

**Office of the Spokesperson****UNMIS BRIEFING TO THE PRESS****26 September 2007**

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press briefing held by United Nations Mission in Sudan Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri, on 26 September 2007.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

The Security Council held yesterday a summit on “Peace and Security in Africa”, chaired by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of France. According to a “concept paper” prepared by France to guide the discussion (document S/2007/552), the meeting, at the level of Heads of State and Government, is aimed at strengthening the mobilization of the international community and at working with African Union representatives to map out concrete and ambitious avenues for action.

The heads of State and government and the senior ministers of the Council’s 15 members, as well as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and AU Commission Chairperson Alpha Oumar Konaré, took part in the debate that focused, among other main issues, on the situation in Darfur.

In his address, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the importance of bringing a sustainable peace to Darfur. “It is an expression of our collective commitment to end the tragedy of Darfur,” the Secretary-General said of UNAMID.

Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union underscored that commitments must be respected and met, the ceasefire enforced, and all parties convened at the upcoming talks.

UNSG Ban Ki-moon also highlighted the Darfur crisis in his address to the UN General Assembly at the opening of its general debate. “I will leave no stone unturned to end the tragedy in Darfur”, he said. He stressed that the United Nations must also move forward with the agreement that ended the long-running war between the north and south and prepare for elections in 2009. He indicated that the crisis in Darfur had grown from many causes, and any enduring solution must address all of them -- security, politics, resources, water, humanitarian and development issues. “There, as elsewhere, we must deal with the root causes of conflict, however complex and entangled”, he said.

UNHCR OPERATIONS IN WEST DARFUR

UNHCR warned yesterday that it might be compelled to scale down its operations in West Darfur if it does not receive additional funding very soon. The UNHCR operation in Darfur is facing a shortfall of \$7.1 million out of a required 2007 budget for Darfur of \$19.7 million. To date, UNHCR has only received \$12.6 million.

UNHCR reports that people continue to arrive in IDP camps, especially around El Geneina and Zalingei. Families are leaving their homes because of renewed fighting and clashes in Sirba and

Jebel Marra in West Darfur; Saraf Omra in North Darfur; and Buram-Dafak region in South Darfur. The presence of various armed groups, especially in rural areas, also contributes to the exodus of villagers.

According to UNHCR, most of the camps around El Geneina and Zalingei have reached maximum capacity and with continuing arrivals, there will soon be a need to create new sites. An estimated 250,000 people have been newly displaced this year due to the ongoing violence, UNHCR said.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Group of Experts on Darfur presented on 24 September an interim report to the Human Rights Council on the progress achieved by the Government of Sudan in response to the recommendations compiled by the group for improving the human rights situation in Darfur. The ultimate measure of the Government of Sudan's implementation of the recommendations is the concrete improvement of the human rights situation in Darfur, the experts said.

The report notes the appreciation of the experts group for the excellent cooperation of the Government of the Sudan during the period under review and its endeavours to address relevant recommendations. It notes that while certain recommendations have been partially implemented, and first steps towards implementation of other recommendations have been taken, other recommendations remain, at least for the present time, without implementation. The Group concluded as a result that it was "not in a position to report that a clear impact on the ground has been identified."

The report notes that the Group plans to provide a detailed description and analysis of the status of the implementation of its recommendations when it presents its final report to the Human Rights Council in December 2007. The Group underscored its wish to give the Sudanese authorities the maximum possible time in which to undertake any initiatives and to report back on any progress and on the impact of its measures upon Darfur's civilian population. The experts group also emphasized its need to obtain as much additional information as possible from all relevant sources, including United Nations bodies and agencies, so that it can obtain a clearer and more detailed understanding of the current situation in Darfur.

FLOOD RESPONSE

At least 100,000 additional people have been directly affected by the latest wave of flooding in Sudan, which has destroyed homes, as well as food stocks and essential household supplies, according to a press release issued on 23 September by the Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan. The latest wave of flooding, which occurred between the last week of August and the first week of September, brings the total of those directly affected to well over half a million. The United Nations and partners, who had put contingency measures in place, continue to respond to the emergency.

On 28 August, the United Nations had launched a 'Flash Appeal' to donors, requesting US\$ 20.2 million to fund the ongoing response. The appeal cited total requirements of \$ 34.7 million, of which 13.5 had already been met by pooled funds managed by the United Nations, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the local Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF). Only \$1 million has since been received from donors, leaving a considerable funding gap of nearly US\$ 19 million.

Q&A

Q: Have three questions. What practical steps have been taken by the UN to force Abdulawhid Nur to participate in the negotiations and [indiscernible]? What will the UN do vis-à-vis Khalil Ibrahim who said that he will continue fighting the Government forces during the negotiations? And thirdly, have invitations been sent to participants in the Libya negotiations?

A- I will start with your last question. Invitations to those who will be participating in the negotiations have not been sent out yet. For the time being, work is being carried out by the AU-UN Joint mediation with the Libyan authorities to prepare for the actual negotiations. In parallel, there is continuous work by the Joint Mediation Support Team, which continues its contact with all stakeholders in preparation of the talks of 27 October in Libya, including on the format of the negotiations and other issues. Invitations to the negotiations will be announced in due course.

On Mr. Khalil Ibrahim, both the UN and the AU have been saying that a cessation of hostilities is an utmost priority and a key requirement not only to help improving the situation of the people on the ground and alleviate the suffering of the people of Darfur, but to ensure a viable environment for the talks. You can not negotiate and continue to fight on the ground. All parties have to abide by a cessation of hostilities. So the UN considers such statements not helpful and I reiterate for you the Secretary-General's call to all parties to commit to cessation of hostilities. Everybody agrees that the issue of Darfur can only be resolved around a negotiations table. Everybody agrees that one of the basic requirements of negotiations is for all sitting at opposing ends of the table not to carry on with fighting. You can not have the guns talking at the same time when you are engaged in negotiations. As you know, the international community and the Security Council of the UN as well as the AU Peace and Security Council are watching very closely developments on the ground and we will watch what reactions they might consider when Libya talks start towards developments that might hinder the peace talks.

On Mr. Abdelwahid Nur, well as you know, has been invited to join the political process and the negotiations. We understand from his statements to the press that he does not want to attend Libya talks and he has a number of preconditions before peace talks could take place. All the meetings and consultations that took place on Darfur political process, the latest of which the high-level meeting held in New York on 21 September, made it very clear that 27 October is the time when the negotiations will start. All stakeholders have been called to be part of the negotiations and support the process. Whether Mr. Abdulwahid will attend Libya talks, it remains to be seen, as it is his own decision to make. We do hope that that he will change his mind and attend these talks, that will start anyway in 27 October as scheduled. Finally, just to reiterate what Mr. Ban Ki-moon and Mr. Konaré said, those who have responsibilities towards the people of Darfur and claim leadership and responsibility for the people of Darfur have to show it around the table of negotiations. The status quo can not continue. Fighting is not the solution. All grievances and demands, including the ones of Mr. Abdulwahid, can be brought to the table of negotiations.

On actions or measures, again, it is a question for the UN Security Council and the AU peace and Security Council, not for the UN secretariat.

If there are no further questions, I thank you for coming and I will see at our next briefing.