

Media Briefing

9 February 2005

Q: My first question is: Vice-president Ali Osman Mohamed Taha spoke yesterday of a plan to resolve the crisis in Darfur in which he announced GoS pledges to appoint a judge to look into grievances on the population and compensations. What comments does the UN have on this?

The second question: The ICRC had proposed to the GoS and the SPLM a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the release of the prisoners. Do you have any information on these arrangements?

A: Thank you very much for your questions. For your first question, my answer is that the Security Council is considering, for the time being, all the reports that it has before it, including the one that we presented on the situation in Darfur. The Council will also be considering the report of the International Commission of Inquiry and that will be the answer of the UN to whatever has been presented by Vice-president Taha as a plan to tackle, among other things, the issue of Darfur. So I don't have any comments – we are waiting for the Security Council to say its final word on these issues.

On ICRC, I am so sorry I don't have any answer to your question. However what we could do will be to follow up this issue with the ICRC itself. I can get in touch with them and see what is happening on that front.

Q: In his press conference of the week before last, Mr. Jan Pronk confirmed that the Security Council would issue a resolution of transforming the advance mission into a regular mission. This resolution has delayed. Are there differences within the Security Council on this issue. What could the delay in deployment be attributed to?

The second point is that the UN had requested the international forces in the Nuba Mountains one hundred days to hand over. Is the UN prepared to take over their tasks within that period?

The third question is on the international forces. The GoS and SPLM had announced a draft agreement on the deployment of international forces. What are the developments on this issue?

A: On your first question on the decision by the Council on the establishment and deployment of the UN peace support mission in Sudan and why it did take so much time; actually it did not take really that much time because initially we are talking about, we are expecting a decision by the Security Council by mid-February. And now we know that the report to the Security Council has been only formally submitted on February 4th. And you know that the Security Council, besides that report, has two other reports to consider: the one on Darfur – that's the monthly report – and also the report of the International Commission of Inquiry. I am not aware of any disputes inside the Council as far as the deployment of the peace support mission is concerned.

We know that there are talks within the Security Council membership on a draft resolution on the mandate and establishment of the peace support mission. So, where we stand, we do not see it as a delay and there is nothing much that you can add to it. It is just how things happen and, hopefully, everything is going to be done on time. So I don't have anything to add to this.

On the second question; if the UN will be ready to take over after the Joint Military Commission ends its task in the Nuba area, my answer to you is yes we will be ready to take over after the Joint Military Commission finishes its task. The answer is, basically, yes.

On your last question, in terms of the status of forces agreement of which we presented copies of these drafts to the GoS and the SPLM/A, we have not yet finalized the agreement. From the GoS side we have very positive responses. The issue has been considered and discussed by the SRSG in his talks with Vice-president Taha and we don't foresee any major difficulties on that front. The SPLM is still considering this and other issues and we will hear from them soon, probably.

Q: Last week the Sudanese defense minister was quoted as saying that the government will withdraw its Antinov planes from Darfur, have you been officially notified of this decision?

A: No. We have not been officially notified of this decision. However it is a very important decision, but we have not been notified officially *per se*, but we do believe that that statement made in this regard by the Interior Minister was quite a credible statement. In any case, we actually welcome this statement. We welcome it because it is one of the requests that we put to the government to refrain from flying its Antinov planes over Darfur and we are happy that the government announced that decision. We will be very happy if this decision is translated into concrete action on the ground, it will help a great deal in the overall situation in Darfur.

Q: There are many statements that the UN Secretary General is campaigning for an action from the Security Council to impose sanctions on the Sudan. How far is that true?

A: The UN Secretary General is not campaigning for sanctions or otherwise. In his position at the top of the UN, the Secretary General is entitled by virtue of that position to say his views and to recommend certain steps to the Security Council. The Secretary General said that sanctions should be kept on the table. He did not say impose sanctions because imposing sanctions is the prerogative of the Security Council. Now I have read all of this about Koffi Anan campaigning. He is not campaigning but while he is undertaking his position as Secretary General, he is the one presenting reports to the Security Council. He is the one depicting the situation and he is the one, the first placed person, to recommend a certain course of action to the Security Council – which he did. Now, I do not view that as a campaign and if you want to talk about a campaign, I would rather talk about the campaign, if I ever use this word referring to Koffi Anan, I would say he is campaigning to bring peace back to Sudan... Because since June, he has been very active and he keeps talking to all Sudanese leaders who can really make a difference, he is following up on all the issues pertaining to the Sudan and he is advocating for the peaceful resolution of all issues that are currently dominating the Sudanese environment, particularly the Darfur

issue. So, in summary, Anan is not campaigning for sanctions; he is entitled to recommend to the Security Council certain courses of action; the ultimate decision will be the decision of the Security Council to take any course of action it deems appropriate. Koffi Anan is actually advocating peace and normalcy in Sudan and I think that he has a lot of currency in that area. Thank you.

If there are no other questions, thank you for coming and see you next Wednesday.