



UNMIS

Press Conference

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Near-verbatim transcript of the Press Conference
by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General,
Ashraf Qazi
UNMIS HQ, Khartoum

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Ashraf Qazi: Dear friends and colleagues [*indiscernible*] feelings; one of sadness at leaving a wonderful country with wonderful people who have suffered much but who have great potential and great promise ahead of them. If the CPA is implemented in the way it was intended to be implemented and the structures of peace sustained, maintained and built upon and that, whatever the outcomes, that the links of history which are many between the people of the north and of the south enabled to be the platform.

It is for personal reasons, family reasons, that I have requested the Secretary-General to relieve me of my responsibilities much sooner than I would have wished for because I certainly would have liked at least to see the elections. But I can tell you with great gratification and assurance that my successor is going to be a far more than adequate replacement, far better person, more able person, more experienced person. He is a wonderful individual and is known and is respected in the north and in the south and has huge UN experience – Haile Menkerios will do an absolutely splendid job and you will all find that out.

I shall of course be following event closely because, as they say, “Once you have drunk from the Nile, you simply can’t keep the Nile out of your system,” and one day I hope to return and meet my many friends here in the north and in the south and to see them on their way to peace and prosperity.

When I arrived here, the CPA was in some trouble. The SPLM had walked out of the Government of National Unit (GoNU) at the ministerial level. They soon rejoined of course but that was symptomatic of the kinds of tensions that exist between two parties. I am glad to note that as I leave, the last abiding memory at the political level will be of the 5th (CPA) Anniversary at Yambio where the two leaders truly spoke from a visionary standpoint – a standpoint based on general conciliation. You had the President of the Sudan say that while his preference would be for unity and he would urge that upon the people of the south, he would respect and welcome whatever decision they came to because he believed in the abiding links between the two peoples. Similarly, the First Vice-President mentioned that the CPA was still the best chance for unity to be made attractive for the south. So while both leaders, in accordance with the CPA, re-dedicated themselves to the task of making unity attractive for the people of the south, both of them equally reiterated their commitment and acceptance of the fact that it is the people of the south who will make that decision and that whatever that decision is, as I said, that the relationship of cooperation between the two countries and the huge range of links between them will become the basis for a new chapter in their relations.

Despite the challenges that lie ahead, and there are challenges, I believe that the note on which I depart here is validly and realistically one of cautious optimism – cautious because the challenges are daunting and the leadership of the two parties have some way to go for us to be sure that all the concerns that they have expressed from time to time are indeed met.

And optimistic because they have repeatedly shown an ability to avoid all the worst-case scenarios that at time have been speculated upon. We saw this towards the end of last year and this year when legislation for essential benchmarks was enacted and the legal framework was brought into being. Differences remain no doubt about that. Concerns of the international community remain. But I believe that the National Elections Commission (NEC) is making steady and significant progress. They have delimited geographical constituencies, they had the voter registration process, the nomination process ... a lot of people felt that

these would be very difficult but they did successfully negotiate these phases of the huge electoral process and they have cooperated with the donor community which has really generous with its commitments and with the UN in receiving, interacting with them and accepting advice. And I believe that, despite the fact there would be challenges, the elections would be held and that they would by and large satisfy the observers and above all the people of Sudan; that the elections will be credible, open, free - previous elections had been held in Sudan but these are even more challenging circumstances. And then, of course, the preparations for the referenda that would also pose a challenge and the referenda commissions need to be established as quickly as possible and a number of other steps have to be taken. As I said, optimism is warranted because despite the fact that things might appear to be moving slowly at times, they do happen and by and large difficult problems are overcome if not perfectly but nonetheless credibly and in a manner that allows the country to move on to the next stage.

Yes, 2010 will be the last full year of the CPA. It would be absolutely critical for 2011 when the referenda are scheduled to take place both in Abyei and in the south but I do believe that, given the spirit of Yambio, the people of Sudan will overcome all challenges and will not only implement the CPA in a manner that sustains the peace but would also build on the links which I have referred to that exist between them and are essential to the prosperity of coming generations of the Sudanese people.

I want to thank the GoNU and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) for all the cooperation that I personally received and that my mission has received here. I want to thank all the members of the UN family here for having worked with the kind of dedication. It has been a total privilege to be associated with a proud people who will ensure that they leave a platform for a better life for their children because this country is just full of potential and promise and all that is needed is peace. If you can have peace, Sudan whether it remains one country or whether, in accordance to the wishes of the south, it becomes two countries, the future for the children of the present generation of Sudanese should be bright and good and everybody has a stake in it because Sudan is strategically located and the stability of Sudan will strengthen the stability of the region and likewise any difficulties here could also radiate outwards.

I have a written text of my speech which will be circulated to you but I wanted to make a few informal comments here to say that I leave regretting my departure from such an attractive people and an attractive land at a time when the success of the CPA would be determined. But I also am very glad to be returning to the bosom of my family and to my own country where we have our own challenges. We shall be seeing the evolution of events here in Sudan from Pakistan with a keen interest and do hope to return in the future to return here in a totally different capacity as a private visitor and to meet again with some of you and other old friends in the future.

Once again, I want to thank you for all your cooperation and kindness. Thank you very much.

Q & A

Sawt Al-Umma: You have been calling these days for unity and how unity should be attractive to the people of Sudan. This comes simultaneously with UNSG Ban Ki-Moon's calls to make unity attractive in Sudan. Many people however think that this call comes too late as UNMIS has done nothing to help Sudanese to resolve their own problems. Why this late call for unity?

SRSQ Qazi: First of all as I said when referring to the spirit of Yambio, both the President and the First Vice-President themselves reiterated their commitment to making unity attractive in agreement to the spirit of the CPA. Both of them recognised that and it is part of the CPA.

What the UNSG said was misquoted and I had the opportunity of explaining that to the First Vice-President and other leaders in the south and that was understood. The report had attributed words to him that he had not said. He had merely reiterated what was in the CPA so there is actually no deviation from standard policy with regard to the CPA there.

The CPA will be successfully implemented whether or not the people of the south vote for unity or for separation provided that the implementation of that decision and the completion of the CPA coincide with the continuous of peace in Sudan. It is a Comprehensive Peace Agreement and one which culminates with a referendum on the question of yes or no to unity and it also has a proviso with regard to unity but the final

choice would be that of the south. If it takes place in a peaceful environment and if it leads to the strengthening of peace, whatever the verdict is, that would be the success of the CPA implementation. The fact they make one choice or the other does not in itself justify the success or failure of the CPA. The CPA is a peace process. It must sustain the peace and part of that process was extending the unfettered right of self-determination to the people of the south which we hope and, as I said, are optimistic that they would be able to conduct freely and fairly, in a manner consistent with the maintenance of peace and in a manner on the basis on which the links between the people of the north and the south would continue to develop and flourish.

There have been difficulties, you are right, but there have been so much progress. Institutions have been established; governments have been established, commissions have been set up; legislation has been made; the NEC has made a lot of progress; DDR that got off to a slow start has developed momentum – it still has many challenges that need to be met because the credibility and integrity of these processes need to be maintained in order to meet donor concerns. Now we are awaiting further developments such as the setting up of the commissions for the referendum and the two sides are setting up teams for the discussion of post-referendum issues which will be of critical importance. While challenges are there, many of the challenges have already been met successfully. Most importantly, the peace between the two sides has been maintained and UNMIS has made its contributions in each one of these fields – not only to the maintenance of the ceasefire. Each one of these challenges were contained and led to further political progress. You know that in 2008 there was a crisis in Abyei but that was contained. It was unfortunate that it happened. Lives were lost. People were displaced. That was a serious development but it then led to both parties getting together and negotiating the Road Map for Abyei and it also led to the Permanent Court of Arbitration taking up the issue and issuing its decision which was accepted by both sides and now of course we await the implementation of that accord.

So there have been significant successes in all and, as I said, the most important is that the peace has been maintained.

Nonetheless, we cannot minimise the challenges that remain and the challenges that need to be overcome to ensure that the elections are successful, inclusive, and fair and bring the people together because an election that polarises the people will have a negative development. But we have good reason to believe that the NEC has the ability to meet the remaining challenges. I met with the Chairman yesterday and not only congratulated him on the successes that the NEC had already achieved but on the need to bending their efforts even to a greater extent to ensure that future challenges, particularly in the field of logistics, are overcome to ensure that the elections can be held on schedule. Of course you are all aware that there are a number of political issues of which some have been resolved while some are yet to be resolved but this is a work in progress.

Yes, there have been pluses and minuses but overall I am cautiously optimistic that the CPA will be implemented successfully, that the peace in Sudan will be maintained and that the people of the south will be able to peacefully exercise their right to self-determination.

AFP: What is the biggest threat now to the CPA?

Would the UN investigate allegations that the north is shipping weapons to the south?

Do you think that the UN will have to change, reinforce its mandate if the south becomes an independent state?

SRSQ Qazi: I will take the last question first. If the people of the south make the decision to become independent, then we will have to cross the bridge that time. It would need the Security Council to take a decision. But I am quite sure that the UN will continue to be present in the south because there is a lot of work to be done with regards to assisting the authorities in a number of fields not least capacity development and training programmes. So I think a UN presence will certainly be there. Also in the north we have the Protocol areas but this is a decision which the two governments, if there is separation, will decide on these matters and the Security Council would take note of that. While planning for scenarios beyond 2011, the most important thing is to plan for the period between now and the conclusion of the CPA process because that would determine the range of options for everyone in the post-2011 period. As you know, in the south there would be a lot of humanitarian, especially development and reconstruction need. There would be a lot of need for international assistance, including a UN presence, and I think that is a likely scenario.

With regards to the allegations of arms, we are aware of these allegations but, I can tell you as of now, we have not been able to verify or confirm them. I think that if issues are addressed in the manner that they need to be addressed for the successful implementation of the CPA, hopefully this matter will be resolved. Right now we are aware of this situation but we have not, ourselves, come across or been informed or provided with evidence which we can report to the Security Council on this.

You also asked what the single greatest threat to the CPA is. Threats can emanate from a number of quarters if we do not meet the remaining benchmarks successfully. If the essential trust between the two parties were to erode and issues and agreements that need to be negotiated don't happen, then of course the situation could become tense.

The most important thing is that the parties remain engaged with each other; that the spirit of Yambio prevails; that they make the necessary compromises to ensure that whatever the final outcome is, it would be compatible with peace. The greatest threat is that if these things don't happen then of course peace could be put in jeopardy. But I think the people of Sudan have seen the horrors of war previously and I believe that the leadership, both in the north and in the south, are determined to avoid any such scenarios in the future and that is the greatest promise ... the greatest reassurance.

Xinhua: Mr. Qazi leaves Sudan after two years during which the CPA has seen some tensions and thousands still die in southern Sudan. What has the UN done during these two years? What has Mr. Ashraf Qazi done in particular?

SRSQ Qazi: I think we did quite a bit and I did quite a bit. As I said, the peace overall was maintained. Unfortunately, it hasn't been perfect because violence in parts of Sudan even now as we speak. In ensuring that the ceasefire agreement by and large held, not only was the CPA maintained on course but also a huge number of lives that could have been threatened were saved. Similarly, our work with regard to local authorities at state level in the south last year helped to save a number of lives even though we know that tribal conflicts led to loss of life. These of course, providing protection for civilians and ensuring that tribal conflicts are contained and addressed, are of course the primary responsibility of the states themselves. Where they don't have the capacity we help in building their capacity and where assistance can also help to mitigate the possibilities and the consequences of conflict, we have been extremely active. I have approached these issues in an integrated manner and I think we have been successful there in ensuring that the loss of lives wasn't even greater than what it was particularly in the south last year. We have worked with the NEC to enable it to make the progress which it has. We have worked with the DDR activities which, as I said, got off to a slow start but then developed momentum and Phase I hopefully will come to a close and Phase II, which is related to the downsizing of forces, is something that is related to negotiations between both sides. We have made considerable progress there with regards to enabling returns of displaced people and refugees. We have worked with the authorities particularly with regards organised returns but also with spontaneous returns. I think we have made a lot of progress in capacity building; we have worked with the Southern Sudan Police Services in order to be able to discharge their functions and to provide an environment for the elections and the referendum in the south. We have made a lot of progress there even though sometimes our resources have been limited. We have enabled the leadership in the south through air support in order to reach areas which otherwise would have been difficult for them to reach. We have arranged conferences. We have ensured that the issues related to migration have not resulted in violence. Wherever there has been violence, we have sought to develop quick-reaction mechanisms and to bring the people together to minimise it, contain it, and eliminate it and to try as best as we can to anticipate future violence.

We have done quite a bit there. Much of the work that we do doesn't always get headlines because headlines always go to dramatic developments. But I believe our overall presence has helped in maintaining the peace; has helped in containing the possibilities and mitigating the consequences of violence and has also helped to build up capacity and train people and also prepare conditions in which a peace dividend can be made available to the people of the south. The challenges are still formidable and it will take time for a peace dividend in the real sense of the word to be completely provided to those areas which have been devastated by conflict for so long a period.

I am proud to be able to say that UNMIS, both before me and during my tenure, as a result of the dedicated work of my colleagues in UNMIS, in the UN Country Team in the UN family, amongst the NGOs also, have continued to do good work, vitally important work, which have upheld the structures of peace and has contained violence and the loss of life.

Yes, there are challenges ahead, yes we could do more, yes we can improve our performance, but we are also proud of what we have done.

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