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UNAMIS

UNITED NATIONS ADVANCE MISSION IN THE SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson

PRESS BRIEFING

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of the address of Mr. Jan Pronk, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to the Sudanese media representatives during his press meeting held in Khartoum on Wednesday 11 August 2004:

I am very pleased to be with you and to answer any questions which you would have. I hope to be able to have many contacts with the press here, in Sudan.

Let me say a few things about the UN mission, UNAMIS. Why we are here. That is a result of a resolution of the Security Council which was adopted last on June the 5th. It is a resolution which looks forward to the peaceful ending of the long fight between the Government of the Sudan and the SPLA/SPLM in the South. You know about the Naivasha Talks and that a final peace agreement is being pursued and might be concluded, hopefully, in September, and would be somewhere in Africa. That is the intention. The peace agreement would comprise all the protocols you are familiar with. Then the United Nations will come in also in the form of a peace support mission to be established by the Security Council on the basis of that peace agreement. The Security Council would decide the size of the peace support mission that we are already preparing for. We will thereafter have a period of six months to build the mission. A period of six years will start in so far as we read the existing agreements for the UN mission to assist in the implementation of the final comprehensive peace agreement yet to be concluded. That is a Sudanese responsibility, northern as well as Southern. Not a foreign effort. Sudanese peace is to be supported by an international presence. Not only of military, but also in terms of development efforts, economic effort, relief efforts, efforts to facilitate the return of the IDPs, the return of the refugees and also demobilization and disarmament efforts of all the fighters. These objectives and this huge task are to be carried out primarily by the Sudanese themselves, the government of Sudan and the leaders and the people of the Southern Sudan. We are here to anticipate that mission, to build it up.

At the same time, as you are aware, there is the outbreak of the fights in Darfur which is a different issue. But the United Nations is quite involved. The situation in Darfur has as you know a lot of international attention. The Security Council is also seized by the matter. You are aware of the Joint Communiqué which was signed by the Secretary General of the United Nations, together with the government of Sudan last month, and the follow-up to the Joint Communiqué in the form of the Darfur Plan of action, which I signed together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The gist of that action plan is to make it possible for the government of Sudan to demonstrate verifiable and substantive progress towards full security in Darfur. No body has ever said that it should be possible to reach full security in the whole of Darfur in a very short period, 30 days. Totally impossible. Every body understands that but it is necessary to have a demonstration of verifiable, substantive progress towards full security in Darfur. In the Action plan we have laid down a number of specific actions: laying down of weapons, identification of Janjaweed militia under the influence of the government, talk with the rebels

in order to bring them in a similar laying down of weapons and a number of other activities in the Action plan which together form a doable, achievable package of instruments to be carried out during these three remaining weeks of August.

This means I have, at the moment, devoting my time between facilitating the talks between the north and the south in order to get them again off the ground. Secondly, talking with the government and others in order to help bring about more Security in Darfur. Thirdly, as special representative also carrying out my responsibility for the humanitarian efforts in Darfur, and fourthly having many international talks with government of countries around Sudan including, for instance, my participation last Sunday in the meeting, the conference of the minister of foreign affairs of the Arab league in Cairo. All these activities are part of my mandate.

I am not an envoy being sent by the SG to make a visit to Sudan, then to leave and to come back later. I have arrived in order to stay here, I will stay in Sudan, I have told my government I am leaving as a Dutch citizen, I am leaving the Netherlands. I was living in The Hague so I went to the civil administration, I am no longer a citizen of The Hague, I am now a citizen of Khartoum. I am living here in order to be here and to have as many as possible contacts with Sudanese, Sudanese civil society, Sudanese politicians, opposition, the press, business, any one here in Sudan and around Sudan.

Of course I also will have to New York in order to report to the Security Council, because the security council will discuss to which extends in these that will be verifiable, and sustainable substantive progress towards full security in 30 days. That will be an important meeting of the security council. I expect it in the first week of September and for that reason this is an extremely important period in order to make it possible for the government of Sudan to gain credibility in the eyes of the international community and to do what it has to do in order to improve the situation of the people in Darfur which is a tragedy, let us face it, there is rape, there are killings of people. People are being driven out their homes, not a few, many, more than a million in a situation whereby lost people themselves are living on very fragile grounds which means that also they are in difficulties and the numbers are increasing. It is an atrocious situation. We have to stop them and every body who is accountable for all these acts of terror, acts of killing, atrocities against individual people have to change their attitudes, that the militia, the rebels, the authorities, the army all parties involved also parties outside Sudan who are in one way or another contributing to destabilization of the situation in Darfur. It is extremely important that we will show improvement, a change of the trend in Darfur. At the same time, it is my view, that finally we need a political solution in Darfur. Talks amongst the government and the movements in Darfur. I foresee that these talks now can start substantially, hopefully, somewhat after the mid of this month in Abuja, Nigeria facilitated by the African Union and by the United Nations, but I also feel that a peaceful ending of the fights between the government of Sudan and SPLA/SPLM in south in the form of a peace agreement to be signed very soon can be a very important contribution towards a better political climate also in Darfur. There are political relations between the two major problems at the moment. It is also important to avoid a situation whereby, elsewhere in the Sudan, for instance in east Sudan the grudges of people will result in a new violence arising in other places in Sudan. It is a tremendous task at the moment. The international community, which I am representing is showing concern for individual people, showing concern for human rights, showing concern for the fate of women and children and civilians. That concern is being demonstrated in two ways: humanitarian relief activities; not enough, they came too late but they are building up gradually. Secondly, by means of political steps for instance in the framework of the resolution of the Security Council and the talks. I have been there in these meetings and I have seen an international community which is not attacking Sudan, it is an international community which is trying to politically help both the people and the people and the government of the Sudan to go back to situation of security which is the

first stage of a more sustainable development. The international community is not against Sudan, it is for the people in Sudan. The international community is not against the government of Sudan, it is trying to help the government of Sudan to do what it has to do. If the government of Sudan is not doing what it has to do, there will be criticism, severe criticism but that is criticism on non-keeping of the promises if that would be the case. So far, in all my talks, I am meeting a government, which seriously tries to keep the promises made in talks with the Secretary general and with me. But, of course, we continue to monitor that politically, very intensely, in a very constructive atmosphere.

Finally, I have been in Sudan very often. My first visit to Sudan was in 1974, and I had my talks with president Nimeri at the time and I went also to Juba, and I had talks with the authorities in Juba. I was then working in a completely different capacity. I have been here very often, in particular in 1990s, both in the north as well as in the south. I know how difficult the situation has been in Sudan. More difficult, perhaps, than in many other African countries for many reasons which, you are familiar with. Many international organizations and governments abroad have closed their eyes to the fate of Sudan for many decades. They came in too late. It is now high time to change the trend. After this horrendous situation of the last couple of decades, including what is happening at the moment, we might be able to show from Sudan Sudanese all of them together that it is possible to solve the problem. We might be able to show Africa that after that plight. It is possible to create a model of tranquility, security, development, sustainable development, human rights, democracy. It is possible. Sudan can be a model for Africa of cooperation between Africans, Arabs, all different tribes, huge population groups in a broad area in one overall nation. That is important because conflicts like we are having in Sudan at the moment are not only Sudanese conflicts. We have similar conflicts and potential conflicts also in many other countries of Africa; in Mali, in Mauritania, in Congo, in Chad, in Liberia, in Sierra Leone, in Senegal and also more towards the south. To solve such conflicts from within, not relying on foreign activities, foreign intervention, but from within is extremely important. The Sudanese can do it and the UN has come here to help the Sudanese to solve their own problems. That is what I feel to be my mandate.

I can only do so if I have many intense contacts with all parts of the Sudanese society and that is what I intend to do.

Let me keep it as a means of introduction with these words.

Thank you.

Any questions?

Q. The UN, represented by the Secretary General, signed a communiqué with the Government of the Sudan, then a plan of action on Darfur between the UN GS Representative and the minister of foreign affairs. A report is to be submitted to the Security Council of the UN in three weeks on the plan of action. Isn't that a pressure exerted by the UN while at the same time talking about giving the Sudanese people a chance to solve the problem by themselves? Why doesn't the UN wait to the end of the 90-day agreed upon with Kofi Annan?

SRSG: Sure, the plan of action is a way to give hands and feet to the communiqué, which was signed by the Secretary General and the government of Sudan. It is the instrumentalization of the one, only in order to help getting agreement on measurable yardsticks in a selected number of areas so that the Government of Sudan knows what it has to do, can do on the basis of its own commitment within a short period. The short length of that period, 30 days, is the outcome of a resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations, and the Security Council exerts pressure, you can use this word indeed. It is political pressure and the

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Secretary-General has mentioned a couple of times in statements that political pressure is desirable, necessary and effective. The UN does not have many other instruments at hand than carrying on political pressure but it is always political pressure based on: firstly; international consensus, not pressure by this country or another country, but rather a common pressure of the whole international community and it is not arbitrary. It is always pressure based upon international standards. For instance the international conventions on human rights. It is not a Dutch one or a UK one or a Sudanese one. It is a world standard. So, pressure to do what you have to do on the basis of what you are a party to. Sudan is a party to the international covenants on the rights of the individual people.

We have to exert pressure on all countries to do so, not only on Sudan. For instance also on my country, the Netherlands, if there is an act against the human rights or foreigners, then there will be pressure from the international community on the Dutch government to stop such acts. Pressure is not one-sided on this or another country, it is an international instrument on countries to comply with international standards.

Q: The Sudanese government agreed the plan of action less than a week ago and yesterday OCHA released a statement saying that it had continued air attacks in Darfur. How do you feel this will impact on the plan of action? How does this affect your initially professed optimism that the Sudanese government could achieve doable things within the 3 weeks forward? How does this affect your optimism on that, has that changed?

SRSG: My optimism is based on my talk with the government and whether it is justified or not has to be checked on the 31st of August, at the end of the thirty days and it is always difficult, in a period of 30 days, to change the situation right a way. Attacks as reported have to be checked; when they took place, where they took place, we are checking that at the moment. Information is necessary but they have to be very concrete.

Q. You mentioned that there is a pressure exerted upon the government by the international community but this pressure is not exerted on the other party that is violating human rights. What is the role of the UN in pressuring the other party so as to stop its practices? What is the attitude of the UN regarding the statement made by the EU, the day before in Brussels, that there is no genocide?

SRSG: Thank you, this is a very concrete question. Firstly: We exert pressures on all parties involved in the conflict and it would not be fair only to exert pressure on the government of Sudan if you would not exert pressure on the rebels. I will give you examples: we have exerted pressure on the rebels to go to the negotiating table as soon as possible, to take these negotiations seriously and to discuss also at these negotiations maintaining the cease-fire, laying down weapons in the selected areas. We also did have, as you may be aware, a meeting with leaders of the rebel movements in Asmara last weekend in order to put pressure on them, to exercise restraint. This is exactly the same language you find also in the action plan as far as the military activities are concerned. It is an even-handed approach.

Secondly: There was a meeting yesterday in Brussels on the basis of the findings of the European mission. They said explicitly that there was no evidence which they had met of genocide. They said explicitly that there was no evidence. They did not say that there was no genocide. They said there was no evidence of genocide, which is different, of course. But I am not speaking on behalf of the European Union, I am speaking on behalf of the United Nations. I can only say the following: there have been allegations that what is happening at

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the moment in Darfur is genocide. Allegations. Allegations are always serious and for that reason the Secretary-General has requested his special rapporteur to carry out investigations in Darfur. Until that report of special rapporteur on genocide has been drafted and has been presented to the Secretary General, the United Nations refrains from any judgment, whether there is or whether there is not, because you have to investigate. I would wish to say that people and the press and governments always ought to be very cautious using language already labeling a specific situation as cleansing or genocide or anything else. You have to get the evidence before you use a specific label and you have to investigate it.

By the way, whether or not there is genocide to be investigated, to be judged, we know that there are atrocities, that there are violations of human rights, that there is rape also of young girls. I was in the meeting with the ministers of foreign affairs in Cairo, of the Arab League and there, many ministers said that there is no genocide. I said please read your own report of the League of Arab States. Read the report and in that report which is not a UN report or an EC report but an Arab League report there are the words killings, lethal beatings, rape, mass terror. That is bad enough and you do not have to wait until there is another label. It is bad enough and it requires action to stop rape, killings, lethal beatings and terror. That is what the EU, the League of Arab States, the AU and the UN have to do together with all the authorities in Sudan. That is the important issue for the short term.

Q. In the plan of action, you have used the term laying down of militias arms, did you abandon disarming of militias as stated in the UN Security Council resolution 1556?

SRSG: To lay down arms is the beginning of disarmament effort. You can not disarm in 30 days. You have to organize disarmament programs equally because two or even more parties and it would not be wise to disarm one party and let the other parties to continue. So you start cautiously by laying down arms then parties do still those arms but if they have laid down their arms they do not use them any more. Then later they can be collected from all sides together in the form of an integrated approach. Integrated disarmament and demobilization effort. So you have to start by not using the arms. And that the experience in many other disarmament activities when there has been a war or a civil war in Ethiopia, in Rwanda, in Mozambique, in Angola. So we are building on that experience. Disarmament is the end. Laying down arms, not using the arms is the beginning. It is beginning of what has been mentioned as a commitment also of the government of Sudan in a communiqué. It is the beginning of the requirements laid down in the resolution of the Security Council.

Q. The action plan stated that securing roads and safe areas is assigned to police, it included creation of confidence. Doesn't the international community trust the military forces, or it considers it a sort of Janjaweed or militia? Why the military forces are excluded and the plan of action stated that the military forces have to be away?

SRSG: Confidence building is always a terminology used as far as a domestic conflict is concerned. You can have a cease-fire, on violence any more. It is a beginning to get a bit laying down arms, to achieve sustainable peace and development cease –fire is not enough. You have to get a political solution. For a political solution, you have to trust each other, otherwise you will never have a political solution. You have to trust each other, you have to confide in each other. You can not do that easily because you have fought against each other, so you have to change the attitude of fighting into an attitude of full cooperation with each other, living together. We knew that from so many domestic conflicts. You have to do that gradually, to build gradually confidence in each other, and then you need mutual steps. What

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we have learned from all these conflicts, not only in Africa by the way, we learned the same in Afghanistan, in Bosnia, that sustainable peace can not be reached over right, it is a process, step by step, gradually and we call that confidence building in order to reach final domestic peace. So it is not confidence building between the international community and Sudan, it is confidence building within a society.

As to your second question, the military forces are not excluded. If you read the action plan you will see that there is one paragraph related in particular to the military and that action plan which I discussed with President Bashir says that the military has to refrain from those selected areas, safe areas, refrain from aggressive military activities. If they are being attacked, they have the right to self-defense, but not to go after the attacker. Not to retaliate in order to show restraints and then they have to be redeployed, which means to go away from civilians IDPs in camps in order to show to these civilians and people in camps that there is a distance. People, particularly civilians, are always afraid of the military, many people also afraid of the police. You ought not to be afraid of the police, but that is a fact. So, you have to create a situation whereby people are no longer afraid of people with arms, militia away, the army away from people who fear the army, police ought to protect the people rather than attack them, and that why you also need international observers and monitors to create that feeling of safety, the feeling of security that is was behind the first paragraph of the plan of action.

Q. There is a confusion regarding your recent agreement with Mustafa Osman, minister of foreign affairs. Is it about the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution or about the implementation of the communiqué signed between the UN SG and the GoS? If it was for the implementation of the communiqué, do we need an action plan every 30 days within the coming sixty days?

SRSG: It is not a substitute for the communiqué, it is as I said before an instrumentalization of the communiqué in a short period on the basis of the implementation of the plan of action, we will have to review and change that plan of action for the period thereafter, finally to meet all the requirements and commitments in that communiqué. But the communiqué itself did not contain commitment which all has to be met in 30 days, No, it is in a longer period. No confusion any more.

Q. Do you see any voluntary return of IDPs soon, if so, what kind of assistance are you going to offer them, since they lost every thing when they fled?

SRSG: I do not see voluntary return taking place soon. Not this month, not very soon. All the IDPs whom we are meeting say they are willing to return as soon as there is security back home. There is no security back home, we are afraid, afraid, afraid! . That is not been taken away soon. There is also another problem; the rains, but that is a different issue.

We mean that we have to help the government of Sudan to create that security, may be not in all Darfur right a way, but in those pockets, selected areas soon so that people can return. But always voluntary. As long as they do not dare to go, we have to help, but please understand that whatever help received from the international community, Sudanese have to help as well. I want also Sudanese NGOs and Sudanese doctors, nurses, local authorities to help IDPs As long as Sudanese would say it is only a humanitarian problem and that is for the international community to take care of, you are wrong if you would say that. You have to do it yourself and we help. These are your people, they are not foreigners, they are Sudanese people who

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have been driven away from their houses. It is the responsibility of the Sudanese authorities to help, of their own people and we can help from outside as long as you are poor people, a poor country, it is a joint effort.

Q. You are expected to present a report on Darfur to the Secretary General who in turn will submit it to the Security Council of the UN by the end of this month. We would like to know the main aspects of this report through your follow-up of the government efforts in the previous period? You have just mentioned that there is no voluntary return of the IDPs while you have stated the opposite in the second agreement signed with the minister of foreign affairs? Is that part of the pressures exerted on the government?

SRSG: I will report on the implementation of all the paragraphs of the communiqué and of the plan of action paragraph by paragraph. What has been done, what has not been done. I hopefully for each paragraph I can be positive. We have a couple of weeks.

Secondly: you are right. There was the mission of the JIM (the joint implementation mechanism) which is a Sudanese-international community, two co-chairs, Mr. Mustafa and me, the mission visited a number of areas where some people had got back to. The mission concluded that those people who had come back, not very many by the way, few, declared that they had not been forced, which is important. What we did say was, there is clearly a policy of the government not to force people to return. I might say at the same time that, locally, still there is pressure but the policy of the government is not to force return and the people met by the mission has gone there voluntarily.

I have just answered five minutes ago another question, namely: Do you envisage voluntary return in the next couple of weeks? I said : No, I do not envisage voluntary return in the next couple of weeks. Some individuals, yes, but not at a mass scale because all people say we would like to go back but we are afraid. They are still afraid and that is why we do not foresee in the next couple of weeks voluntary return.

I am pleased to say that also I have received from the government a commitment that they will not force people back homes when people do not go voluntarily. That will create a situation whereby many people still in the camps and they have to be assisted.

Q. Why didn't you mention Janjaweed militia by its name in the plan of action, is that some sort of revision of the Security Council resolution so as to make it more acceptable to the government of Sudan?

SRSG: I think we say all militia in the plan of action. There are Janjaweed militia and there are other militias, and not all militias are Janjaweed and not all Janjaweed are militia, that why I use that are overall concept of militia which are paramilitary in order not to exclude any possible group, in order to be as comprehensive as possible. That was the only reason why I used that terminology. Not to please anybody, but to be complete.

Q. Did you find, through the JIM, genocide or ethnic cleansing? We want your clear opinion, because certain organization handle the issue as ethnic cleansing and genocide.

SRSB: I have answered that question already, fifty minutes ago, what I did say: such a label ought to be the result of a thorough investigation, it is being investigated, until there is a report of the special rapporteur, nobody should use that language yet. Or, perhaps nobody should have to use that language. First, an investigation is an investigation. Do not use premature language. I again repeat that even if you don't use that language and the other language: terror, rape, killing. That is bad enough.

Q. What about the international assistant, the latest report from OCHA said that the assistant provided is not in its overall more than 40% to 46% .

SRSB: You are quiet right. I am very pleased to be able to answer that question because it is not enough. Food 80% more or less. Water and health less than 50%, that is not good. Moreover, we will have more IDPs and we will have to look forward. We are now working on an assessment of the needs until the end of the year. I will come out with that assessment very soon. I am asking the international community to do what they have to do, to make more available, all countries. I did send that same plea also to the rich Arab states, because there are some rich Arab states. The Arab states also should really give assistance, but not only they, also the west. There are some western countries, which have not done enough so far. So we put a lot of pressure. The USA has done a lot, the EC has done a lot. Some members of the EU have not done enough. So, we put a lot of pressure in order to get adequate assistance.

That's all, thank you very much.