

**The United Nations Mission In Sudan****Date: 24 August 2005****Office of the Spokesperson****PRESS BRIEFING**

Good afternoon ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start the briefing today by drawing your attention to some misquotations that appeared in some newspapers on statements I made on Abuja talks, including the attribution of the decision to postpone the talks to the UN. I would like to thank the newspapers that published today the correction I've sent them. But the benefit of everybody present here, I would like to reiterate again that:

-The UN and UNMIS has no mandate to decide on anything on the talks. The AU has that mandate and the UN strongly supports the AU efforts.

-What we said on the Abuja talks, myself and SRSG Jan Pronk, is available on our website (www.unmis.org). Please feel free to log on to the website and you'll find the full transcripts.

-I would very much appreciate if you'd check with me first before quoting me or any other UNMIS official prior to publishing your articles. Your cooperation will be very helpful in order to ensure that the information provided to the public is accurate.

-Finally, I would like to invite to you to address your questions on Abuja talks to the AU Office in Khartoum. As far I we are concerned, we can only address questions relating to our own activities falling under our own mandate. Thank you.

I will proceed now with the rest of my briefing.

Investigation Commission

UNMIS had received on 18 August an official invitation from the GoS for the United Nations to provide assistance to the National Commission investigating the causes of the helicopter crash that claimed the life of Dr. Garang. The assistance requested include: logistical support to the investigation Commission; technical advice and consultation regarding neutral authority to analyze technical evidence retrieved from the site of the crash. The request for assistance is currently being considered jointly by UNMIS and the United Nations Headquarters in NY.

Visit of the high Commissioner for Refugees

The High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, started a ten-day mission to visit UNHCR operations in the Darfur region of Sudan, Chad, Southern Sudan and Kenya. The Purpose of his visit is to review UNHCR operations in the region.

His visit started in Khartoum. On Tuesday 23rd August, the High Commissioner met with senior governmental officials; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Minister of Interior, Commissioner for Refugees and the President. He also met with UN agencies, donor community and NGOs. He visited Wad Ershef IDP camp.

Today he is scheduled to travel to El Geneina, West Darfur, where he will visit camps for the displaced population, meet African Union, and local government officials. The visit in Darfur will be followed by two days visit in eastern Chad. It is planned he will visit two of twelve UNHCR-run refugee camps, and meet senior government leaders before heading to southern Sudan to see preparations for the return of refugees including rehabilitation of schools, hospitals and demining of roads. In Kenya, he is scheduled to visit Kakuma refugee camp which hosts some 60,000 refugees from southern Sudan. He will return to Geneva on Thursday 1 September.

In June, on his first mission as High Commissioner, Mr Guterres visited Uganda where he met southern Sudanese refugees living in settlements and talked to them about their hopes and fears of going back home.

Military update

-Deployment of Military Observers and Protection Force elements is in progress and as of now, there are 149 Staff Officers, 145 Military Observers and 1492 Personnel from Troops Contributing Countries deployed in the mission area. Following a decision by the SRSG, the Force Commander has directed to speed up the deployment of UNMOs in various sector locations. Respective Sector HQs and UNMOs have started gathering the data about the formation of Joint Integrated Units and DDR process. However, activities of the UNMOs have been restricted due to heavy rains in South Sudan.

-The CJMC Meeting was held on 16 August 05 in Juba. During the meeting, it was decided that both the parties would prepare the lists of personnel for the formation of JIUs and submit the lists during the next CJMC meeting. On opening of Yei - Juba Road, the CJMC decided that Bridge One and Three shall be launched immediately. Consequently, SPLA and SAF, in a joint effort, have to de-mine the remaining part of the road between the Bridges with their own standards, resources and to open the road for civil and military traffic at their own risk. Meanwhile, UNMAS will continue to de-mine, as a priority, the road in accordance with internationally agreed standards. It was also decided that committee will discuss the policy for monitoring child soldiers and AJMC issue at the next meeting. CJMC Members agreed to hold the next meeting of the CJMC in Juba at 0900 hrs on Tuesday on 30 Aug 05.

-Still on demining, a team from the Swiss Federation for Mine Action (NGO) supporting WFP's Nimule-Juba road reconstruction has been working over 2 months to clear the road.(¼ of the road has been cleared). During the operation, an accident had occurred in the morning of 22 August. A deminer (Sudanese national) working for the Swiss Federation for Mine Action sustained severe injuries including an amputation of a leg following a mine explosion. It is the first demining incident involving mine action staff since the Mine Action Programme started in 2002. Further investigation of the incident is ongoing.

Humanitarian

-Following the heavy rains in El Fasher in the night of 12 Aug., the decision was taken to build a dam to protect the area of Abu Shouk camp where the flow of water was the heaviest. Protective barriers will also be constructed on three sides of 60 plots to direct the flow of water past the settlements. GoS authorities will provide the engineers and machinery but have requested support for labour and running costs of the operation. An INGO has completed its assessment of the flood damage to Al-Salaam camp, and has identified 159 families in need of both food and non-food assistance. Much of the food stocks were destroyed by the floods, and some NFIs, such as jerry cans, were washed away.

-In response to the impending food shortage in Wau, WFP began airdrops of 65.35 MT to increase stocks in their warehouses. The agency is planning to airdrop a total of 456 MTs of food for the month of Aug. The food will target a total of 37,000 beneficiaries. Food distribution has now begun in Rubkona and Bentiu by an INGO in conjunction with WFP following an initial delay due to insecurity.

-In Juba, WFP distributed non-food items to 3668 school pupils in conjunction with UNICEF who will distribute school bags. FAO distributed 20 kgs of seed for multiplication to 71 farmers in Tokiman and 125 bags of sorghum to IDP farmers at Kapuri.

-WHO has issued an alert on River Blindness disease in Wau. The agency has brought 65,000 doses of Metizan tablets for distribution to residents and a two-day awareness campaign will be carried out this week in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in an attempt at preventative care.

Questions and Answers:

Q: In your briefing you had mentioned that following the heavy rains in el-Fasher a dam is decided to be built there. Who is responsible for this project and when shall it be built?

Spokesperson: To my understanding, as usual, the decision has been made by the UN agencies who have been working there but these activities are mainly coordinated by OCHA. So OCHA coordinates these activities but however in terms of the execution of these activities we are grateful to the NGOs – international and Sudanese NGOs – who are associated in many of these projects. For this specific endeavour I am not sure who is involved but decisions are made together, coordinated by OCHA definitely, but they are made also in consultation and in coordination with all the humanitarian operators in the area. Generally, the NGOs help and assist in executing some of these programs. However, if I am wrong – my colleague here, Dawn from OCHA can correct me or can add to what I said – I do not know who is specifically involved in the construction of the dam in the Abu Shouk area. We can get this information for you later and we can keep you informed but that is how it goes in general terms.

Q: When will it start?

Spokesperson: My understanding is it must be starting because the heavy rains were on 12th, the decision has been made and I would assume that it started already but I stand to be

corrected by colleagues from OCHA and again I stand to be corrected and I will come back to you with a more accurate answer.

Q: *(In Arabic)* There is a considerable delay in the implementation of the measures set forth in the CPA. The people of the Sudan lay high hopes on the peace process. The new government was expected to be formed on the 9th of July; Mr. Pronk then confirmed it will be formed on 9th August but the people of the Sudan were surprised to see only that what took place was only a ceremony. There is also a major delay in the formation of the ceasefire political commission and a delay in the decision on the fate of the Abyei region. Don't you think that these delays affects the timetable set for the implementation of the CPA?.

Spokesperson: *(In Arabic)* We do admit there is a delay as you mentioned in the implementation of many of the provisions of the CPA and we have expressed our concerns over this delay.

Our response is as follows: we are of the conviction that the Parties are clearly committed to the CPA and the need to implement its provisions. This delay was obligated by a number of considerations and most of these considerations are well understood to us all. In our continued talks with the SPLM or the GoS we stress the need for not delaying the implementation of, at least the urgent provisions of the CPA, for long periods. We share your observations that the people of the Sudan lay great hopes on the implementation of the CPA and our clear message that we confirmed in all our talks and which we continue to stress in all our talks with the Parties is that the people of Sudan expect a lot from you and as you accelerate the implementation of the CPA, their hopes and their trust in you will be consolidated because there is no going back on this process. Consequently, the responsibility lies on the Parties and this message must be put forward by the people of the Sudan to the two parties in order that they may speedup in the implementation of at least the urgent provisions of the CPA so that the people of the Sudan will be assured that this process is seriously on track and with the support of all the people of the Sudan.

Q: *(In Arabic)* Has the United Nations received any invitation to attend the general convention of the SLM? They have cited 1st September as the date it will start and Mr. Pronk had said as he mentioned in his last media briefing to have their convention on September ahead of a sixth round of talks in October.

Spokesperson: *(In Arabic)* I only wish to make a clarification. Mr. Pronk did not decide anything for them but only proposed – it was a mere proposal and of course the SLM has the absolute freedom to decide on the date when it wants to hold its convention. Mr. Pronk's proposal was only aimed at making sure that the convention will be of substantial result and that the date for this convention should not be used by the SLM as an excuse to postpone the forthcoming Abuja talks.

Secondly; as far as I personally know, we have not yet received an invitation from the SLM. I have seen press reports saying that the SLM will invite more than one party – the UN among them – to attend the convention but personally, and I stress personally, I have not seen such an invitation. SRSR Pronk is currently on vacation out of the country. This is of course not an

excuse for not having such information but I have not received such an invitation from our offices.

Q: You are saying you are going to construct a dam in Abu Shouk camp. This is an IDP camp. Do you mean these people are going to stay forever there? What is the idea of constructing a dam there if after sometime people are going to move away and return to their villages?

Spokesperson: It is a very good question. However our response is not related necessarily to how long they are going to be staying. What we know for now is that these people are not going to be leaving the camp next month or the month following. We are not sure that these people would be leaving the camp before the next heavy rain hits the area. So just as a matter of precaution and to avoid the situation that happened lately, we are doing that because we do not have any indication on when these IDPs are going to be returning. You know all the issues surrounding the IDP return question, you know, and we said it and everybody agrees that these people can not return unless the situation is addressed. Two; we have also, and that has been always our policy and our stand assuming that the security situation is addressed, we can not just go ahead and encourage these people to leave unless we are first satisfied that the areas where they are supposed to return to have the required conditions for them to have a normal life. So, I would say, we do what we have to do. We address a situation as it arises. We do not necessarily think that what is going to happen later and who is going to use the dam. Maybe the area where Abu Shouk camp is now may at some point evolve to be an actual village – you never know. But that is not the reason why we are building it. We are building it just to address an actual problem and to avoid that the disaster that hit that particular place is not to be repeated.

Q: These people are not living in villages, just in tents. If this place is dangerous, then it will be simple to move these tents to a better or safer area than incurring all these costs especially that you are facing shortages of funds. You can just move these tents to a safer place 100 or 200 or 300 meters and ...?

Spokesperson: First of all we are not facing all that much shortages of funds when it comes to Darfur. We are complaining about funds not necessarily when it comes to Darfur; we are complaining about it in other areas.

Two: You have been following – for instance I give you the example of Kalma camp – you have been following all the stories we gave you about, first, the problems that were in the camp because it was over-populated and we were trying to find other areas to try to decrease the number and the pressure in Kalma camp. It is not an easy task to find alternative places to relocate IDPs. And it has been one of the problems that we had. It's just been recently – and my colleague Dawn here can correct me if I am wrong – it took us quite a while to have the SLM camp to try to help decreasing the pressure in Abu Shouk camp. It took us quite a while; it is not an easy task. So we try to address the situation, as it arises, within our capabilities and of course prior to proceeding to any of the activities that would mean us incurring substantive expenses, we try to look for alternatives. And if they opted for the construction of the dam, it means that other alternatives were not available.

Q: Since you don't have any problem in funding as far as Darfur is concerned ...

Spokesperson: I am not saying that we do not have any problems but I am saying that we are not facing the same shortages in funding as much as we face them when it comes to southern Sudan and the Transitional Areas.

Q: Even this statement we have received here with regard to the people who are affected with these floods doesn't say how many people, how many families have been affected. The number mentioned here is very small compared to the reports that have been published.

Spokesperson: Definitely you are right but I just indicated to you the number of families here that were affected in Al-Salaam camp. I did not refer to Abu Shouk camp. For Abu Shouk camp we can get you the figures and please get in touch with Dawn, she is sitting right there at the back. But I just gave you an update on what we did in Al-Salaam camp and that is an area also that has been affected. On Abu Shouk, Dawn will give you the right figures on the overall number of people affected.

Q: From the visit of the UNHCR High Commissioner, what is new about this? What we know is that there are many, many, many visits. The main problem with them is that they have not received any funding or a very, very small amount of funding. The problem is not coming every time to visit Sudan. And so, what after this? This is not the first time.

Spokesperson: Well, the first objective of the visit is for the High Commissioner to inspect his own operations in Sudan. He is coming here to see the state of affairs when it comes to UNHCR operations *per se*, how it is going, what are the problems and so on and so forth. And the problems could be anything besides monetary or funding. He is the top of the agency and he has to oversee these operations and if they are being run well or not by his staff and so on – I mean that is just an indication for you.

The other objective by these high profile visits is to draw attention at the international level to the needs of this country in terms of assisting in return and relocation of refugees. We are hoping that by this visit he will go back with all the data required of him to launch again another campaign to mobilise the donor communities to the needs with specific information on specific needs with specific proposals on how to address these problems.

You are right, we have so many visitors but these visits are not for tourism purposes – I hope you understand that. It is because all those high profile officials of the United Nations, be it from UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, what have you – Kofi Annan himself – it is first because they want to show, first, their commitment to the Sudanese problem; two, also because of the media coverage and so on, they get this picture to the people sitting there in the living-rooms in the donor countries and let them know that there are problems and people are in need and that their governments pledged some commitments to the Sudan and they have to honour them.

Q: (*In Arabic*) My question is on the decisions taken recently by the government to review visa requirements for employees of humanitarian agencies. Do you think that this decision may affect the work of these agencies?

The GoS had earlier expressed reservations towards welcoming some international forces but later gave its consent. Have these international forces arrived?

Spokesperson: (*In Arabic*) Which international forces – are you referring to those from Germany?

Q: (*In Arabic*) Yes, them.

The other question is that the AU is facing a shortage due to donor's not honouring their pledges. What role can the UN play towards this problem?

Spokesperson: (*In Arabic*) Personally I have not seen the law itself but did see in the press reports that did say that the GoS has decided to review the laws pertaining to entry permits to foreigners. Our understanding of this issue is first of all that the issue does not cover UN employees – be it we as the UNMIS or the other UN agencies in general. Our understanding is that this issue concerns the voluntary agencies in the first place. This is what I read from the press – I personally have not seen the law or the bill itself and can therefore not comment on it. What I did see is what has been said about the law.

Generally, our position is that as for the activities of the voluntary agencies, the legal framework does exist and International Law and the national laws in Sudan regulate these issues. The state in Sudan, the Government of the Sudan that represents independent sovereignty over its lands, has the powers to enter into agreements with these voluntary agencies to determine the legal and field frameworks for the activities of these agencies – this is in the first place.

On the other hand, it is an acknowledged fact worldwide that all governments have, according to International Law, are supposed to have a positive interaction with the voluntary agencies and to facilitate their activities – of course within the framework of what has been agreed upon between these governments and the voluntary agencies. These voluntary agencies have to be allowed to operate in the country in which it is accredited based on the principles of their independence in light of the view that these voluntary agencies are not controlled by any government as they are totally independent of any government or political party. This issue has to be respected and consequently these voluntary agencies have to be dealt with on the basis of this. I can say no more on the issue due to the fact that I have not seen the bill itself but do hope that all voluntary agencies operating in the Sudan continue to cooperate with us and with the GoS because, in the end, the basic reason for the presence of these voluntary agencies in the Sudan is to assist those sectors in need of assistance. I would like to remind you that right from the outbreak of the Darfur crisis, these voluntary agencies were the first to arrive on the ground in Darfur to assist and neither UN nor its other agencies. These were the international voluntary agencies that went first to the field to help resolve the then immediate problems.

On the Germans, the truth is I do not have any information on whether or not German forces will be soon be coming. What I can confirm is that the German government had offered participation of some of her forces but I do not know the form the participation will take – will they be MilObs or else.

My colleague Mehdi can correct me if I am wrong. Mehdi, Germany is sending UNMOs right?

Mehdi: Yes, forty-two of them.

Spokesperson: (*In Arabic*) Yes, the government in Germany had offered 42 military observers to the mission. According to my colleague, Mehdi from the military section, their arrival will take time. In any case on what you said about the government first rejecting and then giving its consent, we are very pleased that such a decision was taken in the long run because you are aware that we are in great need to accelerate the deployment of our forces and especially the Military Observers who are the backbone of our mission here when it comes to military issues. You are aware that we are mandated to deploy 750 Military Observers and they are the pillars of the activities of the military wing of the mission. We are very pleased with this development and do commend the GoS for its position on the issue.

As for your question on the AU, we are following all the problems that the AMIS in Darfur is facing. On our part, we as the UN do not have funds apportioned to the help the AU. Our assistance was of different natures such as in logistics, planning and the implementation of AMIS' duties in Darfur. In addition to this, our role was also to assist in following the necessary issues required for funding of AMIS operations. Unfortunately we could not do more than this because UNMIS does not have an allocation in its budget that will enable it assist the AMIS. This is not a decision we take by ourselves. These are laws set out by the member-states of the AU, including the Sudan, in the meetings of the committee of the General Assembly that deals with budgetary and administrative issues. Personally I was working there and I do know that it is the member-states and not the Secretariat that set those laws.

Q: (*In Arabic*) I refer here to the request by the UN military committee in which it requested the GoS and the SPLM to establish the Joint Integrated Units. Have these units been formed?

Spokesperson: (*In Arabic*) The timetable has been enshrined in the CPA itself and this is what your colleague from *AlRai AlAam* referred to as delays in the implementation of some of the provisions of the CPA and this, i.e. the formation of the joint military committees. Unfortunately, to date, no major progress has taken place on the issue despite the fact that the SPLM had informed us that it has nominated about 30 people to these units but this number is not sufficient and there must be more. I do not have an idea about the maximum number of members of these units but it is far greater than tens. We are referring to hundred or thousands of people to be nominated to these units. There is a delay. What we can do as the UN – and you are aware that we are here only to assist and that we do not impose anything on the parties – as per the provisions of Chapter VI under which we are mandated, we only point out to the parties what is required of them to do in order to implement the provisions of the CPA and we remind them of their commitments and emphasise the need for them to meet those obligations. What we do is to present reports to the Security Council in order to inform them of the developments achieved in the implementation of the CPA. This is what we do as UNMIS here and there is nothing more we can do.

Q: (*In Arabic*) My question is on the press release. In one of the last paragraphs of the press release, you talked of insecurity in some parts of Bentieu and Robkona. What is the nature of this insecurity – was it military operations, tribal clashes?

Southern Sudanese tribal leaders in the peripheries of Khartoum complained two or three days ago of police harassment. This issue was brought to the attention of the *Wali* of Khartoum who ordered an immediate end to the crackdown that was taking place. Have you as the UN received any such complaints? What is your view on the matter?

Spokesperson: On your question on Bentieu and Robkona, yes events have occurred that may have security implications. Thank God these were not clashes between the parties but were internal issues relating to confrontations between elements of some of the different tribes in that region. I will come back to you with more details on what exactly happened in Bentieu and Robkona but I would like to confirm that this had nothing to do with the Sudanese Armed Forces nor the SPLA but was of a very different nature and I will look for more details – because there are a number of such issues that are being brought to our attention – and will come back to you with the answer. That is all I have to say at the moment on the issue but please give me a call later to find out what I have for you on the issue.

As for what you said about the complaints coming out from some tribal leaders, I do not have any information on whether we as the UN have or have not received any complaints. I will contact our other units in the mission and come back to you with the answer to this question.

No more questions?

Well, if there are no other questions, thank you very much and hopefully I will see you next Wednesday. Have a nice day.