



**United Nations Advance Mission In Sudan
UNAMIS**

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of the press conference of 17 March 2005 by the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Sudan, Jan Pronk.

Radhia Achouri:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, welcome at our press conference. Today we have with us the UN Special Representative Mr. Jan Pronk who will be giving a briefing on the latest developments ... Mr. Pronk.

Jan Pronk:

Thank you.

There is no special reason why I am coming to the noon briefing myself but I always would like to do it at least once a month so that you won't forget me.

Just a couple of things and then I am available for questions.

We are looking to New York at the moment, waiting for the outcome of debates in the Security Council, it takes quite some time. They are discussing three issues: the Security Council which will give us the mandate to start as a regular mission to monitor and support the implementation of the peace agreement between the north and the south, secondly; the resolution – which may be brought together in one resolution – on Darfur, and third; the issue with regard to the follow-up on the Commission of Inquiry.

I understand that the most difficult issue in New York is the last one. They are not getting easily to a consensus and I am afraid that the other issues are being made hostage by the disagreements so far on the follow-up to the Commission of Inquiry. That is a pity because particularly the first issue, the mandate to help implement the peace agreement, is getting urged. There is some delay in the implementation of the peace agreement by the parties themselves; some deadlines are not being met. That is not a big deal so far but there are, of course, two important questions: firstly; does that not give rise to fighting – and there has been some fighting around Akobo – and that is worrying because it can not be monitored because we do not yet have the task as a mission to monitor the breaches of the peace agreement. It can not also be brought to the level of political discussions. And that is a reason to hope that the implementation of the peace agreement can take place soon.

There is a number of steps which have been taken. For instance in the negotiations on the constitution there is not yet a final draft. Anyway they have worked on it and I

have seen some pre-drafts. And they have also taken a decision on the joint team which is going to meet to prepare the work of the government of national unity. There are several steps but the going is slow. Together with the mandate which we have not yet received from the Security Council, it is a bit worrying.

The mission now gets from the Security Council each week a mandate for a week – they call it a roll-over mandate – and that is not a good start in my view.

On Darfur, there is no agreement either yet in the Security Council, they may wish to wait until there is the report of the joint mission of the AU and the UN which has come to Darfur in order to assess what is necessary to step up the protection force in Darfur. There is an AU monitoring and protection force which now consists of about 2,200 military – it is gradually being built up but of course it is not enough and the Secretary-General has said there are a number of options in order to improve and strengthen their presence. I just had a debriefing with the mission which has come back from the field which is going to draft its report in Addis, the AU capital, in order to present to the AU and to the UN hopefully next week so that the Security Council can also take a decision.

I have made it very clear to the mission that we need a robust force - when I say 'robust' I mean 8,000 military – for a duration of about 4 years. This year until there is a peace agreement hopefully towards the end of this year on Darfur and three years thereafter so that people can go back to the areas where they fled from. And if you have 1.6, 1.8 million people which have to go back, you need many people to protect the areas where they have to return to so that they can resettle, start to till the land again and grow food without being harassed or driven out or killed again. A robust force, 8,000, and a strong mandate to protect people four years onwards. And I hope that will be the outcome of the mission. I told them that if that is not the case I will make that clear because that is, as far as I am concerned, the yardstick.

I do not expect strong resistance from the government; the government wants the AU to be there. I do not expect strong resistance from SPLM/A and JEM – they also want their people to be protected in an effective manner. I do expect resistance from the bandits and from the militia including the *Janjaweed*. And of course talks have to take place also with the *Janjaweed*. The AU commanders do a good job. They have talks and they are able to prevent attacks but not always – and you never know because these militia commanders have their own views.

We see that already at the moment in el-Geneina it is an example. The government has done finally in West Darfur what we asked them to do. Remember we asked them to disarm. They didn't but now the Government of West Darfur has said to the militias' "return the cars to us which you got from us, which have been used as weapons. You put military equipment on the cars which are being used to attack people – return the cars – dozens and with our weapons", and the militias don't like that. They are saying, "We are now going to attack the people behind the government of West Darfur; the international community which is driving the government to demand from us to return weapons". And that had been the reason for us, last Thursday, a week ago, to withdraw our people, the humanitarian workers, from parts of West Darfur back to el-Geneina. NGOs have followed – we did it in four days from Thursday until Monday – because of the threats. And we are on the way now to assess

the situation, to talk, also to try to talk with those militia in order to stabilize the situation again so that we can go back but the threats are true. But we have not withdrawn from West Darfur. We have not withdrawn from Darfur – of course not. But from parts of West Darfur around el-Geneina. It is not a big group, some dozens, and it doesn't affect the humanitarian assistance by the way. Because the WFP always drives ahead and brings food and stores that is available. The rations have been sent. So it does not affect much of the humanitarian assistance. It may affect if it continues but not for the time being. It does affect, however, the work of NGOs who are in the camps and who have withdrawn, that humanitarian work is being affected but I hope we will be able to return soon. But it is an example that what happened in el-Geneina could happen anywhere else in Darfur. Therefore that is the reason why we need a government which takes action against militia and we need, of course, a robust force which is there as a deterrent against possible attacks.

Let me go from here to a number of issues related to North-South. First; the political issues with regards to Darfur. I was in Asmara last week and had discussions with the SLM and JEM. They were together – which is good. That was not the case in my previous visit. And I told them please stay together because the government needs a strong partner on the other side of the table to negotiate with. If you have a weak partner the negotiation always fails. You need two strong partners for the negotiations. Otherwise the outcome is never sustained. Stay together and don't fight and talk. Take strong negotiation positions so that you can really have a basis for talks. Talks are difficult, strong negotiation positions, negotiations are difficult but it is always much better than fighting because fighting means you don't believe in talks and that you don't believe in negotiations. So I am not very worried by a very strong negotiating position by the SLM, JEM, saying that they only want to talk if the perpetrators are being indicted. That will take years. Of course that can not be and they understand that. It is a strong negotiating position.

The SLM and JEM made it very clear to me that they now think that the Commission of Inquiry's report is a good report and it should be implemented and that the Security Council should discuss it and take agreements on that basis. And I agree with that. The Security Council should not give, by delaying its discussions, a wrong signal to the representatives of the victims that they are not serious which then may bring the representatives of the victims to the position of fight again. It is a wrong signal by the Security Council. It was a wrong signal to the perpetrators that nothing is going to happen anyway. Because they will not be able to reach a common position in New York. So "we are off the hook, we got away with it and we will always get away with it". A delay in the Security Council gives wrong signals in two directions and that is my message from here also to New York: Please agree, compromise, find a solution, give the right signal that you are serious.

SLM-JEM want to talk and to negotiate. The government also wants to talk and I think that these talks can be effective. They will take months in order to be really serious on all the important sharing of wealth and sharing of power issues; access to land which, for instance, has been an extremely difficult issue in Darfur, will take months but it can only take place if it is quiet on the ground. But you need that robust force which can guarantee that there are no major attacks.

I also saw in Asmara the leaders of the Beja Congress and the Lions. They also were together and they made it very clear that they are in for talks and that they do not like violence. I believe that and they can do it either in the NDA which is good and I said, “please stay in the NDA”, and they want to stay in the NDA but at the same time in the NDA they think that they are weak and they also want to have a forum of direct talks with the government. They want that and I have the impression also that the government is quite willing to have that – which is good.

A third possibility is where we have a national conference on peace and conflict in the country which is in the peace agreement of the 31st of December last year where you will bring together in that national conference all conflicts. The new government of national unity will then have discussions with all its components and liberation movements together to have a sustainable solution for the future and also to underline to those who would participate in that conference, a conference of national unity to deal with peace and conflict in the long run is an important thing. That can not start yet because you do not yet have a government of national unity. You should have first that government of national unity including, the SPLM, in the present government so that they can start. And of course conflicts should also already be discussed now and the talks between the Beja Congress and the Lions could take place in the next couple of months. I would be very much in favor. But good talks might also be a reason not to demonstrate or not to oppress a demonstration and not to use violence. By the way I hope, and I will ask the government, that the inquiry, the investigation, that the government did announce into what happened in Port Sudan where a couple of dozens of people who were demonstrating had been killed, would be published soon and that that will be a good report, a faithful report, an honest report. It is also necessary to create confidence amongst the other side that talking really makes sense.

North-South: As it is said there is some delays but of course preparations take place. In the framework of those preparations, I am visiting some parts of the rest of Sudan. I went for instance this week to Abyei to have discussions with the leaders of the Misseriya and also the Dinka leaders and the government in Abyei and I came back with optimism. It started in Abyei in the early 1980s and of course there are still tensions but they don't fight. They have already stopped fighting before the CPA and they talk and there are Dinka leaders in the north who are participating in meetings of the traditional leaders with whom I had my discussions. They gradually come to understand each other. And we will come in over there. That will be a very special situation because Abyei has a very special status and there will be tension in the future. When people return to Abyei, they will be Dinka because the Dinka were pushed out during the war. That will change the balance, the composition, and what consequences will that have for a referendum six years later? So you have to talk during the six years in order to get some reconciliation so that people are no longer afraid of each other. That also means we have to get in with developmental and recovery activities and we will. We will open an office over there and we will start activities also to help people to return to Abyei and to carry out also developmental activities not only for the Dinka who are returning but also for the Dinka who stayed behind and also for the Misseriya people so that they know that we are not only helping the other party but that we want to help an overall community.

We will try to do so also in the other parts of South Sudan to help the return of the people which is a tall order because millions will have to return. And I started the

preparations with my people here in the mission on such a return policy which will start this year on the facilitation of voluntary return – of course every return should be voluntary – and spontaneous return so people should take their own decision to go, not being forced, but on their own initiative. We have to facilitate that in particular by starting protection activities on the way because people are being harassed on the way and attacked by self-appointed commanders which is adding to the cost of return – the bus they are taking for instance - and also assistance upon their return in the area where they go back to and good information in the places where they now are present in the camps and in the areas.

We also want to start now in those areas where we have not been during the last couple of years relief and recovery activities so that people know, in those places that they are in now, that there is a choice for them to return or to stay and settle down. That means in particular also, outside all the camps where the IDPs are in the south and across the border in Uganda and in Kenya, also here around Khartoum. There are hundreds and hundreds of IDPs in and around Khartoum. It could go even to up to about 2 million. About 800,000 are in a very bad situation. They have been forgotten also by the donors, the international community, by the UN, by the NGOs and by the Sudanese government. It is nobody's business any more.

We now start a return policy and a resettlement policy. Of course you can no longer say it is a matter of relief. It has to be part of an overall policy. So I went also to the camps and the squatter settlements around Khartoum. I went ten days ago for instance to Sheikan and el-Fateh – those are squatter areas around Khartoum. Last week I went to wad-el-Bashir and Omdurman el-Salam which are camps. And I was startled, I must say, about the extremely bad situation of the people living there. And many of these people are even worse off than people in Darfur: no water – only water that is coming out of donkeys. And people have to pay more for that water than I have to pay in absolute terms, and I am rich as compared to them, in The Hague. It is unbelievable not only on relative terms but in absolute terms. So in relative terms it is a huge mark. No sanitation. If you are in a squatter area you just go out and relieve yourself. Tens and tens and thousands of people, a couple of times a day. That has major consequences for sanitation and for health – for diarrhea – and there are no clinics over there and there are no NGOs to help them there - UNICEF has withdrawn, donors have withdrawn because the south was more important.

People have been forgotten completely. Because they have been forgotten, they have also been forgotten by the government. And what I saw in terms of demolitions is startling. I went to a place where recently people were living – I think 13,000. It was completely empty, flat, nothing anymore. People have been told. “Leave your huts in half an hour and take your possession.” Some may stay. It is a kind of lottery. If you were here before 1997 you get perhaps a ticket. And others, you get a place on a truck and the truck will bring you this afternoon twenty kilometers further and dump you in the desert.

I have been a minister of the government of cooperation, as you know, and I was here around in the early nineties and I had discussions with then minister Banaga at that time. At that time it stopped. But it is still continuing and this has to stop. Because if we now go for a voluntary and spontaneous return policy for the people, then we have to say the people are going voluntarily. But if you are being told to leave your house

so that it is demolished it is no longer voluntary of course because then people don't have another option to stay on. So I really, I am requesting, and when I am saying 'request' I am using very diplomatic terminology, the government to reconsider that policy and to be human. Of course the government has the right to plan Khartoum and many people are coming here and Khartoum will be a metropolis and will expand. The government has every right to allocate land. But allocate land in a human fashion. Make it clear to people that you have the right to stay or that you have to go and tell them in advance that you have to leave because something else has to happen on that piece of land and offer an alternative to the people.

These are not middle-class people, they are extremely poor ... extremely poor. So we will have to work together and I really hope that it will be possible for the donor countries, the UN, the NGOs and the government and the government of Greater Khartoum to work together to get a humane policy of return and settlement. That is now necessary following the peace agreement because the peace agreement speaks about return and settlement of these IDPs – it is also a part of it.

So we will work on the other side, in Abyei and wherever, to make it possible for people to return, and on this side where people are now. Hopefully, also, on the road between this side and the other side, to help protection.

That can not take place overnight and may take years because there are so many who are here already for a very long time. And many of the IDPs were born here. They also have to take the decision whether to stay here or to go but that should be a voluntary, spontaneous, facilitated decision in a humane environment in order to really have a decision to really have a sustainable future for the country.

That is a huge task to be discussed with all authorities and we will do so and I will continue to go to all these places on this side and on the other side. Next week I will go to the Nuba Mountains in order to see the situation over there which is comparable to Abyei and is a very special situation. It is a good situation there because the JMC has carried out a very good job in terms of the monitoring of the peace and there is no fighting any more. The Nuba Mountains were a dark area in the 90s. Nobody knew exactly what was happening over there. It has greatly improved during the last couple of years due to good cooperation between the GoS, SPLM and the JMC. The UN is going to take over very soon as part of the mandate and I hope that we can do as good a job as the JMC has done in the Nuba Mountains and that is also the reason I am going there next week in order to have discussions with the authorities on all sides in order to help the preparation of our deployment.

Finally, tonight I am leaving for Luxemburg, a small country, where there is a meeting of the European ministers of defense and all the European ministers of defense have also invited me to meet them because they have also to discuss what they can do to help the North-South mandate of the UN including the military deployment. And I also will like to discuss with them what they can do with the AU in Darfur because they have to do much more than they have done so far. So I am going there in particular also for that reason, like I did have my mission to Germany and I saw the Minister of Defense and the foreign minister to get their commitments also. I hope to be able to go to other countries in Europe. Soon I hope to be able to go to Paris and to London and I will inform you about these visits as well.

Let me stop here. There is much more to be said but I can do so perhaps in answer to your questions.

Q: We saw Ambassador Kingibe this morning responding to the WFP trip. He said that the situation has deteriorated security-wise, and the hostilities in Darfur, do you have anything on that. I would also like to know in your talks to him what the reaction to your mission was like when you said it wanted a force of 8,000 when there are only 2,000 on the ground.

A: I did see him today and we started the mission. Then, like always, ambassador Kingibe and I agreed on each and everything. He said today that the security situation is not good...

That is correct. I mentioned myself el-Geneina but I could have mentioned that Jebel Marra itself which is always a region of high tension. Again there was a peak.

The problem was, in my view, could be contained if there would be a strong AU force over there and they are not there. It is a difficult situation and we need them also there. For that reason we need many more. And there is a lot of looting going on throughout Darfur – that is another issue. I have a long list of looting incidents; cars, trucks, making the truck drivers more afraid to drive. So my call is on SLA not to do that but SLA always says “we didn’t do it”. And I need to set an overall plan and we are working on that.

SLA is not very forthcoming. The people who have been looted say they were clearly SLA who did it and SLA continuously denies saying that they were others, former SLA, etc. so we are running around in circles and we are missing quite a number of trucks at the moment and WFP is becoming very upset and they say either we don’t want to drive any more or we can’t because we don’t have drivers. And that is against the interest of the people who are, SLA claims, are their people. So SLA, insofar as they are behind the lootings, is acting against the interests of their own people.

Q: And what is the mission’s reaction to your statement that you want approximately 8,000 – there are 2,000?

A: They still have to write their report. And everybody is saying of course that 2,000 is not enough and we should have a figure of 3,300 which was in the plan. And I think people have come to the conclusion that that would not be adequate – that they need more – but no body gives a ‘yes’ to my 8,000 figure. I understand that but that is my claim.

Q: You want the AU forces to come to 8,000. They struggled for months to get some 2,000. Do you think you made a mistake as it is taking too long to deploy?

A: Politically I don’t think it was a mistake because it is ethical. The Secretary-General of the UN mentioned four options: this one AU proper, or UN, or joint or a multi-national force.

Politically I think that the other three options are very difficult ones. Some of them are non-starters, theoretical. So, politically, I have the impression that you have to go forward with the first option because there is hardly any other alternative. That is not negative because it is in principle a good option. As Africans, and I said many times, they do a good job. They even would do a better job than if they would be Asian or European troops because they understand better the culture, the language, and they are quite committed to their own people. It is a numbers point. It is also a logistical point. You have to say to the Europeans and the Americans 'you have to do more to make it possible for the Africans to bring more on the ground, and quicker. And if they can not do it quickly they have to find a kind of bridge until they have enough on the ground. And I do not want to go into a choice between the options. My point is: 8,000, four years to do it. And I have the impression that the Africans really want to do a good job so make it possible for them to do that good job.

Q: Why hasn't the world contributed logistical support?

A: Maybe it was bad planning – it is possible. May be slow implementation because of the facilitating company. Everything is now being brought to commercial companies outside the military themselves who couldn't do the job. May be bureaucracy in Europe. It is possible. May be the Africans themselves were too optimistic about the speed at which they could bring the troops. That is also possible. Then they are not to be blamed because if the Europeans are also asked to take troops to a country it also takes months before they do it.

Anyway this is, for the time being, the only option and they have to deliver and the whole world has to make it possible for them to deliver. That is why we have the mission here to find out what is, in essence, a joint mission of the AU, UN and partners – so there was an American and a European delegation in that overall mission.

Q: I just want to ask a question about southern Sudan – I asked this last week. The money for peace support in southern Sudan – a billion dollars – that has been talked about, it seems that money will automatically come pending when the mandate is approved. Why is the development money which is needed for the south not up for granted? Why do people have to go about to begging to try and find this money

A: The request is from the international community to particularly monitor the peace agreement with a peacekeeping force. That is the major element of the peace agreement. So we have to do that first. It costs a lot of money and the military people say that that will mean 10,000 and they will have to be brought and that will cost a lot of money itself. Automatically financed; it is the assessed budget of the UN but we don't have to go around anymore to beg for money.

My desire is to have a mandate which does not only entreat peace monitoring but also reconstruction and development. That is why I call it a comprehensive approach – you know that, I hope. A comprehensive approach that includes DDR (disarmament activities), de-mining activities, return activities, development activities and also nation-building activities – if I may use that term, human rights activities, everything. Then the governments in New York say that is a lot of money itself. And that is not only one billion but that would be perhaps three. And we are not making that

attainable on the basis of assessed contributions. Then you have to go around, that is their choice.

So I have been whipped so bad by countries that say one billion is already too much. It is not coming automatically in the budget and we will have to see and please go around. My answer to them is that this is quite strange that you say so because you have to go around and then you go in particular to the richer countries which will then have to pay twice: first for the peacekeeping mission in the regular budget and then to answer requests. But then they say well we can't answer no. And then it falls apart. That is why we really approach the international community with the concept of a comprehensive approach that needs everything so that we are able to start with demining, a start with reconstruction, etc. So that the additional money is coming on a voluntary basis. And we tell them at the same time 'if you don't want this to be part of the assessed contributions I am chasing you anyway because I need the support also for all the other activities. That is why I am going to all these countries.

But you are quite right; it is cumbersome. And I wish that the whole program could be part of an overall UN contribution system which is not good.

Q: Why the issue of human rights abuses and war crimes was not raised in the case of the war between the north and the south?

A: There was a discussion also among GoS and the SPLM to raise it in the CPA. They together decided not to raise it. They also did not say it should not be raised. That may mean that people in the Sudan in the future can raise also that question amongst themselves. That has happened more in other countries. And there is nothing in the peace agreement which will deny the citizens of the Sudan the right to seek their rights on the basis of past atrocities. And then there is one path for the UN – I go back to make this very clear – that if they want to raise that, they have the right to do so. It is a human right and that human right should be protected.

Q: The UN has been accused by the government as discouraging the efforts related to the peace process between the government and the rebels in Darfur ...

A: I didn't see that statement by the government you are talking about ...

Q: It did come out in the media and especially in the Monitor some three days back. They accused the UN of discouraging the peace process between the government and the rebels in terms of issuing out the 51 suspects by the Commission of Inquiry. What is the UN reaction to that?

A: My reaction is that I traveled to Asmara to meet with the leaders of the rebels in order to request them to come to negotiations soon knowing that the government is quite willing to have the peace negotiations both on the ceasefire agreement and in Abuja.

Secondly; as far as the report is concerned of the 51 names, that is a report which was not organized by the UN but issued by the Security Council. Why was that necessary? Because the UN did ask, in Security Council resolutions, the government to put an end to impunity, also it seems in the meeting between the Secretary-General of the

UN and President Bashir in July. The Security Council then came to the conclusion that demands by the Security Council which had been repeated many times had not been addressed because no major perpetrators of human rights violations had been arrested by the government or brought to court. That is the reason why the Security Council asked for the Commission of Inquiry.

Q: But the suspects, as considered by the government, can they not discourage the peace process as the government says?

A: The whole problem of the Darfur is a human rights problem. There were people who are responsible for the fact that tens and tens of thousands of people were killed and are responsible for the fact that 2.5 million people are driven away out of their villages - that is a fact. That has to stop and can be stopped in different ways. What makes it the most important thing is that the president himself signed – otherwise he would not have signed that agreement with the Secretary-General in July. One most important thing is that this has to stop by ending impunity, by bringing these people to court. We can not always postpone it because those people think they can get away with it. Kill, drive people out of their houses and continue to do so.

Q: The government stated that the UN is going to take the suspects to the ICC and the government is opposing that. And the US is talking of an Arusha court. To date no agreement has been reached by the UN on the report by the Commission of Inquiry and where to try these suspects. What is the cause of the delay?

A: The Security Council has to take a decision. The UN does not have a position but only implements the decisions of the Security Council. The Security Council, that is the US, France, China and Russia, together have to take a decision. The UN does not have a position.

The Security Council decided there should be a report. The Security Council studies the report and has to take a decision what is to be done with the report. It is a not a UN report. Please understand that it is not a report by the UN. It is a report to the Security Council.

— *End* —