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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:

Good afternoon,

SG/UNSC

The Secretary-General's monthly report on Darfur has been released on Monday. We will provide copies as soon as possible.

In his report, the Secretary-General says that the security situation in Darfur in March saw no improvement. He reports increased military activity undertaken by all parties and attacks against international personnel. The Government, he says, continues to pursue the military option on the ground with little apparent regard for the commitments it has entered into.

The killing of civilians and combatants alike must stop, he urges, and a genuine ceasefire must be observed. He notes that the African Union's Peace and Security Council will meet later this week to decide on steps to strengthen the African Union mission. The Secretary-General himself is expected to submit by 24 April a report to the Security Council on how to reinforce the African Union effort in Darfur. No date has been set yet by the Security Council for a discussion of this report.

SRSG

-The SRSG Jan Pronk is back to Khartoum after his trip to Oslo and Paris. In Oslo, he participated in the Donors Conference. In Paris, he met with French High officials, including the Foreign Affairs Minister, Michel Barnier, to discuss with them ways and means by which the French Government could support humanitarian activities of the UN in Sudan, the deployment of UNMIS as well as support for the AU Mission in Darfur.

-The SRSG is meeting today with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mustafa Ismail. The main two issues to be discussed are: the results of the Oslo Donors Conference and their implementation and the Status of Forces Agreement.

Military update

-General Akbar, the Force Commander along with Head of Mission of the Verification and Monitoring Team (VMT) had a meeting with Commander Salva Kiir, Chief of the SPLA and

Dr Justin, SPLM Representative at Nairobi on 14 April 2005 at the SPLA office at Nairobi. Discussions focused on the UNMIS Military Deployment to assist and support the CPA based on SC resolution No 1590.

- The Force Commander will be conducting a two days visit on 21 and 22 April to Malakal, Wao and Juba to assess the ground preparations for UNMIS troops' deployment. Deputy Force Commander Brigadier General Gregory Mitchell along with two staff officers visited Juba on 18 April 05 and saw the arrangements being made for troops deployment in the sector.

- As of today 05, 44 Headquarters Staff Officers have arrived in Khartoum. Key Military will be taking part in a pre-deployment training programme in Nairobi from 28 April to 16 May. Military Liaison officers have been deployed in most sectors and Staff officers are shuttling between Khartoum and sectors to fine-tune the deployment schedule of troops. The Military Observers UNMOs and troops will start deploying in the mission area starting from next month.

South/South dialogue:

UNMIS is participating as an observer in the South-South dialogue which started yesterday. The Principal DSRSG Taye Brook Zerihoun represented UNMIS at the official opening of the dialogue yesterday. Over 200 delegates were expected to attend the dialogue, including the SPLM/A leadership, pro-GoS militias, various armed groups and civil society representatives to discuss peace-building, inclusiveness, reconciliation, and good governance.

Humanitarian

Visit to Sudan by the Acting High Commissioner for Refugees

The Acting High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Wendy Chamberlin, has started a five-day visit to Sudan and Chad. After visiting two sites where people displaced by the 21-year civil war live on the outskirts of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, Ms. Chamberlin said UNHCR and the international community will hold the Sudanese government responsible for protecting its own people and helping them go back to their original homes, if that is what they want. She stressed that the same principles apply to people displaced within their own country as to the return of refugees - that their movements must be voluntary and carried out in safety and dignity.

Women from the southern Nuba Mountains - who have been living for the past 17 years in a camp on the outskirts of Khartoum - told Ms. Chamberlin of their worries about going home: the expensive bus fare back to the south, the fact that their children would not have as good schools as in Khartoum, and fears that they would not find land on which to farm.

Yesterday, Ms. Chamberlin traveled to Nyala in South Darfur, where she visited some of the nearly 2 million people displaced by the separate Darfur conflict, on top of those displaced by the civil war in the south. She stressed UNHCR's role in protecting displaced people, especially in counseling and helping women victims of rape. Later this week, she plans to cross the border into Chad, where we are taking care of some 200,000 Darfur refugees.

Returns and relocation

- In South Darfur, a new IDP site, to be named 'Salam,' shall open this week at Hashaba, near Kalma. IOM and HAC have come to agreement on all major issues related to the voluntary relocation of IDPs from Kalma.
- IDPs originally from West Darfur are being pressured to return to Wadi Saleh or Mukjar localities. The Governor's 'Return Committee' is offering financial incentives to encourage return, despite clear understanding of the MCM agreement.
- 197 returnees were registered passing through Kosti on 17 April to various locations in south Sudan.

Security:

- Kor Abeche and Neitega in S Darfur remain calm. Arab militia are reported to be moving west and north of Neitega in an attempt to cut the rebel links from Jebel Marra to Sheriya locality. There is likely to be a reaction by the rebel movements.
- The Minister of Social Welfare in Bentiu held a meeting with OCHA and WFP on 14 April. He stated that there was an attack in the cattle camps surrounding Nhialdiu on 23 March 2005 carried out by the Leek tribe on the Bul tribe. According to the Minister, 20 people were reported killed with 24,000 heads of cattle looted by the Leek group. The Minister added that approximately 6,000-10,000 civilians were displaced into Nhialdiu as a result of fighting. The Bul regrouped and launched a counter attack on the Leek, sending more civilians into Nhialdiu and further into Bentiu and Rubkona. Currently there are an estimated 6,000-10,000 people, mostly women and children, in Nhialdiu that require urgent assistance in the water, food and medical sectors, the Minister said. OCHA and WFP are planning to send an assessment mission to the area.
- On 14 April tension between the tribesmen aligned with the SPLA and other armed forces has been reported around Murle village.
- On 14 April fighting reportedly broke out between SLA and Arab Militia from Masry, Daba Toga, and in the Abdul Bagir area of N Darfur on 13 April 2005. Seven people were killed and two wounded during the fight.
- On 14 April, 11 Sudanese Ministry of Health polio vaccinators were detained in areas north of Kutum (N Darfur) by SLA. They were released promptly, but their vehicles have not yet been recovered.
- On 15 April, a national staff member of an INGO was shot and killed in the Golo area. Preliminary information states the shooting is likely to be connected to a personal issue, unrelated to the work of the INGO. There are concerns regarding a pattern of incidents targeting humanitarian organizations perpetrated by pro-government militia in the area.
- On 15 April, militias reportedly looted 100 cows from nomads north of Um Kasara (S Darfur). No injuries reported.

Protection

- Serious protection concerns have been reported 3-5km north of El Daein (S Darfur), where pro-government militias are reportedly harassing and looting properties. Discussions with the AU are ongoing to devise strategies in order to address the situation.
- On 14 Apr at Humber village the Sheik was arrested by armed Arab militias and detained at Mugasat check point for two days. However, he was released with the help of the GOS Police.

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e-mail: achouri@un.org

Human rights:

- OHCHR and the AU CIVPOL conducted an assessment of Sisi (W Darfur). The community highlighted that there had been increased harassment by armed militia. The team met with four rape victims who outlined their stories which had taken place over the last two weeks. The cases had been reported to the police but when questioned, the police denied having received the reports.

Food

During the 17 April OCHA Weekly Coordination Meeting in Nyala, S Darfur, there was consensus among several organizations that food shortages in South Darfur are to be expected because most of the farmers are becoming IDPs, and because of the lack of preparations for the upcoming farming season.

Health

We have an update for you on health from WHO. Other than that, we have the following report from WHO and UNICEF:

WHO: 2nd Crude Mortality Survey

The second round of the Crude Mortality Survey has been launched with the agreement of the Government of Sudan, Ministry of Health and the support of all the United Nations agencies and International health Non-Governmental Organizations operating in Darfur. The humanitarian coordinator of the UN country team is coordinating the interagency exercise.

WHO has the responsibility for setting the methodology and analysis of the data. The survey is conducted with the participation of FMOH, UN agencies and NGOs. The preparatory phase started April 7 in Cairo with a technical meeting attended by FMOH, WFP and WHO. The protocol and methodology are planned to be finalized next week for dissemination to all participating partners. The proposed starting time for field work and data collection, is the 1st week of May and will continue for a period of between 4 and 6 weeks. The preliminary report is expected by mid June.

UNICEF:

- Polio National Immunization Days from 11-13 April were completed, but new polio cases are still appearing (3 new ones in 3 different states). This means that the situation is still very fluid, that routine immunization needs to be strengthened (the NIDs are expensive and not the answer in the long run). There is also a need to increase social mobilization so that parents know that polio requires multiple (at least 3) doses. Preliminary reports indicate that in West Darfur, 99.4% of the targeted 326,328 children under 5 were immunized.

-UNICEF, WHO, Khartoum State Ministry of Health and a few NGOs completed a rapid health and nutrition assessment in the Khartoum state IDP camps and squatter areas. Results indicate that the situation of these residents is not desperate: no major problems with access to health facilities (though frequently they have financial problems to pay for the health services and prescribed treatments). Malnutrition rates relatively low (3-4% in most areas, up to 7% in a few).

-UNICEF and UNFPA completed a Situation Analysis in 7 locations in Darfur on how conflict has affected the wellbeing of girls and women. One of the main findings is that sexual and gender-based violence being amongst the major concerns, along with health and nutrition, sense of loss, etc.

- UNICEF, WFP and Accomplish and State Ministry of Education in Bahr el Jebel began assessment of schools for the Food for Education Programme. 75 schools – 50 in Juba and 25 surrounding ones will participate. Food distribution will start on May 1st.

Q: Regarding Khor Abeche, I wonder if you have a list of follow ups about how many people died there.

Spokesperson

I don't have any updates on the casualties. We are waiting for the African Union that is actually finalizing its report but we do not have an actual account of casualties as to date.

Q: I heard that it wasn't as destroyed as was stated.

Spokesperson

Actually the report on which we based ourselves for that joint statement between Kingibe and SRSG Jan Pronk was based on a preliminary assessment conducted by the African Union on the spot immediately. We are following it up and the African Union is, as I said, conducting a thorough assessment. We do not exclude at all that the extent of damage could have been less. Bear in mind that the African Union when it conducted its first assessment it did it by flying over the area by night. So they might have had a preliminary assessment that is not the actual account of what happened. So we are waiting for a final assessment on that.

Q: If the statistics were questionable at the time, then why are you so keen to put it out that this was so heavily destroyed? Have you received an assessment that is putting the figures much less?

Spokesperson

In terms of assessment, I would say that the only part that is the authority on those assessments is the African Union. However, the statement, if you are asking why we reacted immediately, it was not to highlight the extent of the destruction. The issue was on more important questions for us that was the breach to the ceasefire that was because we considered it as ...

Q: But the militia hasn't signed the ceasefire.

Spokesperson

No. We do not recognize militias. Militias are supposed to be citizens of Sudan and they are supposed to be controlled by the GoS one way or the other because they don't have a sovereignty of their own. The GoS is accountable for its citizens so if you have a citizen of a

different country and they are acting in certain ways, the GoS (and this is what we have been saying all along) has the responsibility to stop them.

To continue, the African Union, before the attack, was engaged in a mediation process. Although the mediation process was brought to the attention of all concerned, the attack still took place. So what we wanted to highlight by the statement is not mainly about fears. It is mainly an issue about principles regarding International Law and any applicable law and, by virtue of the agreements that they have signed, that attack should not have happened regardless of the extents of damage, of destruction.

Q: Do you think it damages your credibility when you put out a statement which was significantly inaccurate?

Spokesperson

I would not say it is an issue of credibility because, as I said, again, regardless of the extent of damage, and if there is something to correct we correct it – it is not as if we will deny it. When the African Union is going to do its thorough assessment of the extent of damage, we will report that it over-estimated the extent of damage. Well, they will be the first to announce it.

Q: How much damage is actually in the town? I heard that a team from the UN organization was flown in to assess the extent of the damage.

Spokesperson

We are not mandated to do that. That is the job of the African Union. What we do as United Nations, and you are right, there was an assessment team that went together with the African Union and the United Nations OCHA included were there. They visited the area. However, again, the authority in terms of asserting the final figure for destruction is the African Union and not the United Nations. You know that we are not mandated for monitoring anything that has to do with security and particularly anything that has to do with breaches of ceasefire.

Q: Why was there a joint statement?

Spokesperson

The joint statement is a political statement. You know that the Security Council requested the GoS and all parties to abide by the ceasefire and that is where we kick in. But on monitoring issues, that is the authority of the African Union.

Q: The Secretary-General spoke before the Security Council on the situation in Darfur during the month of March. He spoke of continued targeting of aid workers in the region. With reference to the situation that led to the withdrawal into Geneina of humanitarian workers, in general terms, what is your assessment of the current security situation in the region as far as humanitarian work is concerned?

Secondly; why in particular are humanitarian workers being targeted? What is the aim of such harassment targeting humanitarian workers?

Spokesperson

For further information, please contact UNAMIS Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri. Phone: (249) 392 270
e-mail: achouri@un.org

With regards to your question on the general security situation especially as far as humanitarian workers are concerned, the situation remains relatively the same as the situation we reported in March. Reports reaching us talk of continued harassment in a number of areas on humanitarian convoys and some humanitarian workers. This has, and of course still does, greatly affect our movements on the ground and hampered access to the needy. The situation has not seen any improvement, at least during the month of April. We have said more than once that there is much speculation in the situation in general and we can not say for sure that the situation is deteriorating or not deteriorating in a continuous way. Our report to the Security Council mainly describes incidents occurring during the specific period of one month.

Again, what we can tell you is that the security situation, especially in relation to humanitarian workers, has not much improved since our report to the Security Council. We have said in a number of occasions that basically the militias and highway robbers – outlaws more than any one else – are mainly responsible for such incidents targeting humanitarian workers.

We had also highlighted some difficulties and some violations carried out by the rebel parties but we had reached solutions to these issues with the rebel parties. The main problem remains with the outlaws and highway robbers because there is no one among them recognized as someone to negotiate with. As for the rebels, should any problem occur from their side, we talk with them and solve these problems directly with them. But the main problem and threat comes from the militias and the outlaws.

Why humanitarian aid workers are being targeted is not an exceptional issue. A number of such incidents occur everywhere in which humanitarian aid workers who are not nationals of the country operate. With regards the militias, we had sketched out a possible cause for their attacks and think that their latest attacks on humanitarian convoys must have been carried out in reaction by some of these people who feel they may be among those wanted for justice before international or domestic trials and as a reaction to this, they attack foreigners indiscriminately.

I would like to mention that most victims of such attacks are Sudanese humanitarian aid workers working either with United Nations agencies or NGOs and voluntary agencies.

Q: Just a follow-up to Jonah's question concerning the ICC recommendation. The joint statement released by the AU and the UN stated that an individual who is stated in that joint statement. is going to be taken to the ICC. How is he going to be taken to the ICC?

Spokesperson

The statement, yes, specifies the name of the individual. It does not however say he is going to be handed over to the ICC. It says that the name is going to be communicated to the Prosecutor of the ICC. So there is no question of getting him out of the country or arresting him. You know the competence of the ICC – what it is supposed to do, right? The International Criminal Court is supposed to prosecute all those who are committing crimes as defined by International Humanitarian Law – killing people, raping, destructing and so on. Legally speaking, that person, because of the nature of the crime that he was responsible for, his name has to be added to the list of people who are presumably responsible for these crimes. This is what is going to happen.

Q: So you are saying that more names may be added to the list of 51 names?

Spokesperson

Definitely yes, because if these things continue and if we, or anybody else including the GoS itself, are able to identify specifically some particular individuals, their names have to be brought to the attention of the ICC because the nature of crimes that are committed or will be committed fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC.

Q: My second question is about the Oslo Donor Conference. It is being said that “No peace in Darfur, no pledges for Darfur”. In other words, does it mean that the international community in general is trying to turn their backs against what is taking place in Darfur?

Spokesperson

First of all the Oslo Donors’ Conference was not about Darfur. The Oslo Donors’ Conference was addressed to the need of the Sudan as a whole. That is one. But more specifically, it was addressed to the needs of Sudan after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. You know that there were two documents before the Donors’ Conference. One was the Work Plan of the United Nations for Sudan for 2005. The second report was the report of the JAM on identifying the needs as they result from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. So the focus was not Darfur in terms of pledges. The focus was mainly everything that had to do with relief and reconstruction needs as identified. You will remember that the donor community told the GoS and the SPLM that if they signed the agreement, then the international community will come in with money to support their endeavor. This is what the Oslo Conference was about.

As for Darfur, actually we are doing pretty well in terms of donations. We have some shortages here and there but we are not having shortfalls or at least serious ones that might lead us to think that Darfur is going to be cut off. Yes, there were some countries while making their pledges kind of put conditionalities on actually paying up the money they are pledging to the resolution of the conflict in Darfur. That is a fact. However that is not the position of all donors. Many donors, most of them I would say, made their pledges and they are going to be honoring their word. The Secretary-General himself, although he said it kind of jokingly but he was very serious, he said maybe it is about time that the United Nations appoints a collector who will be going to the doors of donors, banging on their doors and asking for cash. And he said it recently in a letter to the editor published in the New York Times and he said it explicitly that people cannot eat pledges, they need cash.

So, we are following it through and, hopefully, we are going to get enough cash to start our operations on the ground.

Q: Are these going to be empty promises?

Spokesperson

I hope not. We are doing everything it takes when it comes to donors and we do believe that donors, when they made their pledges in Oslo, they were quite serious about it. Some put some conditionalities but we do believe that if everything goes well and if there are actual moves to resolve the issue of Darfur, we do not believe that donors will take back their promises because the responsibility is huge and they are aware of it.

For further information, please contact UNAMIS Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri. Phone: (249) 392 270
e-mail: achouri@un.org

Q: On the issue of food security, there is a news item today that says that 460,000 tons of cereals donated by the United States will arrive in May and that the WFP has received 25 million dollars. Can you confirm this?

Spokesperson

I really can't.

Do we have our colleague from WFP here. Can you please comment on this information?

PIO, WFP

Let me follow up these donation details with my office and I will get back to you this afternoon. The United States has certainly been a generous donor with cereals and all that kind of donations.

Spokesperson

Thank you, Penny.

Our colleague here is Penny Ferguson and she is the Public Information Officer with the WFP.

Q: In your press briefing you spoke about this assessment made on Khartoum IDP camps by the UNICEF, WHO, Khartoum State Ministry of Health and it said that the situation in these areas is not desperate. Are they serious about this assessment? They said that these people only have problems in paying for the health services.

These people have nothing. They don't have jobs, they don't have money, how can they say that their situation is not desperate?

Spokesperson

You are talking of desperate in terms of health, I guess ...

Q: Health, food, everything – water, environmental sanitation ... I don't like it if they are here when they present such a report ...

Spokesperson

But please do understand that it is a matter of defining what is desperate and what is not. For instance, when you talk about malnutrition rates, there are universal standards by which you could say the situation is desperate or not desperate or beyond or above what is acceptable by these standards. I am not an expert in the issue but I would say that may be you are right in terms of describing the general situation on a humanitarian kind of level. But the scope of the survey or the study was not on every single aspect of their lives. It was targeting basically health matters. In terms of health matters, according to the survey, it is not as bad as one might think because of two things; because of the fact that they have access to health facilities, that is one. Two; in terms of malnutrition rates, it is not really as dramatic as anybody else might have assumed before the survey. The scope of the survey was limited. It

is not covering every single aspect like you mentioned, for instance employment, habitat or ...

Q: Did they cover all the IDP camps and squatter areas as they say here?

Spokesperson

I don't know. I did not conduct the survey but I am assuming that they can not conduct it on all the individuals there. I do believe, in general terms, that what they do when they do surveys is they take samples of the population that are representative enough to make sure that the results of the surveys are reliable enough.

But what I can say is I will get to UNICEF, I am noting your questions and I will come back to you with a more thorough ...

Q: Personally, I don't think this survey has been done on any actual basis or fine scientific basis if they come out with such a result.

Thank you.

Spokesperson

That is your privilege, sir, to think whatever you want.

Q: During Jan Pronk's participation in the Donors' Conference, there was a strong impression from the international community that a political solution must be found to the issue of Darfur and that the Naivasha model for the south be implemented there. Is there any mechanism or new effort conducted by the United Nations Secretary-General to exert pressures on the rebel movements to bring them back to the negotiations table?

Jan Pronk toured the Jebel Marra region last week for talks with the rebels. What ensued in these talks especially in relation to resolution 1593 and the resumption of a new round of talks in Abuja?

Spokesperson

I will start from where your question ended. With regards resolution 1593, the UNMIS has completely no role on this issue. Our role is confined to explaining the resolution to those who want to have a better understanding of the issue. Should we be requested by the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC to give any assistance, we would also do so just as any other party which has been requested to give such assistance will do. We have no role on resolution 1593 or its implementation because the issue has become a totally legal matter and we do not have legal authority. This is my answer to your first question.

On your other question on the presence or not of a mechanism to handle the rebel movements to push them towards resumption of talks in Abuja, you recalled that Jan Pronk was in Jebel Marra where he held talks with leading figures in the SLM. His message was very clear. He said that they should go to Abuja to resume talks and that they must commit themselves to a final political settlement with the GoS. That they should go to Abuja first with good intentions and, second, with a proven commitment that they go this time to talk and not only to listen and then interrupt, and thirdly; that they must understand that there are clear obligations and

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commitments that they have to observe and that, in its recent resolutions, the United Nations Security Council had also mentioned these movements by name and that the United Nations Security Council resolutions also target the rebel movements who have obligations by virtue of the agreements signed with GoS and also under International Law. This is concerning ourselves as the UNMIS and we of course continue towards pushing the rebel movements by all possible means to commit to peace and denounce the option of war as a solution to the crisis.

Since you mentioned the Oslo Conference, I would like to mention here that a number of representatives of donor states met in the wake of the conference with representatives of the JEM and the SLM and their message to the rebel movements was the same: you must resume talks, you must go back to Abuja, you must cooperate with the African Union which is the body responsible for brokering the talks and is also responsible for security matters, helping in sending in security personnel to Darfur. The message was clear and very strong and had been agreed upon by all donor states. Also present in the meeting were Mr. Kingibe and a representative of the United Nations. The message of the meeting was a unified and strong message for the rebel leaders. This is what I can say in answer to your question.

Q: What are the sources you depend on in preparing your weekly reports?

My second question; The UN has left the AU responsible on the security issue. According to our understanding, the UN does not seem too happy about how things are going on in this regard. Will there come a time when the UN will run out of patience and decide to take up the issue by itself?

Spokesperson

On your first question on our sources of information, our reports are comprehensive reports that cover the humanitarian, security and political domains. We are the main source for the political issues because Jan Pronk calls and makes contacts with the officials be they in Khartoum or at local government levels in the three regions of Darfur. We are also in continued consultation with the African Union in order to come out with a complete picture on the Abuja process – the talks and all that. You also are aware that we participate as observers in the Abuja talks. The aim of our participation is not only as observers but also to assist the African Union in its mediation between the parties. This is on the political side.

On our information in the humanitarian side, you are aware that there are a number of United Nations humanitarian agencies operating in Darfur since the beginning of the fighting in the area around 2003 and also the voluntary agencies working in partnership with the United Nations agencies. These are our sources when it comes to humanitarian issues.

On security issues; our main source for information is the African Union and you may have read all the resolutions issued by the Security Council and the African Union which underline the need for strong coordination between the African Union and the United Nations including on exchange of information. Why so? Because, as you rightly said, the African Union is responsible for the security issue. But the Security Council had requested the Secretary-General to come up with monthly reports on what is happening in Darfur. Basically, the main feature of this report is information on to what level the GoS and the other parties are responding firstly to the requests of the Security Council and also give them a report on the general situation in Darfur in order to enable them and the other relevant parties to take the necessary measures.

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On your second question; it is not an issue of patience being exhausted. I mentioned in the beginning of my briefing that the African Union's Peace and Security Council will meet on the 28th of this month to look into the report of the assessment committee headed by the African Union and in which the UN participated in addition to other donor states. This committee had traveled to Darfur to assess what measures can be taken to support the role of the African Union and the possibilities for increasing the number of African Union forces in the region.

In the view of the United Nations, the African Union remains the best option and is an option that we strongly adhere to. First of all; because the African Union has experience on a number of issues especially relative to African affairs. Secondly; because the experiences have shown that when the African Union has enough forces in the ground, it managed to control the situation and even prevent other incidents from happening. The African Union does not only monitor the implementation of the ceasefire but also intervenes in mediation between the conflicting parties and even between tribes that may have plans for armed clashes. The African Union intervenes in such cases in order to prevent armed conflict and clashes from occurring. We therefore have full confidence in the capabilities of the African Union but have pointed out in a number of occasions that the current resources at the disposal of the African Union do not allow it to carry out the duties required of it. And we expect the African Union's Peace and Security Council to look into possibilities to expand the number of troops currently deployed. We are now waiting for the outcome of that meeting.

Q: You mentioned earlier that there are contacts between you and the government over resolution 1593. Have you reached an agreement over the issue?

Concerning the United Nations forces to be deployed in the country within the next two months, from which nationalities will the first batch of these forces be drawn?

Spokesperson

I think I have already answered your first question. In our first step, Mr. Pronk held talks with Vice-president Taha on the fringes of the Oslo Conference and discussed a number of issues including resolution 1593. On Pronk's part, he explained and clarified the resolution 1593 to the Vice-president.

As I said, we as the United Nations do not have any role in the issue of implementation or following up on the resolution because the issue has become basically a legal issue and will be handled at the level of the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC with the GoS. We will not be a party to it, as I said, because we are not a judicial body. This is in relation to resolution 1593.

On the forces that are expected to come in; yes I did say in my briefing that we will start the actual deployment of these forces in the beginning of next month but I do not have information on the nationalities of the first batch to come in. Please keep in contact and I will let you know once I have clear information on the issue and even on the areas of deployment.

Q: There is a situation on push-and-pull between the African Group and the European Group in Geneva on the human rights situation in Sudan. Through your close monitoring of the issue in Sudan, do you think that the situation in Sudan requires a special human rights monitor?

Mr. Pronk had requested an increase of human rights monitors in Darfur from 20 to 150. It does seem that the United Nations response to this request has delayed. What has happened on the issue?

Spokesperson

On the issue of Geneva and the Human Rights Commission, frankly speaking, I am not in a position that allows me to respond or comment on your question. I only comment on our duties in Sudan. This issue of appointing a special human rights monitor for Sudan concerns the Commission itself which is a committee made up of representatives from different nations. If such a committee decides, through voting or otherwise, to issue such a resolution, then such an issue concerns the committee itself. I do not have any comment on the issue and I do not have the right to carry out any recommendation or comment on the issue because it is totally out of our jurisdiction.

Q: How do you comment on the human rights situation in Sudan?

Spokesperson

We do not have, at the moment, any mechanism for monitoring the human rights situation in the Sudan as a whole. We only have an authority to monitor the human rights situation in Darfur alone. Resolution 1590 cited as part of our mandate issues pertaining to human rights. Our role, as set forth in the mandate, does not include, however, include elements of human rights monitoring be it in the north or south. These issues are totally different. Our role will basically be to help improve human rights in general in the Sudan – that is to say to spread a culture of human rights, help improve human rights institutions, etc. Special consideration will be granted some particular segments of the population such as refugees, the homeless, women, children, etc. Our role here will be very different from that of the international human rights monitors in Darfur.

I cannot at the moment give you a complete overview of the general human rights situation in Sudan. We do have indicators of what is happening in Darfur but we do not have enough on the human rights situation in Sudan as a whole. This is all I can say on the issue at the moment.

On the issue of the increase of the human rights monitors, to say the truth, I have to confess I have not been following the issue of deployment of human rights monitors. Contact me after the briefing and I will try to give you more information on the issue.

Q: The Deputy Spokesperson had mentioned earlier that consultations are in place between the United Nations and the GoS over resolution 1593. He even said that he will not give us any additional information on the issue so as not to undermine the talks. Have these talks stopped or reached a stalemate?

Earlier reports said that a United Nations chartered aircraft was shot at over Juba. I would like to know what the outcome is of the investigations carried out on the issue.

Spokesperson

I do not have any answer to your first question but I will follow up the issue on the outcome of the investigations. I would also want you to understand that there are a number of such

For further information, please contact UNAMIS Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri. Phone: (249) 392 270
e-mail: achouri@un.org

incidents that have taken place be they on United Nations aircraft or even African Union aircraft. But investigations are yet to come up with decisive results. That is to say that we have not managed to identify the person responsible.

On the other issue, in my assessment, I think that what my colleague has said has been misunderstood. We do not talk of negotiations because we, as a United Nations mission are not in a position to negotiate or intervene in negotiations on the issue of resolution 1593. First of all, because it is a resolution issued by the Security Council and that is final. Second; because the authority to follow up on the issue is now with the Chief Prosecutor now that the resolution has been issued. We do not have any authority to come in to negotiate on the issue. I had said that the SRSG had talks with V-p Taha and explained to him that resolution because, in our view, the resolution has been misunderstood to a great extent. The common man understands it as though the resolution targets the Sudanese people as a whole. We have tried to make them understand that the resolution is not against the Sudan as a state and does not target the Sudanese as a people. We also explained to them some of the legal aspects entailed including the fact that the ICC does not replace the judicial authorities in a particular country but in fact compliments these authorities.

Our role in the issue has therefore only been in explaining and clarifying what has been noted in the resolution. We do not have any authority, legal or otherwise, to undertake negotiations on the issue.

Q: There is a lot of talk on the dismantling of the Kalma IDP camp in Nyala, S. Darfur with the GoS saying that it has identified three sites for relocation of the camp in cooperation with the United Nations. What has happened so far on the issue?

There are complaints of a weak response from donor states in supporting returnee refugees and IDPs. What is your comment on this?

Spokesperson

On your first question, I have presented a briefing on the issue of Kalma. You will find information on that issue in the briefing. In short, sites have been identified for the relocation of about 20,000 residents of Kalma camp and they will be relocated there in the near future. Generally, it seems there is an agreement between the local authorities in South Darfur and the United Nations agencies on the issue. This is all the information I have on the issue of Kalma camp. Yes there is a positive development on the issue.

On your second question on complaints of lack of financial support for repatriating returnees, you are right. This is why we have been emphasizing the issue of providing the necessary support for this issue. This is one of the key issues discussed in the Oslo Donors' Conference. Part of the monies pledged by the donor states in Oslo will be channeled towards this issue and I wish, for more clarification, that you contact the UNHCR who will have more information for you on the subject. If you can't reach them, then I will contact them personally in order to provide you with more detailed information on the issue.

Q: You said that you do not have a role in the resolution apart from explaining the resolution. You did say, however, that you can provide assistance should the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC request such assistant. What kind of assistance do you mean?

Spokesperson

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e-mail: achouri@un.org

The assistance I mean is that should the Chief Prosecutor come to the Sudan, following contact with the GoS and after its consent, and come here for talks with us, we first of all assist him in accommodation. Secondly, we brief him should he request from us a briefing like we did with the commission of inquiry. Our role then was the same role played by the government and by the African Union. Should he request for instance a briefing on the security situation, we give him such a briefing. He comes and says he wants a briefing or documents or any information on an issue that falls within the jurisdiction of the ICC and we give him such information. The GoS will also be in the same position as ourselves should it decide to cooperate with the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC and will grant the necessary assistance to the Chief Prosecutor in order to enable him carry out his duties.

Q: Can the mandate granted by resolution 1590 establishing the United Nations Mission in Sudan be revised after every six months or so? There are talks that the Security Council was very clever in passing this resolution and gaining the consent of the parties and then issuing resolution 1591 and 1593. There are some who expect that the mandate granted to the mission will be altered to meet the requirements of the provisions of resolution 1593.

Spokesperson

No. this will never happen.

Q: In fact, I was not closely following up but I think there was a comment that there will be 44 staff officers for the United Nations. Are they already here and are they from different nationalities?

Spokesperson

Yes, they are already here and they are from different nationalities. This has been mentioned in my briefing and you do know that the military component of the mission will be a multi-national one to a great extent.

Q: Have they now been deployed to all parts of the Sudan?

Spokesperson

No. In my briefing, it says that they are already here in Sudan. Some of them have been deployed as liaisons officers in the areas of deployment and the most important elements of this component will soon be in Nairobi and you will find the dates in the briefing notes. These will be subjected to pre-deployment training and a number of these military elements are carrying out site trips to the areas of deployment in order to carry out logistic preparations necessary for receiving and deploying these forces.

As to deployment *per se*, it will start at the beginning of next month, May.

Q: With regards to the United Nations Security Council resolution 1593, the GoS is saying there a judicial committee has completed investigation procedures ahead of trials of suspects in North Darfur and has now shifted to Western Darfur. Have you been informed of the findings of this committee?

Spokesperson

Not to my knowledge.

Q: I wanted to know about the security situation in Darfur. We learnt some times back that the roads have been closed before people to access relief. Actually the Fasher-Kutum and Nyala-Geneina roads. What is the latest on these roads. Are they in use or not?

Spokesperson

I have to come back to you on that and to ask if it is open or still closed.

Q: The WFP alerts that food rations in Darfur will be cut to a population of about one million people for the next few months. We don't know how far it has gone and which people will be affected in the Darfur region.

PIO, WFP

Thank you for your question. That release was talking about a cut that will take place in the rations for people in the Darfurs as of May.

What will happen is that we will be cutting the non-cereals items in the rations. The cereals part of the rations will not be affected. A typical ration is made of 15kgs. of cereal for the month and 4.5kgs of non-cereals items. These non-cereals items which are vegetable-oil, salt, sugar, pulses and something they call "blended food". This component of the rations will be halved because that means that we can make absolutely certain that we can supply at least a half ration of these items throughout what we call the 'hunger season' – the rainy season when peoples needs become greater.

If it will assist you, I have a copy of this release in Arabic which I can send to you if that makes it any clearer and that contains the exact weights and the divisions of the food rations and when it will start. Does that help?

Q: I am concerned about which people will be affected in the Darfur region.

PIO, WFP

It is all the Darfur assistance beneficiaries in the Darfurs. It is not something that will affect some people and not others.

The only exceptions are people covered by food supplies to specific feeding programs that we have for example for children who are malnourished or for nursing mothers and these supplies and the supplies to the agencies which will be carrying out special feeding won't be affected.

Spokesperson

Correct me if I am mistaken Penny, but this decision by the WFP is a decision that is, hopefully, temporary because they are having problems getting enough money to get enough food. So if they get enough money in the forthcoming days, this decision will be reversed and they will resume distribution of rations exactly the way they used to.

So, the point made by WFP in that release was to draw the attention of the donors to this problem because one of the possible impacts of cutting rations will be affecting the nutrition status of people which could result in malnutrition in some cases. You know that people there are very vulnerable and if their food diet would be reduced in terms of fibers, vitamins and so on, that could impact on their nutritional status. But, again, we are hoping that this decision could be reversed soon and we are hoping that donors would put the money required for WFP to resume its activities as it used to.

PIO, WFP

Indeed that is correct. The decision that we have taken is to make the best available use of the resources that we have. Moving to half rations in May is the most, could you say, nutritionally responsible decision that we can make because it means that we can continue to make at least some supply of these essential nutritional elements. We simply didn't have enough funds to be able to buy and ship in the commodities that we needed to keep supply going. If donations come through, and of course this is also remembering that we must be able to ship in or get these commodities in to place in Darfur in time with the approach of the rainy season.

So it is those two factors; the money and the physical ability to do it. Until that becomes possible, we will simply work with the best solution that we can.

Q: The WFP has been asking the Sudan government to give them permit to bring food through Libya to Darfur. What is the rationale behind bringing food through Libya?

Spokesperson

I am afraid that I don't have actually any confirmed information about that that I can give you. I know just a couple of reports of the press recently about an application.

WFP always looks at the most effective way as to bring in food. But beyond that I don't actually have anything more to tell you.

Q: Yesterday, it seems that the government through the Ministry of Interior has discussed this issue. The Minister said that the government has been discussing this suggestion by the WFP. Can you confirm that the WFP is approaching the GoS to allow it to ship in food to Darfur through Libya?

PIO, WFP

You have got the report so you actually seem better informed of the process of the negotiations than I am. But I can check with my office to see if we have any updates and more information on that and I will get back to you. If you want to give me your telephone number and your contact so that I can call you this afternoon to see if we have anything further.

Q: With the current food you have available and if the donors are not coming up with anything, how long will it take before you have to make another harsh decision?

PIO, WFP

We very much heard that the decision that we have made now will mean that supply will be able to continue at that level right through the very difficult season. This is why we have moved to make this decision now and to implement it in May so that we can continue this half-ration supply right through and that we would avoid the situation of having a last-minute further cut.

Of course, as you understand, in fluid emergency situations it is always very difficult to take a crystal ball and predict the future and say, okay there will be this level of need. But based on the best information that we have at the moment, this is what we are trying to do.

Spokesperson

I will add to this that you ladies and gentlemen of the press could be of great help highlighting this issue and drawing the attention of the donors and making as much noise as possible so they really get it and understand that, okay we are working under these conditions but WFP can do only what the donors can provide it with.

The impact, if such a situation continues, will not be good and it will be really a very unfortunate thing to happen because the humanitarian community did a lot to save lives and the humanitarian situation. If we have this kind of situation happening, the achievements we had so far could be reversed and that could be very unfortunate.

So, ladies and gentlemen, use your pens and start writing on this.

Thank you very much and I hope to see you next Wednesday.