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## Office of the Spokesperson

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### SRSG PRESS CONFERENCE

*Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference by SRSG Pronk held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2006.*

**Al-Hitti, Spokesperson, a.i.:** Thank you very much for coming.

We are very pleased to have with us this afternoon the SRSG Mr. Jan Pronk who will be briefing you on the latest developments in our mission area and his activities inside and outside Sudan in order to achieve peace, security and stability all over Sudan.

Without further ado, I give the floor now to Mr. Jan Pronk.

**SRSG Pronk:** Thank you. A couple of developments but I will be very brief so that there is more time for questions.

Firstly; my main attack today is the attack which took place on a convoy of former South Sudan Defence Forces soldiers – unarmed and with families and other people – last week on their way from Khartoum to the south. You know that on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January Paulino Matip made an agreement with the Government of South Sudan that the South Sudan Defence Forces would be incorporated into the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army one year after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, that was obligatory, that the South Sudan Defence Forces would take the decision whether to belong to the one or the other party. Just one day before the end of one year after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that decision was taken. It means that the South Sudan Defence Forces have to move to the south and have to be incorporated. Many of them are in Khartoum – in total about 17,000 people have to move.

Some movements have started. A major convoy was taking place last week and they were ambushed. 32 people were killed; over 30 people were wounded. The convoy had not been notified in advance. I had a meeting with Paulino Matip and told him when it is a convoy of former soldiers, unarmed, it should be notified in advance because they are going to be incorporated in the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army. Even if they were going to be

incorporated in the Sudan Armed Forces, the official rule is to notify in advance because that is a movement.

But having said that, an ambush is totally unacceptable and thousands of others will have to continue. The convoy was stopped, was ambushed, at the moment it is in Kharasana in order to proceed further to Abyei. The Force Commander is over there; we have monitors over there; we have humanitarian assistance at present but still there is no movement and they are there now already for more than a week. We want this to take place smoothly.

Yesterday in the meeting of the CJMC both the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army and Sudan Armed Forces did observe one minute of silence for the victims and they expressed their dismay and their sorrow and there shall be a full investigation into the responsibility of this serious violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and into the responsibility for the killings.

I am very concerned about this because more convoys of former South Sudan Defence Forces soldiers are there to come in order to make it possible for them to join the south as had been agreed upon in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on the basis of their own choice ... not everybody has to follow South Sudan Defence Forces Paulino Matip; there are a number of commanders, notably Gordon Kong and others who have decided to stay with the Sudan Armed Forces. They have the right to do so but those who go to the south following Paulino Matip have to be able to go there without any harassment and without ambush. That is one point.

Second thing with regards to the south; an important institutional development was that the first meeting of the CPC took place – you know it is one of the institutional committees – in end-February. We have decided the CPC is Government, Government of the south and the United Nations dealing with the political dimensions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, that there will be meetings of the CPC each last Thursday of the month.

The first meeting was of a procedural character setting the terms of reference and the agenda. The second meeting will be at the end of this month and will also deal with a number of substantive issues – there are many of them – of a political character related to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which has to be discussed in an official framework as there are, for instance, the political dimensions of the incorporation of the Other Armed Groups like I just mentioned; as there are, for instance Abyei, the east, the LRA ... all those questions have to be discussed not only bilateral with the one or the other party but in an institutional framework. And I am pleased that now finally, 8 months after it ought to have taken place (July last year), the CPC has started. The atmosphere was very good which augers well for a good cooperation and also in this particular framework.

Point number three; some good news: we had a meeting of the consortium for the first time – you know the consortium which is a structure consisting of the government and the government of the south, i.e. the Government of National Unity, plus the donors – not on a voluntary ad hoc basis but a structure on the basis of established procedures - World Bank and IMF led.

The first meeting was last week in Paris. There was a very good turn out. The Government of National Unity led by Vice-president Kiir had prepared itself, I would say, excellently. A number of disputes, well known, for instance on how much oil revenue has been made

available to the south were solved because the meeting would take place and difficult questions were answered. And in the meeting it was said by the Government of National Unity and the Spokesperson that time was Vice-president Kiir that there was no dispute any more with regard to the oil revenue. Which is good because now everybody knows how much revenue is available on the basis of the 2005 production for development in the south. Moreover, the Government of National Unity and also the Government of South Sudan came with rather detailed plans with regard to economic policies based on good criteria with regard to transparency and good economic and good financial governance of domestic and international resources for development. They had done their homework, in my view, excellently and that created a lot of confidence amongst the international parties which then also led to concrete announcements of programs for development on the basis, for instance, of the MDGs for this year.

The next meeting of the consortium will not take place outside Sudan but, it will be two meetings however: inside Sudan in October in Khartoum as well as in Juba.

Further good news: the government has decided to prolong the moratorium with regard to the bureaucratic procedures which did curtail in the past humanitarian assistance in Darfur and elsewhere until January 2007 – which is important because shorter extensions of months or so are not helpful because then you can not plan your humanitarian assistance. This makes it possible now for NGOs and United Nations agencies to plan humanitarian assistance in Darfur and in southern Sudan until the beginning of next year.

I am very grateful that the particular minister Kosta, the new minister for humanitarian affairs, was able to convince his colleagues that this is very much in the interest of the Sudanese people.

Further good news: there was a meeting yesterday here in Khartoum between the *Wali* of Khartoum, the donor community partly at ambassadorial level and the United Nations on the situation of the IDPs in and around Khartoum. There was the really very firm commitment by the *Wali* saying there would be no further relocations against the will of the people concerned.

It is the outcome of lengthy talks – people went into what has happened about a year ago, in January 2006 and remember Soba – this is not going to be repeated again. A commitment by the government and the *Wali* here of Khartoum that there would be no relocations. It was also clearly said that announcements which had been read – and we have read also some specific announcements in the press – would not be implemented. There would be no further relocations and that augers well for the good cooperation between the international community, donors in particular, and the authorities in Khartoum with regard to this issue.

I am also quite pleased that we were able to bring in a United Nations agency dealing with metropolitan development and poverty – HABITAT – within our country team. They have worked out programs to deal with development and poverty. The programs have been not only proposed but also agreed upon so we can now, hopefully by the end of the year and with the help of HABITAT, start carrying out such programs.

Going to Darfur; since my previous press conference at the end of January, I went a couple of times to Darfur in order to talk with the authorities over there as well as with the rebels and

particularly to South Darfur. I visited, in particular, Sheiriya and Gereida - difficult areas; extremely difficult.

In Sheiriya, I saw situations whereby all Zaghawa had been ousted out of the city. Part of the city was empty; part of the empty city had been burnt down. Not big but empty completely. And all Zaghawa were told to leave the city and never come back. Why? Because the Zaghawa are being accused of supporting the SLM.

We all know of course that there are many Zaghawa fighters in the SLM but old people; women; children, can not be seen as belonging to a group. They are individual people. And in a statement which I made in Sheiriya to a big gathering of people, I said that according to the Sudanese Constitution on which they should be very proud, all Sudanese people have the right to live everywhere according to their own choice – let me say a great achievement in the constitution – and you have to allow people who want to live in the city to stay in the city and to come back.

I made that statement against the background of quite a number of armed militia who were standing there with posters – quite aggressive. It is just an example of the situation whereby increasingly there is a polarization between groups and there are many threats against people belonging to a specific group – in this case Zaghawa people who were living around the region of Sheiriya and are in dire circumstances. I saw a couple of the IDPs without hardly any assistance because it is a very unsafe area at the moment. Things like those take place regularly.

Also in another area which is not so often being visited by people from far away and unsafe and that is the area around Gereida the southern part of South Darfur. It is a city with an IDP camp which is of the same size as Kalma – which means between 70,000 to 90,000 people without assistance because it is not safe. And all these people come from villages around and villages around are one by one being attacked by militia who are not being stopped. The African Union is present in the camp in Gereida with about 100 persons and they say they can't stop them; they can't protect the people.

I was there a couple of weeks ago. The day to day information which I had about the security situation in the region also mentioned that yesterday there was an attack on Abe Donky and many other villages around and again people were chased away and killed in dozens.

In the south of South Darfur since the end November, ethnic or tribal cleansing or cleansing – whatever you want to call it – is taking place resulting in dozens of people being killed weekly. The total number of people being killed since November was about 400. It continues and can not be stopped by the present force in Darfur and it is not being solved. Militia are there by thousands and each time there are attacks by groups of about 400 on camel and horseback – it's the old story – against people who are being accused of aligning with a specific rebel movement but these people who live there are very often just farmers, old people, women and children. That is continuously still taking place in Darfur.

It is against this background – and I could tell you but then it is a difficult story if I would read all the incidents in Darfur on a daily basis – it is against that background that the present international discussions are taking place.

Discussions on peace; for instance Abuja. I was in Abuja twice, you remember I was there in January right after the passing of the deadline, I was in February, I was in March – no progress. There is no progress in Abuja so far. A text now has been typed with regards to an enhanced humanitarian ceasefire agreement. I am pleased that Mr. Salim did do so. But even if that would be accepted – there are many comments from the Parties on it – it would be an enhanced humanitarian ceasefire agreement very much like the N’djamena Ceasefire Agreement which did not work and only of a humanitarian character. A humanitarian ceasefire agreement is an agreement in order to make it possible to give humanitarian assistance. It is not a ceasefire agreement which protects the people but protects the assistance to the people which is not good enough. What is necessary is a comprehensive ceasefire agreement which is kept and respected and protects the people so that they can go home to their villages. What is going on in Abuja is far from what is necessary.

And we need peace in Abuja in order to make it possible for any peace forces in Darfur to carry out a good protection task. And a good protection task can of course not be carried out against the will of all parties concerned and it should be based on a certain agreement with regards to peace, with regards to ceasefire and also with regards to the presence of a peace force – if the presence of a peace force is not being respected by the parties who wield the power in a specific region, it is doomed to fail. That is the present discussion not only in Abuja but also elsewhere for instance in Addis and you are quite aware of the status of affairs with regards to that discussion and I don’t have to elaborate myself.

Thank you very much.

## **Q & A**

**Q:** I have a number of questions but will ask one first, get the answer to that and proceed to the second and so on.

**Al-Hitti, Spokesperson, a.i.:** Two questions only please.

**Q:** If I do understand the interpretation correctly, Mr. Pronk mentioned tribal cleansing. Why did he use that term and who is carrying out this act?

**SRSB Pronk:** People from the one tribe against the other. The government says it is a tribal conflict and I think the international community is underestimating the tribal dimension of the conflict – it is not only a political conflict but also a tribal conflict.

The third dimension is economic and people want to create space; soil, water for themselves to the detriment of access to space, water, soil, grazing land, etc. to others belonging to other tribes. So they clean the area in order to have space for themselves. That is the tripartite dimension of the conflict – tribal, political and economic – and that results in chasing people away in order to guarantee access to yourself and that is what is taking place in many parts of Darfur; guaranteeing space for yourself by chasing other people, who belong to another group, another tribe, another ethnicity or whatever you may wish to call it, from their land.

**Q:** You also repeated the phrase “guaranteeing appropriate protection”. Taking this into account and in light of the contents of the Secretary-General’s monthly report where it is mentioned that the priority now is to guarantee protection for civilians and the grim picture you drew about the situation in Darfur, do you mean to say that the African Union forces on the ground in Darfur can not provide this protection and that the deployment of international forces is necessary?

**SRSG Pronk:** The African Union does its very best. They are very frustrated – the commanders who do not have enough capacity in a specific area for instance in Gereida – about the inadequate resources in order to protect the people and that is resulting at the moment in political discussions concerning the transition.

There was a meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January. They took a decision “to support a transition”. They said that was a decision in principle to be reconfirmed by a similar meeting of the same Peace and Security Council at the ministerial level in March – that has taken place last Friday. In that meeting they reconfirmed that decision and now it is up to the Security Council in New York to give an answer.

That is the political process; I am just waiting until the Security Council takes a decision. In the meantime, we have to continue to do our work on the basis of the present mandate.

**Q:** Is it really now just down to the Security Council as to when the United Nations comes into Darfur because there seems to have been a rather different interpretation of the decisions taken last Friday. Are there additional conditions? Does there have to be a peace deal in Abuja or do you think these obstacles are being blown up?

**SRSG Pronk:** I think it is up to the members of the Security Council to take such a decision. It is the highest political organ in the world; what they decide has to be done. I don’t know what they are going to decide and of course there are questions and one question is: with or without a peace agreement? I have always been in favour of a peace agreement before there would be a different force. You remember I have always asked for a robust force which would be big, strong and with a broader mandate to help people who are returning. People would normally return after there is a peace agreement and not before a peace agreement so it would be much better, very preferable I have always said, to have the peace agreement first.

I was the person who mentioned for the first time the deadline of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. I took that initiative, all parties embraced it and then left it.

I am in favour of a peace agreement and a force with a new mandate in order to make it possible for people to go home – which is not the present mandate, of course, of the African Union. Even if the African Union would stay, it would have to change its mandate in order to make returns possible and that is necessary after a peace agreement.

I don’t know what the politicians are going to decide at the moment. There was a very good statement by the Security Council in early February asking the Secretary-General to start consultations with the African Union and with all parties concerned in order to prepare a transition on the basis of the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council in mid-January. That has started. In the meantime, of course, quite a number of questions were raised the parties including the Government of Sudan – you remember perhaps my address to

the plenary meeting in Abuja where I said that nothing will happen without consultations with all parties including the Government of Sudan. So consultations are important and the peace agreement is important and both have to take place, in my view, before you can be very effective with a different mandate in Darfur.

**Q:** Will the United Nations team be arriving soon to prepare for that transition?

**SRSB Pronk:** The Secretary-General has said that an assessment team would have to carry out its assessment in March. It would have to be a joint assessment team by the United Nations and the African Union – I am waiting. We are ready to receive it but of course consultation with the government is necessary because you can not just send an assessment team without having talked with the government. It may be that New York would decide that such a discussion with the government can only take place after the meeting of the Security Council on Darfur next Tuesday – I will be there. I will have to present my three-monthly report on north-south and my monthly report on Darfur.

Very often, the Security Council then takes some time to take a decision to prepare a new text. So it will be slow I am afraid – not afraid for the political development because you need time and should never impose something but consult everybody; but I am afraid that postponement will not stop the attacks. And that is my main concern, my main mandate I to help people on the ground in Darfur – that is my yardstick.

Postponement is good for political purposes; postponement is not good for protection purposes; that is my dilemma.

**Q:** Can you tell us clearly who is behind the ambush of the South Sudan Defence Forces going to the south and what is the United Nations position on this?

**SRSB Pronk:** I have some suspicions but I am not going to reveal my own suspicions. I can only say that in the CJMC yesterday, a decision was made to carry out a joint (which means Sudan Armed Forces, Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army and United Nations) investigation and that in order to work out the terms of reference for that investigation, there would be an emergency meeting of the CJMC next week here in Khartoum – all meetings have been taking place in Juba but the emergency meeting will take place here in Khartoum to have a joint investigation into the responsibility for that attack and I think now we have to wait for that investigation.

**Al-Hitti, Spokesperson, a.i.:** Excuse me, Mr. Pronk said “my suspicions” and not accusations (*presumably referring to the interpretation*).

**Q:** Mr. Pronk described the situation, if I may use the word, as very horrible – systematic killings going on; tribes moving others from their places, I don't want to say the word ethnic cleansing; and concerning the Abuja peace talks, it is stagnated as you described; the African Union have extended its mission to an additional six months but have the problem of logistical support which was coming from the donors as far as we know. Will the donors accept to support this mission in Darfur and if they don't then who will in the coming six months?

**SRSB Pronk:** Excuse me, what was your question?

**Q:** My question is that the donors support the African Union mission to protect the civilians and they discovered that the African Union is not able to do the job properly. Do you think that they will continue supporting the African Union mission in the coming six months and if not, who will do that?

**SRSB Pronk:** Very horrible, you said, but please don't forget that I also brought some good news – three points which were quite important. Definitely I also try to be very balanced and independent.

May I correct you in one point: the donors did not find out that the African Union could not do a good job. The donors did not provide the African Union with enough resources in order to carry out a good job – that is different. It also comes back to the donors themselves. The donors, the western countries, asked the African Union, through the Security Council, to carry out this job and the African Union right away took the decision to do it – you remember in October 2004. They did it quickly and I am quite positive about the African Union. They brought 7,000 troops in a shorter period than the United Nations was able to bring 7,000 troops – you remember? I got my mandate for 10,000 troops north-south in June 2004 and now I have 7,800. But that is after, if you calculate, about 19 months. The African Union was able to bring 7,000 troops in 13 months which is quicker.

The African Union did do a good job. They did not have enough resources. Wherever they were, they were able with the resources they had to protect – but they did not have enough. Remember I have said often we need a force which is at least twice as big to be in the places where people are being attacked. The situation, for instance, around Kalma is much better now than in the past. The situation also around the camps in the neighbourhood of el-Fasher is now better. But far away, it is very difficult and that is where people are chasing each other from their homes.

The African Union has taken a decision. They came to the conclusion that they would like to stop after a couple of months and then request the United Nations to come in. For that period, you need assistance from the same donor countries. We have helped the African Union last month – I went to Addis – to prepare a budget for the next period. I want the African Union even stronger than before for the rest of this year and helped them to prepare a budget for nine months on the basis of about 25 million dollars per month which brings you to about 225 or somewhat less. If that money is not available it would be difficult for the next couple of months. You can discuss four months which have been mentioned or six months which have been mentioned or longer – I don't know what type of decisions are going to be taken by the Security Council but you need money for the African Union at a certain moment that might, perhaps if there is a transition, be incorporated in the budget of the United Nations. But the same African Union troops also could stay longer just with another hat and others, in addition, that also could join. Now I am looking forward in a longer period. I don't know what type of decisions is going to be taken in consultations with the Government of Sudan but for the short term we need resources. The Secretary-General of the United Nations himself proposed that we have a pledging conference for the African Union early-February for the next couple of months in Brussels. It did not take place because of all political discussions that were taking place amongst the donors and the African Union but we wanted such a pledging conference. Now that another decision has been taken by the African Union last Friday, it is highly necessary to guarantee the ongoing presence of the African Union until further notice for the next couple of months and you need money and you need a pledging conference for that purpose.



**Q:** Mr. Jan Egeland made a statement that 3.3 million persons are threatened to die with hunger in Sudan unless there is a provision of 650 million for the south; 650 million for Darfur. In addition he said they need about another 300 million for another six million persons in need. This means that there is a lot of money requested. How do you see the situation?

**SRSG Pronk:** I agree with his figures. These figures are based on the estimates by our staff here. They Work Plan, which is of a humanitarian post-reconstruction character, for the year 2006 has been committed to in terms of promises for 37.8% as of yesterday which is not enough. So I keep my fingers crossed. You need assistance; you need money. If that is not coming then assistance has to go down and in many areas as you are aware and I told you in a previous conference, the improvement in the welfare of the people is only dependent on assistance and not on their own economic activities because of insecurity.

Last year the harvest in Darfur was good, better than in 2004 but many people could not benefit from it also because of the high food prices. Peace is necessary in order to stabilise the economic production and the market situation. In the south we have a similar situation: food production is not high also because of the mines and because of the destruction of livelihoods in many areas so they will for quite some time be dependent on assistance from outside. We are constantly requesting for that assistance which we did again during the consortium meeting last week in Paris. Donors are aware but we need the money soon.

That is what is behind Egeland's statement. I understand he will come soon to both southern Sudan and to Darfur in order to strengthen the convincing power of his own statement.

**Q:** The position of the Government of Sudan is very clear in that it will not allow United Nations forces into Darfur except as a contributing factor for reconstruction and rehabilitation as stated by the Vice-President yesterday.

The government has also refused to allow into Darfur an international fact finding team as revealed yesterday by an official at the Security Council. Should we expect the Security Council to issue a Chapter VII resolution should the Government of Sudan reject the international forces?

You were in Asmara yesterday as you said. What new development is there on the eastern Sudan issue? Should we expect a resumption of talks?

**SRSG Pronk:** I prefer not to react to statements because there are some different statements coming from the government. For instance in Addis, the government delegation did say that they would agree with a transition if the African Union would decide so but I am aware also of other statements so I better refrain from reacting to individual statements.

Security Council should take a decision; how to react – and that is next week. Let us not talk too much and just work and leave it to those who take the decisions themselves and I am not going to speculate what type of decisions will be taken by the Security Council.

I only want to highlight the needs that the Security Council would reach a consensus and that requires, indeed, unanimity amongst the P5 – the Permanent Members.

I was not yesterday but the day before yesterday in Asmara and I met President Isayas and had a long discussion with him on the situation in the region. I can not disclose of course what President Isayas did tell me but I have my regular discussions with President Isayas.

I did not meet the Eastern Front because the Eastern Front which we had made an appointment with did not show up. Which brings me to the conclusion that, at the moment, they are less interested in talks and that is a setback. I wanted to discuss with them the consequences of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army withdrawal from the eastern part of the Sudan which had been foreseen on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January but it was agreed that it would take place finally somewhere in May – that has consequences of course. At the moment, we are on the ground in Hamesh Khoreib with the United Nations in JMT format which means jointly with monitors coming from Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army but the future is a bit uncertain and I wanted to discuss that like we had many discussions beforehand.

I urged the Eastern Front in January after they had taken the decision to have a meeting in Tripoli to come to Tripoli – they promised to do it and didn't go. I made an appointment with them in Asmara – I went there; they didn't show up, which is difficult, I may say because you need to talk. If you don't want to talk, then solutions are being found on the ground. Not by speaking but with weapons and that ought to be avoided. So I, very honestly, am quite disappointed about what happened in Asmara. However I did have a very lengthy 3-hour discussion with President Isayas.

**Q:** The Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid in West Darfur has suspended the activities of the Sudan Social Development Organisation (SUDO) in the region. The organisation claims this move is a violation of the Interim Constitution. What are your comments as the United Nations on the suspension of such an organisation without reason?

**SRSB Pronk:** I know SUDO and I know that they have done excellent work. In Zalinge for instance they have their offices over there. I just read this morning that they have been told to close their offices and to leave. I regret that such a decision has been taken. NGOs, even if they carry out activities which are always not to the liking of the authorities, should have the space to carry out such activities particularly in the field of human rights. I think it is important in a country like Sudan that human rights activities are not only being carried out by foreigners – by, for instance, United Nations agencies. That human rights activities are being carried out by Sudanese NGOs themselves. It is a domestic issue; it is a domestic political debate and that is why I have always been very much in favour of Sudanese human rights lawyers whom I consider quite courageous. I know quite a few who have been harassed in the last couple of years and couple of months; I know quite a few who have been jailed and arrested and I think these are courageous people. I think that in Sudanese society they should be given political space, psychological space to continue their activities. It is much better to have such activities being carried out in a dialogue between Sudanese than in a dialogue between Sudanese and foreigners.

**Q:** Yesterday, Vice-President Taha expressed said in a press conference that the achievement of peace in Abuja is almost at hand. Do you see any grounds for this optimism?

Last week Taha met Minnawi and Dr. Khalil in Tripoli. What is your comment on this?

**SRSB Pronk:** Thank you.

I know that the government has decided really to speed up the talks in Abuja. I commend them for that decision but it has to be followed up by steps ... specific, negotiated steps and I have not yet seen them in Abuja in particular with regards to the ceasefire agreement.

May I add that I have not seen steps forward in order to get somewhere from the rebel movements either and there is a great difficulty resulting from further fragmentation amongst the rebel movements - we have discussed at lengths in previous press conferences.

So I commend the official position that there should be soon a peace agreement however that has to be translated in very concrete political steps – offers – in a negotiations. Negotiations mean step, counter-step, another step in order to get a convergence. I have not yet seen it. I hope that steps will be made in the right direction and that means a real ceasefire.

And also in the right place. I would like to say in general to the government and also to the rebel movements: there is only one place where you can reach an agreement and that is in Abuja. Only in Abuja and only under the leadership of the African Union. The African Union is the only game in town ... Abuja is the only game in town. People have to negotiate there and not elsewhere because partial agreements are not so helpful. That is my answer.

**Q:** On the Tripoli meeting ...?

**SRSG Pronk:** That is what I said and I gave an answer to that and said it is only in Abuja – partial agreements, one party and part of the other party are not so helpful. Please, please, please meet in Abuja. The United Nations has always said, “We support the African Union”. The African Union is the only place and Abuja is the only place.

**Q:** On this issue of transition there seems to be two sides to that – the government and the United Nations. The government is trying to block the transition while the United Nations is setting plans for the transition. What are the possible impacts of such a situation with regards the humanitarian and security situation? It is possible that these issues have turned the focus from the more important issues.

Another thing is that there is a resolution from the Security Council. Will the resolution abide by the six months transition period set by the African Union or is there is a possibility of ignoring this period?

**SRSG Pronk:** I do not want to speculate, as I said, on what the Security Council is going to say. Again, I repeat, it will take time and it requires also unanimity and I don't know what the outcome will be.

The question is what is the consequence on the ground in terms of security. I have already depicted the security situation which is grim ... it is grim. Without a political solution it will further deteriorate.

On the humanitarian situation, everywhere where we can give assistance, it is good ... really good; everywhere where we can not give assistance it is really bad. You know that we can not go to many places in western Darfur. By the way, we have increased the number of United Nations staff in Gereida in order to do a little bit more than we could after we had decreased the staff to about 50%. We are eager to come back but in all the places we can not go because of the security situation, the humanitarian situation is really bad. And the longer

this whole discussion takes place, the worst the humanitarian situation will be for those people who are not in areas accessible by humanitarian workers. That is the answer.

**Q:** In his report on Darfur, the Secretary-General indicated that there are incidents of rape in the area and that UNMIS is following 5 cases that occurred in the east, north and west of Darfur where the victims are less than 15 years old. This is information we are not aware of, what are the latest developments on the issue?

**SRSB Pronk:** There is no new development. We follow it up with the authorities; we go to the police, we go to the court – we follow that. We write these reports you know and we highlighted this particular drama because it was a drama and a tragedy for the people who were very young. It is an example; there are many more of such cases.

We follow it up as much as possible but, of course, after it has happened it is too late. What we can do is to try to convince the authorities that they have to go after the perpetrators; what we can do is to try to give assistance to the victims. We have had indeed progress because the new foreign aid law is much better than one and a half years ago but it has also been implemented in all individual towns and cities. We can not prevent it. United Nations is here only in Darfur with humanitarian workers and some development agencies. We don't have police; we don't have people to protect the people. We can only note and speak out and write out and highlight and inform – that is the only protective device which we have until now.

**Q:** The (*indiscernible*) in the Jebel Marra has been under siege since December with about 60,000 people completely surrounded by armed groups. No relief assistance comes into the town. Deaths have started to occur as a result with about 3 women and 2 children dead four days ago. There are about 30 cases of disease each day and a total lack of United Nations agencies in the Jebel Marra area. The head of the municipality says the situation is headed towards a mass death of the people in the area.

How will this situation be handled? Have there been contacts with the armed groups or with the officials inside the area?

**SRSB Pronk:** That is one of the reasons why I went there recently to the Jebel Marra to have discussions with the parties concerned. There is fighting still going on and that is the reason why we had to withdraw everybody who wanted to be withdrawn – NGOs you remember we had a helicopter crash that accompanied that operation. We want to come back and NGOs are eager to come back. We are discussing at the moment the possibilities for return of NGOs in order to start again humanitarian assistance but it has to be made safer for humanitarian workers and the Jebel Marra are not safe. There are threats and there is fighting also in the Jebel Marra.

**Q:** In the Oslo Conference donors had given a lot of pledges but up to today some have not been fulfilled. Last Friday people were in Paris to make further pledges. What guarantee do you have that the pledges would be fulfilled?

The talks in Abuja are very slow and there is killing of innocent people going on on the ground in Darfur. In order to stop the suffering of the people in Darfur, what emergency law do you make since there is no deadline given for the peace talks?

**SRSB Pronk:** Sir there is no guarantee. As long as you are dependent on the individual goodwill of individual countries there is no guarantee. There is only guarantee if the money is being paid out of official contributions of assistance. A United Nations peace force for instance, like is the case for all the other countries, is being financed out of assessed contributions. The money is there and countries have to and are obliged to pay. It is different in the case of individual peace force whereby, the African Union, each couple of months has to beg around – please give us more money. You don't plan a peace operation in the long run – you need a long run operation – on the basis of 3 months' begging operation for more money ... that is not serious.

Maybe I can end by saying that to those who want a guarantee that there is enough protection for people, then you have to go to the United Nations as a whole. And to those who want to have a guarantee that the sovereignty of a nation is being respected, I can only say that then you have to go to the United Nations as a whole. This is because the United Nations is based on two principles: the Charter enshrines 1946 The Sovereignty of Nations and the Protection of Human Rights of People. These two principles, there is only one organisation in the world which is able to bring both together. It is difficult and there would always be a political discussion but these are balanced principles.

And people who think “let's wait; let's keep the United Nations away” should understand that that means less guaranteed protection and less guaranteed sovereignty.

Please understand the history of the system – the United Nations – of which you are, yourself, a member.

Thank you.

**Al-Hitti, Spokesperson, a.i.:** Thank you very much, that was the last question.