

**Office of the Spokesperson****UNMIS BRIEFING TO THE PRESS***13 June 2007*

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference held by United Nations Mission in Sudan Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri, on 13 June 2007 at the UNMIS Press Briefing Room.

Good morning everybody. I will start with the item that headlined by most local newspapers and other media.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH-LEVEL AU-UN CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN ON THE HYBRID OPERATION

The two-day AU-UN high-level technical consultation with the Government of Sudan on the proposals contained in the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the hybrid operation in Darfur (S/2007/307/Rev.1) was concluded on 12 June. In a Communiqué issued the same day, it was announced that in view of the explanations and clarifications jointly provided by the AU and the UN as contained in the presentation, the Government of Sudan accepted the joint proposals on the Hybrid Operation.

The participants underlined the need for the resolutions or decisions authorizing this Operation to be adopted by the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council.

They also further agreed on the need for an immediate comprehensive ceasefire accompanied by an inclusive political process, and stressed the need for troop and police contributing countries, as well as donors, to facilitate the early and successful implementation of the hybrid operation.

The UN Secretary-General welcomed the positive conclusions of the high-level African Union-United Nations consultations with the Government of Sudan on the hybrid operation, and looked forward to expeditiously implementing the three-phase approach to peacekeeping in Darfur.

He also stressed the need for an immediate comprehensive ceasefire, accompanied by an inclusive political process, as essential steps toward a lasting solution to the crisis in Darfur.

SPECIAL ENVOY ELIASSON BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Many of you have been calling to ask about Mr. Eliasson briefing and the road map he jointly prepared with Special Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim and I have the following for you:

UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for Darfur Jan Eliasson briefed the Security Council on 8 June on the latest developments on the ground with a special focus on the political process. In this regard, he presented the joint AU-UN roadmap for Darfur political process. Special Envoy Eliasson informed the Security Council that his newly appointed Senior Advisor, Mr. Pekka Haavisto, will be assisting him, together with the African Union, in preparing the ground for negotiations as outlined in the roadmap.

The roadmap for the political process consists of three phases: Convergence of Initiatives and Consultations; Pre- Negotiations; and Negotiations.

As a point of departure for the implementation of the roadmap, the AU and UN expect all parties to declare their serious commitments to achieve a political solution to the Darfur crisis, create a security environment in Darfur conducive to negotiations, participate in and commit to the outcome of the negotiation effort, and cease all hostilities immediately. It is expected that the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council hold all parties accountable to these commitments, with the understanding that obstruction to the peace process will have consequences.

During the first phase of the roadmap (Convergence of Initiatives and Consultations-May/June 2007), the AU and UN will work with all national, regional, and international actors to ensure that all initiatives currently underway converge and are integrated within the broader AU-UN framework by the end of June. Simultaneously, the AU and UN will continue extensive consultations on the political process and parties' positions with all stakeholders inside and outside Sudan.

During the Pre-Negotiation Phase (June – July 2007), all parties are expected to demonstrate a serious commitment to the political process through accelerating preparations for negotiations in good faith. For this, the parties are to uphold the ceasefire, including refraining from military build-up or posturing of forces, stopping aerial bombardments, containing the Janjaweed and tribal conflicts through an effective ceasefire mechanism throughout Darfur, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and demonstrate respect for human rights and humanitarian principles.

Simultaneously, the AU-UN will finalize consultations with the Government of Sudan, signatories and non-signatories, civil society, tribal leaders and representatives of IDPs, refugees and women's groups.

As for the Negotiations Phase, which target date is August 2007, the Special Envoys envisage invitations to a brief and intensive negotiations session following completion of Phase II, which objective is to contribute to narrowing the gaps between the respective positions and determine the parameters of an all-inclusive agreement with broad ownership among all stakeholders.

The political process and any ensuing agreement will be supported by the envisaged AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping operation, which will be mandated to verify compliance and the implementation of all agreed commitments, as well as to contribute to the restoration of security and protection of the population of Darfur.

UNMIS ACTIVITIES

UNMIS CPA Monitor for the month of May has been issued and is available online at <http://www.unmis.org/english/cpaMonitor.htm> and its annexes are available at : <http://www.unmis.org/english/cpaMonitor-annexes.htm>

The following are few of the main highlights of the CPA Monitor latest edition:

-Throughout May, NCP-SPLM high-level political meetings were held to discuss outstanding differences over CPA implementation. Progress was reported in a number of areas. However, the concluding NCP-SPLM Joint Leadership Committee planned for 27-28 May was postponed, to give more time for preparatory discussions on Abyei and the oil sector.

-The 4th Southern Sudan Governor's Forum was held in Juba from 4-6 May and addressed a number of key governance and budgeting issues. The Forum recommended possible postponement of the full national census to January 2008.

-On 30 May, NCP and SPLM said they had reached agreement in principle on a temporary interim administration for Abyei; however geographic boundaries for the territory have yet to be agreed.

- In May, SAF said it completed its unilateral disarmament exercise for members of incorporated Other Armed Groups, and announced that there are now no SAF-aligned OAGs in South Sudan. However the status of ex-OAGs targeted by the disarmament exercise is disputed by SPLA.

-The Lord's Resistance Army and Government of Uganda reconvened in Juba on 31 May for a new round of peace talks, which will address agenda item III (justice and accountability).

UNMIS Gender Unit, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, Unit for Combating Violence Against Women and Children, is convening a workshop on "Violence Against Women in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on **"Women, Peace and Security"** – 14 June 2007. The workshop will be held at the Police Home -Khartoum (Burri), from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together government institutions, United Nations partners, civil society organizations and community based organizations working on combating violence against women and related women, peace and security issues to address violence against women in conflict situations in the context of SCR 1325 .

Fifty participants from the Government, including the Minister of Justice and the Head of the Government Unit for Combating Violence Against Women and Children, United Nations and Civil Society organizations, including women community based organizations, are expected to take part in the workshop. Working papers will be presented and discussed at the plenary session which will be followed by group discussions on identified topics, with the aim of coming up with concrete recommendations on the next steps in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 by the Government, the United Nations and civil society groups.

UN AGENCIES

High Level Committee on the implementation of the Joint UN/GOS Humanitarian Communiqué

The High level Committee established by the Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian activities in Darfur held its fourth meeting on 12 June at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. The participants welcomed the significant progress that had been made by the Joint Procedures Centre in the establishment of a database to monitor the implementation of the Joint Communiqué. Significant progress was made on labour issues, in particular the recruitment of international staff. Positive progress with regards to customs and immigration issues was also noted. It was agreed that in follow up to the trip to El Fasher and Nyala, a joint team would be dispatched to El Geneina and Zalingei in order to ensure that the procedures agreed are implemented at the field level. A joint GoS/UN press release is available in the room.

UNICEF

In a press release issued on 11 June, UNICEF welcomed an announcement by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) that it would begin handing over children associated with its armed groups in Darfur.

The same day, UNICEF Representative in Sudan Ted Chaiban and SLM/A Chairman Minni Minawi signed an action plan for the release and reintegration of children associated with SLA/M in Darfur. The Agreement was witnessed by the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator, Bajulaiye Oluseyi.

The agreement signed between the SLM/A and UNICEF commits the SLM/A to identify locations where children are associated with its armed groups within one month, prior to a joint verification of children by the SLM/A and the United Nations. UNICEF, in collaboration with Government and local and international NGOs, will support the provision of family tracing and community reintegration programmes, along with training of SLM/A field commanders on international child rights and protection standards. Demobilized children will benefit from life skills and vocational training opportunities, education support, psycho-social activities such as recreation, sports and career guidance, as well as the assistance of social workers who will monitor and ensure follow-up of children during the reintegration process.

Exact numbers of children associated with armed forces and groups in Darfur are unclear, as monitoring and reporting have been difficult due to limited access to conflict areas. However, UNICEF estimates that at least 7,000 children could be linked to various armed forces and groups in the region, either as combatants or serving in ancillary roles such as porters, cooks, messengers and bodyguards. The press release is available in the room.

WFP

In a press release issued on 11 June, WFP announced that it will be able to keep its Humanitarian Air Service (WFP-HAS) operating until October 2007 thanks to an 18 million dollars package of new contributions from several donors. This will enable WFP to continue its operations while avoiding carjackings. To date this year, some 70 cars, belonging to either international aid organizations or African Union peacekeeping troops, have been stopped on the roads by gunmen and frequently stolen. This number is already 60 percent of the total during 2006, when 118 vehicles were attacked.

The press release is available in the room.

UNHCR

UNHCR indicated in its latest Refugee Returns statistics that as of 2 June 2007, a total of 64,146 Sudanese refugees have returned home in the framework of organized and assisted self-repatriation operations. The overall number of Sudanese refugees who returned home since 2005, including spontaneous returns, has reached 154,662 individuals. UNHCR statistics are available in the room.

SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS

An increase in violence between nomads and sedentary farmers in areas along traditional nomadic migration routes was recently reported in the Lagawa-Julud and Talodi-Kauda-Dilling corridors in the northwest of Southern Kordofan. The most serious incidents occurred in the Dabri and Hajar Jawad areas. Since 18 April till date, a total of 13 fatalities were reported from clashes affecting both groups.

In Eastern Equatoria state, three different incidents took place from 31 May to 7 June, during which, at least four people, including three women were killed, and several wounded by unknown gunmen in and around Torit.

In Darfur, a three truck convoy rented by a UN agency transporting food (sugar and oil) from Nyala to Neteiga (73 Km NE Nyala) were stopped and robbed by armed Arab militia just before arriving at their destination.

On 11 June, an UNMIS vehicle traveling from Geneina town to the airport was car-jacked by two (2) armed men. The hijackers, who were pursued by the Government police, hit a woman and her child as well as a donkey. Following the accident, the car-jackers abandoned the UNMIS vehicle which was recovered by the GoS police.

On 6 June, three children between 6 and 12 years old residing at Shamal IDP camp (north of Nertiti, West Darfur) were killed by an Unexploded Ordinance.

HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENT IN DARFUR

An INGO distributed Non-Food Items to Taiba, Shabbad and Hassa Hissa camps in West Darfur benefiting a total of 9,498 households. However, it was noticed that tension due to the presence of armed elements in and around the camps is on the increase.

Over the past three months, a gradual increase of malnutrition rate has been observed in Hamediya camp in West Darfur. A total of 202 cases were registered in May, while in April 189 cases and in March 135. Many of these cases were found among the new arrivals.

In North Darfur, an INGO completed the construction of one school in Agro camp and six children friendly spaces in Rwanda camp in Tawila.

This concludes my briefing to you today and I apologize for the length of it, but as you see that have been many developments over the week. The floor is now open for your questions.

Q & A

Q: Can you tell us more about what was agreed upon in Addis Ababa? United Nations funding for the peacekeeping operation in Darfur was pegged to Sudan's consent to the deployment of such a force. Now that the government has given its consent, when will the United Nations Security Council issue its resolution on the funding and call on Troop Contributing Countries to bring in their troops?

Spokesperson: Obviously, I was not in Addis Ababa so I do not know what was in the actual agreement but please refer to the joint report submitted by the United Nations Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. It [*that report*] details everything that has to be in the hybrid operation.

Secondly, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, is expected to brief the Security Council today on the details of what happened in Addis Ababa. Once we have the details from New York based on the briefing of Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, we will definitely share them with you.

On the issue of the next steps regarding the financing, obviously, as you saw in the Communiqué issue yesterday, there is an agreement that the United Nations Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will have to decide on the resolution mandate for the hybrid operation. Based on that mandate to be provided by the two legislative bodies of the United Nations and the African Union, obviously the Secretary-General will submit a budget proposal to the General Assembly of the United Nations, which will in turn take a decision on financing. I have no idea when the Security Council will be meeting but there is a general sense of urgency and the Security Council has been the one insisting on the urgency of tackling the issue of Darfur so we will see.

In any case, the Security Council will be coming to Sudan on the 17th of this month, and I am sure that all of you will have a chance to see the Security Council members when they come and your question will be best addressed to them. For the time being, I have no date to give you on a scheduled meeting of the Security Council on this but one assumes that the Security Council will treat this issue with a sense of urgency.

Q: Would you consider that Sudan's acceptance was unconditional or conditional?

Secondly, there were reports of fighting in the Jebel Mara between the Government of Sudan and the SLA-AbdulWahid. Do you have any details as to that? Any details on whether it is still going on?

Thirdly, you said that Other Armed Groups aligned to the SAF have left southern Sudan. Would Gordon Kong and his forces be included in that?

Spokesperson: Honestly, I have to check on all the questions that you asked me.

On whether the acceptance of the Sudan government was conditional or unconditional, I will give you exactly the same response. I am not aware of the full details of what has been agreed on on the

actual nature of the agreement. One assumes that they accepted the proposal as contained in the joint report submitted by the Secretary-General and by Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré. There might be some changes to that based on the consultations. I am not aware of them and so we will wait for Mr. Guéhenno to tell us what is in that agreement.

On your other question, I do believe that in the latest News Bulletin issued by UNMIS there was a reference to fighting between government forces and the AbdulWahid Nur faction in an area – I am not sure which area exactly and have to check if it is in the general area of the Jebel Mara or not. We did receive reports but I cannot tell you at this point whether we are able to confirm if this fighting continue to take place or not and will have to check on that. The date of the fighting that was reported to us is included in the News Bulletin we issued the day before yesterday.

On your last question on alignment of Other Armed Groups, I have to check . But as I said in my briefing to you, the SAF said that they have no Other Armed Groups aligned to them present in southern Sudan but I will check on the name you mentioned.

Q: My first question is; according to the Addis Ababa protocol, who is going to command the troops in Darfur – AMIS or UNMIS? Is there a problem around this area?

The second question is about the US stance on this. As per now, I understand that the US is skeptical on the agreement. How much of a hindrance can this US skepticism or non-cooperation with the United Nations be to this process?

Spokesperson: I will start with your last question because it is the easiest. First, I do not explain positions of the United States or any other country. I only answer questions as they pertain to the United Nations. Obviously, the US is part of the Security Council; the Security Council, as I said, is to be briefed today by Mr. Guéhenno, then we will see what the overall position of the Security Council on the matter is. I will stop at this as far as your question on the US is concerned.

On the other issue, I repeat again, I do not want to dwell on any details of the agreement struck in Addis Ababa including on the issues of command and control until we see what comes out of New York. But in the report of the Secretary-General jointly presented with Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, you have answers to that. For both the institutions, the most important thing is to expedite the work on the hybrid operation and we do think that technical issues of command and control are secondary when compared to the need to having the hybrid operation deployed and the objectives of the operation, which are to help the Sudanese people and the Government and the other stakeholders settling the situation in Darfur. That is the crux of the matter as far as we are concerned. Again, we will let you know once we have clarity from New York on the overall details of what have been agreed upon.

Q: How optimistic are you about this agreement? There was a similar agreement – basically almost the same – last November, how different is this from that and how optimistic are you about implementation?

Spokesperson: I do not know what agreement you are referring to in November? If you are referring to Addis Ababa conclusions and Abuja decision of the AU peace and Security Council. I'd say that these two set the framework is you will but now we have an agreement that goes way beyond the Addis Ababa and the Abuja decisions not in terms of principles but in terms of the details. The Abuja decisions set the principles for how the approach of Addis Ababa should be taken forward but there was no agreement decision on details. The hybrid force was agreed in principle – nothing more and nothing less – but now we have something comprehensive; we have a detailed report and we will see what is the exact agreement and then there will be a mandate from the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. So now we are talking of an actual operation – not a concept ... not an idea but an actual operation.

How optimistic are we? Well, the United Nations is always optimistic. We did experience delays based on misunderstandings and we always opted for dialogue and Mr. Ban Ki-moon insisted on

having room for discussions with the Government of Sudan to convince them, to alleviate any misunderstanding and to clarify what needs to be clarified and so on. And these efforts have so far been successful. In his statement, the Secretary-General insisted on the need for all to expedite implementation of this package so we will see. So far we have no reason to believe that the Government of Sudan will back off – we just had an agreement yesterday so we cannot start saying that they might or might not back off. We are optimistic and we will keep the channels of dialogue open with the Government of Sudan, in full transparency, together with the African Union and we will see. By the end of the day, the three of us are working for the benefit of the people of Sudan and the Sudan as a country – the people, the government, and all concerned.

Q: [*Indiscernible question on the road map for peace in Darfur*].

Spokesperson: The road map has three steps. The third step is Negotiations. And for the negotiations, the two envoys [*Eliasson and Salim*] are planning to send invitations for negotiations that they intend to be short in terms of length. This is what I said.

Q: Does this mean that the demands of the rebels such as for compensation will be met?

Spokesperson: I still do not understand your question because the road map is quite clear as I mentioned it. There are three steps. Of course, in the second phase, the two envoys expect that the gaps in terms of positions will be narrowed and also that the parameters for an all-inclusive agreement will be determined and defined.

We are not there yet; we have not reached that phase yet ... we are still at the first phase that is the convergence of initiatives and consultations. This first phase aims at knowing who thinks what and what they have in mind. The second phase will be to try and get the differences of views closer together and to narrow the gaps between them. We are not yet at that stage.

Q: A team of the efforts led by envoys Salim and Eliasson traveled to Egypt, Libya, Eritrea and Chad. Were they able to bring the initiatives of these countries on Darfur into [*Indiscernible*]?

The JEM under Dr. Khalil Ibrahim says it will only accept talks in territories under its control. What are your comments on this?

Spokesperson: About who says what via the press not something for me to comment on is. The position of the two envoys and the two institutions is very clear. The non-signatories of the DPA have to join the political process and their positions have to be tabled at some point. Another requirement is for all the non-signatories to try to have a consolidated position regarding the issues to be negotiated. This is a principle position of the two envoys.

Now on the details of issues like what you mentioned, it is not for me to comment on and I am sure that the two envoys have compiled so far a number of ideas and positions and so on during the consultations so we will see how all of this fits together to prepare for the negotiations.

I really still do not understand your other question but can only repeat the three phases and it is still a road map. Obviously at some point, Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim will be here in Sudan and they could expand further on the details.

On the issue of the joint mediation support team, yes they did have a number of visits to neighboring countries during which they met with non-signatories and stakeholders as far as the Darfur political process is concerned. They met also with officials of the countries that have initiatives. Please do understand, again, that the aim of the joint African Union-United Nations led political process is not to eliminate other initiatives. The aim is to make them converge and actually support the endeavors of Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Salim. To that extent, yes, all the countries with initiatives like Egypt, Eritrea, Chad, Libya, declared their full support to the efforts of the two envoys and their readiness to help and assist the process. That is a given.

Q: You said that a joint team had gone to carry out field assessments on water sources and possible areas of accommodation for the hybrid forces ...

Spokesperson: I did not say that – I never said that. What I said was related to the Heavy Support Package. It was not about the hybrid operation because the hybrid operation did not even exist at the time. I was talking about the Heavy Support Package.

Q: Some government officials have today given press statements to some Sudanese newspapers saying that agreement was to deploy 17,000 to 19,000 troops. Is this number correct? In other words, what is the exact number?

Spokesperson: There is no exact number that I can give you. There are options and these are part of the details to be finalized.

Q: ... finalized in coordination with the government or just between the African Union and the United Nations?

Spokesperson: I would not elaborate further. I would wait for Mr. Guéhenno to answer this question because I am not sure exactly what the ultimate decision would be.

Q: What next after yesterday's agreement in Addis?

Would the United Nations meet its obligations [*indiscernible*] bearing in mind that some government officials have pointed out that the United Nations has not fully met its commitments to the Light Support Package and the Heavy Support Package?

Spokesperson: I think I answered this question already. I would simply repeat what I said: yes, upon the agreement of Addis Ababa, obviously the Security Council of the United Nations and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will have to sit and issue a resolution in which they will detail the mandate, the composition, the tasks, and so on, of this hybrid operation - that is one step. Immediately after we have an official mandate from the two legislative bodies, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Security Council of the United Nations, the United Nations Secretary-General will provide the General Assembly with a budget proposal for the hybrid operation because the agreement is that the United Nations will be taking care of the full financial requirement of this hybrid operation. And we will take it from there in terms of deployment and so on. Obviously, in the process, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will get in touch with Troop Contributing Countries to request contributions in terms of troops, civilian police and so on. And the United Nations Secretariat will start also the process of recruitment of civilian staff required to support these operations. So these are the steps. I do not have a calendar to give you but these are the steps and these are the actual basic procedures of any peacekeeping operation. It is not specific to Sudan but these are the steps.

Q: In a number of press conferences, the United Nations is on record as saying that the implementation of the CPA is progressing. But in fact there are some issues still lagging behind, such as Abyei. Why doesn't the United Nations come out clearly to say which party is right or who is hampering the implementation of the CPA? The NCP or the SPLM

What is the United Nations view on the government rejection to hand over to the ICC state minister Ahmed Haroun and Mr. Khosheib?

Spokesperson: Starting from your last question, this mission has no views on what you asked i.e. the issue of the ICC. The ICC is an independent body. You should ask the Prosecutor of the ICC. This issue is also handled by the United Nations Security Council so if the Security Council deems appropriate to react to this, they would do so.

On your other question that is more relevant to us, the United Nations is not here to say who is right and who is wrong as you said. We do remind the Parties of what they should do and so on but by the end of the day, you have to go back to the CPA that details the responsibilities of the two parties and specifies which institution is to assign responsibility and ensure accountability. For instance on the issue of Abyei, the issue lies with the institution of the Presidency, according to the CPA. It is not for UNMIS to do that. However, in all its regular reporting to the Security Council on the implementation of the CPA, we do say publicly that there are problems and difficulties and that

there are delays and we warn about the possible consequences of delays and so on and I think that we have been fair in our assessment and transparent and we said what we had to say within our mandate.

That was the last question so thank you very much and see you at our next briefing.