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SRSR PRESS BRIEFING

Spokesperson: Good afternoon everybody. Thank you very much for coming today.

Without further ado I would like to give the floor to SRSR Jan Pronk who will be briefing you on a number of issues pertaining to the developments in the Sudan and also on his activities as Head of this Mission and those of the mission under his leadership.

Without further ado, Mr. Jan Pronk ...the floor is yours.

SRSR Pronk: Thank you ... good afternoon.

I understand that in the previous press conferences there was some discussion about the disclosure of financial figures by the UN concerning the operations of peacekeeping missions and also concerning humanitarian development assistance – I saw the transcripts of the discussions; I went into it myself and I can say the following about the official reports with regards to figures and performance:

Firstly; you know that the mission, like all peacekeeping missions, is working on the basis of a budget and the budget has been approved by the United Nations General Assembly after having gone through the whole procedure. We are now working on the basis of a budget for the period 2004-2006 that runs until the 1st of July 2006.

The budget underlying our operation, I have it here , it is the General Assembly document which was distributed in August last year. It is a public document and if you can not find it yourself, the office can help. It is a public document with all the figures and all the comments.

Of course you may say that a budget is not a state of expenditure. But, like always is the case for any government or any company, at the end of the budget period, an account and state of expenditure is being drawn up and made public.

As far as the state of expenditure of UNMIS is concerned, there is a state of expenditure for the period of mid-2004 until mid-2005 – that is our fiscal year (*UNMIS budget performance report*). That is not yet a public document. It is in New York and is being discussed by the official organs of the United Nations. I understand that it will be discussed in April by the

Budgetary Committee of the United Nations – that is the ACABQ – and then it will thereafter go to some other layers of the UN System and then it will be made public. It works the same way for the whole of the UN System – as it is the case for any Government or company – the final account or performance report of is made available to the public months after the closure of the respective annual or fiscal year. As soon as our report is made public we will make it available to you. That is on the mission's budget accounts and expenditure.

On humanitarian performance: the humanitarian assistance is not part of the mission's budget as you know. It is separate. We have to go around through the agencies and also directly to donors to ask for assistance. You know about the Work Plan (*for Sudan*). We establish all financial needs of all UN and partners – that is not a budget by the way – We present them to the international community to make available the resources needed. You have copies of the Work Plan and it is a public document which has been made available to you – both for 2005 and the new one for 2006. The Work Plan is the total sum of the operations envisaged by the individual agencies and NGOs. They themselves have their own financial accounting procedures. Which means that the way in which the activities are being carried out in financial terms is made public by the agencies themselves – by the WFP, by UNICEF for instance. What we do internally is to make a physical survey on what has been done with the money: how many schools have been built; how many water points have been restored; how many kilometers of road have been demined, etc. and I don't know whether that has been distributed already but it is a third document which you have in front of you (*the document was available for the media in the briefing room*). It is a summary of the performance of development and humanitarian activities in Sudan in the year 2005 by type of assistance: food aid, water, etc. That is an output of the cost on the basis of the information which we have received from the individual agencies – we are a kind of broker for individual agencies in terms of getting the money and giving the information about the results of their activities.

Any questions about that can also be raised to me when I have finished my briefing as a whole.

On Abuja Talks and Darfur: The talks in Abuja proceed at the moment. The talks on the chapter on wealth and income sharing proceed well – there is a near-agreement on this. The talks on power-sharing, I understand, are going slower than the talks on wealth-sharing. The talks on security have been given a boost recently. That is also what I noticed when I was in Abuja the last time. We must wait of course for the outcome of those talks on security so that we can judge to which extent the outcome will be a step forward in comparison with the ceasefire agreement which is the present basis of operations and which has been violated so often.

The international community – and that includes also me – has exerted quite some pressure on the absent leaders. I understand that now both Mr. Khalil and Minni Minnawi are on their way to Abuja. They promised to go there and our appeal to them is to take their coming to Abuja very seriously in order to give instructions to their delegations to conclude the talks with an agreement and to commit to constructive negotiations. I made clear in Abuja and also in talks with individual leaders that I really demand an end to violations and also demand an end to internal fighting amongst the individual groups which together form the movement as a whole. And I also made clear in Abuja, you may have seen the text of my statement, my address to the plenary session in Abuja about two weeks ago, that rebel movements should remain Darfurian rebel movements and should not become an instrument in the hands of

other governments because that would mix objectives and it would make the possibility of reaching a result very difficult.

I also made that clear in my talks in the field myself. After having been in Abuja I went to speak to a large group of SLA commanders again in North Darfur, which I am doing quite regularly, in order to inform them about the process in Abuja and to give them the same message as I am giving always to the leaders themselves. As a matter of fact, I came back from that meeting but I can not tell you where that was, I came back quite positive because I feel that commanders in the field want peace; they also are tired with the war. They watch the negotiations in Abuja very carefully. They want peace and that is an important message which they asked me also to make clear to the government and to the international community.

It is interesting to note that also many other people in Darfur want peace. I had, during a visit which I made to North and South Darfur the possibility to meet quite a large group of tribal and traditional leaders and, of course, the war; the Abuja talks and the whole idea with regards to what nowadays is being called the 'transition from the AU to the UN' featured highly on the agenda. –you know that I don't only have contacts with the government, the *walis*, but I had extensive talks with those governors over there. I will say something about the transition issue separately, but it was very clear that whatever positions the tribal leaders were taking, they wanted peace. I had such discussions also in the past when I went to Darfur. The atmosphere is changing – people on the ground want peace; also in the cities; also representatives of tribes who themselves are not participating in the talks in Abuja. So that is a very important message to all negotiators in Abuja. Please represent the people of Darfur – they want peace. Whatever tribe, political party or any other group they belong to, they want peace. I see a more sincere, shared view – the desire for peace – nowadays than, for instance, one year or one and a half year ago. And that is reason for hope.

Of course an important issue in the discussions is what we call the transition. Let me say the following about it and I repeat what I said before: the UN has never asked for the transition – I repeat what I said before. The UN even has been reluctant because we do not know how to conduct a new peace operation when we are overstretched already– we have around 14 existing operations and we have not enough troops anyway. We never asked for it. But if the AU takes the decision for the transition– if and when - the UN has the moral and political obligation to respond positively and not to shy away because that is part of its mandate.

But – point number three - the decision has not yet been made on the transition.. The meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council at the Ambassadorial level on 12th of January said, “we support a transition and this is a decision in principle but another decision has to be taken by us in a different setting – the meeting of the same AUPSC at the ministerial level

It is now certain that that meeting is going to take place on the 3rd of March. I have been invited to go there and I will go there. That is the meeting where the AU is going to take a decision. The decision has not yet been made. Thereafter, of course, the Security Council will have to take a decision. Please understand the procedure. What has been asked by the Security Council – not in the form of a resolution but in the form of a Presidential Statement – to the Secretary-General is to consult the AU which we are doing intensively at the moment, and to consult with all parties in Abuja. Which means with the rebel movements and also with the government - nothing without consultation with all parties including the government. That was a very clear statement of the President of the Security Council which

was the Ambassador of Tanzania, at the end of January. Such consultations are taking place at the moment with the AU in particular to ensure that the AU can stay as long as possible in Darfur, hopefully to the end of this year, at least, because so far they have only money until 31st of March. That is why a meeting to get resources for the AU is being organized (*the pledging conference*). There is no date yet but I hope, by 8th March – it is not certain - possibly Brussels, it is not certain. But as far as we are concerned, we would like to get as much money as possible for the AU to continue and expand its presence in Darfur. That always has been the UN position and is still our position – more money, more resources, for a long period for the AU in Darfur. I made that also clear in my talks also in Addis Ababa where I met with Mr. Kingibe and many other AU officials last week.

Whether that will take place is dependent on countries. The UN does not finance the AU. We don't have the money; we don't have the mandate to do it. The UN never finances any peace operation by anybody else – not NATO, not the AU, not an individual country, never. That would be wrong if you would do so if it is a peace operation by somebody else not on the basis of our own mandate. There is a distinction of responsibility. We can't do it also because of our Charter. Countries are financing the AU. If they take another decision then that is a new situation and then we would have to respond because the most important issue is how to protect civilians – the principal consideration in Darfur.

You know I have expressed my concerns about the situation in Western Darfur where we had to withdraw about 50% of our staff. The reduction is still in place. We are constantly watching the situation over there and so far I am not in a position to say staff can return. We didn't have an evacuation but only a withdrawal of 50%.. I am still very concerned.

In South Darfur, I am quite concerned about the situation in a number of places. I only mention examples: one example is Sheiriyia which is a place where we can no longer work because it is so unsafe. Only the AU is going there sometimes. We understand that many people have fled the whole area of Sheiriyia and many have come of course to places of refuge including camps. We also know that there was an attack, according to the AU, by militia on the SLA over there and then at the same moment there was also a government helicopter in the same region, in the same location, which was shot down by the SLA. There is the AMIS, the AU Mission – that is their task to go there and see to which extent that was a violation of the ceasefire. It is up to them to come forward with the report.

I can not say more about this. This is an AU issue and we do not have factual, sustainable information from the ground from our own people because they can not be there. I have ad hoc information and I will continue to seek about that situation because I am very concerned.

The second issue – and I am just mentioning two examples - is the situation in Gereida. Gereida is a matter of grave concern to me because of the following: we did have 4 demilitarised areas you remember – Labado, Isra, Marla and Gereida. That was the result of good negotiations on the basis of the ceasefire agreement that took place in November and December 2004. Everybody would move away and the AU would get in to demilitarize the area.

There is a new status quo in Gereida. In one way or another SLA get back to the area. There was no attack on Gereida but they were there and they declared that Gereida was again under their command. Cleverly done, you may say. They went in one by one as civilians and then they grew in number and then they said they had the town again. This is in my view a

violation of the agreement of the demilitarized character of Gereida. The AU is discussing it but the problem is you can not raise it as an important issue in the joint ceasefire committee, which has to assess to which extent there was a violation of the ceasefire and to address that because the joint committee does not meet. That is one of my frustrations of the workability of the ceasefire agreement of N'Djamena.

In the neighborhood of Gereida a lot is going on. There are villages being attacked by militia. I do not know more about it because we also are not present there but we do hear about dozens of people being killed in villages. Whether that is a tribal fight or a political fight, it doesn't matter much. Many women and children are being killed in those villages and it is a matter of great concern.

Such issues, Gereida and Sheiriyia show that we are not yet able to protect people. And that is the main reason why the AU and the UN, each within its own mandate, have come to Sudan - only to help the government and other parties to protect the people - only that, our only objective.

On the East, I have two points. We have asked the Government and the Eastern Front to start talks. They have chosen Libya as the facilitator, it is their autonomous choice. They may decide who is facilitating the talks. The talks have not yet started. They ought to have finished before 9th of January - the SPLA would have moved at that date according to the CPA - the talks did not finish before the ninth of January, they did not start before the 9th of January, they have not yet started today. That is a reason for concern.

I have again asked my deputy Mr. Zerihoun to go to Asmara and to talk with the Eastern Front and we have had already quite a number of meetings with them - in order to discuss with them the start of the talks; resumption of the talks, however you want to call it. Our message to both parties is "start talking rather than wait, wait and then you will have a disaster for the people in Hamesh Khoreib and the neighboring areas".

We have been successful because the rebels did listen to us and have promised not to attack and have released the hostages and also the Government has made important steps in the direction of the Eastern Front, also on our request. So we have been able to facilitate informally - not in formal talks. To proceed informally, however, is never a good basis for sustainability as far as the outcome of talks is concerned because you only end up with a kind of a gentleman's agreement which has to be translated, hopefully in Tripoli, into a formal agreement.

In the meantime, we are in Hamesh Khoreib. The status quo is acceptable. We have our UNMOs and we have also our civilian representatives. In particular humanitarian activities are being carried out. We know where everybody is. The lines are clear and there are no movements, and that is one of our major tasks to be there where there might be a problem in order to keep the status quo which can be used for talking somewhere else.

That is also what we are doing in the south. We have been of late quite successful in containing a number of conflicts in the south by sending in UN unified delegations - military, humanitarian, human rights and political components together- to the places of conflict together with the SAF and the SPLA - as we always do. We have been successful in containing problems

I recently went first to Blue Nile State where I had discussions in Damazean and in Kurmuk and a couple of days ago to Unity State and Upper Nile State where I had discussions with the authorities with such conflicts. But we, together with all the parties, have been able to contain the conflicts. I mentioned one example which has recently become more important and that is conflict due to the fact that not all SSDF commanders directly follow the line of Paulino Matip who made the agreement with Salva Kiir to integrate SSDF into SPLA. You remember the Juba Declaration of the 8th of January. Just one day before the final day that SSDF should take their decision according to the CPA to join one of the two parties of the CPA or chose the other alternatives in the CPA. I had a meeting with Matip and some of his colleagues, and told him I didn't think it was wise for me to see him before he took the decision in order to show that we were impartial, but I was very pleased that I had the opportunity to see him after he had taken that decision and I asked him to stick to that decision because uncertainty would create instability. He said that he hoped that all the people under his command or the command of many commanders with him in the SSDF would follow.

Some did not so easily and there were a number of fights between SSDF troops and SPLA troops in the field in particular in the states that I have mentioned – Blue Nile, Upper Nile and Unity states.

I had myself the opportunity to speak to with one of them, Peter Doul, who confirmed to me that he had taken the decision to follow and join SPLA along with his troops. I told him “it is your own decision so stick again to your decision, or otherwise we will have again uncertainty and instability”. He confirmed he would do so.

This major positive fact of the 8th of January –the Juba Declaration - after such long discussions first under the chair of Chairman Garang and then Salva Kiir can of course take some time to be implemented because there are so many people in the SSDF. But I am hopeful that the integration of the Other Armed Groups in SPLA will not function as a source of instability but as a source of stability in the months ahead.

I could tell you more about my visit to these two states. The most important thing is that people are expecting a lot from their own government and from the international community to help them to follow up on the peace agreement with return, demining, reconstruction and development. I consider that one of our most important tasks -which brings me back to the issue of money that we have to raise for these activities that will have to be spent very well and will be spent very well and transparently in the interest of the people in such states and elsewhere in the south.

Can I finally make the following comments: I think this is the last press conference to be chaired by Ms. Achouri. That is the reason why you all have come here in such a huge number trying to say good-bye to her. I am pleased to inform you that Ms. Achouri is not leaving us definitely. You know that she is going to do an important task in another area in the Middle-East but we have only made her available for a specific period – it is a loan - until the end of the mandate of the Special Envoy over there.

So I hope, and that is on paper, that she will return to us somewhere in mid-June. That is a foreseeable period. I very much deplore and regret that she is leaving us for a couple of months, but on the other hand she is an outstanding choice of the Special Envoy over there

and she will do an excellent job over there as she has done so far over here and I am certain that upon her return she can continue to do an excellent job with us.

Thank you.

Spokesperson: Thank you very much Mr. Pronk and thank you for your very kind words..

Now the floor is open for your questions.

Q: Mr Pronk must have seen the statement of the Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs accusing you of playing the role of Governor-General in Sudan or, as the statement said, you are installing yourself as Paul Bremer in Iraq.

The statement further said that the Sudan government categorically rejects these activities of the UNMIS and goes on to accuse you have violating the sovereign rights of the Sudan through your attempts to create the opinion that you are the ones charting Sudan's future. Don't you think that these accusations make you lose your impartial character in Sudan?

The said statement goes on to say that you have also proposed replacing the Darfur Ceasefire Agreement by another. What are your comments on these especially in light of the fact that the statement was strongly worded and brings you into confrontation, I believe, with the government of Sudan?

Following this statement, could you tell us whether you intend to replace the Darfur Ceasefire Agreement?

SRSG Pronk: Thank you. The question is whether I have seen the statement. Yes, I have seen and also read the statement.

Secondly; the statement refers to a meeting which I had yesterday with Acting Foreign Minister Mr. Karti. I did have that meeting indeed and the statement is a correct description of what Minister Karti said to me. It is also a correct but very brief description of my response - which is correct by the way - because it is up to me to make public what I said to the government.

I am not going to have a discussion with the government through the media. I can only say the following: the UN is acting within its own mandate. We are not overstretching our own mandate.

Two; I have always been completely impartial. By the way, the fact that I have been criticized by the government and by the movements, for instance, is a proof that so far I have been able to be completely impartial.

Three; as I said half an hour ago, the UN is not inciting the AU to hand over to the UN, on the contrary, I made this clear here and I also made it clear in my discussion with acting Minister Karti yesterday.

Q: I have three questions but just to help Mr. Pronk in understanding the questions through the interpreters, I would ask a question, receive the answer and then ask another.

It is most important for us in the press to understand the terminologies used; the statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says Mr. Pronk was summoned, while Mr. Pronk said he had a meeting. Were you summoned or was it a meeting?

SRSB Pronk: On Sunday, I was asked by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to have a meeting with him. It was an oral request and not in writing and the oral request came to me as a request for a meeting and I responded that I would come. Which is not unnatural - sometimes meetings take place on my initiative; I request, sometimes meetings take place on the request of the government. That is the answer.

Q: In your response, you said that the UN in Sudan acts in line with its mandate. Do you think there is a misunderstanding of the limits of this mandate that allows Mr. Pronk to speak about a problem such as the Merowe Dam and then, in one of his press conferences, evaluates the performance of the *Wali (Governor)* of West Darfur and says he is not carrying out his duties?

SRSB Pronk: I think there are misunderstandings – that is on the first question about the mandate. That is why we continually try to explain what the mandate is and what the mandate is not. To a certain extent, that is due to the fact that there is still a lack of knowledge about the CPA – the CPA is the basis of our mandate and I wish that the government and also the government in southern Sudan would pay more importance than they have done so far in disseminating the contents of the CPA because that is the basis of an understanding of our mandate. The CPA is our main source of action. What we are doing, we do in order to help the Parties implement the CPA and when the people don't know exactly what the CPA is about, that would lead to some misunderstandings about the mandate.

Two; I have my discussions not only with the government but with others. However, I always go first to the government. For instance, when I go to North or South Darfur, I first pay my respects to the *Walīs* and have lengthy discussions with them. For instance when I go to el-Damazeen or to Bentiu or to Malakal, I first pay my respects to the government. I have full-fledged meetings with the whole of the cabinet of these States; not only with the *Wali* but with the whole of the cabinet where all ministers are being invited by the Governor to be there.

I understand you are referring to a comment which I made maybe half a year ago with regard to the governance void in West Darfur. It was not an assessment of the performance of the Governor. I made that also very clear in my cordial discussion with I had with him later on – I visited West Darfur a couple of months ago - .That was a comment on the mounting insecurity in West Darfur which, by the way, has led to a situation where we had to withdraw so many people (*UN and humanitarian workers*). And if we are concerned about insecurity and if we are concerned about the fact that our workers can not give the assistance which is necessary to the people in the camps and the villages anymore, I have to make that clear – that is not a secret issue; it is a public issue.

I am also having discussions with people from the civil society. That means tribal leaders, human rights lawyers. That means for instance also representatives of civil society organisations, which is often the case when I go to Darfur. That also means representatives of other political parties. I speak with the government; that means NCP and SPLM, but at the same time I have my discussions also with the other political parties which are official

political parties in this country. These talks are necessary in order to get inform on their views concerning, for instance, the implementation of the CPA.

Representatives of some interests groups also asked the UN to see them – I can not say no – of course I can not see everybody but then we have staff members who can listen to them. That was, for instance, the case with representatives of the so-called ‘group of victims of the Merowe dam’. I listened to their views and that is it; as I am also doing with, for instance, representatives of IDPs around Khartoum and elsewhere.

That is the task of the UN. I consider that part of my mandate. As long as people in this country are citizens themselves, then indeed they have the possibility also to have discussions with representatives of the UN.

Q: You said that you saw that the commanders in Darfur want peace. There are meanwhile reports of the slow pace in the Abuja talks. This points to the talks that have been repeated saying that there is a disconnect between the commanders in the field and the political leaders at the negotiations table.

In your view, could you not come up with an initiative in which the say of the field commanders will be more recognised than that of the politicians?

SRSG Pronk: You should never make a choice to say, I want to deal more with one group than the other group. I think it is wrong to make a choice. You have to do that with both. That is why I have my regular contacts with Minni Minnawi, AbdelWahid Nour and others, and also with the commanders trying to bring them together. Because you are right in your assumption that there is a gap between Abuja and Darfur. I consider it as one of my tasks to bridge the gap and that is why I am having discussions not only in Abuja but also in the field.

I am making clear also to the people in the field: Abuja is the only game in town and the AU is in charge of the talks. It has to take place in Abuja which is the only game in town.

By the way it is not so difficult to explain to the commanders. They want Abuja ; they want peace in Abuja. I, twice in the last year, made it possible for a big delegation of the commanders to go to Abuja and to have talks over there and to be present over there. But they are not there now in the 7th round. They were there in the fifth and in the sixth round. We could take such an initiative again but I don’t think that at the moment it would be very helpful because I think we should now stick to the existing arrangement in the last stages of the talks – and I am using terminology which is being used by the AU – they think that it can be finished now rather soon. I think that in the last stages of the talks you should not complicate matters by bringing others in. In the last stages of the talks, you always have to end up with only a small group of players otherwise you are complicating matters.

Q: We in the media do understand that an AMIS-UN transition will only be done following final decision on 3rd March and after the consent of the AU Peace and Security Council. How does Pronk explain Kofi Annan’s activities requesting the US to prepare troops for Darfur and the AU sending military officers for training in Kenya and Uganda ahead of a transition?

What has happened on the issue of the officers who have been granted administrative leave from the UNMIS? Does this point to corruption in the mission?

SRSG: AU forces have and are being trained by individual countries. There are special relations between individual western countries and individual African countries to train their army. For instance, the US is training Rwandese Army and has done a good job – and there are other relations.

These armies are part also of the AU forces in Darfur – and that is good – you need well-trained African forces in order to be effective and I hope that that can continue. As a matter of fact, if and when there would be a transition, I hope that it would be a transition towards a force which is African in composition. Whether it is possible to have a bigger force (because that is important) only consisting of African countries, I don't know – it may be a matter of finance but I don't know.

I have made it very clear and I don't want to repeat it, that I think it would be good to have African countries only or perhaps some Asian countries like we have at the moment working in perfectly well in south Sudan. And the transition to the UN if and when – and, again, I am not asking for it at all – would only mean an extension of what we are doing at the moment; an extension of the coverage of the area in what we are doing in the south.

We need, of course, monitors from the whole of the world. They come from all countries including Western Europe. That is good. We need of course also technical personnel from countries with a technical capacity. I give you one example of what we need for instance: there are attacks taking place by militia on villages. They kill people. I would like, if I would be in charge, to know in advance that such an attack is going to take place. And you need some modern technology in order to see it coming. That is sophisticated technology. With the help of sophisticated technology you can protect people because then you can be there with the troop before the attack takes place. I wish that that technology would be in place in Darfur. I don't think African countries do have that technology. Some western countries do have that technology. I wish that that technology could be used by a peace force in order to help protecting people by avoiding attacks.

On your other question, there are 8 persons in the UN system who, after investigation in the peacekeeping operations as far as one element is concerned – the procurement of equipment, are being sent on administrative leave with pay. Explicitly, it is an administrative and not a disciplinary decision. Two of them come from here – from Sudan. By the way, it is the result of investigations into peacekeeping operations in the whole of the world during a long period. This means that people are being sent on administrative leave in order to answer questions also with regards to peacekeeping operations in the past or elsewhere where they have worked. Whether that is related to Sudan or not, I really don't know. The problem is that I do not have the report – the report is still confidential. I regret that that is the case because otherwise, being transparent, I would like to give you information on the basis of the report. I do not have that information but have only been asked to make available some staff members for New York in order just to help New York to draft an answer to the investigations. These people have returned already and two have still been put on administrative leave with pay. They are not at home but are working in UN headquarters at the moment still drafting answers to questions. So they are working in New York rather than here.

This is all the information that I can give at the moment.

Q: Yesterday the SPLM leader accused the Sudan Armed Forces of still supporting the LRA. Since the UNMIS is the only neutral observer in the south at the present, what are you saying about this?

SRSB Pronk: I know these statements and I am discussing them also with SPLM military and at the highest levels also with the GoSS. We know that the President of the Government of National Unity has said that no longer is support being given to the LRA. I have to believe the President of the Government of National Unity. As a matter of fact, we do not have evidence that there is still support being given the LRA but I am aware of the questions and I do not exclude that some individual people somewhere are continuing to give support. But, again, I am only saying I do not exclude that – I have no concrete evidence.

Q: Last week we were informed by OCHA that there is another displacement of IDPs in Khartoum. What is the result of the meetings on that?

SRSB Pronk: I think the meeting is taking place tomorrow. It did not take place yesterday.

We have been told that it would not be a forced relocation because that is the agreement with the government – no forceful relocation. Secondly; relocations are useful if relocations take place not in a forceful manner to a place where you can live better. The government, as I have always said, has the right to decide where refugees and IDPs have to live. That is the right of the government but the implementation of the policy ought to be also in accordance with human rights – you know that I had questions about that, serious questions last year – the Soba incidents were an important basis for such questions. Since then, the cooperation between the international community and the government, including the *Wali* of Khartoum, has improved a lot. I would say it is a result of the UN raising the issue early last year.

Q: You met some commanders of the SSDF and some agreed that they would join the SPLA. What have you done about the PDF who are still not with the SAF – can you tell us briefly something about that?

Last week we learnt that some leaders from Jonglei State submitted a memo to UNMIS. What was it about and what are your comments?

SRSB Pronk: Individual commanders, in my view, have the right to take a decision whether or not to move to the SPLA or to SAF. It can not be that only the leader of the SSDF can take a decision for 40,000 other people. They have the right to do so and I do not want to influence their decision. I hope that they follow their leader but they have the right also not to do so. I hope that their decision would be final – otherwise you get hip-hopping and that is instability. I hope that the decisions are being made autonomously and not as the result of pressure on the people who are going to take the decision. That is what I have to say to that specific question.

I have not received that statement. It was delivered to the UNDP and not to me. I can react when I receive it and after studying it but have no answer so far.

Q: Back to the MFA statement yesterday. It is clear that the statement constitutes a turning point in GoS interaction with the UNMIS. Parliament is supposed also to discuss the issue. I say this because the UN operations in Sudan originally came on invitation from the Parties to the CPA and UNMIS existence was based on the principles of cooperation between the

different parties to bolster the peace process. Now and after one and a half years of operation in Sudan, there are some shortcomings in the peace process; the situation in Darfur has not changed and has in fact worsened; and now with this statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday, it seems that the government of Sudan has adopted a very acute position on the role of UNMIS. Does this mean that the cooperation is no more?

Will this lead to a different form of UN presence here, say under a Chapter VII operation?

How do you view the prospects for future cooperation against this background?

SRSG Pronk: I do not agree with you that the CPA is in difficulty as you said. That is not true.

I said in my speech to the Security Council that the CPA is on track. Yes, there are problems, but that does not mean that the CPA is not on track. There are always problems in the implementation of any agreement but the CPA is on track.

Darfur, yes, there are major problems. There is no peace and people are still being killed. We are only giving assistance to the people. That's the task we have. We don't have any ceasefire related task; we don't have any political task – nothing. We only give assistance to the victims. And on that score we have been extremely successful. You can not judge the overall situation in Darfur on the basis of the performance of the UN or its role.

Thirdly; you said, in the translation, there is a turning point (Government interaction with UNMIS). Can I quote the last sentence of the Press Statement: *“At the end of the meeting, it was agreed to continue the dialogue between the two parties towards more coordination and understanding so as to be able to address all issues in a responsible and constructive manner”*.

I could have drafted that sentence myself. That is not a turning point. That means we continue forward in a constructive manner. So I don't see that as a turning point and as far as we in the UN are concerned, we continue with our work as we did so far, on the basis of our mandate.

Q: You said in the briefing today that the situation in Hamesh Khoreib is somehow acceptable to the UN. There are however some press reports that there are clashes about 15 km. from Hamesh Khoreib - in Khor Kibrit - and that the UN has contributed indirectly in flaring up the conflict even between the tribes by not moving fast. There are accusations from the Eastern Front on that - what are your comments?

The government delegation to Abuja says that the international community has continued to send in negative signals to the rebel movements and you did mention here that Dr. Khalil Ibrahim and Minnawi are on their way to Abuja and that you conveyed to them the message of the field commanders to reach peace. Does this does this mean that February will see the end of the negotiations in Abuja especially in light of a US pressure for an end to the talks this February?

There are reports that Mr. Pronk went to the Dutch government to request 35 Military Observers.

SRSB Pronk: We are not satisfied with the situation in Hamesh Khoreib – there is no peace. I am pleased that there is a status quo and don't know anything about additional fighting outside Hamesh Khoreib as you said. In Hamesh Khoreib, anyway, there is a status quo and the status quo has to be used in order to bring people together to find a peaceful solution in the talks.

The only message which I can give at the moment on the basis of my discussions in Darfur to the leaders is: "Your own people want peace." That is my message. Please follow your people.

Thirdly, there are UN Military Observers (UNMOs) in South Sudan. They come from many countries. Some countries are also considering sending UNMOs. One of them is the Netherlands – not on my request because we request all countries to participate and there was a debate in the Netherlands government and parliament in December which resulted in the decision to make available 35 UNMOs like many other countries also made available UNMOs. But the parliament said it is not yet safe in Sudan so we can not yet send 35 people and they decided to send a mission to south Sudan in order to assess whether it is safe in south Sudan.

I said to the government that it is safe but if you don't believe me please come and see for yourself.

Q: My first question is on a report by *Alwan* daily that says the US and UK have a project to re-colonise Darfur. What is your opinion about that?

Sudanese people and government have rejected the entrance of international troops to Darfur. Would the UN still go on without the consent of the government?

SRSB Pronk: There is no policy of re-colonization of any country in the world. Former colonial or non-colonial countries will be very unwise to do so.

Secondly; it will never happen through the UN because the UN is the "father" of decolonization. Without the very strong work of the UN in the 1950s, Sudan would not have been the first big country in Africa freeing itself from a colonial empire. It (*colonisation*) would never happen through the UN.

I quoted, myself, the statement by the President of the Security Council: consultations with everybody and with the government of Sudan in particular. So nothing will happen without consultations. That is what the President (of the Security Council) has said; that is what Kofi Annan's task is and I am doing that together with him and, to a certain extent, on his behalf.

Q: The Council of Ministers has presented for the third round of discussions the Voluntary and Humanitarian Works Bill. Yesterday, the Humanitarian Affairs Committee at the National Assembly issued a report in which it sets out regulations to organizations and agencies and these contradict international conventions and bar these agencies from appealing should the registrar revoke their license and dictates that the sources of funding and donations be received only through the consent of the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs. This may deprive the these agencies from playing the role of the third party in the implementation of the CPA.

SRSB Pronk: My question is: has that bill now been passed? Because I thought that it was being discussed by parliament and that amendments were discussed and I don't know the outcome of the debate and I have to be fully informed before I can comment on it.

Q: Almost. The final reading is today.

SRSB Pronk: Almost passed is not the same as passed. I have been a member of parliament for many years – almost passed is not passed.

I know the first text of the first bill and we had discussed it with NGOs and humanitarian agencies. We had also quite a number of concerns and made it known to the government. Then everything was postponed due to the parliamentary procedures here – which was good; a good political debate.

I raised the issue myself again two weeks ago in a meeting with Vice-president Taha to show that we are quite interested. By the way he did not say it is not our mandate but answered the question. And he said that there is a new text which means that the government has listened to many concerns.

It is now in parliament and it is up to the parliament to take a decision. I know that it is quite a discussion and I know also the positions of some individual members of parliament. It is now up to them. But in the present situation when it is still in parliament just before the final reading, I am not going to comment on it and I wait until the vote is passed.

Q: You said that your mandate is on the basis of the CPA. Nowadays there is a new development and you have just told us there is a process of transition from the AMIS to UNMIS. You lament that you have no troops and you have not money to support the operations in Darfur and there is no way out for UN to support the transition yet people are still accusing the government of not being serious in implementing the CPA. Just to take an angle from the speech of Madam Rebecca de Mabior in the US, she said that the NCP, being the prime partner in the GoNU is not serious in implementing the CPA. Does this mean that what you are saying is true that the UN is here to support the NCP and the SPLM in implementing the CPA? If yes, why then are the people in the SPLM still complaining?

Finally; Sudanese are also complaining that UNMIS is not serious in advising and giving pressure to the NCP in implementing the CPA. They say the reasons are clear: the delay in the deployment of the 10,000 peacekeeping troops is evidence that the UN is not so serious?

What is going on in the south – killing of women and children and tribal leaders accuse the SPLA recently of taking women and children hostage and that one year after the peace agreement was signed, there are no signs of development in the south or elsewhere. They say that peace is not yet effective while you say that your presence here is to help the parties push ahead and there is the description that the UNMIS is moving at a chameleon speed. What are your comments?

SRSB Pronk: My answer, sir, is that it was a Sudanese war and a Sudanese peace. You make war against each other – you make peace with each other. The UN didn't make the war and the UN didn't make the peace. When you made peace, you invited the UN to help you keep it. That is what we are doing.

We believe the parties when they say they are serious in the implementation process. We know that there are political parties who express political views – which is good in itself. They don't fight anymore; they fight politically with words. That is a major improvement as compared to the past. The more heated a political debate is, the better because then, out of the confrontation the truth will come out.

We only help the process of making peace sustainable – that is all. We do so with the help of our troops which are able to contain conflicts. We have been able to do so and there are quite a number of examples – I gave you a number of them.

We are very serious. It is true that I don't have my 10,000 troops on the ground – only six plus. Some countries did not bring the troops which they promised. Does that mean that the UN is not serious? Make a distinction please between the UN and countries that are making promises to the UN. Please make that distinction.

That is my answer.

Spokesperson: I think that that was the last question.

Thank you very much and, hopefully, you will be attending these press briefings and with this large number because we always like a full room and Mr. Pronk enjoys it very much when you come with all these questions that are very interesting. It is important for us also to address them and, hopefully, this cooperation with you will continue.

Thank you very much.