of splinter groups of SSDF with undecided affiliations becoming a bone of contention between the SAF and SPLA. While the UN is extending its good Offices to resolve the crisis through the parties and also through the AJMC mechanism, it is extremely important for the parties to convene a meeting of the OAG Collaborative Committee to finally resolve the issue of alignments. The OAG Collaborative Committee is believed to have been formed but UN which has a membership in it has not been informed about the date of its convening. It will be in the overall interest of the nation that OAGCC should quickly resolve this issue which has serious security implications.

Q & A

Q: About the talks on the east, what about Pronk's requests to Annan for the UN to take over the issue of the east? (*indiscernible*)

It is known that 9th of February was the deadline for the withdrawal of SPLA forces from Hamishkoreib. You did talk about the issue but I it was not clear to me.

Spokesperson: On the east, I have been asked a number of times about this issue, that Mr. Pronk had requested the Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the UN takes over the issue of eastern Sudan. I strongly deny this. In none of our official reports or statements have we made a request of such kind. We do follow the issue of the east based on the fact that the events there are closely related to peace and stability in the Sudan as a whole and on the general situation in the Sudan. But the UN has never at one time put forward such a request to handle the dossier on the east. We do send information to the Security Council on what is taking place in the east based on the considerations I just mentioned but we have at no time requested charge of this issue. If you are referring to the mediation efforts – I did read some of what some Sudanese papers are writing attributed to a Sudanese official – we strongly rebuff what has been written in the press. Pronk has never at one time requested to become a mediator. This has never happened. And you were present and heard at the last press conference held by Mr. Jan Pronk when he talked about the issue of eastern Sudan and mentioned in particular our talks with the Eastern Front. Mr. Pronk did tell you that his deputy Mr. Taye-Brook Zerihoun held talks with the Eastern Front and the message was clear which was: remain committed to the talks under the umbrella of the Libyan initiative since you have agreed on a Libyan mediation. Cooperate with this mediation and go to Tripoli and to the talks.

But, and I repeat, the UN has at no time requested such a role. To the contrary, the UN had earlier been requested by the Eastern Front at one time to mediate and we had told them that we were not keen to play the role of mediator in this issue. The UN had proposed to the Eastern Front and the Sudan government also some other non-UN mediators. Among them, for example, the Moi Foundation as one of the names we proposed to them. In the long run, the parties agreed on Libya as a mediator and they are basically the ones to have the final say.

Neither the UN as an institution nor Jan Pronk as an individual have ever requested the role of mediator and we categorically refute this.

On Hamishkoreib and the withdrawal, you are aware and as per the CPA that the SPLA was to withdraw by 9th January but due to a number of reasons that they themselves explained, they did not.

We have learnt, but not in a formal manner, that there was an agreement between the Parties to extend the deadline by one month for the SPLA withdrawal. We do not have confirmed reports whether or not this agreement was documented because we were not formally informed but only heard of this through unofficial channels.

The fact of the situation is that some element of the SPLA is still in the area and I did inform you on what was discussed and agreed upon at the CJMC level. In fact I do not have anything more to add on this issue. On our part, we strongly stressed the need to hasten the withdrawal and we have informed all the parties that the SAF could enter the area once the SPLA withdraws and this is of course on the basis of what was agreed upon in the CPA. But, on the ground, the issue may still take some time.

Q: About the Sudan-Chad situation ... how serious does the UN regard that situation?

Could you expand on what Mr. Pronk was saying at the weekend about exporting the conflict internationally and is it your belief that the Sudanese and Chadian governments are involved in violence along that border?

Spokesperson: I will start with your last question. First of all, you know that we don't have the capacity to ascertain the involvement of that party or the other. You know that we do not have the capacity. So it is beyond UNMIS capability and mandate.

Chad is definitely not our ...

Q: (*interrupting*) ... but you do get information from your agencies and from people ...

Spokesperson: First of all it is not our mandate. Yes, we do hear things from here and there,, but none of it could be used as solid indication for us to come up with an assessment. Even if an assessment has to be made, it is not UNMIS that will make an assessment. That would be somebody else and not us. It is not our mandate to take care of the relations between two countries.

On the rest of your question on how serious it is, we could not speculate. It is serious enough for us at the United Nations to limit to a minimum our activities in West Darfur and in the areas bordering Chad. Our current presence there is kept to a minimum and you know that we declared Geneina area as a Phase V security level. So we have basically confined our presence there to a real minimum and we are watching what is going on there in case we need to take further steps.

What Mr. Pronk meant by calling for non-internationalisation of the conflict is obvious. There are so many accusations from different parties and ones needs to ascertain whether some of them are true or not about alliance of certain groups in Sudan with other groups from neighboring countries such as Chad to attack some locations in Chad and *vice versa*. Of course, the message of Mr. Pronk to the people in Abuja, although we did not mention Chad specifically, mind you, he said: beware of your alliances with other people from other countries because that might lead to the situation escalating and might further confuse the issue by having other parties from other countries getting involved in a conflict that is essentially and initially an internal conflict. You would understand that any involvement of any party outside the Sudan in the conflict, leads to, by definition, to an internationalisation of the conflict. So this is what he meant. I would stop at that. As UNMIS we are watching

closely what is going on in that area and are making necessary contingency plans to ensure the safety and the security of humanitarian workers – UN staff and so on. But beyond that and at the political side of things, you know that it is not our mandate and it is being taken up by the AU and there is a mini-summit opening up in Tripoli today on this particular issue.

Q: Why did the UNMIS withdraw its offer to transport the internal delegation of the Eastern Front from Khartoum to Asmara and from there to Libya?

Spokesperson: When did this happen?

Q: We have learnt from sources from the Eastern Front that you had offered a UN flight for transporting their delegation from Sudan to Asmara and from there to Libya.

Spokesperson: To be frank, I do not have any information on this issue but will come back to you.

We normally do not reject a request for assistance from any party especially if we do know that they lack the resources. The main criterion is assisting them in the course of carrying out important political issues that may bolster political talks – whatever relevant party is involved and in which we are helping. But let me find out. Even the SLM requested our assistance to travel to Abuja and we assisted them and also did the same for the JEM. We have granted assistance on numerous occasions including even to the SPLM.

As for the Eastern Front, I am not sure but let me find out and will come back to you. We have in fact transported them previously and I truly am not aware of what you just said but let me find out.

Q: This was in the course of last week.

Another question: what are the facts surrounding reports that a UN aircraft was subjected to threats from Eastern Front rebel forces in the Hamishkoreib area?

Spokesperson: Neither do I have any information on this. UNMIS has good relations with the Sudanese people in general and if you did mention the east, UNMIS enjoys good relations with the people from the east and has never at any time been subjected to any form of hostility be it from the people of the east or from any other parts of the Sudan. Sure there have been some demonstrations and the like but we have never been physically subjected to any form of hostility in the Sudan. In fact, we do commend the people of Sudan for this and I am surprised at what you said ... no it has never happened.

Q: I have a question with regard to the SSDF and SPLA forces in Upper Nile because I have seen a lot of conflicting reports about it. What about the number of casualties and whether the fights are still ongoing and who initiated these fights. What is the nature of the problem?

Spokesperson: We have also conflicting reports for that matter and I can not confirm any particular origin or scope of the conflicts. And we had conflicting reports on who is involved for true. The one party that we can confirm is the SPLA.

On the splinters of the SSDF – we call them splinters of the SSDF but we can not go further in terms of identification by name or affiliation because it is very confused situation over there.

On the number of casualties, I have also been asked the question and I saw in the media and some of your colleagues asked me if I could confirm the number of 200 that I think has been carried out in the media. First: we are in no position to give the number of casualties because we were not on the ground in those locations where the fighting happened and we were not entrusted with making a headcount of casualties.

Two: according to our own information, we do think that the number of 200 is exaggerated and we do believe it is less. We are not undermining the number – it could be tens of victims - but it is definitely not 200. This is the information that we have.

I am sorry I can not elaborate further because, as I told you, our role in this particular issue has to do with two things. One: to assist in the sorting out of the Other Armed Groups issue as per the CPA. You know that the CPA stipulates that the Other Armed Groups have to chose either to ally themselves or be absorbed into the SAF or the SPLA. That is one. Or, two: join in the program of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration. This is the obligation and they were given one year to do so.

Our role in the CJMC is to follow up on this particular commitment of the Parties and see how far they progressed in fulfilling this particular obligation. So that is our role.

On actual fighting and what happens between the Other Armed Groups and the Parties, our task is mainly a task of good offices to try to defuse the situation and talk over the problems to prevent escalation and to stop vilonece. And so far I can tell you that we did play that role in that situation in particular. We managed to convince the parties to stop the actual fighting and we have had a commitment at least from the two parties to the CPA – that is the SAF and the SPLA - to refrain from the use of violence and to stop fighting and to prevent them as well. This is the role that we have but it doesn't go beyond that.

Q: Just to build on the question of My colleague Derek, last Monday, Lt. Gen. Paulino Matip, as I learnt, has been promoted. He had a press conference at the Liaison Office of the GoSS in Khartoum. In that particular press conference Gen Matip alleged that Sudan military intelligence is supporting some groups that do not join the SPLM and by name, he mentioned Gen Gordon Kuong. He said that the Sudan military intelligence supports Gen Kuong with ammunition and material so as to continue to cause insecurity in south Sudan and to destabilise the implementation of the CPA.

Matip however says that he has the proof that comes from him because before the signing of the CPA, the same group has been supported to fight the SPLA so that the process of the CPA could be destabilised.

What is the UNMIS position in this particular situation?

Spokesperson: UN position on what exactly?

Q: The UNMIS' exact position. Matip has been identified clearly and your role here is to monitor the implementation of the CPA. Because such a situation in Upper Nile in one way or another lead to a destabilization of the implementation of the CPA.

So what is your role as the United Nations Mission in the Sudan? What are you going to do and what have you done so far after Matip's press conference and the reports you have read in the press?

Spokesperson: I just answered this question sir and I am not going to repeat again and again the role of UNMIS when it comes to the Other Armed Groups. The Other Armed Groups are the responsibility of the Parties. They have to sort them out. We are here to monitor if the Parties are abiding by the CPA or not. It is not for the UN to come and force these people to ally themselves either to this party or the other – that is not our job. Our job is to tell the Parties that “this is your obligation and you are supposed to tell us from the other armed groups who is allying themselves to that party or the other one”. If Paulino Matip decides to join the SPLA and others from the SSDF do not join the SPLA, it is not for us to force on them who they are supposed to join. If an armed group joins one particular party, then it has to fulfill the same obligations stipulated in the CPA for the signatory parties.

As for what Mr. Matip said, I can not reply to it. It is his own assessment. What I can confirm to you, however, is that some of the SSDF joined with Paulino Matip the SPLA; some others chose not to. Where their alignment now is, right now, we don't know but we hear that some of them are aligned to the SAF but there is other information about some groups that are operating independently. As long as the SAF and the SPLA do not come to us and say, “this is the list of the people and the groups who are aligned to us”, we can not speculate just based on a statement made to the media by Mr. Paulino Matip or anybody else for that matter.

Q: Are they allowed to split – the SSDF – in terms of the CPA?

Spokesperson: I don't think that the CPA went to that extent of detail about Other Armed Groups but I will check again with our lawyers here but I don't think it made any specific provision on what happens if any Other Armed Group decides to split. The CPA did not go into a comprehensive list of Other Armed Groups but spoke about them in general. But regardless; assuming that the SSDF was mentioned *per se* in the CPA, that does not mean that one would have to deal with the SSDF as one entity and not allow it to split. They split; they don't split, they are part of the Other Armed Groups referred to in the CPA and are subjected to the same provisions of the CPA. Whether they are named or not or referred to as an entity or not, the focus of the CPA is on Other Armed Groups and actually, I think nobody can give you certainly how many Other Armed Groups there are in southern Sudan and what their names are.

Q: You stated that this pledging meeting has been postponed. As a matter of fact, we have been hearing for the last two or three months the need to strengthen the AMIS until the transition can be made to the AU. And now, out of the blue, the conference has been postponed. AMIS' funding will literally end in March and you don't know even when this meeting is going to be convened.

Do you think these people are serious?

Spokesperson: They are very much serious.

Q: If they are, then why did they postpone it so drastically?

Spokesperson: We don't need something drastic to postpone a meeting. Sometimes it has to do simply with logistics. It has nothing to do with the commitment to the conference. It has absolutely nothing to do with it. Everybody is talking about the need – and when I say everybody, I mean the UN on different levels and also the donor community- to support the AU until a decision is reached about what is going to happen later. Whether it will be a definite decision to have a transition from the AU to the UN or not, that we can not speculate on but the pledging conference is an absolute necessity.

I am not aware of the actual reasons why the conference was postponed but there's nothing to be worried about. It is just a regular postponement like other meetings which were scheduled to take place at one point or the other and were postponed. It is not being postponed for a long period. And, actually since you brought it up - the Peace and Security Council meeting and the deadline where the AU says it will run out of funds by the end of March- I'm telling you that everything is being put together so the pledging conference happens on time for it to achieve its objectives. It will take place and hopefully the outcome will be the one that we expect to make sure that the AU will continue its role with even more support than it used to have so far.

Q: Relating to the SG report this month about Child Soldiers. He was calling on the parties to stop recruiting children and so on. I mean this is a very lenient position because there already is a resolution of the Security Council and the UN General Assembly which put a mechanism for reporting on these who are recruiting child soldiers and submitting their names to the Security Council. What is this: *Calling for the parties to refrain ...* according to the resolution, they should be reported and the Council should take action against this.

Spokesperson: Yes, you are right. There are different bodies of the UN, at the level of the General Assembly and the Security Council, that deal with the issue of Child Soldiers. There are treaties, conventions and resolutions on this issue. However, the Secretary-General, when he calls on parties to refrain from this practice, he is entitled to do it. The Secretary-General calling on ending this practice does not mean that we are undermining other mechanisms but it is a different context. The other bodies and mechanisms are absolutely entitled to proceed on what has been viewed internationally, as you said, holding accountable the parties that breach International Law and recruit child soldiers. So that the two do not contradict.

The Secretary-General basically highlights such problems and puts it before the Security Council and in his personal capacity can call upon parties to do this or that – that is his prerogative – but the two do not contradict and are complimentary.

Q: Last week, you told us that two UNMIS staff have been called to report to NY. Can you briefly tell us the latest on this?

Secondly, the UN is a big body in the Sudan that is to monitor the implementation of the CPA. The CPA stipulates that the militias in the Sudan – be they the SSDF and others – and the Popular Defence Forces have to join either SPLA or the SAF. The UN knows very well about this and this is the role that is supposed to be done. To date there are still violations of the CPA because these people have not been given a specific deadline. May I know what deadline was given to the militias or to these groups who are causing chaos in the country because the SPLA has been given until the 9th of January to leave Hamishkoreib and the SAF

were also supposed to be doing that. Both of them violated the CPA. What then is the deadline given the militias?

What pressure is the UN bearing on the two parties so that they may reach the right conclusion so that people enjoy peace?

Spokesperson: Again, on the issue of Other Armed Groups, I don't know how many times I have to repeat myself: read the CPA and see the responsibilities of the Parties and read Resolution 1590 again to see what our role is.

We do not have an active or proactive mandate to deal with the Other Armed Groups. Our mandate is to monitor and assist the Parties in the implementation of their commitments when it comes to this issue, among others. We do monitor what is happening, if the Parties are keeping up with their obligations or not and we do report on it. We do monitor this in the context of the Ceasefire Joint Military Commission. We are putting together reports to the Ceasefire Political Commission that unfortunately has not been meeting at all since established and we are reporting to the United Nations Security Council. So we are doing our part of the job.

You talk about violations; yes we are monitoring and recording them. Our role in preventing them is to try to sensitize the Parties to meet the deadlines agreed upon and to also extend our assistance in the areas they need assistance in to expedite the process.

On the other armed groups, I just briefed you today on our concern, for instance, on the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee that we were told was established but has never met and it was supposed to meet on the 6th but it did not meet. And it is the task for that committee to discuss these issues. Well, I mean, ask the Parties. Why are you asking the United Nations? Go to the Government of National Unity and ask them these questions but the UN has no mandate to force or enforce on the Other Armed Groups to disarm, to join the DDR or to join any party. That is not our role. Please understand this once and for all.

On the issue of the two UN officials, my understanding is that the report of the International Oversight Services has been distributed to the Member States but has not been made public as yet so I don't have a copy of it. What happened to our colleagues, as I informed you, they have been put on administrative leave with full pay – that is not to say that it is a disciplinary measure - and the management at the level of the Department of Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York are following through on the findings of the report. Nothing has transpired yet and we will keep you informed if anything happens but the process is still ongoing.

Q: The Security Council adopted a resolution sanctioning Sudan (rest indiscernable)...

Spokesperson: Please be very specific in your statements. The Security Council has never taken any such. The Security Council issued resolutions 1556 and 1591 that include a number of measures of which are arms embargo measures– yes this has happened. I have just told you that the report of the Panel of Experts has just been released to the public and covers its duties in the context of its mandated task as per resolution 1591. The Security Council has not taken any steps at this moment regarding the issues pertaining to sanctions. The Council has not adopted any resolution “sanctioning” any particular individual. The only resolutions we have so far are resolution 1556 and 1591. So please be specific and check your facts first.

Q: There are reports accusing the UN....reports of an arms-laden UN flight at Khartoum Airport.

Spokesperson: Sometimes, I really fail to answer such questions. We do not traffic in arms and even assuming that we have flown in weapons, this is by virtue of the peacekeeping mandate given us by the Security Council. We are a peacekeeping mission and peacekeeping missions have soldiers and soldiers carry weapons and these weapons are for the protection of UN staff and UNMOs and so on.

In any case, please give us the information you have so that we could at least track the report you're talking about. But the presence of weapons in such a UN operation is only normal.

Q: There is another UN aircraft carrying goods to the traders in the *Suq el-Arabi* market that has been seized at the Khartoum Airport.

Spokesperson: Should the UN mission here turn into a commercial Company then you will be informed.

Frankly, please if such things come up do not bring them up before the press briefings where we discuss important issues. We do not answer such questions. Let us talk about important issues that concern the people of the Sudan. Please use these briefing to the benefit of the people and refrain from bringing up such issues.

Q: Whenever the Sudanese government is asked about this possible transition from the AU to a UN mission, they ask the question why can the money be found for a UN mission which will probably be five times more expensive at least when it can not be found for the AU mission. What would be your answer to that and perhaps you could see in their question that they maybe think that there is some sort of conspiracy in a faraway land to transfer this over as the money would be available for the UN and not the AU.

Spokesperson: My answer is the following: it is a very valid question and whenever I have been asked this question, I say it is a very valid question. But bare in mind that the UN has not asked or even considered the issue of transition. The decision came from the AU.

But the way I would continue to answer this question is the following: first of all, I would ask everybody to bear in mind that the primary responsibility in maintaining international peace and security is the one of the UN. The UN is not an intruder in this issue – it is our primary responsibility. So that is my answer legally and politically speaking.

Two: I would say that the AU when it decided to support in principle the transition, it was for a very valid reason. The difference between having an AU or UN operation is the following and, unfortunately, it has to do with finances again: no matter how much support, assuming that the donor countries will be giving the same budget that will be allocated to a UN mission to the AU, the problem of voluntary contributions in general is the unpredictability of the funds. You can not operate for a long or mid term operation – because everybody foresees this operation in Darfur to last for at least 2 to 3 years – you can not operate for peacekeeping operations based on voluntary contributions because even if they pledge the same amount that would be given us if we take the task, by the time between pledging and actually disbursing the money, the AU or any other entity can be paralyzed. So my answer will be two-fold:

One; the UN after all has the primary responsibility,

Two; the shift would secure the sources of funding in a predictable way because you know that the contributions in our budgets are compulsory – obligatory – so we never run out of money. They can pledge for the AU the same amount of money but the disbursement is another story and it can arrive too late for the AU to be as effective as it should be.

Three; historically - and Mr. Kingibe said this in his press briefing – although the AU played major roles be it as AU or other regional groupings of the AU like for instance ECOWAS and ECOMOG in maintaining peace in other areas in Africa, the AU has however not undertaken such a role from start to finish because of the limitations of the AU itself. It doesn't have the capacity, it doesn't have the resources, it doesn't have the money. They always started an operation and then handed it over one way or another to the UN. I give you the example of Sierra Leone, Liberia for instance.

So this would be my answer but, again, as I said, it is a very valid question but it has to do with the arrangements at the international level or at least the UN level that you can finance a UN mission via the budget of the UN to which the contributions are mandatory but you can not do that when it comes to helping another body in doing the same task which is maintaining international peace and security through obligatory contributions through the UN budget. That is not my place to tell you why. It is the member states who decided so.

Q: Why is the UN so much more expensive?

Spokesperson: What do you mean so expensive?

Q: All estimates are that the cost of the mission here would be a lot larger than the AU not just because – for example your mission here cost a billion dollars a year and it has 6,000 so far on the ground rising to 10,000. The AU mission is much less than 400 million or something like that for a 7,000 contingent. Why is the UN service more expensive?

Spokesperson: I don't know who made the assessments but as far as we are concerned, we do not know of any official assessment of cost. In any case, I refer you to what the Security Council asked for and the criteria to be observed in the contingency planning for a possible transition, some of the important criteria that the Security Council put there is cost effectiveness, basically. There has been so far no assessment to cost-compare An AU Mission to a UN one. Yes, I read articles, I don't know where they got their figures. An assessment will be done at one point or other and they will come up with the cost estimates and the Security Council will read through the cost-effectiveness, the maximum use of existing resources and combining resources and so on which are some of the major criteria set forth in the Security Council for the contingency planning to be proceeded with by the Secretary-General.

Plus you can not compare us with the AU because one of the reasons why the AU is not may be all that costly is because they don't have all the equipment and logistics required. As for the UN, the budget is going to be gradually decreasing, if we talk only about the south not including a possible transition AU/UN In Darfur. UNMIS was quite expensive in the beginning because of the requirements of the setup of the mission. We had to do everything from scratch - so many contracts; so many contractors just to do the groundwork for us – the camps and so on. The budget is going to be decreasing as we go because then we will be

settled and our expenses are going to be reduced because we would be fully operational and would have covered all the big expenses that were needed for the start-up phase of the mission. And it is not unusual – it is not only for Sudan. If you look at the financial history of all peacekeeping operations, take the DRC for instance, you will see the decrease; East Timor is the same. The setup phase is more expensive than when the mission is fully up and running.

We are trying to be as lean as possible in terms of expenses but unfortunately this is the price for peacekeeping.

Q: Actually my question is a follow up on what Jonah was saying. We always have a problem with the UN, not UNMIS only – with all the UN agencies. We hear about the budget; you are calling for donors to support such and such programs and the next year will be the same story. I am not interested in what the international community is doing but I think that the Sudanese people also have the right to know how much is spent of this money that is being collected in their name. We never receive any information on this.

Spokesperson:.. How comes? For somebody who follows the financial aspect of things, and I do know you are quite a computer wizard yourself, in the OCHA website and the Sudan Information Gateway for instance you have updated information regularly on every single money that we get and how we are spending it.

Q: When you see the list, you get totals for the money spent but you don't know on which programme was money spent. You have a volume like this of the Work Plan but you don't know which program.

Spokesperson: You remember that after 2005 there has been a report on how much money has been spent on the Work Plan, by region, sector and programme. For the new Work Plan, we are still in the early phase of implementation phase of implementation so we can not come up with figures as for now. But, of all things, I can tell you that the money for humanitarians in particular is the most transparent thing ever because the main consideration besides, of course, the right of the beneficiaries to know what is the money being spent for, is that they have to account for the money to the donors. If you think the donors give their money without checking where every single dime is going, then you are wrong. The accountability in terms of financial ...

Q: (*interrupting*) Excuse me ...

Spokesperson: (*interrupting*) These are accusations – unfounded accusations and I repeat again ...

Q: (*interrupting*) No they are not accusations. The same information that you supply to the donors are not being supplied to ...

Spokesperson: That is not true. It is on the website and you can see it at any point of time. I am not aware of the differences in the reports or the information given to the donors. Your country itself can follow on all of these things in the ECOSOC – the United Nations Social and Economic Council that is an intergovernmental body or the Board of UNDP of the other Agencies. This tendency of accusing United Nations entities of non-transparency is exaggerated and one should not express them lightly when they can back them with actual

proof. The biggest wealth of information provided worldwide on any given issue comes from the United Nations system. Its on world-wide web. Also, if you have any queries you follow it up with the concerned agency and I don't think that any UN official you want to go to to ask for this information or other things will keep it from you.

There is a difference between you not seeing the information and making a generic statement of this nature implying things that are not true and unfounded because these people are doing everything they could to juggle the problems of money not coming through, expectations of the people to be addressed and accusations of bad faith and withholding information. This, I think, is a bit exaggerated. Give us a little bit more credit. The information is there; computers are available; log on and find the information. If you don't find it at the website, you have always physical people, offices, and they will provide you with the information.

Q: I will rephrase my question in detail: what has and what has not been provided?

Spokesperson: Ask it to the relevant people, I am not an accountant and I am poor with figures. Ask the colleagues dealing with humanitarian issues .

Q: What is the humanitarian situation following the withdrawal of the UN agencies from some areas affected by the recent events in Darfur?

Spokesperson: Since we are not on the ground in the areas we have withdrawn from, I do not exactly know what the humanitarian situation is like but we can only expect it to be bad. The camps and areas that have been affected by the ongoing conflict live on humanitarian assistance. If these are not availed, you can only deduce one result. The practice however is that should the conditions allow for our return in an area we had withdrawn from, we re-evaluate the humanitarian needs in these areas following our withdrawal.

I hope you understood what I said.

Q: The SLA has requested you to contribute to the protection of IDP camps in Darfur. What about that?

On Mr. Pronk's visit to Abuja. There were earlier visits. He keeps visiting. The only thing you say he does is talk.?

Thirdly, (indiscernible but about the UN is taking over in Darfur, and if it will also take over the Abuja Talks)

Spokesperson: First of all let me say the following so that the issue will be very clear to all: you are talking as though a transition of the AMIS to a UN operation has already occurred or decided. This is not so. I repeat, the AU decision was in principle and the UN decision is also in principle as a contingency measure towards any resolution that may or may not come up from the AU on a definite transition. I don't know how many times I'll have to be repeating myself on this issue. I said the references are there and the AU and UN decisions are there and we gave you copies. Please read them again. You all talk as though the UN has indeed taken over the issue which is not the case. It is not the case and we are still talking about something that may or may not occur.

Q: My question is based on the assumption ...

Spokesperson: I'm sorry, that not the case. When you ask such questions you are making assertions. I said this before and repeat it again: we have not taken charge of the issue of Darfur. We are still deliberating on it and even the deliberations are not on that the UN is taking charge of the issue. We are talking about, and I say it in English: a possible transition from the AU to the UN. Possible is the operative words. And I repeat in Arabic. Let us not overtake the events and talk of things that have not yet happened.

On your question on the SLM, I do not have any information on whether or not they have requested such a role of the UN. In any case it is not for the mission to decide on such things. We go back to what will happen in Darfur. Should it be decided that the UN take over a field role in Darfur – then the tasks of the UN will be decided by the Security Council. So far, there is no mandate that allows us as the UN to play a role to physically protect IDPs or anybody else in Darfur at the moment. So SLA might put forward any request but we do operate based on mandates not requests.

On your other question, should I understand that you expect Mr. Pronk to take up a stick and start forcing people to make peace?. Mr. Pronk's mandate is political and that is to assist the people in Abuja through putting in more political pressure and reminding them of the UN resolutions that, among other things, provide for sanctions against any person, as per resolution 1591, who hampers the peace process; who stands obstacle to the peace process; who violates human rights; who carries atrocities against the people there; who violates the arms embargo and so on. This is what Mr. Pronk can do. And that what is referred to in the diplomatic world as "political pressure".

On who can do more, this is an issue that depends on the Security Council and its AU counterpart. The UNSC can make tangible decisions against any person who hampers the peace process or violates the UN resolutions. Mr. Pronk can only go there and talk and can not do anything else. But that's not to be taken lightly. He is the Secretary-General's Representative and can speak on behalf of the UN based on the Security Council resolutions and international law which he can use as a means of pressure.

Thank you very much and see you next week.