

**The United Nations Mission In Sudan****Date: 12 October 2005****Office of the Spokesperson****PRESS BRIEFING**

Good afternoon ladies and Gentlemen. The SRSG, Jan Pronk, can not make for the Press conference initially scheduled. So, I'm giving you the press briefing today. We do apologize for this.

**Darfur:**

- Although most of you covered the topic and received the statements issued by United Nations officials including the Secretary-General's statement, I would like to remind everybody that following the killing and the abduction of AMIS personnel in Darfur, the Secretary-General issued a statement condemning the targeting of the AMIS personnel. The SRSG had also issued a statement and we have copies of it as well as the one issued by the SG in the room.

- The UNSC held a meeting on 10 October and heard a briefing on the situation in Darfur. Following the meeting, the President of the Security Council made a statement to the press on behalf of the Council Members, in which they condemned rising violence in Darfur and called for the perpetrators of attacks to be brought to justice. The President of the Security Council cited in particular the attacks perpetrated against civilians and the killing of three peacekeepers and two contractors serving with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) as well as the abduction of other AMIS staff. "That was unacceptable in itself and all the more so in the context of and against the background of peace talks going on in Abuja on a political solution to the conflict in Darfur," he said.

Members of the Council called on the parties to cooperate with the AU mediation in Abuja and with AMIS. They urged the parties to immediately end acts of violence and restrictions on humanitarian aid and to cooperate with the AU.

Discussions also re-emphasized the determination of the Security Council to apply measures adopted earlier this year imposing a travel ban and assets freeze on those impeding the peace process, committing human rights violations and violating Council mandates, the President said.

-UNMIS will take part in the meeting of the Joint Commission on Ceasefire that will be held in the Chadian capital N'Djamena tomorrow. UNMIS is providing aerial transport to the participants to the meeting from Abuja to N'Djamena.

-The security situation in Darfur remains very tense. There are reports, not confirmed yet, on clashes between the Government' forces and the SLA forces in the area of Kufod (between

Al Fasher and Kutum) No further information is currently available. Over the last week and besides the attacks on AMIS personnel, UNMIS continued receiving reports on banditry incidents, looting, and robbery. All these incidents involve use of weapons and some of them lead to casualties. UNMIS received also reports, currently being investigated by the AU, on attacks by Arab tribesmen on villages in the Darfur. Given the prevailing security situation, almost 2/3 of the areas of operation of the humanitarian community in South Darfur is considered hazardous for the safety of humanitarian personnel and has been declared no go areas. Almost all roads in and out of Geneina have been also declared no-go by the UN. In North Darfur, humanitarian access has been less affected and most areas of operation are accessible.

## **Military Update**

**Strength:** Deployment of Military Observers and Protection Force elements is in progress and as of now, the total strength is of 3,274 personnel, including 183 Military Observers.

The move of Bangladeshi Contingent from the transit camp Site to the TCC Camp Site at JUBA has been completed. Whereas, Zambian Force Protection comprising 230 personnel have deployed in Abyei.

**Monitoring and Verification.** United Nations Military observers, assisted by SAF and SPLA forces are carrying out routine monitoring and verification duties in all the sectors. An UNMO team from Torit conducted a ground patrol to LIRIA. The preliminary report of the team confirms that an LRA attack on GUMBELA village took place on 02 Oct, in which sixteen people were killed and several wounded.

**CJMC Meeting.** 11<sup>th</sup> CJMC meeting was held in Juba on 11 October 05, which was chaired by the Force Commander, Maj Gen Fazle Elahi Akbar. The Chairman thanked the SPLA for providing a Liaison Officer and staff officers to the Joint Military Coordination Office. SAF confirmed that they would raise, as a matter of utmost urgency, the difficulty over providing their officers for JMCO with their Chief of Staff. The Parties also agreed to recommend to their Joint Defence Board members that an OCHA sponsored workshop be held on 'JIUs Interaction with the Humanitarian Community' in order to inform the JIU senior commanders of the potential for information exchange and coordination with the Humanitarian community. The Parties were also in agreement to provide the United Nations (Sector Headquarters) with 7 days prior notification of the movement of their forces. Failure to do so would constitute a violation of the CPA. CJMC Members agreed to hold the next meeting of the CJMC in Juba at 0900hrs on Tuesday 25 Oct 05.

## **Humanitarian:**

-In **Tawilla, North Darfur**, around 2,500 residents who fled the town after the September 29<sup>th</sup> attack continue to spend the night in a make-shift camp near the AU base. Minimal humanitarian assistance is currently available, as all international NGOs have evacuated Tawilla.

-Continued fighting in the region is causing continuous displacement of civilians to Zam Zam camp in North Darfur, as the camp is perceived as a safe haven. So far, around 6,000 new arrivals have been registered. Throughout the Darfur region, thousands of civilians are fleeing to IDP camps as a result of the recent violence.

-In **Geneina, West Darfur**, humanitarian agencies are facing increasing constraints in delivering assistance, as the UN has declared all roads leading out of town to be restricted in view of armed clashes in the north, west and south of the town, and increased banditry along all roads.

-In **South Darfur**, the UN is concerned by recent AU reports of the use of white NGO-type Land Cruisers by both the Government of Sudan army and the SLA. If true, this might constitute another serious threat to humanitarian actors operating in the area.

**-On the positive side, two issues can be noted:** One is the release on October 6<sup>th</sup> of the three SUDO staff members who had been abducted in ZamZam camp on September 29<sup>th</sup> by the SLA. The second is the successful headcount that took place in Kalma camp on October 4<sup>th</sup>, after six months of uncooperative or obstructive behaviour by IDP Sheikhs and local Government of Sudan authorities. Preliminary but unconfirmed figures show a presence of around 90,000 IDPs – far less than the previous working figure.

-In **Abyei**, an estimated 350 IDPs arrived during the week. The total number of arrivals since August 26<sup>th</sup> is now over 5,500. Although response to the sudden influx of returnees has begun, capacity of humanitarian agencies in the area continues to be extremely limited.

**-Walter Kalin, the SRSG on Human Rights of IDPs**, visited various IDP communities in Khartoum State on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr Kalin spoke to households affected by the latest relocations to El Fateh 3, where **forced relocations of families are ongoing**. Mr. Kalin will brief you on his visit tomorrow, during his press conference to be held here at 1:30 pm.

-Following heavy rainfalls in and around **Nyal and Mayandit, Unity State**, preliminary findings of an inter-agency assessment mission recommends that food, non-food items, shelter, safe drinking water and advocacy on personal hygiene and sanitation is needed in these areas. In Leer County, an estimated 11,750 people are affected; in Mayandit County, an estimated 17,350 people are affected; and in Panyijar County, an estimated 45,000 people are affected. The mission found that crops were damaged and many cattle were lost. A final report of the assessment is currently being compiled. Local residents are predicting that it may take months for the water to subside.

-Meanwhile, **Bentiu, Unity State**, is still experiencing a daily influx of IDPs from Tonj, Warab and Gogrial Counties due to flooding and crop damage caused by insects. Over the last three weeks, 528 households consisting of 2,374 have arrived at the Eastern Bank IDP camp.

-WFP reports that new uncertainty over supplies of jet fuel may jeopardize its air deliveries of food assistance to people across Sudan. The Sudan Petroleum Corporation – which imports and refines fuel and determines allocations to private suppliers – has given WFP verbal advice that it will not continue to allocate jet fuel for its humanitarian operations.

-WFP was told it would receive a final allocation of 1500 metric tons of aviation fuel, barely enough for one week of operations, and would then have to import fuel independently. The advice has not been confirmed in writing and WFP is urgently seeking meetings with the Corporation and with the Government of Sudan.

-Air capacity is a serious concern. Although the rainy season is drawing to a close and the road conditions are beginning to improve, areas of the south in particular remain inaccessible. A worsening security situation in Darfur means WFP must make contingency plans for air

deliveries. WFP is appealing to the Sudan Petroleum Corporation authorities and to the government to give priority to fuel needs for humanitarian operations. The UN as a whole supports this appeal given the importance of the issue.

Finally, I have the following announcement: the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Sudan, Dr. Sima Samar, will visit Sudan from 16 to 22 October. This is her first visit to the country since her appointment in August 2005. She will be holding a press conference upon completion of her mission at UNMIS HQ, in this room. The exact date and time for the press conference will be conveyed to you later because we do not know the details of the program of the Special Rapporteur.

I am through with my press briefing and am now ready for your questions.

## **Q & A**

**Q:** Does the UN have any doubts about the statement of Ambassador Kingibe on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October that the Sudanese government was coordinating with Arab militias to attack civilians?

The second question, how many IDPs in Darfur are now outside the reach of humanitarian agencies?

The third question; a month or so ago, Jan Pronk sat here and was being very optimistic about the situation saying that he was confident that we'd have deal before the end of the year and that he believes he is a player in the process and he can help finish the battle. It appears that nothing that he talked about then has come about so, does he still have an influence in this process? If so, where is it being exerted and what difference is it making? Things seem to be going just the opposite way.

**Spokesperson:** I will start with the first question. In terms of the statement made by Mr. Kingibe, I have to say the following, and I said this before: the United Nations has no capacity of its own to investigate what is happening. And we said that before, many times, that our main source of information and the one that we rely on on what we report to the Security Council is the African Union and its findings. So for us, the AU has the mandate and they have the mandate to investigate; they are the authoritative source and if the AU ends up with findings, we can not doubt it.

**Q:** Just to take it from that point, you also receive information from your people in the field and from the system that links you and to the UN people on the ground. I have been on the ground in West Darfur and there are some serious doubts among aid workers there about the account of what happened to Aro Sharou. Do you share those doubts?

**Spokesperson:** I am not aware of what the aid workers told you but for us the final say is the AU say and not what people say all around the place. That is for the African Union and they provide reports not only to us but to the Peace and Security Council of the AU and this is the authoritative source as I said. By the end of the day, anything that has to do with security, that has to do with breaches of the ceasefire and so on, these are the jurisdiction of the African Union and not ours.

As for the account of the overall number of IDPs affected, I do not have the exact numbers here. I will follow up with our colleagues from OCHA but you can imagine the number. Because I told you that for South Darfur, for instance, where we have a very heavy presence with big IDP camps, almost a third of the area is a no-go area for the United Nations. As for West Darfur, basically nobody can go out from or to el-Geneina. The situation, as it stands now, is that everything is basically at a standstill in West Darfur. Those who are in el-Geneina are staying in el-Geneina and those who are outside el-Geneina are just staying there and not moving around. So everything is at a standstill. In North Darfur, as I told you, the situation is a little bit better but this does not mean that we do not have no-go areas as well in North Darfur. So you can just imagine the impact on humanitarian assistance and so on. But I will check the exact figure because I do not want to give figures just off my head like this.

**Q:** Just for future reference, we will kind of appreciate getting the kind of humanitarian updates. But for us to kind of cover the general situation in Darfur it will be useful in a week-by-week basis if we could be given a broad picture as well.

**Spokesperson:** You are absolutely right. I am trying to achieve that and I will talk to my colleagues particularly from OCHA because I believe that we need a standing OCHA presence in these briefings and to liaise with you on these matters. But I will talk to them and come back to you with something more solid.

**Q:** You just said that West Darfur and South Darfur are pretty much (*indiscernible*) there are about 1.6 million ... 1.4 million in both states. Could we say hundreds of thousands ...?

**Spokesperson:** I will not venture into figures, honestly, because you know how tricky the issue of figure is. I will not give you any figure unless it is checked by our colleagues who oversee the issue of figures.

Now on your final question on the issue of Mr. Pronk, well, of course the situation is as the way we see it on the ground. However, one has to bear in mind that the Abuja talks are still ongoing and that the information that we have is that although there are going slowly, there is progress. We are not saying that there is a breakthrough as yet but, apparently, those who are around the table are negotiating and did not leave the table. What happened or what is happening in Darfur so far did not result in the participants leaving the table, which is a good sign. We did not have this before, mind you, so we are following very carefully and we will see what is transpiring. We still do believe that it will take only for the parties to show their seriousness on the ground, particularly from the side of the rebel groups, to contain their elements and to show the discipline required for that peace deal to be made. It is not an impossible task.

Pressures are being exerted by every party possible – the UN, the AU, by other groups like the EU and the US, and from all sides. Everybody is doing their bit and we will see how this will affect the behavior or attitude on the ground.

**Q:** The events of the last week have shown that talks have been completely irrelevant.

**Spokesperson:** Not necessarily. We are used to that. We still need to exert pressures on all elements involved for them to show discipline and to stop violence – whatever that violence means. We will see, but it is too early to say that there is no hope for Abuja. It is still too early and we will see what is going to happen.

**Q:** Given that the rebels in North Darfur are now saying that they are targeting the AU with the recent hostage-taking, and the NGOs are now saying that they don't want to travel in armed convoys with the AU because they are scared of attacks. Are you not concerned that the AU is being dragged in a conflict by the rebels and also concerned that they had to be rescued by another rebel group?

How would you describe the overall security situation in Darfur?

**Spokesperson:** The concerns that you said some NGOs expressed, for us, are legitimate. We do understand that concern. It took us quite a while to come up with a mechanism whereby the AU can help in escorting convoys in order to secure access. However, we are considering the issue of course. We are currently considering should we continue with the escorts or not. For the time being, at the time I am speaking to you, the arrangement is still on. We did not reverse it or anything like that and I am talking about UN agencies in particular. Because the UN can recommend to the NGOs certain ways of doing things but we can not impose them. By the end of the day, if the NGO does not feel safe enough to go with the African Union, it will be their decision to make. We, as UN, are considering the issue but we did not make a final decision. The decision, as I know it to the time we are talking to you now, we are still resorting to the AU assistance in terms of escorts.

On what you said about the overall concern of the AU being part of the conflict, the AU is not and will not be a part of any conflict. Unfortunately, the AU has been targeted by some attacks but the AU will still be always an independent, impartial third party whose presence was requested by the parties and we do understand that the AU needs to beef up its ability to defend itself. We are talking about mainly adequate equipment to be provided to the AU, particularly, the armored personnel carriers, which unfortunately because of some difficulties by the GoS, they were not provided on time to the African Union. There are still 105 armored carriers to be provided. My understanding is that the GoS promised that it will put an end to any impediment before the delivery of these to the AU. Hopefully it will happen. Most of the countries who are in the position to do so, could contribute more of this kind of material. I do not want to expound further on this topic because I am not aware of the actual mandate of the AU in terms of provisions for self-defense for the AU. But we do have all confidence of the fact that the AU will continue to be the impartial party that it has been so far.

**Q:** Just you saying that they are an impartial third party does not mean to say that they will (*indiscernible*)

**Spokesperson:** I don't understand the question but to me, I do not know the details of the mandate of the AU. But, assuming that the AU has provisions for self-defense, I do not consider resorting to self-defense, for instance if the AU is shot at, she would answer by shooting back at the attackers- I do not consider that as being a third party. It is self-defense. But if you are talking, as I read in some media some opinion articles on the AU, that the AU might stage a kind of retaliation activities, I do not have any reason to presume that the AU would do that. That is not the role of the AU. I know that, in general terms, the use of force, be it by the AU or even the UN – and mind you even within a Chapter VII provision, the use of force is not resorted at easily. You really need to have a very serious, compelling reason to do that. And so far we do not expect the AU to engage in such activities. If it is a self-defence activity, well, everybody should understand that if the AU is shot at they have to defend themselves and that does not make them a party to the conflict. It is just part of their mandate. I mean, nobody should expect from the AU or from any peacekeeping force to have their

personnel shot at and killed and then blame them for being a third party or being dragged into the conflict and hence losing their status of an impartial or neutral third party if the shoot back.

**Q:** But they were rescued by another rebel group.

**Spokesperson:** I did not get to that point on rescued by another rebel group. We do not know the extent of involvement of that particular rebel group, but to me, it is something that I can not comment extensively on. I think the AU should explain to you the exact circumstances of the involvement of that rebel group in the rescue. We heard about it but I do not know. I did not even see something official from the AU on that particular issue.

**Q:** I was there yesterday and they said they were rescued by the JEM rebel group. I was just wondering: concerning the UN, doesn't that concern you? Because basically they have been kidnapped by one rebel group and rescued by another rebel group. Where is their (*indiscernible*)?

**Spokesperson:** This has nothing to do with their neutrality. If the Justice and Equality Movement helped the AU to rescue its people from a rebel faction that used to belong to the JEM, I do not see that it is something that will affect the AU credibility as a third party. I do not see that. Actually, you would see that in all statements and even if you go back to the mandate of the AU itself, first the safety of the AU is to be provided by the GoS – that is in general. Two; on the ground, the parties, the warring parties, also have to ensure the safety and security of AU personnel. And all the statements that you have seen by the UN and any other authority called for all parties to assist in this particular endeavor. That is part of the rules of the game. And actually it is something that we should work on - if a rebel group can do that – that is a development which we would welcome and we do not see the link between that and the fact the AU is a third party. Unless one would assume that because the AU was saved by one party, it would lean towards that party and hence lose its impartiality. What the JEM did is a very positive step. However, it is not something that the AU should pay back – if you understand what I mean.

**Q:** The United Nations has requested African Union protection for humanitarian operations. Doesn't this contradict Kofi Annan's requests for GoS commitment to provide protection forces for aid workers in Darfur?

What will be the implications of the United States blocking of the report that the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide was to present before the Security Council?

**Spokesperson:** On your first question, there is totally no contradiction between the two issues. The main responsibility lies on the GoS to provide protection and safety for all workers in the Sudan be from the UN, NGOs or the AU – the government is responsible for all these. This is in principle. But on the ground, you are aware that there are a number of roads that are not safe – we are basically speaking of bandits here – criminals roam about in a number of areas. In order to secure relief convoys, the AU was requested to escort these convoys on some routes. This issue does not contradict with the fact that the GoS is basically responsible for general security. If you do have any other view on the issue then we can discuss it more after the briefing.

On your second question, the truth is that I am not aware of its details. You asked of the implications of the issue. There are no implications because Mr. Juan Mendez will present his report and this report will be made public whether he presents it personally or not to the Security Council. The report will be formal one and will be made public. On the question of the US, we do not think that this issue will affect the report. If you were following this particular issue, you would note that Mr. Mendez had informed the public, at least the press, on the contents of the report he was going to present to the Security Council. Consequently, whether the report was or was not presented to the Security Council, the aim was reached.

**Q:** The UNMIS budget was tabled before the Security Council last week. What is the latest on the issue?

**Spokesperson:** The decision is yet to be taken by the UN and we let you know once the decision on the issue is taken.

**Q:** The situation in Darfur is escalating and my question is: is there a link between the people at the table in Abuja and the field commanders who are worsening the situation? If there is no link, then what is the role of the UN in order to make a better link?

**Spokesperson:** I don't know what you mean by link. Do you mean command and control – people in Abuja over the people in the field?

**Q:** Those people in the field coming in to talk and those people in Abuja coming to talk with the people in the field in order to stop the situation.

**Spokesperson:** Actually, the situation is very complex as you know it and as we know and realise it. Let us start with the SLA. The SLA you do know is having problems and it is obvious there are problems of command and control between those who say they are representing the SLA or any other faction you might talk about, and the individuals on the ground. Unfortunately, this rift has grown more serious recently. That is a serious problem. We do understand that so, yes, I could say that in terms of command and control and unity of particularly the SLA, it is quite shaky.

As for the JEM, you know that the JEM has been through lots of splitting and many groups emanated from them and formed their own groups. For instance, the NMRD used to be one of the groups emanating from the JEM. Some other groups that do not have names yet including the ones cited in the issue of the abduction of the AU personnel – the group of Salah (I don't have the full name) – also used to belong to the JEM. So yes there are problems in terms of command and control and unity and cohesion inside the rebel groups. That is something that of concern for us. We as UN made it clear in the very early stages of the Abuja talks that they have, as a matter of priority, to ensure their unity not only as separate groups but also to coordinate, if possible, to coordinate amongst each other between JEM and SLA and try to come to the Abuja talks with something that they could negotiate jointly.

I do not have much to say because the efforts we exerted were numerous. It is not the end of our efforts, we will continue to exert efforts. For the time being, and as I said there are so many efforts being undertaken, and if you follow the news, there are so many high profile visitors coming in here to Sudan and going to Abuja and going to N'djamena to talk to the rebel groups in particular. So hopefully this will bear fruit – but I can not say more than that.



**Q:** What is the United Nations position on the abductions? How do you see read Kofi Annan's threats to stop humanitarian assistance to Darfur should the security situation continue? What effect will such a threat have?

**Spokesperson:** On our position, it has been made public through a statement by the Secretary-general and you do have a copy of the statement by the SRSG and a statement issued by the Security Council which I will distribute to you once we have that. Our position is very clear and known and the copies are available for you.

On Mr. Kofi Annan, I thank you for your question because it will give us the opportunity to make a final clarification because almost all press establishments issued their reports of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October under the title: *the UN Secretary-general threatens stop aid to Darfur*. Kofi Annan has never said this and has never made such a threat. I have the verbatim text of what he said during the press conference held in Geneva in answer to a question by a reporter. I only want to mention what Kofi Annan said on the issue of humanitarian aid. I will read the text in English:

“They must also understand, I mean both groups – both the rebels and the government – must understand that if these incidents continue it will impede humanitarian assistance and delivery. It is already impeding access to some of the people in need and it may require a cessation of operations to some parts of the territory”.

So Mr. Annan did not say that the UN will put a stop to humanitarian assistance. What he did say is that should the security situation continue unchanged, this will largely impede humanitarian assistance and delivery. This is very factual statement. I had said in my briefing today and in answer to your colleague from the BBC and Reuters that, for the time being, the UN has closed a number of routes to humanitarian convoys pending improvement in the security situation. Consequently, this has indeed affected the humanitarian situation and this is what Mr. Annan meant.

On the second part of what Mr. Annan in which he said that it may be necessary to put a final end to some humanitarian operations in some areas, this is also an issue that has to be understood in its right context. This is because there are some areas we are monitoring in which there is continued violence and where, as a result, operations can not continue in these particular areas. I have neither the names nor numbers of these particular places but there are a number of roads in Darfur which are being controlled by bandits and in which NGOs have been subjected to more than an attack within the same week. We, of course, follow these issues. If we find out that there are roads in which there is no hope of security, then we could not continue to operate on those roads. Despite this, what the UN now does is that it flies in aid to areas inaccessible by road. We do try but, in the end, those who hamper the normalization of the security situation in Darfur must be brought to account and especially the attacks on humanitarian workers and the AU who are helping the normalization of the situation and should not to become a target. They are the ones to accountable for hampering humanitarian assistance. By the end of the day, it is their people they target more than anybody else, and they must be accountable on these issues at one point of time or the other.

**Q:** Let us refer to the mandate of the UNMIS which is essentially to assist in the implementation of the CPA signed between north and south. Recently, Vice-president Salva Kiir expressed concerns over pegging support for this agreement on the Darfur issue. To what

extent has your mission been pre-occupied with the Darfur issue at the expense of your actual mandate which is support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement?

**Spokesperson:** I will be very brief. The issue has never affected our role in assisting the parties in the implementation of the CPA.

**Q:** This is a follow up to the second question I asked last time. How would you describe the overall security situation in Darfur?

**Spokesperson:** I forgot that. The whole situation in Darfur is, and I told you, not a good one. First of all, as I mentioned, the issue of looting and banditry is taking quite serious proportions. We have been monitoring this phenomenon since it started and I can tell you that I remember days when we would have one incident of banditry in one week in the whole of Darfur. Now we have lost count, and when I look at our reporting, I can not tell you how many because there are so many. And when I say scope, it is geography but also in terms of whom they affect. Before, it was only on commercial trucks here and there but now it is indiscriminate. Anybody who happens to be passing by, whatever flag you are carrying or whatever thing you are doing, so far maybe ... I was going to say maybe the AU was exempt, or the UN *per se* were exempt from this, but I do not consider what happened in terms of abduction was for the purpose of looting. But looting is taking quite a proportion. Plus there is use of force, use of gun, in all these incidents of banditry. So we have casualties, we have people being humiliated, people being beaten up, people being ... sometimes some women being raped or abducted, and so on. It is quite a phenomenon and this is what we warned of right from the beginning: do something about it or otherwise you will have a phenomenon where war-lordism will rule over. So besides the problem between the rebels and the government, you have another force that does not recognise agreements or whatsoever and they will be doing as they please. Unfortunately the situation is growing in that direction to quite an extent.

The other thing that, I would say, characterises the situation for the time being is the resurgence of attacks on villages by armed tribesmen. We had fewer before. If you follow our reporting on that, particularly this month, there is a resurgence of this particular type of attacks on villages and with the occurrence, as you are aware, of an attack on an IDP camp – the first of its kind. We have also the resurgence of direct clashes between the government and SLA forces.

So, basically, that gives you an overall idea of what is different now compared to at least three to four months before when we thought that the situation, although it was not good, but it was good enough because at least we did not have direct clashes between the traditional parties; we did not have large scale attacks on villages against civilians and, even in number, they were basically few compared to what has started to emerge right now. So the situation is quite serious and that is my answer to your question – I hope I addressed it.

**Q:** Have you heard that the GoS has asked the AU to change its head of mission here in Khartoum?

**Spokesperson:** Yes, we did hear.

**Q:** And what is your reaction to that and could you tell us a little bit more about what you've heard

**Spokesperson:** We heard it via the media as usual, which is a big source of information. My answer to that is the following: first, it is a bilateral issue between the AU and the GoS. Two; the GoS did not notify us or talk to us officially on the issue, three; if you look at the communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council in its last paragraph – I don't know if you have the communiqué or not – but in that communiqué, the AU Peace and Security Council reiterated their full confidence and trust in the leadership of AMIS in Sudan. That is all I would say about the issue.

**Q:** In line of that, would you agree that they were in crisis?

**Spokesperson:** I would not say they were in crisis. If you are referring to the issue related to Ambassador Kingibe, we do not see that the issue affected the overall relation between the AU and the GoS, that is one. And I do not really see necessarily the link between that and what is happening to the AU in Darfur.

**Q:** We are looking at the big picture here. There are problems at the top and there are problems at the bottom – so it would seem that they have got big problems.

**Spokesperson:** Well, not anything that the AU could not overcome.

**Q:** *In-sha-allah*

**Spokesperson:** *In-sha-allah.*

That is the last question. Thank you very much and see you tomorrow during the the press conference of tomorrow. Thank you very much.