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UNITED NATIONS ADVANCE MISSION IN THE SUDAN

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Office of the Spokesperson

PRESS BRIEFING

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's weekly briefing (12:30PM) by Radhia Achouri, Spokesperson for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan:

SRSG:

Following the killing of two national staff members of Save the Children UK on 12 December, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jan Pronk, issued a statement from NY, where he is currently, condemning in the strongest terms the brutal killing of the two humanitarian workers. Copies of the statement are available. "The fact that the workers themselves seem to have become the target of fighting poses severe difficulties for humanitarian access, with grave consequences for assistance in the future," he said. The SRSG Pronk called upon the parties to respect the principles of international humanitarian law and reminded the Sudanese Government of its responsibility to protect humanitarian workers in its territory.

Save the Children-UK (SC-UK) released a statement on 13 December, which we distributed to you, announcing the killing of its national staff members while travelling in a clearly marked convoy on the main road between Mershing and Duma in South Darfur. The agency further stated that it has suspended its operations in South Darfur, including its operations in Duma where it runs a feeding centre and medical clinics, while it reviews the situation.

Save the Children UK has issued today a second press release on the tragic killing of its staff members, which is also available for you in Arabic and English versions.

Political

Naivasha

The Naivasha peace talks re-started after a brief pause with the return of Vice President Taha to the conference site. The delegations from both GoS and the SPLM continue to work towards a comprehensive peace agreement by the end of 2004. The parties seem optimistic that they will be able to finalize their comprehensive peace agreement within the agreed deadline of the end of this month.

Abuja Talks

The Darfur peace talks resumed in Abuja, Nigeria with the participation of both rebel groups (JEM and SLM) and GoS. The parties heard from the AU CFC on the current security situation in the three Darfur states and the list of cease-fire violations allegedly committed

since the signing of the Abuja Protocols on 9 Nov. 2004. The AU proposed to the parties to discuss the security situation prevailing in the Darfur region before opening discussion on the declaration of principals. The mediation suggested also to convene tomorrow a meeting of the Joint Ceasefire Commission (established by the N'Djamena Agreement on Humanitarian Ceasefire dated 8 April 2004). The meeting was adjourned for 24 hrs at the request of the movements and is expected to continue tomorrow.

The mediation team held consultations yesterday with the Government of Sudan delegation and, afterwards, with the SLM. The Government's delegation has agreed to the mediation proposals (speedy communication of its plans to disarm the Janjaweed/militia, and an immediate end to its current offensive) if the movements were prepared to accept their part (communicate their locations to the Joint Commission, commit to abstain from attacking commercial traffic). The Government's delegation suggested an addition: both parties return to their positions of 8 April 2004. The SLM/A has not provided yet a specific reaction on the mediation proposals or to a commitment to attend the Joint Commission meeting planned for next Thursday.

Humanitarian issues

- The Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian affairs and Development, Manuel Aranda Da Silva traveled to West Darfur on 12-13 December. In El Geneina, he was accompanied by IOM and UNHCR, where the team clarified for the authorities, UN agencies and INGOs the roles of the two organizations regarding return and relocation. Discussions were held with the Wali who promised no return or relocation would take place without consultations with the stakeholders as per the agreement with IOM and the Memorandum of Understanding under negotiation with UNHCR. The DSRSG also visited Mornei camp where it appeared as though the humanitarian situation had stabilized. However, the DSRSG remains concerned with the security situation in the surrounding areas which prevent IDPs from returning to their own villages.

- The Darfur Humanitarian Profile as of 1 November 2004 has been released yesterday. Here are the main findings of the report:

- There are an estimated **1.65 million** IDPs in the Darfur region. The total number of conflict affected persons is estimated at **2, 279,266**. This figure includes 50,000 people who were identified since last month as result of the verification of previous registration numbers. As of 1 November, it is estimated that: **food** was delivered to **57%** of the conflict affected persons(CAP); **61%** received **shelter** and **Non Food Items**; **43%** of CAP has access to **clean water**, **52%** of IDPs are covered by **sanitation activities**; **60%** of the CAF have access to **primary health care**; **52%** of the same population has access to **secondary health care** facilities and the routine expanded program of **immunization** covered **32% of all children less than 1 year old** against diphtheria, pertussis, whooping cough and tetanus.
- Since 1 July, the number of **humanitarian staff** has notably increased to reach a total of **6,653** and the number of **international staff**, which stands currently at a total of **788**, has more than doubled. The current ratio stands at **1 aid worker per 348 beneficiaries**. However, the number of aid workers is expected to increase in the coming months.

- Despite prevailing insecurity in the three Darfur States, **79% of Darfur conflict affected population is currently accessible to UN humanitarian workers.**
- Most of the underserved area remain rebel-held, many of which have not been accessible to UN agencies because of a series of security incidents and a delay in obtaining SLA agreement and understanding of humanitarian rules and principles laid out in agreements.
- Increased banditry and deterioration in the security situation continue to pose a major threat to improvement of the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- **For more information, please refer to the full report at: <http://www.unsudanig.org/emergencies/darfur/profile/index.jsp?fid=oct-dec>.**

Security Issues:

North Darfur: There are unconfirmed reports on fighting yesterday between GoS forces and the SLA in an area located north-eastern of Al Fasher. No further information is available. Except for this incident, the security situation over the past week seemed to have subsided with no incidents reported since those of 7 and 8 Dec. UN officials conducted an assessment of the Thabit – Shangil Tobayi – Abuserega – El Fasher road and cleared it for UN operations. UNMAS and OCHA subsequently traveled to some of the areas on 12 December, including to Gallab and Thabit. UNMAS is clearing the area of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and OCHA is undertaking a humanitarian assessment. The teams report that the approximately 16,000 IDPs that had fled the 22 November attacks on Tawilla to Thabit have now scattered in the surrounding areas after the 7 December attacks on Thabit. However, the IDPs that had fled Gallab fearing a potential attack on 8 December have subsequently returned to the camp. The fighting in Thabit on 7 and 8 December had reportedly resulted in 4 civilian fatalities and 20 injuries. One civilian was reportedly arrested by the GoS troops. GoS troops were also reported to have attacked Gerib Shama in the Dar es Salaam area on 8 December.

South Darfur: Fighting continues in areas east and southeast of Nyala town. In addition to the incident involving SC-UK staff members, fighting was reported in the villages of Bashom, Eida, Ishma, Um Zehefa, Reil and surrounding areas to the east of these locations on 12 and 13 December. Moreover, the reported build up of rival armed groups in these areas have raised serious concerns in the humanitarian community. UN operations and movements have been suspended in these areas due to the insecurity. Two international NGOs report that they have relocated staff from Muhujariya to Sheriya due to uncertainty about the security situation in the area.

-Humanitarian agencies report that Arab militias had entered some sections of Kalma camp in the evening of 13 December, randomly shooting into the air, and looted personal items from some huts and livestock belonging to some new arrivals.

Protection Issues:

South Darfur

-Agencies are working within the framework of the Management and Coordination Mechanism (MCM), the operational arm of a GoS-IOM MoU on voluntary return, in order to conduct voluntary and appropriate relocation of some of the IDPs in Kalma and El Geir camps. IDP leaders, GoS authorities, and humanitarian agencies are currently working together to identify potential sites and assess the sites both in terms of the social composition of the areas and the technical aspects of the sites.

Greater Equatoria: An Inter-Agency Assessment was conducted in the southern Sudanese counties of Morobu, Yei and Lainya from 13 - 18 Nov. in response to reports of Sudanese refugees returning from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda due to security concerns. Reports had indicated that Sudanese refugees, who had been living in the DRC for the last 20 years, were beginning to return due to having been caught between inter-tribal fighting and having been directly targeted by local militias. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) activities have also forced some Sudanese refugees to return from Northern Uganda. The Assessment found that 8,404 people had returned to Equatoria from the DRC and Uganda between July and Nov 2004.

Southern Sudan:

Many IDPs and refugees have been encouraged by the relative calm and promising prospects for a comprehensive peace agreement between the GoS and the SPLM/A to begin returning to their areas of origin. So far in 2004, some 420,000 displaced persons and some 130,000 refugees have returned to southern areas, including transitional areas (Abyei, Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile).

Food/NFIs

North Darfur:

- Agencies have agreed to use Thabit as a central distribution point to reach the approximately 16,000 IDPs that were dispersed to surrounding areas after the attack on Thabit on 7 Dec. A distribution of NFIs will be carried out from 16 to 18 Dec. and MSF-Spain will carry out a health screening on these same dates. The local area commander and community leaders were requested to inform the IDPs of these distribution plans.

- Agencies report that new IDPs continue to stream into Abu Shouk camp. Meanwhile, negotiations with local GoS authorities to secure a site to accommodate the 20,000 or so new arrivals in the past two weeks are ongoing. Agencies hope that the decision to set up an Abu Shouk II will be granted as rapidly as possible to allow for the adequate establishment of water supplies and the planning of the lay out of the camp.

South Darfur:

- As a result of ongoing violence, WFP and its implementing partners have restricted their movements into areas north and east of Nyala. However, food convoys have been dispatched to Kass, Kubum, Ed Daein and to West Darfur without security incidents. WFP is also preparing to assist the approximately 2,000 new arrivals into Kalma camp and the approximately 1,000 recent arrivals in Beliel camp.

West Darfur:

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- WFP reports that it completed distribution of food to affected populations in Garsilla, Deleig and Um Kheir and plans to distribute another round of food rations before the end of the month of December. Intersos, Oxfam, NCA, IRC, Solidarites all plan to increase their interventions in the Zalingei corridor, covering Garsilla, Deleij, Mukhjar, Bindisi, Um Kher, Um Dukhum, Nertiti and Zalingei.
- Khartoum: Demolitions in the camps and squatter areas in greater Khartoum have created the need for shelter and NFIs. Currently, 20,000 House Holds in Soba Aradi, El Salaam and Wad el Beshir are in need of shelter. It is expected that this need will increase throughout the cold season. FAR will distribute 6,000 blankets and 6,000 pieces of plastic sheeting to the most vulnerable families affected by the demolition in el Salaam and Wad el Bashir camps.
- Greater Upper Nile: Food production and, thus, the livelihoods of much of the population in the surrounding areas of Bentiu/Rubkona have been severely affected by cattle raiding and forced taxation on fishing by local militias. Militias demanding high and illegal taxes at fishing sites have discouraged significant numbers of people from fishing as an alternative to depending on livestock.

In early Nov. 2004, the State Ministry of Agriculture in Upper Nile reported that crop production this season is not as strong as last season's due to drought and insecurity. FAO is launching a programme to increase fruit production in Upper Nile and Jonglei States that includes a training seminar for fruit tree growers in Malakal which began in late Nov.

Q: Are there any updates on the circumstances that led to the killing of the two Save the Children national staff members?

The second is on the Joint Commission between the UN and the GoS, more specifically the Ministry of Justice, on human rights, investigations on human rights issues and whether the commission has started working, what it is doing, and so on.

A: On your first question on the latest we have about the situation surrounding the killing of the two Save the Children national staff, the AU is currently investigating on the issue and we have some indications pointing out at some rebel movements that might be implicated in this issue. We however still do not have any confirmed findings or reports from the AU. Once we have it we will keep you informed.

On the second question, the commission referred to is actually a sub-JAM commission agreed upon between the GoS and the UN and its partners. The members of this sub-commission are having consultations on the definition of the Terms of Reference of the sub-commission, its methods of work and so on. Consultations are actually taking place on procedural issues pertaining to the setup of the commission but it has not yet met on substantive issues and we are expecting it to hold the a substantive meeting – the first one of this sub-JAM commission – in the forthcoming weeks.

Q: In your previous briefings, I thought you stated strongly that the UN is not pressurizing any party to bring peace in this country. But the SRSRG stated in his press conference in New York that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council must not leave the negotiating parties an alternative but to find a political road to the separate crisis in Darfur. My question is: what does he mean by saying that the negotiating parties not be left with an alternative.

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Secondly: The Security Council had been urging the GoS with sanctions unless the government brings the crisis to a cooler situation. But the situation is now heating up. This involves the last incident which the UN described as the brutal killing of the aid workers. What does the UN plan to do in future in order to stop such atrocities in the Darfur region instead of only just condemning them – which is now routine?

Jan Pronk also said last month that the deployment of the peace monitoring forces is going to be I think 7,000. Also in his last conference in New York, he increased the number from 9-10,000. What caused him to increase this number?

A: From the bottom up: the figures provided by Mr. Pronk should be looked up in context. He provided these figures for an indicative purpose. You know that for us to decide on the number, you need first to have a peace agreement which is not yet there. Two: after the peace agreement is signed, the Security Council will have to sit and draw a mandate for the peace support mission. All these figures are just given as examples – none are final figures. These figures will be set up on a final basis once the Secretary General is going to provide the Security Council with an actual proposal for what kind of level is required for that peace support mission to deliver the mandate that will be given to it by the Security Council based on the comprehensive peace agreement to be signed by the parties. So please when referring to these figures they should be referred to as an indicative and not official figures.

On the LRA and what they are doing. Sir, I don't know why the Security Council did not react. That question should be asked to the members of the Security Council. I don't know why the Security Council did not act. Whatever is brought to you here is brought to the attention of course of the UN legislative bodies and the Security Council makes up its mind and reacts to whatever it deems appropriate. So I don't have an answer to your question on the LRA

On the Security Council and what it would do to reverse the situation if the situation continues to deteriorate, I am quiet sure that you have been following the line of thinking of the Security Council and whatever it has been doing. Yes, the Security Council started threatening by the use of sanctions and all that. The threat of sanctions is still there regardless of all the interpretations that were given mistakenly to the last Security Council resolution adopted in Nairobi. That Security Council resolution adopted in Nairobi, in its preamble reiterated all previous resolutions pertaining to Darfur; hence reaffirming and confirming again all the provisions including the ones that would touch upon sanctions. On how the situation could be reversed and what could be done, it is yet to be seen. However for the time being, we are giving lots of room for diplomatic efforts. With all these meetings taking place, we are putting as much weight as possible behind the Abuja process. The AU is doing the same because we do believe that the situation on the ground can not be reversed as long as there is no serious commitment to a peaceful negotiated solution to the whole situation in Darfur. So we are putting lots of weight there. All actors, be it the UN or others are pushing towards the direction, but by the end of the day if the parties themselves do not commit to their agreements, do not heed to their appeals, do not comply to Security Council resolutions and continue breaching the agreement and doing what they are doing now on the ground, then the Security Council – I am just guessing – will at some point take the appropriate decision to address the situation. I would expect also the AU to proceed along the same lines. As you know, the AU is the lead, politically, in this issue, and is also the lead on operational basis since they are deployed there to monitor the ceasefire and do a lot of other things in Darfur. Now we are trying to redirect all efforts around the table of negotiations and are however following up very closely what is happening and of course all this is going to be brought to the Security Council. And then you will know from the Security Council if it is going to limit

itself at condemning only or they are going to be more pro-active and have something else – but that's for the Security Council to decide.

On your first question on the statement where we said we are not pressuring the parties to make peace and what has been said by Jan Pronk, I think that you put the statement in the wrong context. I think I said the statement at some point in a context. I did not say that we are not pressuring people to have peace. What I said is yes we are trying to help the parties get to peace eventually. However, if they are not willing to do so, nobody is going to make that peace for them. They have to bring it, they have to work for it and they have to do it themselves. Peace has to be the product of the parties. We are here to help and to assist and if they fail, well there are other issues to be considered and then the international community will have to say something about this since the Security Council will have to be seized by the matter.

What Jan Pronk said is not a new thing and has been his stand on the issue for a long time now. Jan Pronk has always said that the Security Council members particularly at the B5 level will have to be united in all their voice. And as long as they are not united, they can not drive or help drive the process to safe harbors. By being united, the message will be strongest and the parties will listen to it more carefully compared to a message that they know is just a compromise between members of the Security Council that have some differences in position in terms of how, in the long run, to resolve this issue of Sudan in general and Darfur in particular. That's his stand.

The other pillar of SRSG's thinking is that: yes, we encourage political talks, yes, we give enough trust to the parties who are in Naivasha. However, they should understand that this is their last chance before the eyes of the international community since they signed an MoU witnessed by all members of the Security Council in writing and before their own people. Because they made the promise that they will make it by that deadline. If they fail this time, well nobody will be trusting them any more. This is what Mr. Pronk had in mind when he said what he said.

Q: Jan Pronk has asked members of the Security Council (*inaudible*). Does that indicate there is a split within the Security Council?

A: He was not talking about a current split since the Security Council is not meeting on the Sudan for this particular issue. Of course the Security Council will be meeting immediately in the event of a signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. What Mr. Pronk has been referring to is the previous atmosphere in the Security Council when they were negotiating the resolutions that were already in existence. All of us know that the Security Council members did not have exactly the same line of thinking, did not have the same approach, but eventually they managed to get a consensus text. But it should be more than a consensus text. Mr. Pronk wants the Council to be unanimous – completely unanimous behind the resolutions that it issues because the more unanimous the Security Council is, the better it's messages are heard and understood by everybody else. This is actually what he meant. He was not referring to a current situation taking place in the Council but drawing from the surroundings of past negotiations of past resolutions, he appealed to the Council to be as united as possible and actually is appealing to everybody to be as united as possible. He is calling upon all parties on the negotiations table, be it in Naivasha or Abuja, to really come with clear visions, substantial proposals, open minds and so on and for the rebel groups to come with a united front and message because that's the way to go. I mean you can not work on still tentative things. His message to the Security Council is an old one. He has been saying that since he began his assignment. I do believe that that is also the message of the Secretary General himself to the Security Council not only on Sudan but on all issues because the responsibility

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of the Council is so important that the unity of the Council is a must for any issue to be considered by the Council and really dealt with in a proper way.

Before you go, please those you did not receive accreditation with us, next week we will be moving to the new building – that is in Garden City. For that building please again we need to issue you with accreditations. Please get in touch with my office to have these accreditations issued before we move to the new building. I don't know how many of you have the cards but please come to my office to get the accreditation forms.

If there are no more questions then thank you.