



UNMIS

Press Conference

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Near-verbatim Transcript of the Press Conference by
Mr. Denis K. Kadima, Director of the United Nations Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED)
On UNMIS' Role and Preparations for the Referenda
UNMIS HQ, Khartoum

Deputy Spokesperson Kouider Zerrouk: Thank you for coming. I would like to introduce to you Denis Kadima who is the head of our United Nations Integrated Electoral and Referendum Division. Denis just joined the Mission recently and is the UNMIS Director in charge of working with the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, helping to support them for the referendum. He will brief you on the preparations and the role UNMIS is doing and will do for the coming period.

Once again you are welcome and kindly note that his Opening Remarks would be distributed to you after the briefing and a transcript of the press conference sent to you later in the afternoon.

Without further ado, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Denis Kadima.

Thank you.

UNIRED Director Denis Kadima: Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to express warm words of welcome to all the members of the media who are here today. This is my first press conference in the Sudan as the Director of the United Nations Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED) and I am pleased to see that so many of you have chosen to attend.

I'd like to begin by congratulating the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission for the swearing in of Mohamed Osman Al-Nujoomi, its new Secretary General. Following the appointment of Mr. Al-Nujoomi, our team has been closely working with the Commission on policy and operational matters. I therefore think the time has come to brief the media and the public about what our UNIRED team is presently doing in support of the Referendum authorities as there has been increasing interest in our work. Let me begin by explaining that our role and responsibilities in the upcoming Referendum are determined by UN Security Council Resolution 1919 which calls on the UN to "be prepared to play a lead role in international efforts to provide assistance to support preparations for the referendum".

In concrete terms, this means that we are not directly administering, nor managing the upcoming Referendum. The Referendum is a nationally-owned Sudanese process and we are here to provide technical and logistical assistance to the Referendum authorities to organize this historic event.

We will be assisting the Referendum authorities in every phase of the process, starting from the conceptualization of operations, the planning of the procurement and distribution of materials, to the Voter Registration exercise, the exhibition and challenges and finally polling, counting, tabulation and announcement of results. We are also expanding our staff members to achieve this.

I'd like to emphasize that UNIRED is neither monitoring, nor observing the Referendum. As a general rule, whenever and wherever the United Nations provides Technical Assistance to a national organization to carry out a vote, it does not out of principle engage in the observation or monitoring of an electoral event. Observation will be carried out by national and international Observer Missions invited by the National Commission to do so, such as the African Union, the European Union, the Carter Centre, and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa. Exceptionally, this Referendum will also benefit from the presence of the UN Secretary General's Referendum Monitoring panel which has been invited by the CPA signatories to support the process and this panel will engage with national authorities and the Commission to

make sure all political, security and any other issue affecting the credibility of the process are addressed in a timely fashion.

We are not alone in this endeavour. We have several UN and other international partners who are actively providing technical assistance to the Referendum authorities. Post elections, as part of the lessons learnt, UNMIS and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) electoral teams have integrated in order to provide a more streamlined and coherent approach to UN support to the referenda processes. With UNDP, we have already begun with the procurement of voter materials and will also provide equipment to County-level Offices. We are also working with other international technical experts from the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union (EU) who are also behind the scenes providing advice and technical capacity to the Referendum authorities.

Our UNIRED team is supporting and helping the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in their efforts to organize and conduct a peaceful and successful referendum.

To support the later goal, UNIRED, in conjunction with its partners, has developed for the consideration of the SSRC a number of plans, manuals and guidelines, such as a draft Concept of Operations for the Referendum process, draft internal regulations for the Commission and draft regulations on the accreditation of observers. Preparations are also underway to provide briefings and training for the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau, the Referendum State High Committees and County Sub-Committees.

We are also assisting the Referendum Commission and its subsidiary bodies to carry out an extensive logistical operation across all areas of the country where Southern Sudanese live so that they exercise their right to register and later cast their vote in the upcoming poll.

UNMIS has trained 9,700 national security officials so that they may organize and carry out operations that will support an orderly Referendum process that respects the rights of individual voters to both register and vote in a secure environment. Training of security officials shall soon begin in Northern Sudan as well. By the end of the process, some 21,000 police will have been trained with the assistance of the United Nations Police (UNPOL) across the country.

As for international observers deploying to the Sudan, UNMIS will also provide logistical assistance to them within our means and resources.

In terms of tangible assistance, the UN will deliver approximately 120 tons of Voter Registration materials, consisting of training manuals, registration booklets, registration kits, forms, voter education pamphlets and other supplies. It will be an important logistical operation that will require coordination both by national and international partners.

In remote areas of Southern Sudan, we are setting up over 70 Referendum Support Bases and will also open offices in Sudan's Northern States to provide technical assistance to national officials and staff working there. We are also working together with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in relation to the out-of-country operations.

For polling itself, the UN will also assist with the printing of ballots and other training materials. International donor funds will be used to support procurement both for registration and polling through the UNDP Basket Fund.

I very much hope that the presentation I have just provided you answers some of the questions you may have had until now about the UN's role in the upcoming process. The United Nations is committed to assisting and advising the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission to carry out the Referendum and helping the country achieve this key milestone of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Q & A

Reuters: Given the logistical tasks ahead, how confident are you that the southern Sudan referendum would happen by the January 2011 deadline? Can the Abyei referendum happen on time as well?

Do you have any idea of the total cost of both referendums? What is the UN contribution to that?

Al-Ayyam: Inter-tribal conflicts still rage on in southern Sudan with about three rebel groups still active. Should there be an escalation of the violence during or after the referendum, could the governments guarantee the safety of the civilian population in the region?

Sudan Vision: Yesterday, the Secretary-General of the Referendum Commission said in an interview that there will be 3,600 [referendum] centres all over Sudan. You said that you are going to provide 120 tonnes of material and we are remaining with about 100 or so days. When will we start? Have the materials arrived yet? If not, when will they arrive since the referendum forms and the other documents are the basis of this process?

UNIRED Director Denis Kadima: Regarding the first question on the deadline of 9th January, that is the decision of the Referendum Commission. Our responsibility, clearly, is to provide technical assistance and logistical support so that they can fulfil their mandate. Whether or not it would be on that date, it is for the Commission to answer.

As for the Abyei Commission, we are getting ready; we are planning, we are getting our teams around. We are working very hard and as soon as that Commission is in place, we would be there to support them.

Regarding the cost of the referenda, we are working with the Commission. We have come up with the Commission. We made some inputs in the planning but the budget, ultimately, is the budget of the Commission that will have to assess what is the cost. But they are already discussing at this moment with the Government. I am not able to give you figures but, I'm sure if you miss the Secretary-General [of the Referendum Commission], he would give you definite answers.

Regarding inter-tribal conflict in the south and a possible escalation of violence during or after the referendum, as the UN we are committed to supporting the process and this support includes also security support through our UNPOL and other units. Their duty is only to assist the process. If violence escalates, I am sure that the authorities would have to decide on how far they could go on the process. Clearly, security is the responsibility of the national authorities.

The last question about the 3,600 registration centres as cited by the Secretary-General, when the material arrives, what I can say, is that the Commission could come up with a timeline happen place. As far as we are concerned, we are providing the support; and we are helping with procurement, but the details of when these aspects of the process would finalise and so on, I'm sure the Commission would be able to provide you with such details.

Bloomberg News: To follow up on an earlier question, logistically is it possible that the referendum can happen in time, can voters be registered? The Referendum law says that the list of Voters' Registry has to be ready by end of August. Does this mean that the law has to be changed?

Al-Midan: The NCP and the SPLM have invited the UN to monitor the referendum. Mr. [indiscernible] said that the UN would not monitor the referendum. Does this mean that the UN has turned down the partners' invitations to monitor the referendum?

The Referendum Commission has announced that the UNMIS would print referendum registration forms and that registration would start in mid-October. Is it true? Has the UN issued tenders for printing such material?

Nile TV: Can you recommend a delay of the referendum?

D. UNIRED, Kadima: I think I have already provided the answer on the first question about the deadlines but I could repeat the answer if you want me to do that. My answer is that the decisions on the dates of the processes are the responsibility of the Sudanese authorities; that's not our responsibility. I think that is clear enough.

Regarding the panel set up by the UN Secretary-General, normally when we provide technical assistance we don't observe; we leave that task to other groups. Exceptionally, in the Sudan, we have been requested by the CPA partners to monitor as well. That is why the Secretary-General is going to deploy the team and that team would be different from the UNIRED. We will have different roles: our [UNIRED's] role would be to provide technical assistance while their role would be to monitor and make recommendations so that corrective measures can be taken. Actually they would also be observing our work in an indirect way. So the panel is separate.

On the question about the printing, when it would start and so on, I have said that we are assisting the Commission with the procurement of voting material starting from registration and so on. As to the time of when these would arrive here, I think that this is an issue of management. We are not managing the process; we are advising and supporting. Those who are managing the process should be able to give you the different timelines.

On whether we could recommend a delay, again, this is the responsibility of the Commission. I think we need a different press conference and that time it would be for the SSRC.

Khartoum Monitor: Do you think the humanitarian situation in southern Sudan can affect the referendum?

The Juba Post: There is a great concern by the political parties and the people of Abyei that the whole referendum process for that area be handed over to the UN. I am asking you whether you are ready to take over the Abyei Referendum process.

There has been an issue of more deployment of UN forces to monitor and provide security for the referendum. What would be the strength of those forces and when would they arrive?

Freelancer: You made it very clear that UNMIS is not going to be party to the observation of the forthcoming referendum. Based on the UN experience, would you be able to carry out a peaceful and smooth referendum?

D. UNIRED, Kadima: On whether the humanitarian situation in southern Sudan could affect the referendum, we are aware there are challenges and we are working with the authorities here to ensure that the referendum takes place, regardless of what is on the ground. Our role is to support the process.

As far as Abyei is concerned and if it is to be handed over to the UN to run, I don't think such a request has been made. At this moment, we are getting ready to support the commission once it is in place.

On the deployment and the number of UN forces to provide security, it must be clear that whatever we as the UN do, we assist the national authorities in the north and in the south to take on those responsibilities. Our role here is to support rather than to be on the forefront. We support our Sudanese partners.

On whether we could have a peaceful process, I think we are working towards a peaceful process. We are putting our resources and contributing to make sure that would happen.

Sudan Vision: You did mention in your Opening Remarks that you are supplying 120 tonnes of material for the referendum. Have they arrived; are they on the way?

D. UNIRED, Kadima: We are helping the Commission to acquire the material so that they could organise the referendum. Our role has been to advise them on the kind of material they need starting from voter registration. What I have given you is an estimation of the amount of what material is needed. Once it is here, the UN would assist with transport and so on to make sure that they arrive where they are needed for the process to start. That is all I could say: we are assisting the referendum authorities to acquire the material ... and is coming from outside.

That being the last question, I would just like to reiterate what I said in the beginning - I to make sure that we are on the same page. What we are saying here is that the referendum is owned by Sudanese. The referendum is a nationally owned process ... and we are hoping that the country would rise to the occasion. We are providing very tangible technical assistance; very tangible logistical support. Ultimately who is going to come with the timeline; who is going to implement this process is the Commission and, I could say, we are here to support them twenty-four hours, seven days.

Thank you.

Deputy Spokesperson Kouider Zerrouk: Thank you very much, Mr. Kadima. Thank you all for coming. A transcript of this press conference would be sent to you and please pick a copy of the Opening Remarks on the table on your way out.

Thank you.

ENDS
