

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN
UNMIS**SRSB Press Conference****Khartoum****17 August 2005**

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's press conference (12:30PM) by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sudan, Jan Pronk:

Spokesperson: Good afternoon everybody and welcome to our press conference of today. Mr. Pronk will be giving the press conference and without further ado I will give him the floor. Mr. Pronk.

SRSB: The last two days I spent in Darfur. You know that a couple of weeks ago on the 31st of July on my way to SLA commanders in South Darfur I had to return because of the death of Dr. John Garang. I postponed my visit to the SLA in the field until yesterday and the day before yesterday.

I had talks in North Darfur in Musbat and in South Darfur in the Jebel Marra and also in Muhajariya – three different locations – with commanders belonging to SLM/A. Dozens of commanders and also many people around. Some people on the ground, also people dealing with humanitarian affairs etc. I think I saw all the important political commanders of the SLM on the ground. My findings are the following:

The commanders are united in their desire to continue the talks in order to reach a peace agreement at the end of this year. That is their wish so they are behind the process and there is no betting on two horses – military and political – like it was the case last year. I had that impression already; my impression was confirmed. I also got confirmation that they are of one position and that means both the commanders in the north – which are more *Zaghawa* oriented, and the commanders in the south – which are more *Fur* oriented.

They have requested a postponement of the talks in Abuja for one reason and that is to organise a conference on the ground in Darfur amongst all the SLA leadership, north and south, military, political and humanitarian, various tribes, quite a big conference, in order to unite – of course everybody knows there were some differences – in order to unite also with their leadership abroad and in order to prepare the agenda for the talks.

I made my position clear. My position is: indeed such a conference is necessary and desirable as I said this already when they came with their specific suggestions in January this year when they asked to postpone the fifth round which already had been scheduled for February after the difficult and failing round in November 2004. And I reminded them that I had made quite a number of diplomatic efforts to get also the international community and the government of Sudan behind the idea of a Darfur conference of the SLA to be held not

outside the country but within Darfur so that many people could participate and so that they could not be manipulated by a host country – then they are their own hosts. But despite the fact that everybody, after two months talking, was behind the idea, the conference had not been organised which brought the AU then to the conclusion to organise the fifth round which took place in June in Abuja. And I said a second postponement is not so credible because you didn't use the first postponement well – you didn't organise the conference. A short postponement seems to take place anyway because the 24th of August is very near. But you have to sit together and accept an invitation which you will receive from Mr. Salim to have talks in a very small circle: leaders of SLM; leaders of JEM; leaders of the government and also the United Nations. I expect such an invitation to be sent by Mr. Salim very soon and we will participate also. And I told them they have to go and they will make clear that they would like to have that conference and a specific postponement of the Abuja talks but not a long postponement because that will not be accepted. I reminded them of the fact that President Bush, through Ms. Condoleeza Rice coming here in Khartoum with the message that the talks should not take place on the 24th of August but before. And I said the United States always has been seen by you as an important supporting political force so please understand. If a postponement is unavoidable – because we are getting very close to the 24th of August now – it should be a very brief postponement.

In my view it is desirable to have rather lengthy and intensive talks because we can not have a superficial outcome which we then call a peace agreement. There should be real substance and needs talks and talks. So I could imagine that we have two rounds – round six and round seven – and that is over; and then you get close to the end of the year. And you remember, I have always said that is the objective: 31st of December a comprehensive peace agreement in Darfur. Use the time – four months and half a month in August – two rounds could be useful on the basis of quite an elaborated agenda. So I told them why not organise your conference after the sixth round and before the seventh? Sixth round – not on the 24th of August but in September, and then your conference perhaps in October, and then the final round around November and then peace in December. It is a matter of arithmetic but to a certain extent of course a lot of politics will. But it is logical. If you want to your conference to be well-prepared, okay. But do not give the impression to the international community that you are using it as an excuse to postpone the talks because that is not credible and moreover it is unwise because now you have a government which is different from the previous government. The SPLM is part of the government and Salva Kiir as a successor to Garang has made it clear that he wants a political solution in Darfur and they are quite serious about it so it is possible.

I had lengthy discussions under trees, lengthy discussions with many commanders including also Minni Minawi who was also present in the talks and I think indeed the SLA not only wants to have peace but understands that it is necessary to have peace before the end of the year. They are serious in organising their conference in order to have a strong, united position which is in everybody's interest, because an agreement in Abuja, which is being wiped off the table right away by the commanders in the field, does not make any sense. The fifth round was also quite positive because many of these commanders had been given the opportunity by the United Nations to go to Abuja so that they were present in the corridors and knew exactly what had happened. And I really got the impression after lengthy discussions that they knew exactly what had happened in Abuja and that they had some confidence in the process. So this augurs well.

Of course the United Nations does not call the shots. We are not organising the talks; we are not postponing the talks. What my colleague Ms. Achouri said last week was in some papers not quoted very well. They United Nations did not postpone the talks. Mrs. Achouri said that

we have been given information that there was a request by the SLM to the AU to postpone the talks so that they can not take place on the 24th. Please quote me well. You have always quoted me well and I have no reason to complain but I want to be very clear that we want the talks as soon as possible. I was the person, you remember, who said that before the end of the year we need a comprehensive peace agreement. And I always said we are on track but now it is becoming critical. So use the next couple of months very well.

So I assume, but I have not yet received an invitation – please understand this, I have not yet received an invitation – I assume that there can be a small, brief talk in a small circle maybe in Dar-es-Salaam where Mr. Salim lives but he may decide somewhere else, in order to prepare the talks. And I know that the government wants to participate in that meeting if there can be an invitation and the SLM will also participate. I just had also a phone call from the leaders of the JEM – because I also want to see the leaders of the JEM in the field.

I told the SLM that I am not so much interested in seeing their leaders somewhere else outside the country. Everything has to take place here because it is an internal and not an international conflict. And I also conveyed the message from Secretary-General to Mr. Abdel Wahid Nour (SLA Chairman) who asked to see the Secretary-General in New York and the answer from the Secretary-General in New York was: no sir. Talk with the UN in Sudan with my Special Representative. The job has to be done there; no longer workshops; no longer meetings outside and far away. It is all distraction. Now we have to use the time of the last four months very intensively. And I have the impression that the people on the ground understand that – they want it. I was told also – I didn't see the letter so I can not confirm it – but I was told by the head of my office in Nyala that there was a letter from the IDPs (maybe not from all IDPs) who said: we do not want a postponement of the talks. This is very interesting. If IDPs come to the conclusion that they want to have a political solution soon – I have not seen the letter because he told me when he came to see me on my way back – but it is in line with my position which I also took in my talks with commanders: you are fighting for people. You are not fighting for leaders somewhere outside the country. You are fighting for people and these people need to go home at a certain moment and we can not postpone that at a certain moment. We can not ask the AU to wait another year before they expand their troops. If that is possible, it will also safeguard the areas where people return to. Moreover, I am concerned that the huge amount of money that is being made available by the international community for the IDPs and the other affected people in Darfur in 2003, 2004 and 2005 will decrease in 2006. You can not always continue with a lot of money. At a certain moment in the western countries things are changing. I don't like that but that is a political fact. We see now for instance a lot of BBC interest in Niger – you have seen that – that will have some consequences. There are many poor people over there. Of course much more assistance is necessary but when it is not coming then it has to be allocated in a different way. And I told SLM if you wait for next year then you may have to take decisions under a lot of pressure – namely the pressure that the aid is decreasing. That is not wise. You should take political decisions when you are not under pressure. At the moment you are not under pressure – only the pressure that the end of the year you have to conclude talks. I keep you informed. We are now entering a critical stage in the talks. Four and a half months then you should have the comprehensive peace agreement.

We are talking everywhere. My deputy Mr. Zerihoun is returning today from Asmara for talks with the Beja Congress and the Free Lions of the eastern region in order to help prepare for talks which I still expect to start in September. I can't say anything about it because I did not have any contact with him. I will see him this afternoon.

Of course the events in August following the death of Dr. Garang may delay everything. As I said before, only a delay and not a change. And I really hope it will be possible to have talks with the east in September. I do not have any other indication in a different direction but I stand to be corrected after getting his report.

As far as Abyei is concerned, internal talks are ongoing, quite important also. On the ground people are talking following my meetings with the Misseiriya and the Dinka where I tried to convince them to talk not about the report but to talk about the approach, about living together, coexistence among each other in Abyei. People now talk and the UN is there facilitating these talks – I don't have to do it myself. I am very pleased that after my facilitation efforts now something has come out off the ground. And you have to keep it in Abyei at the moment because the best solution to a local problem is when people who are living somewhere and have to live together solve their own problems without any political interference from above. So that is some progress.

Point number four; we are changing some of our approach regarding the deployment of the troops. We will speed up the coming in of the UNMOs. We did have to delay it a little bit because of the insecurity following Dr. Garang's death. We are speeding it up. We have identified places where we consider it to be a priority in particular, of course, Abyei and Bentiu at the moment. We are also re-allocating elements of the troops which had been designated to some parts of the country to some other parts of the country. I give you one example which is not too technical. We had the whole riverein unit boats on the Nile located in Juba. But there is tension in Malakal so we are re-allocating it to Malakal. In Malakal there is no problem between the SLM and the government, you know, but there are groups shooting at boats on the river Nile. The MSF, for instance, has been shot at a number of times now by groups which make it very difficult for the MSF to bring assistance to the people who are out of Malakal. That has to be stopped, so we bring our riverein unit to Malakal. We are relocating also some of the troops to some of the areas where we have priorities. That will be laid down in a piece of paper which I can not disclose to you now but which I will send to the Secretary-General this week that will lead to a kind of a press release with some information for you.

No major changes because that is not necessary in the present situation in the south but there are some hotspots. There may be even less hotspots than we were afraid of because we have the impression on the basis of our contacts that the relation between SPLM and SSDF is going to the right direction after the first talks that took place in Nairobi. And that means for instance, I understand, that there will be a positive approach in Bentiu to the coming of the new governor who is being appointed by the SPLM over there and that is positive – less tension.

Speaking about tension, let me say something about what is going on around Khartoum. You remember I gave you some information about the events in Soba and the follow-up. We had established consultative machinery with the *Wali* and his people whereby the UN, agencies, government, were sitting together. And in that consultative machinery, the *Wali* had promised that there would, until further notice, be no further relocations.

I am afraid that I have to come to the conclusion that the relocations that started yesterday around Khartoum took place without consultations. That is what I have been told by my representatives in these structures. If that is the case, I deplore that. Of course the government has the full right to relocate – I am not speaking about return but relocate – for its own reasons but promises have been made for consultations and I am afraid I have to conclude that consultations did not take place.

The second thing which I have to deplore is that some violence has taken place and that is not necessary in my view. So I will get a report – I can't say much about it at the moment – but I will get a report and will raise it.

The third thing to deplore is that of course we decided to go there right away with human rights representatives, with humanitarian representatives and the CivPol. They were stopped. And I deplore that and I will raise that. There can be no reason to stop UN Police, UN Human Rights Monitors to do what they have to do.

So the consultation issue, the stopping question and the violence question will be raised. I can't say more about it but I need more information. At the moment, I have again sent our representatives – police, human rights and humanitarian people to the same area to see what is happening and they will report back to me so that we can bring it in and discuss it with the *Wali* together with other government officials. In my view it is to be deplored that these things take place right now after the difficulties which we have had here in Khartoum.

Finally and then I stop; I understand that the investigation in the accident (Dr. Garang's plane crash) is taking place at the moment. We have offered our assistance to the government and to SPLM and also to the Government of Uganda whereby we made clear that in our view it was wise to set up an international commission. All three – the government, SPLM and the Government of Uganda – did say that they welcome us and a possible UN involvement. We had been involved on my own initiative right in the beginning in two ways: firstly by sending our military observers to the site to see what was happening. I have withdrawn them last Thursday when it was no longer necessary for them to stay there but they have been there already ten days. The second assistance which we gave was to make available 17 body bags. That is where the number 17 is coming from - 17 body bags. Not because we said there were 17 bodies – no. We were asked to make available body bags and we didn't know how many and that means we didn't know how many people they said died in that night and of course that is always the case during an accident but 17 would do. So we did send 17 body bags. Sometimes we send more body bags than is necessary in order to be on the safe side. Better more than is necessary than less than is necessary. I can't say any more. We made that available and we transported it to New Site later afterwards. We didn't do the investigations ourselves. That's it. So that was our involvement – monitoring around and transporting the bodies.

I have not yet received a concrete invitation to participate in the follow-up of the investigations. I know there is a committee; I know there are discussions; I understand the committee is government and SPLM so you may say a committee of the Government of Sudan as a whole. But it is not an international committee. I have not received an official invitation to participate in the investigation itself – I am waiting for it. I am not sending experts on my own initiative now that investigations seem to have started. If I get an invitation I will forward that invitation to ICAO in Montreal – that is their headquarters because ICAO regional headquarters in Kenya have said they do not have the necessary expertise themselves.

So that is the present situation. We said we are willing, they said we are welcome and I am waiting for a concrete invitation to participate in the present investigation. Such an investigation, by the way, always takes time. You know that from accidents. It is to be deplored but it is always a very technically difficult investigation. But I have made clear in all my contacts with the parties concerned that in my view it should be fully transparent so that there can not be any reason for any doubt later on. And as far as I am concerned, still there is no reason for any doubt whatsoever in the present situation.

These were the points I wanted to raise with you, I am available any questions.

Q: On the relocations, is that what was happening in Mayo – there are reports of police operations in Mayo and up to Mandela and up to Jebel Auliya. Is that what you were talking about?

SRSG: No, I am talking about Sheikan. I am talking about Sheikan where people are being relocated. I do not know exactly how many because you always have to be very careful with numbers. I am not quoting. But they are being relocated to el-Fateh. We have tried to go to Sheikan and also to el-Fateh which is a difficult area and we know that from the past. As far as we understand there are not enough services available in el-Fateh. So you need consultation but in the consultation you have to make clear if you relocate people you should relocate people to a location which is acceptable in terms of availability of water for instance. And we understand that that is not the case and also for this reason it will be premature. But I can give more complete information after knowing more.

Q: What do you know about the fighting that the government has reported between SLA and JEM in a place called Oum Muhira – they say that 50 people have been killed?

SRSG: I can say the following: I raised it with the SLA yesterday. They do not know anything about it. So I raised it with the JEM – I called them. They don't know anything about it. So they both deny that the other is attacking them, which is interesting. Mostly in such a situation they say yes it took place but the others attacked us. Both say it didn't take place. None of them said the other is involved.

Our own security people have tried to find trace of any battle but couldn't find anything. So in the present situation I think it is a rumour and no more than that.

Q: Thirdly; I just wanted to note there is a conference in Port Sudan where you have flown in 70 employees to discuss the funding of the Work Plan.

SRSG: I am going there tomorrow. We are bringing together members of the UN Country Team in a meeting together just like last year to prepare the next so called Work Plan – a funding plan. And the meeting could take place here but sometimes it is better to bring people with one plane to a place where nobody is being disturbed. So the meeting is taking place today and tomorrow. Manuel da Silva (DSRSG for Humanitarian Affairs and Development and UN Resident Coordinator) is chairing the meeting today and tomorrow and I will go there in order to listen – and you know I never listen only, I always say something at the same time in order to influence that process.

Q: Given it that there are funding problems with the work plan do you think it is a wise idea to fly people down to Port Sudan to the Hilton when basically most of them are here anyway?

SRSG: I don't know whether it is in the Hilton. I cannot confirm that. Maybe it is in the Hilton, I don't know. Last time it was in Port Sudan and in Nairobi because it is a combination between north and south and then you have to meet in the north as well as in the south. You have to bring people from the south, anyway, to the north because it is not a regular meeting. The members of the Country Team in the South have to come to the north. And if they would have to meet in the south then we would have to bring the members of the Country Team for the north to the south. Now whether to bring people by plane from

Khartoum to Juba or from Juba to Khartoum or to Port Sudan, that doesn't mean anything. And these people coming here from the south will have to be lodged anyway in a hotel. So the costs are slightly different, no more than that.

Q: Regarding Darfur and your optimism that there can be an agreement by the end of the year. Is that really grounded considering the unexpected possibility of attacks, these rumours of fighting between the two factions and reports on the ground by humanitarian groups that the situation is not stabilizing at all?

SRSG: It is grounded. As I said last time – I don't know whether you were there or not – you have to set an objective and make that objective a reality. That is politics. And rumours come out and you cannot let rumours decide. If people say there is a fight and that fifty people are dead and that is not true then what is the ground of the rumour? Moreover, the situation in Darfur is much more stable as far as the fight between the parties who are in the talks – the government, SLM and JEM. Please listen to my story and not to the story of others.

But you are quite right that there is a lot of looting taking place and both parties complain. The government says it is SLM and SLM says it is the government. This is war. It took place in Angola, in Mozambique, in Congo, everywhere and there are always groups that make use of that instability. Is that politically inspired? Everybody says it is politically inspired. In the eyes of the SLM, every looter is a *Janjaweed* sent there to loot by the government; by President Bashir himself – which is not true. And in the eyes of the government, every looter is a personal representative of Minni Minawi – which is not true, you know that. How to solve the problem? Making peace; joining forces; making a government whereby also the opposition is part of the government so that they both can stop it. I said this many times in Darfur yesterday: you all say that the government is behind this; learn from Garang. There were many militia in the south and everybody said or knew that all these militia were supported by the government – nobody had the proof but these militia were there and the weapons were there. So what did Garang think? I become the government so that the government can no longer give the support. As a matter of fact it is very quiet in the south at the moment. The situation has changed completely with one major exception which is the LRA that is the movement from outside. And of course such improvement never takes place overnight. So you need a political change also to take care of such instabilities on the ground. So my optimism is grounded – that was your question.

Q: You know the talks are postponed till God knows when.

SRSG: Yes, and I made it clear that such a postponement is part of the reality of these talks. I was quite concerned about the postponement of the fifth round, which had been scheduled for February, until June. It was a long postponement. But if Mr. Salim would take a final decision to postpone it for a couple of weeks, not August but September, then that is part of the reality of the talks.

Q: You said, sir, that the SLM has requested a postponement despite reports that SLM leader AbdelWahid has issued a statement rebuffing this and saying that the postponement has been requested by conspirators.

The second question is; have leaders of the SLM fixed a time for their conference?

SRSG: I have not seen a statement by Mr. AbdelWahid. I saw a statement in one of the newspapers by SLM-Khartoum. I didn't know that SLM-Khartoum did exist. Really that is interesting because then I don't have to go anywhere to Darfur. And I would like to invite

them to come to my office right away. I asked all the commanders in the field “do you know about SLM-Khartoum?” They said no they didn’t know that that does exist. And they all said, and they were very close to AbdelWahid, “we want a postponement; we want a certain postponement.” I told them, “please, a very brief postponement – days, not months.” And I hope I have been able to convince them. So SLM wants a postponement. That is certain.

And the JEM, I don’t know by the way. Mr. Salim did not say that the JEM had asked for a postponement so I don’t know.

On the date for the conference, the SLM has to decide. And I told them, “don’t take much time.” And I am now presenting my idea which I presented to them: do it in October after the sixth round. Try to make that clear in your own head. Small talk, August; sixth round, September; internal conference, October; final around November. That is my proposal. I made it to them in order to help them make it clear that their request for a postponement is serious and is not an excuse to postpone the talks to infinity – that is not what I want.

Q: Your deployment plans have changed due to the incidents in Bentiu that you mentioned. We would like to have more clarification on the role of the UN forces – is their role to protect the observers or to intervene to protect the agencies present in those areas? If these forces can intervene to protect a barge, why can’t it intervene or why didn’t it play a role in the incidents that occurred in Khartoum?

SRSB: The mandate of the United Nations is to monitor the peace. And we are sending also protection forces to protect our own monitors. That is the only reason, plus to protect civilians in their near vicinity if that is possible. So the example of the humanitarian assistance which we want to give to people in the neighborhood of Malakal by NGOs – it is humanitarian assistance whereby, at the same time, a military boat can be on that river in order to deter possible attacks. Like the AU is also deterring attacks by, for instance, the *Janjaweed*, on people in the villages by their presence. So it is protection by deterrence.

Neither the AU nor the UN has a mandate or the capacity to participate in a violent outbreak which is taking place in order to stop that and to protect people. That capacity is not there and we don’t have also that specific mandate. And that is the reason why the UN will not take an official police task of the government to protect people in such a situation. We don’t have the mandate and we cannot do it. We are too small for such a large outbreak of events. Of course if it takes place partly just in the neighbourhood of where the troops are, then they have the mandate to protect these people in their neighbourhood. But the small amount of Italian troops which we have available here in Khartoum did not have the mandate; could not have them either – to go into Khartoum in order to protect hundreds and thousands of people who would be attacked by other hundreds and thousands of people. That is impossible – not our mandate and not possible. That is a government and a police task in a country itself and not a task of foreigners. That is the answer to your question.

I thought you mentioned Bentiu. We have less incidents in Bentiu than people were afraid of. The fear was that SSDF forces would make it impossible for the administration to be sent to Bentiu by the Government of South Sudan to land and to take over. Paulino Matip (head of SSDF) has now made it clear that the administration being sent by the Government of South Sudan is welcome. I have sent a mission to Bentiu this week consisting of military observers, humanitarian person, civil affairs, police, in order to assess the situation. Their report is that we can go there and we should go there but the situation is much more calm, harmonious and secure than we were afraid of. And we will. Of course it is always a difficult place because of the stronghold of one of the other movements but there is more harmony than we thought and

we will extend our presence (we were not there) as a mission also in Bentiu- that includes also military observers.

Q: What sort of message do you think it sends to the people of southern Sudan, the people of Darfur for all these people to be in the Hilton in Port Sudan discussing their plight? Isn't it kind of a classic illustration of the 'lords of poverty' type of situation whereby you have the leaders of these agencies gorging themselves on the best foods in the country while they discuss their inability to feed everyone else?

SRSB: Could you repeat your question?

Q: Seriously, how do you justify the extra expenditure to fly all these people from Khartoum to one of the best hotels in the country when in effect what they are discussing is how they haven't got the funds to fund projects in the south and Darfur? Isn't that extremely crass ...?

SRSB: It is not extremely crass, sir, and you know that. I just told you. You have to bring them either from Juba to Khartoum or from Juba to Port Sudan. What is the cost difference? And if they come here they have to be lodged anyway. And I do thoroughly despise the implicit accusation of UN people who are working very hard to use their efforts for the people in Sudan. You follow an article which I saw recently in a newspaper here – 'what is the UN doing here?' you follow articles which have been written here also in this country that the UN is not helping people, only themselves. That is not the case, sir. These people are working extremely hard and under extremely difficult circumstances, more difficult than you as a journalist, in the field. We have observers and humanitarian workers who are getting malaria; who are in hospitals; who are really not having any positive situation at the moment as compared to many UN people in many other countries. And they also sometimes have to meet to take decisions and they have to be flown in in a big country to have a meeting because I cannot organise video conference between here and Juba and Rumbek where all these people are. They have to be brought together, sir, and if they are being brought together, they have to meet and they need computers to write their reports and they have to eat and they have to sleep. What is against that?

Q: My question rather would be that a large number of these people probably work anyway in Khartoum and have residences in Khartoum.

SRSB: No, sir. I have to bring all these people from Juba and Rumbek back now to the north in order to have the meeting. Last time the meeting took place outside the country. For the first time it is now finally taking place inside the country. But I have to organise the meeting between these people together because, as I did say, it is a comprehensive approach. I do not want to have a plan for south Sudan separate from a plan for Darfur and a plan for Sudan as a whole, and you know that very well. And if you want to have a comprehensive plan then you have to organise it and you have to travel. If I would have two different plans to be brought together to different countries then I would get the same criticism from you – why don't you do your job better, why don't you have a comprehensive approach. You wanted to have a comprehensive plan, yes. And in order to do so you have to meet together; you have to sit together for two days in order to bring all these agencies who always have different views – always have their own plans – together in one room. And they are not leaving that room before they have agreed on an overall plan. What's against that, sir?

Q: It is just how it looks from the outside.

SRSB: Yes, and that is why you go on to give that impression from the outside because you are looking from the outside and you know the situation quite well. And you know how the people are working here. And that is why you get that answer.

Sir, you are insinuating. You are not questioning.

Q: It is my turn to ask the question, sir.

SRSB: And it is my task to give you an answer and I hope you got that answer.

Q: I do.

Q: President Bashir has issued a Presidential Decree adopting the new boundaries in South Kordofan according to the peace agreement. Since you are aware that there are some objections about this, how do you see now the situation and your role if there is?

SRSB: Are you referring to the Abyei Boundary Commission and the boundaries resulting from the Abyei Boundary Commission with consequences for South Kordofan?

Q: Yes.

SRSB: My answer to this is the following: the Commission has issued a report which is an expert report because it is not a report by all members of the Commission. The members of the government unit in that Commission had a different view than the members of the SPLM unit of that Commission. I had discussions with the members of both more than with the experts because they flew out of the country. On that basis, I have said that this is an expert report but it seems to be disputed. It is a report which has been presented to the Presidency; it has not been presented to us. We are not asked to give a substantive judgement on the outcome of that specific work of the Commission. It is my task to organise a situation whereby the parties can work peacefully with each other even if they have different views about it. And now the parties are being asked to wait until the Presidency has studied the report and taken a decision on how and what can be done with the report itself. So I am asking all my discussion counterparts which are the Misseiriya leaders here, Misseiriya leaders in Abyei, Dinka leaders here, Dinka leaders in Abyei, SPLM leaders and also parties belonging to different political parties because I had quite intensive discussions, to wait until the Presidency has studied it.

Of course Mr. Kiir did need sometime to make himself familiar to that new issue which now has fallen on his table. I have not yet been told what the Presidency has decided and I am advising everybody to wait. I had decided, as far as the UN operations is concerned – because we have specific sectors and regions – not to change anything so far. To keep the regions and the map which was the basis of our operations.

Q: My second question is on your coming meeting on the UN Work Plan. As you know that the 2005 Work Plan has not been implemented, I think, more than 50%. Now you are preparing for the next year plans, are you going to just carry out this unimplemented program and maybe the plan itself which, I think as updated in June to 2 billion, will it be more realistic?

SRSB: We have increased the assessment of the needs for 2005 from about 1.5 to about 2 billion. I think the present figure, if compared to the 2 billion, is not even 1 billion which is less than 50%. I think we had the figure of about 800 million out of the 1.5. This, on the basis

of the new assessment, is less than 50%. These are figures which of course will increase because you are seeing an increase in commitments after the summer in the light of the new budgetary calculations of the donor countries so I am quite confident that the figures will increase substantially but it will be less than the needs are. So we will have to cut.

So far we did not have to do so in terms of the essentials – in particular not yet in terms of food. So far the cuts meant that the number of programs considered necessary could not start and they had to be scaled down. That meant for instance also -because there are activities also by NGOs including in the Work Plan- that some of the NGOs which did have good programs could not start their activities.

I am going to New York again in September, which is an important month, in order to get the discussions with the donors off the ground with the support of the Secretary-General in order to speed them up. I don't know what the outcome is. We have difficulties. I deplore that to a great extent; I deplore that due to mal-events – now for the first time since 30 years again in Niger in the sahelian areas there is an outbreak of hunger over there which will compete with what the donors are going to do for Darfur and Sudan. For me it is an additional reason to call on SLA to be extremely serious with the talks because if we extend it into next year, as I told them yesterday not in the Hilton Hotel but under trees, it is going to be very, very difficult for their people.

Q: So you expect that the Work Plan for 2006 will be more than 2005?

SRSG: I think we will have to work with two options: if we have peace at the end of this year, then we can work already on return activities in Darfur and that means a re-allocation. Return activities may lead at a certain moment also in less food aid because in the second half of the year food production in Darfur might increase. At the same time I must say that if we are being asked to renovate, to recover, to rebuild villages, which will take of course more than a couple of months, that would also add to the costs. So it is a balance that is to be expected.

As far as the south is concerned, less relief but more recovery and more development and that means an increase. And the Work Plan will gradually have to become part and parcel of the post-Oslo development plan. I must come to the conclusion that so far Oslo did result in commitments which did not materialise with a couple of exceptions – the Dutch, for instance, now have made available quite a sizeable amount of money for the multi-donor fund. The humanitarian assistance is materialising with up to 50% but that is a much higher percentage than the realisation of the commitments in these for development. And that means that perhaps you will have to continue with humanitarian approaches in order to get the money.

I have told the SPLM also that they will have to be very serious also as far as their own domestic resources are concerned. They have higher resources than people think and it is very necessary that SPLM and the government sit together also on economic issues so that SPLM can use their resources which they can rightfully claim also for development activities. I am being asked to spend money on Juba which is highly necessary but we don't have the funds because the development funds have not yet been available on the basis of Oslo and you can't solve the problems of Juba with humanitarian assistance alone. You can do something in terms of water and food but that is not development. They will have to sit together. I have advised both parties, -there is a certain slowness in economic terms more than the other elements of the CPA- to go to the next meeting in September of the IMF and the World Bank. The world leaders in economic and financial terms are available. All ministers of finance, all the bankers are available. And my advise which I have given also to

Salva Kiir is: if you want to make also a travel outside, go to the annual meeting of the IMF, show yourself, show your plan, create confidence amongst investors in the policies of the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan so that the money can come in order to do the job. If you wait a year, then the ministers of finance don't know anymore that Sudan exists because there would be something else. Make use of the first opportunity of that meeting after the peace that you have created. That drive, in economic terms, outside of the humanitarian field. And I hope that at that meeting – but I don't see it happening yet – that the government and the government of south Sudan will announce, together with the Bank or the Fund, that the first consortium meeting which is bringing together the commitment of the international community institutionally, will take place this year in order to lay a sustainable basis on the ongoing aid flows.

Q: I have listened, Mr. Pronk, for the last four or five months of what you had to say about Darfur and particularly your hopes for Abuja. I have characterised, and many others have characterised, your comments as showing great optimism but soon we will learn whether the optimism is based on reality. In your first statements in this press conference you talked about your meetings with the SLA, etc.; you talked about the plan that you had for the talks; you were very (inaudible) about what the SLA said to you. Why do you maintain this optimism because to the outside world it doesn't appear to be much reason for the optimism?

SRSG: You know, as I said, if you are coming to these press conferences then you can quote me. What I said last time was that I am not a spectator of a match, I am a player. So you set the goals and you don't leave it to others to set the goals and to change the goal-posts. You have to set goals, you have to set your objectives in order to make it possible that they are implemented. So it is not just the optimism of a spectator of a match whether the match will go for a victory of the one or the other party. You are a player yourself and you can try to make it work. That is one thing.

Secondly; look back. A year ago there was fighting resulting in thousands of people dead per month. At the moment, we are counting and counting and counting per month violence. Last couple of month, a hundred. It is too many but the activities did result in progress. In terms of mortality, you have seen the figures. It was twice the critical threshold, it is now two-thirds of the critical threshold which is a three-fold improvement. In terms of breaches of the ceasefire, it was not possible to count all of them in our monthly report to the Security Council a year ago and that went on until December-January. Now it is handful and there are months without any breaches of the ceasefire. In terms of the political will to talk, the government was not interested to talk a year ago. They are now angry wherein the other side wanted to postpone the talks. They want to talk. And that is not fake. They have made it clear in the fifth round that there is very serious talks and that they want to get a result. And I saw their, you may call 'flexibility', in the talks. Also, as far as SLM and JEM are concerned, in the fifth round they didn't run away. They stayed from the beginning to the end and they were as flexible as the government in making a compromise. The agreements which were reached in November last year were breached and violated in the month after November. They are no longer being breached at the moment. There is, of course, a lot going on which I do not consider the first responsibility of the government and SLM. The *Janjaweed* and the looters which are also split off of the groups themselves. So I see step by step progress. And because there is step by step progress, I see the optimism is warranted. I can't prove at all that the progress will turn out to be legitimate tomorrow or the day after tomorrow let alone in December. But the speed and the direction show that there is a certain legitimate optimism warranted in itself and then you make it happen.

Q: Let us go back to the SLA because they seem to be the critical factor at this time because they are not traveling at the same pace as everybody else. What leads you to believe and your reasons for optimism that the SLA: one: actually have the (*indiscernible*) that can be delivered; two: can deliver and three; have a direct connect to the people on the ground?

SRSB: I am shifting my attention from the diplomats around to the people on the ground and I have been very clear to them ...

Q: Does that mean you are not confident in the people you had been talking to?

SRSB: It is for that reason - confidence in the connectivity between the leaders and the ground - that we brought the leaders on the ground with a plane to Abuja in order to be there. And that was quite an investment. I must admit they were sleeping at the Hilton Hotel but it was quite an important investment and it did produce an outcome which turned out to be sustainable. So connectivity between the leaders and the people on the ground is the most important thing in which we are trying to invest at the moment. I have told the SLA leaders on the ground who said: our leaders are going around in the world in order to help making peace. I said, "that is a waste of time, sir. Your leaders should not go to Italy or the US or to the UK. They should come here. They should be here in order to work here for peace and talk here." Can you bring them here with your planes? I said: no way. They are rich enough to get themselves to Addis or Asmara or Nairobi and then we can pick them up with a plane in order to bring them to Darfur in order to do the work over here. So my orientation is the people, the leaders, who are themselves also in dire circumstances and they are better than many people think in terms of logic and thinking and expressing the demands of their own people

So I have a certain confidence that the period in which the leaders of SLA were betting on two horses - if you can talk you can always fight - is over. There are many political leaders now on the ground working with the military commanders who are serious about talks. They are tough negotiators definitely - quite tough, and they have strong demands. But they are more united and cleverer than many people think and more representative also of the people in the field themselves, and you need a strong group which is united in order to get a good result rather than a small group which is being alienated from the people whom they represent.

Working towards that connectivity is a good investment and may produce a result. I don't know but, again, I am not a spectator. I am a player.

Spokesperson: Please don't leave; I have a little announcement for you about one activity that is going to be undertaken very soon. I am going to read it in Arabic because it is mainly of interest for the Sudanese media, of course the international media is welcome to attend: The Human Rights section of UNMIS is organizing a Workshop with the participation of Sudanese Society on the NEW Constitution and human issues. The Workshop will take place on 20 August at UNDP conference room. We have the invitation here. Please feel free to grab them on your way out. The media is invited to attend but you have to confirm your attendance by phone or by e-mail. Thank you and see you next Wednesday.