



UNMIS

Press Conference

30 June 2009

Near-verbatim transcript of the Press Conference by SRSG Ashraf Qazi following the Washington Forum of Supporters of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

SRSG Ashraf Qazi: Thank you for coming. I have recently returned from Washington where I attended the USA sponsored conference on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). I would like to share with you my comments on the conference, and I would also like to use this opportunity to reiterate UNMIS commitment to supporting the full implementation of the CPA which remains the bedrock for sustainable peace in the Sudan.

The 23rd June “Forum for Supporters of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement” under the auspices of the US Department of State and led by Special Envoy Scott Gration has created a new momentum by refocusing the attention of the international community on the CPA.

All participants acknowledged that the CPA is at the crucial final phase of its implementation. They stressed that, with only about 18 months until the referendum, all parties involved should redouble their efforts for a successful CPA implementation in order to bring lasting peace, stability, and prosperity to the people of Sudan.

Delegations from international organizations and donor countries lauded the parties for the achievements made so far. However, they also stressed the urgency of addressing outstanding issues. These included the need to resolve remaining disagreements with regard to the use of the census results; the need to accept the forthcoming PCA decision on Abyei’s boundaries; the need to accelerate the border demarcation process and to maintain momentum for the DDR operations as well as the need for measures to be put in place to ensure that the 2011 referendum is peaceful and that post referendum stability is guaranteed – no matter what the outcome.

I welcome the American initiative and the commitment of the NCP and SPLM to tackle outstanding CPA issues through continued and intensified dialogue. The conference in Washington has been a promising start. Trilateral meetings between the parties and the US Special Envoy are planned for July and August in Khartoum and Juba respectively. It is hoped that these will result in further progress on the outstanding issues related to CPA implementation. Concrete progress on these issues is essential in order to create conditions for durable peace in the Sudan. I urge both parties to make full use of this opportunity.

The CPA parties reaffirmed their commitment to abide by the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on Abyei and to ensure the stability and security of Abyei following the ruling.

UNMIS stands ready to support the implementation of outstanding CPA benchmarks. We remain committed to supporting credible, peaceful and transparent elections and have put in place a team of electoral experts to support the National Elections Commission with their election preparations.

A secure environment will be a key precondition for the conduct of elections as well as the referendums, and indeed for the implementation of the CPA. I am concerned about the security situation prevailing in South Sudan and the Three Areas. I call on all parties to exert every possible effort to ensure the safety and security of civilians and to find an effective way of addressing tribal hostilities.

UNMIS will continue to pursue the mandate given it by the Security Council in support of the peace process and to work with all parties concerned. Time is indeed short. This puts a premium on the political will of both parties to address and resolve these issues, and for the international community to support the parties to achieve implementation of the CPA.

The media will have a key role to play in supporting CPA implementation, particularly as elections and the referendum approach. For the benefit of the people of Sudan, all our efforts should be concentrated on a common goal: CPA implementation, a peaceful referendum and post referendum stability.

Thank you.

Questions & Answers

Al-Sahafa: *I do not remember your actual remarks but I do recall you saying in an earlier press briefing that the census was carried out in a correct manner and that agreement should be reached over the outcome of the operations. Does the UN still maintain that position?*

SRSQ Qazi: As far as the census is concerned, we know the fact that is that the Presidency has communicated the census report to the Chairman of the National Elections Commission (NEC). However, even afterwards, some parties came up with statements with regards to it. The most important thing is that if there are any differences with regards to how the census results should be used, these should be addressed successfully by the two Parties. That was also covered by the Washington meeting and I do not anticipate that this would be a problem because the two Parties have agreed that they will, through sincere negotiations and efforts, resolve any outstanding issues. I do not regard any problem as being an insuperable obstacle to the implementation of the CPA. There are differences, disagreements on a number of issues, there are points of view, but the important thing is that the two Parties, with the encouragement of the international community, are trying to redouble their efforts in addressing all outstanding issues including any that pertain to the census results.

AFP: *Just two quick questions: I was wondering if you think there are risks of new episodes of violence in Abyei following decisions of The Hague court and if UNMIS, or the UN generally speaking, would take any preventive measure to curb new possibilities of violence in the region of Abyei? Thanks.*

SRSQ Qazi: As I mentioned, the two sides are obligated and have reiterated their obligations to adhere to the results of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). Both sides have also committed themselves to taking on necessary actions in order to ensure that whatever the results of the PCA arbitration, that peace would be maintained. As far as UNMIS is concerned, UNMIS is in the area and would take all necessary actions, in support of the local authorities, to maintain the peace. However, this is the primary responsibility of the Government of National Unity and the primary responsibility of the two national forces – the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). We have a monitoring role, a verification role and a protection of civilians' role that we will perform within our capabilities. This is a Chapter VI mission. We will assist in maintaining the peace; we will be reconfiguring our forces to ensure that the peace is maintained but our role is a supportive role, an assisting role. We will not only play an active role politically but also in terms of conflict management and in terms of anticipating any difficulties. We

will meet with the local people, we will discuss the situation and, wherever necessary, we would be conducting patrols to ensure that peace is maintained. But I would like to emphasize that the primary responsibility rests with the local and national authorities.

I would also myself be visiting Abyei in the next few days – maybe in a week’s time – and I plan to be there at the time when the PCA arbitration word is expected. We do not have a date as of now but it is expected to come sometime in July. I, as well as others, will be there in the area and will be maximizing and coordinating our efforts with the authorities there in order to ensure that the concerns of all the local people are addressed, no matter what the verdict is, in order to ensure that the peace is maintained. Once again, however, I will always stress that this is the primary responsibility of the authorities themselves.

BBC Arabic: You mention that you support the local authorities in efforts to maintain peace in the region. What steps did you take following the violent tribal clashes that left over 300 dead in southern Sudan?

SRSQ Qazi: We have taken a number of steps there. We have established a base in Bor and have set up a temporary operating base in both Pibor and Akobo. We have worked with the local authorities in developing a Stabilization Plan for the area. We have helped in transporting food and other necessary items to the displaced persons and our efforts have been appreciated both by the authorities in Malakal and in Jonglei and in the local counties where, if it were not for our action, the results could have been even worse. We are very actively engaged in addressing the situation there and in helping the authorities to develop their capacity to address the situation there.

Al-Akhbar: Follow up to the question on tribal clashes, I would like to refer to the last remarks attributed to your person to the effect that tribal clashes in southern Sudan have resulted in more deaths than deaths from the conflict in Darfur. Do you regard with concern issues such as DDR, border demarcation, elections and the distribution of electoral constituencies?

SRSQ Qazi: We are concerned about all these issues. We are concerned about violence, wherever it takes place and whether it is in one part of Sudan or another. What is important is to contain the violence and to minimize any casualties and, indeed, to eliminate the possibility of casualties among innocent civilians. We have taken action through our force contingents. They carried out patrols; they created a buffer zone between the two sides, they have taken it to humanitarian relief operations and they have taken it to civil affairs, conflict management, and political reconciliation efforts. We are engaged on a wide front of activities wherever the violence takes place, be it in Abyei, Upper Nile State, Jonglei State or elsewhere. Wherever it is, we are actively involved and it is important that the Government forces recognize, as indeed they have, that this is their primary responsibility. Especially in Jonglei, the Stabilization Plan is being developed to try as much as possible to ensure against such violence in the future.

As far as border demarcation and DDR are concerned, DDR has gone off to a good start in the Three Areas - Blue Nile State and Southern Kordofan State - and is now in southern Sudan. There is of course a funding problem which was also discussed thoroughly in Washington. In order for the DDR process to continue according to schedule, considerable funding from the international community is required. They are aware of this and they have indicated their willingness to respond to this need but they also have concerns that also need to be addressed. All of these issues are going to be taken up in further discussions and, hopefully, progress would be made so that the DDR process is not interrupted for lack of funding.

As far as the border demarcation process is concerned, we are happy to understand from the Presidency that the Ad hoc Border Committee has been instructed to complete its report by the end of September. We are very busy in assisting the Ad hoc Border Committee with technical preparations and technical assistance. We hope that the schedule would be maintained because everything is interlinked and any delay will delay other benchmarks. We hope that the schedule of

completing the report and submitting the report to the Presidency would be on schedule and, similarly, the demarcation of the agreed border will be completed by the end of the year.

AFP: I know that the two Parties agreed to respect the decision of the Hague court but the risk of tribal violence in Abyei remain. Do you think that there is a possibility this could destabilize Southern Kordofan?

SRSQ Qazi: We are aware of all the possibilities – the good possibilities and the not-so-good possibilities. We are catering to all the things that can go wrong, are working very closely with the authorities, and are engaged locally in cooperation with the Parties that, as I keep mentioning, have the primary responsibility for security. As I keep mentioning, we are a Chapter VI mission with 10,000 peacekeepers here of whom only half are combat soldiers. If you look at the whole area of southern Sudan, this comes to about one soldier per a hundred and twenty square miles. You have to be realistic in what you expect. What the international community is entitled to expect is that we will do our very best, within our resources and our capabilities, and also that we will be integrating all our efforts – our peacekeeping efforts, our political efforts, our peace and reconciliation efforts – and, wherever possible, intervening with the authorities and assisting them in their efforts. We do hope that the concerns of the local people, which we are aware of, will be addressed sufficiently so that nobody will be tempted to threaten the peace. If these concerns are not addressed, of course there will be the risk of tension and the risk of conflict. With all the efforts and all the planning that is on the way and the fact that not only myself but other senior people are expected to visit Abyei and other areas of potential conflict and tension so that we could ensure the peace, is very important. We know how fragile the situation can be and therefore all our efforts need to be concerted in order to maintain and strengthen the structures of the peace. Indeed, I believe that the media here also has a role to play in maintaining the peace and in terms of highlighting the efforts that all parties are making. As I said, there will be a follow up meeting to the Washington meeting. There will be other formats in which the Parties will be meeting in order to address all the outstanding issues. The Abyei situation is one of the immediate issues because the decision of the PCA is expected in the month of July and we are therefore all working around the clock in order to ensure that the peace is maintained.

Khalid Mansour (D/PIO): Thank you very much, sir.

I would like to also inform you that a full transcript of this press conference will be posted on our website and emailed to you, hopefully in a couple of hours.

Thank you very much for coming and hope to see you very soon in another press conference here at UNMIS. Thank you.