



United Nations Mission In Sudan
UNMIS

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

Spokesperson

Good evening all and welcome to this press briefing. We thank you for coming.

SRSG Jan Pronk will be briefing you on some issues pertaining to some of the activities we are carrying out in Sudan be it on the North-South peace process, on other issues pertaining to Darfur for instance.

Without much ado, I would like to leave the floor for Mr. Pronk but before that, I would like to inform you that Mr. Pronk will only be with us for an hour and I hope you will make your questions concise in order to make the best use of this hour. Thank you.

Mr. Pronk, the floor is yours.

SRSG: Thank you. The reason why I'm here today is that I want to maintain direct contact with you. So at least once in a month, I come to our press briefings.

The fact that I am here does not mean I have a very special message and I would like to be brief so that you can ask questions to me.

I am very pleased with the whole process of the implementation of the North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement. First, the parties are working very hard here in Khartoum in the framework of the JNTT. Secondly, this Sunday, we had the first meeting of the CJMC which is the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee, on the 8th of May - on the date which originally had been scheduled - mandate date plus 45 days -. The meeting was good, very cordial. Military persons of the south and of the north interacted quite well with each other. The next meeting will take place two weeks from now so we will have a regular pattern of bi-weekly meetings.

You know that the Military Ceasefire Committee will report to the Political Committee to be established. I just had, that's why I was a couple of minutes late, a meeting with V-P Taha on a number of issues. I asked him to establish the Political Committee soon so that the Military Committee can report to the Political Committee. I also asked him to establish the Assessment and Evaluation Committee. The process of establishing all these committees is difficult, but they are very important outcomes

of the CPA negotiations because they help to monitor the implementation of the Agreement: The Joint Ceasefire Committee – military –, a political committee to politically look at a high level into the implementation of the ceasefire and the Assessment and Evaluation Committee to look into the whole matter of the implementation of the CPA. All these committees will now be established. It is useful because, and I am very pleased to note that, all parties still aim at the date of the ninth of July for the constitution of the Government of National Unity. I got that confirmed last week in a meeting again which I had with Dr. Garang in Nairobi. I got it confirmed also today in a meeting which I had with the Vice-president Taha.

I also have very good feelings on the basis of my visits to the field. Last week, this weekend, I was in Juba and in Malakal and also in Kassala. The parties, in particular in Malakal and in Juba, meet each other regularly and have very good contact with each other. I don't see any animosity. On the contrary, I see people from both sides who are meeting each other very cordially. And that augurs well for the future. They want things to be done in the field. The same feeling I had in the Nuba Mountains and Abyei – you know there was a problem in Abyei when the Boundary Commission did come to Abyei to do its work. That was two weeks ago – that problem should not be overplayed. It was, also according to the SPLM, only a very small group of Misseiriya were protesting – about 45 people and no more than that – they are not of great importance.

On the ground also in the south, the parties really want to work together. And you see, for instance in Juba where I was, that people were very pleased with the fact that there is peace, that the United Nations is there. That is for them a signal that peace will be more than a ceasefire and that it will be sustainable and will last. That's good news.

There is good news about Darfur. There is no bad news about Darfur more than in the past. I think it is important to make it clear that there is stability as far as relations between the government and the parties on the ground is concerned. During the last couple of weeks, there were some attacks by militia but not more than in the past.

The problem at the moment in Darfur is, and I mentioned that before, an increased number of security incidents carried out by bandits. We are very concerned about that. I just read a report yesterday. The list is getting longer and longer. People are getting killed by bandits. At the moment the estimate of the African Union is that banditry leads to one person being killed every three days. Drivers, there were two drivers killed, of commercial trucks bringing the food to the people. WFP food. The attacks were directly aimed at them, not just an incident. One shot was directly aimed at the driver. It is murder, and it is indeed a crime. And why, I don't understand. Because the food is for the people living in the region where the bandits are. Even when there is no looting of a car, drivers are being killed. I am very concerned about it. The Deputy Executive Director of the WFP is at the moment in the field. We hope that, with an increased presence of the AU, we can halt that development.

I am very positive about the decision of the African Union to increase its troops from 3.3 to 7.3 thousand. I hope that can be implemented soon. There are discussions at the moment about how it is going to be implemented with a lot of support from our side. Only African troops will be deployed, with support from our side, and the support of some countries – rich countries – to assist the AU financially and with logistics. I am

having discussions regularly with representatives of European countries, Canada and the United States in order to get it done. This is quite urgent compared to monitoring the ceasefire between the government and the SPLM, because the ceasefire is holding. In Darfur, we need at least to get security on the ground for humanitarian purposes. It is also protection which is necessary from African troops and I am very pleased that the African Union is doing so.

Political talks; they ought to be, in my view, resumed seriously, ultimately in June, so that a serious start can take place for the first time in 2005 because there were no talks in 2005 since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the north and south. The talks should be seriously resumed within one period of a year after the meeting between President Bashir and Secretary-General Koffi Annan which took place on the 1st July 2004 as you remember. A serious resumption in order to meet the objective, which you know is my objective, another Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the GoS and the rebels before the 31st of December 2005. When I did launch that target a couple of months ago, many people said that it is very ambitious. It is very ambitious to have a Comprehensive Peace Agreement within this calendar year. However, the longer parties wait to talk, the more ambitious it will turn to be.

I am very pleased with the reconfirmation by the government that they want to talk. Again it was reconfirmed to me today by V-P Taha. We do our very best to get the rebels also to the negotiations table. Firstly because there are no reasons for them any more not to go. The government wants to go, number one. The AU is expanding its troops on the ground, number two. The Security Council did what it had to do in order to help bring an end to the impunity of those perpetrators who were killing people in the field, number three. There are no reasons any more not to go. There are no reasons also not to disclose the positions of the rebels in the field so that the ceasefire can be made more sustainable in the long run.

We are making also known to all countries around Sudan that all their efforts of goodwill to organize meetings for the rebels, in Rome, in Oslo, in Nairobi, in Tripoli, in Asmara, wherever, are distracting from the talks. Too many talks, too many bilateral uncoordinated initiatives at the moment. We should focus on the resumption of the talks in June in order to have six months of talks and a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. No delays, no good intentions, the important thing is professionalism rather than good intentions.

I also always call on the rebel movements to be united and strong. Good negotiators, strong together so that the outcome of the negotiations can be firm and sustainable rather than loose whereby the outcome is being dismissed as irrelevant by the parties on the ground. Be strong, be firm, be good negotiators, negotiate at the negotiations table because indeed you can get a good result over there.

Number Three: some words about NGOs. In all my contacts in the field – in Darfur and in the South – I meet dedicated NGOs. And I repeat language which I used before: young people, young boys and young girls from other countries and also from Sudan are helping the victims. There are young Sudanese, because they are afraid that, for instance, the medication and the food is going to be robbed and looted by bandits, are sleeping in the tents very near to the food and medicines in order to protect it for the benefit of the people. They are all dedicated. And I meet many,

hundreds or more, if I count the Sudanese, thousands. They are working together. INGOs can not work without national staff. National staff can not do the work without the INGOs who bring some expertise and particularly resources. It is very good joint operation. Please understand that without this also the UN can not do the job. We can bring the food from outside, we can raise the billions of dollars, but to bring it to the people on the field, it is the job of NGOs. They do a perfect job. They stay when they see injustice and insecurity. They don't live a comfortable life. Many of them are under duress, stressed. When they report, they report in good faith. When they see rape, it is not 'invented' by them, it's rape. Come on, people are not lying. Don't deny that there is rape. Female journalists, I would like to ask you in particular, don't give any food to stories that if women say that they are being raped that they are just saying it and it is not true. It is true. And when NGOs and others are reporting on this it is a fact. They don't just give fake reports. Trust each other.

I am here also to say we protect NGOs, we protect the people, and we protect in particular the Sudanese staff of the NGOs who are very brave. International staff members have an air-ticket in their pockets, they can go. Sudanese staff members can not. They are brave. They get some money of course, it is a job, but they could have had another job. So, please understand without them we would never be able to do such a good job. And the job is good; because the situation is much better in the camps. Not yet in the places where we do not have access to. Particularly in rebel-held areas it is difficult. But in camps it is much better. All visitors from outside are saying to us that indeed the situation has much improved as compared to, for instance, August, September and October last year - count your blessings, we also do.

Finally; we have many visitors. I just wanted to announce that the Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Jeanne-Marie Guehenno, is visiting this country for about a period of a week coming tomorrow night for talks with the government and for visits both in Darfur as well as the south. He is the Under Secretary-General of the United Nations who is responsible, for Peacekeeping Operations.

Thank you.

Questions and answers.

Q:Mr. Pronk mentioned that the security situation in Darfur has improved but we do notice recently that attacks have turned to banditry and not hostile military operations. We would like an explanation on this banditry. Who, in your view, should be responsible for stopping these acts of banditry?

Has the security situation in Darfur improved to the extent that the attacks have reduced to incidents of banditry against humanitarian trucks and convoys?

SRSG: The humanitarian activities are mainly hindered by bandits. Bandits are no military. Banditry is banditry. At the moment it is mainly hindered by bandits – not by the rebels, not by the government. There are militia activities, I don't call the militia bandits, but militia activities have not increased lately. You never know when, of course.

There was a village burnt about ten days ago. But this week, our main problem is banditry. Who are the bandits? I wish I could know. Of course many bandits are former combatants. I don't think that the bandits get instructions from leaders. I have met no government official who I would think would be really interested in a thing like this, on the contrary. I have met no commander of SLA in the field who would be interested in such activities. So bandits act by themselves.

To a certain extent, of course, it is due to the attractiveness of all these assistance which is brought. We bring a lot. To a certain extent it is also due to, perhaps, some distress in some areas as there still is some hunger in some areas because we can not get there.

Q:My question concerns the deployment of forces in Sudan. How many soldiers are there who have already arrived in the Sudan? How smooth does the deployment process proceed? What are the obstacles to your deployment operations especially in light of reports that some tribal leaders in the Kassala region are against your deployment in those areas?

SRSG: I was in Kassala where I had very interesting lively meetings with the *Wali*, the chief of the police, the chief of the military, the chief of intelligence and about 200 *sheikhs* and representatives of the civil society. Good political meetings whereby people rightly said 'please do not mess with our culture and do not mess with our religion and tradition'. And of course we are not coming to do so. We are coming in order to help you put and end to the war between SPLM and the government, including in the Kassala region so that people can have a peaceful life on the basis of their own culture, religion and traditions. Nobody said that the military should not come – and they are coming.

When I was there there were fifteen Nepalese, tomorrow 201 other Nepalese will come. They come to el-Obeid, they stay there two or three days then they drive to Kassala. So in a couple of days they will be there. Nobody said they should not come. On the contrary. But they said 'what are they coming to do'. They were some people in the town hall meeting who asked 'are these military here to stop us to move from one city to the other?' No, of course not. I told them that they will help you keep the situation peaceful so that you can go from the one to the other city without being harassed by others.

Such questions bring me to the conclusion that it is necessary for the government to give more information about the peace agreement and for us to give more information about our role on the basis of the peace agreement. We do that mainly through the press, through you. But we also, of course, use other instruments. I very much hope that in a short period we can have access to the radio. I very much would like to have discussions on the radio with your people so that inhabitants of the Sudan can listen, not to our statements, but to discussions that we have. Can listen to answers to their questions.

Nowhere are our troops not welcome. I understand that some people, because they do not know what's going on, have some questions. I was able at least to answer some of these questions but certainly there will be more in the future.

You asked also how many troops will come. After eight months, everybody will be on the ground. We have postponed our deployment scheme which originally was for six months with another two. Why did we do so? Because in the middle of the deployment scheme there is the rain period. And that is difficult. The only major difficulty for us is logistical. The rainy season makes it difficult to drive and makes it difficult to build. For that reason we have changed our deployment scheme a little bit so that we are spreading it over a period of eight months.

Within the first two months anyway, the Nepalese will arrive in Kassala, India will arrive in Juba and the Bangladeshis will arrive in Malakal. These are the big contingents in the beginning. I think that then you will have about four and a half thousand already in the first two months.

Q: You did mention that the GoS has no objection to continue talks in Abuja. What then are the obstacles to the resumption of these talks? Are the Darfur rebels putting preconditions to talks resumption? What new development is there on resolution 1591?

Prong: The government wants to resume the talks. Not only is it a matter of no objection, no, they want to resume the talks. The rebels – no preconditions. They also have said ‘we want to talk’, but they don’t do it. No preconditions anymore and I just said that in my view there is no reason for preconditions because all conditions have been met. I mentioned the three examples.

But the rebels are traveling around the world rather than sitting together, all of them – JEM and SLM, in order to define their input into the negotiations. That is what is necessary. That is why I say they are restricted by efforts of goodwill by many countries who want to help them. And everybody wants to help them. That means that they go from the one to the other place and the talks don’t start. That is the problem. The capacity on the side of the rebels. They want to talk, no preconditions anymore, but on their world tour they have not been able to also land in Abuja.

Does the United Nations exert any pressure on the movements to resume talks? Definitely when I see them, yes. I have asked them to come together in Asmara so that I can have a next meeting with them. And I am daily ready to go to Asmara. We have also bilateral talks. Our experts with individual representatives.

1591 is the resolution of the Security Council establishing a special panel committee which then will see into the question of the persons who might be eligible for sanctions. That resolution has not yet been brought to implementation because the Security Council still has to set up its panel. The panel of experts has not yet been established. I expect that it will very soon and then the Panel members will come to Addis which will be their seat. That is what I know. Nothing more.

As far as the second element of Resolution 1591 is concerned –you know that in the resolution it was said that the government is not allowed to bring new troops to Darfur; not allowed to bring new military equipment to Darfur; not allowed to carry out military flights- all information coming from the African Union to us is that the government is complying with these conditions in the resolution so far.

Q: Will the JIM carry out a tour of Darfur to assess the situation in Darfur and report on their findings before it completes one year of existence? Will the United Nations peace support troops abide by the timetable set by government and the SPLM should the parties see that security and stability are restored or will the forces decide for themselves when to wind up operations?

Pronk: I understand that the second question is: will the United Nations Peace Support Forces leave after seven years on the basis of the criteria set in the original deployment scheme as defined by the Security Council? The answer is yes. But the Security Council has given us a mandate for six years plus half a year on an exit strategy after the referendum but has also decided that it will review the mandate each six months. So we will have to write a report each three months and each six months they will review the mandate. That may result in a decision that perhaps some troops may leave earlier. It is quite possible for financial reasons or because it is safer on the ground.

I do not have the impression that at the moment anybody is thinking already of the extension of the mandate after six years. Why do it if things go well?

On your first question, yes, indeed, we had for the first time in a couple of months a JIM meeting which was a good one a couple of days ago. We took several decisions. One which is important, to visit Darfur. The JIM was established in the meeting between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and President Bashir in 3 July last year. In 3 July this year it is one year.

So I have proposed the following and my co-chair was totally in agreement with it: let us have a joint mission again in Darfur to see all the places that we have been to last time – we went twice, in August and I think later – and to write a joint report of the JIM to the Security Council in which we can say to which extent has the situation improved since last year. A joint assessment report.

I expect the joint mission to take place in May, early June, going to West, South and North Darfur. Ambassadors, government officials, UN officials, AU officials. May be it will be three parallel missions to North, West and South Darfur and may be one mission after each other, we still have to decide. It should be ready by mid-June so that we will have a joint report in the second half of June for the Security Council later on.

It is a good ending of that year of existence of the JIM.

Q: I want to ask a question about the African Union forces in Darfur. Since last year, the African Union had proposed to have a force of 2,000 – 3,000 by the end of December. But up to now the African Union forces, to my understanding, are only 2,200 troops in Darfur. And now we are going to propose to have a force of 7,000 by the end of August and claiming to have a force of 12,000 by the end of the year. How realistic are they going to meet this deadline if they could not meet the previous deadlines and people in Darfur are suffering and nothing is being done?

Pronk: The deadline is end-August 7.3 thousand. Is it realistic? Well, on the basis of the experience of the first stage, some people put questions but these questions now

need to be answered and I have the impression that the western countries are more serious in making the support available very soon.

There is a lot going on at the moment. Missions, talks, meetings, visits of ministers of defense, military in particular of western countries, also jointly. Meetings here and there is work being done at the moment also here in Khartoum and in Al Fasher. So I am positive that it will work out.

The other deadline – you are mistaken. Twelve thousand not before the end of this year. Definitely not. 12,000 next stage, next year. That is only necessary if by the end of this year there is a peace agreement so that next year we can start with return of people. In order to return you need safety in the places where people return to. You need the additional 5,000 on top of the 7,000.

So I keep my fingers crossed, sir, just like you. Because you did say that it is highly necessary because the people are suffering. And that is why we are indeed pushing and pushing African and western countries to do what they have to do.

Q: Returns in south Sudan are still being threatened by landmines especially on the roads linking major towns in southern Sudan with SPLM-held territory. What are the United Nations plans to assist in return and rehabilitation of these returnees?

SRSG: The urgent plan is to get de-mining off the ground. We have already de-mined quite a number of kilometers. As you know, in my last meeting with you, I said another 35 kilometers. That number has increased a lot. But now I do not know exactly the number of kilometers but it can be made available to you.

In Juba, I had discussions on the main roads which are the lifelines to Juba: the roads of Juba-Torit, Juba-Nimule and Juba-Yei. That last road which I mentioned will be ready I think within a couple of days. The next road will be Juba-Torit. The Juba authorities did say ‘what about Juba-Nimule? That is very important for us because that is the lifeline further on’ (I think to Lockichoggio and Mombasa).

The problem is not only capacity. The problem is if you have cleared the road from and still there is LRA in the field and you do not have enough troops to control the road, there will be possibilities for new mines to be planted.

So we need a comprehensive approach of the military, the de-miners and also, hopefully, the Joint Integrated Units of the government together with SPLM in order to safeguard security.

I would highlight, as a major problem in the south, at the moment – the LRA. We will have discussions with the Ugandan government. I expect a visit of the Minister of Defense of Uganda very soon for talks with the government and also the SPLM to have a joint approach in that field.

I mentioned this because you only mentioned de-mining and the infrastructure. Of course the reconstruction of infrastructure as a result of the war can not take place overnight. It needs a lot of reconstruction and needs a lot of resources. The important thing is setting priorities. I have made the commitment that the priorities will not only

be set by us but in consultation with the parties – SPLM, government of South Sudan and the government – so that you can make up plans together. So Sudan should not expect our plans. The idea is to make a plan together.

Q: You have recently conducted tours within and outside the Sudan to assess the different views on dialogue between the GoS and the rebel movements of Darfur. What are the most important achievements reached on the issue towards bringing the sides to resume talks in Abuja? The second question is on the tribal reconciliations that we hear of each day. The Vice-president was in Darfur recently and talked of ongoing reconciliation. Reports reached us yesterday also that Musa Hilal has called for inter-marriages between the non-Arab and Arab tribes of the area. The African Union and the Libyan leader is also exerting efforts to bolster tribal reconciliation. Do you think such reconciliations can help solve the problems should the external parties fail to resolve them?

SRSG: Most important two result are: a major improvement in the welfare situation of the people in the camps. That is one thing. Second; a very substantive decrease in the number of breaches of the ceasefire. These are major results.

On you second question, reconciliation is very important. In my discussion with the authorities, I said that we are in favor of reconciliation activities. I told them also please do not see it as a substitute to the political talks. Secondly, please make it just so that the strong tribe will not impose its outcome on a weak tribe. Please also make it representative so that, for instance, tribes which are related to the SLA be compensated. No substitute, representative, just. The authorities say, ‘yes, we understand. That is what we want’. I am pleased to hear that compensation is an important element of reconciliation and that if the tribes who have carried out atrocious crimes have to compensate the others and if they do not have enough financial resources for compensation that the government will help. That is important. It augurs well.

So I hope that the reconciliation efforts will continue with the three comments which I have made. I understand that it can not be finalized very soon. It will go beyond the period of political talks in Abuja.

Several elements are also necessary. Please, not only reconciliation for past activities but also stop the new ones. Also the new fights. One very important thing and I hope we could help in one way or another is to help the trekking of the nomads, the camels, to take place without fighting. And that is important now that the rainy season starts because the trek takes place twice a year, I understand.

Maybe the AU could help, maybe the UN can help. That is not reconciliation but it is pre-conciliation you may call it. A prevention, sort of. These efforts, therefore, are quite important and we are very much in favor.

Q: Some believe that United Nations Security Council resolutions 1591 and 1593 support the rebels of Darfur and that the United Nations and the Security Council should have delayed issuing such resolutions that take a hostile side to the government.

SRSG: Are the resolutions helping the rebels? Maybe. But they were not intended to help the rebels. They are intended to help the victims. So please do understand that the basic objective of these resolutions is to create a safe environment for the victims. No atrocities anymore against the victims. That is the partisan character of the resolutions.

Second thing; should you be fast in adopting and implementing the resolutions? That is not for me. That is for the Security Council. These are Security Council resolutions – 1591, 1593. 1590 that is for us – North, South. The other two – for the Security Council, not for us. The Council takes its own decisions.

But you can not be fast enough to help the victims. And I have said it often. If the government itself brings the perpetrators to court soon, fast, tomorrow –because there are many, many tens of thousands of people killed – then the Security Council and the ICC won't have to work very fast. It is up to the Sudanese themselves. And Sudan works fast on 1591, I did say. The day after the passing of the resolution, they seem to have decided not to have hostile military flights, not to have new military equipment and military troops so they are complying with the resolution which is good news.

Q: The armed groups of Darfur believe that UN's relations with them are not "equal" to the contacts of the UN with the government. The second point is that you mentioned that the rebel movements have not set preconditions to the resumption of talks despite the fact that we understand that the rebels have demanded that government police be withdrawn from specific areas in Darfur and that the government release people detained in relation to the conflict in Darfur.

SRSG: I beg to differ, sir. I was recently in Jebel Mara. Thousands of rebels and many more people who were belonging to the same group. I have never been received so positively by anybody. Big demonstrations in favor of the United Nations. I have never seen a demonstration anywhere in the world so positively with regard to the United Nations as in the Jebel Mara. So I beg to differ. Next time you can join us so we go there. And they were quite representative of course. These were the strong fighters.

With the leaders of the rebels in Asmara, I have very good relations. The relations are so good that even at a certain moment they said, 'can the UN not take over the negotiations because we believe in you?' We said no, it can not be. It is the African Union and should be the AU. We are behind the AU. So, sir, you are misinformed about the first.

Secondly the preconditions. I am quite aware of the fact that the rebels do have their conditions. Police and political prisoners are amongst them. Demands, all parties have demands when they go to negotiations. The important thing is, is a demand a precondition which has to be met before you start talks? No, that is not the case.

They need conditions, all parties need conditions. Otherwise you can't talk – but no preconditions. They had some preconditions in February but that is now behind us. Now they have made it clear that they are willing to talk without preconditions. This is a result also of some of our efforts and this is how it has to be. You have to solve your conditions at the negotiations table not on the road towards the table.

Q: How do you describe the current humanitarian situation in Darfur? Are there concerns now in light of the approaching rainy season? With regards the international forces, some local media report that the LRA has struck again in some parts of Equatoria. How much threat does the LRA pose and does the United Nations have the mandate to curb such attacks?

SRSG: There are great concerns with regards the future of the humanitarian situation. I really hope that there will also be enough food in the future. The Americans have helped a lot but there is a certain end to it. And the Europeans have not yet taken over. And in Oslo we got a lot of money but not enough and we got less than people thought we got. So far, so good, but I keep my fingers crossed for July onwards. I am pleased with the visit of the Deputy Executive Secretary of the WFP here. We are having talks with many countries in order to ensure us that indeed they will improve the resource base. Not only food but also, of course, activities of other NGOs and international agencies in insecure situations. That is a second major problem because in the camps it is okay in terms of humanitarian situation which has improved a lot. But in many less accessible areas it is difficult. We get distressing reports from those areas and I should not be too positive. I have been told that the total number of people affected in areas where we hardly have access to should be seen as about half a million. So the IDPs are better off than those people who are still in the regions where they have stayed.

Moreover, the war has led to a situation whereby there is hardly food production. The food security situation in Darfur has deteriorated a lot and if that continues, then it will be very difficult to resume it.

Resources are necessary and a restoration of the food security situation is necessary and for that purpose you also need stability and return of people next year.

As far as resources are concerned, the west has to do more. By the way, also the countries belonging to the Arab world have to do more. And I hope to be able in June to participate in a mission of the Arab League going to all countries in the middle-east which are quite rich in order to explain the situation and the needs. They have done something; I hope they can do more. It will be a mission, I hope in June. The Arab League is organizing it.

On the LRA, we are also very concerned about what is going on. They killed about ten days ago, I think, eleven people. Just like that. And I mentioned already in answering another question that you need activities of the government and the SPLM monitored also by us in order to address that situation. We are quite concerned about the position of the LRA. It has to be solved also by means of international cooperation with the countries in the region.

Q: Have you received any confirmation from the government and the rebels that they are going to upgrade their level of representation to the Vice-president from the government side and the chiefs of the rebel movements from the other side? Pronk mentioned the other armed factions in the south as one of the obstacles to the peace process. With the deployment of the UN forces, have you been given guarantees from these groups that they will not attack the UN forces? Has Pronk, in his talks with

former president Moi, been given any information on the next meeting between the SPLM and the other armed factions, mainly the SSDF?

SRSG: Did I receive assurances that parties are going to increase their level of representation at the level of the highest political figure? Yes, that is their intention. I got those assurances.

Secondly, did I get any assurances from the SSDF that they will not hinder? No, we don't have that. So talks are necessary. But we also were not told by them that they will hinder. Talks did not yet take place.

Thirdly, did I receive from former president Moi the assurance about the next meeting with the armed forces. No, because they are not talking with the armed forces. They are talking with the civil society. You have two reconciliations. One with the civil societies – that is through the Moi Foundation. I had discussions with him. He wanted support from us, we will give him support for the next meeting. It will take place. A separate stream is the talks, reconciliation orientated, with armed forces. That is taking place. We have less information on that, so far. The parties will give information to the CJMC that I mentioned and I hope to be able to say a bit more about that after the next meeting of the CJMC in two weeks from now – that is the meeting that took place in Juba last Sunday.

This was the last question, I understand.

Just one last comment. I said quite a lot about the NGOs, nobody asked a question, nobody commented on the NGOs. That means that you all agree and I hope I will be able to read that in your newspapers.

Thank you.

— *End* —