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PRESS CONFERENCE

United Nations Security Council mission led by (UK) Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference by United Nations Security Council mission led by UK Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry, held on 6 June 2006 at the Hilton Hotel in Khartoum

Amb. Parry: You know, colleagues, that we have had quite a busy program. We have met the representatives of the government but especially we had a very long session with the President and, as well, a long session with the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

What was particularly advantageous for us is that it was the first time the Security Council, coming to Khartoum, was able to sit down face to face with our interlocutors and set our approach and to hear, on the other side, the views, the concerns of the government.

The message we brought was that the Security Council was holding out the hand of cooperation to Sudan. The United Nations is heavily involved in Sudan today: peacekeeping operation, massive humanitarian operation and a myriad of other United Nations support for Sudan.

Following the agreement in Abuja – the peace agreement in Darfur – it is really quite crucial now that that should be implemented speedily. And what we have said is that as well as our support and our wish to see the African Union Mission actually strengthened, what we are clear about is that we are offering that the United Nations would take over that peacekeeping operation. We can only do that with the consent of the government. We would do it in terms of implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement. That is to say not just to monitor it but to provide better security for the people of Darfur and thus, also, ensuring better humanitarian access into Darfur.

We have gone through the associated issues. I think we have explained why the last resolution was adopted under Chapter VII and we have reinforced that we come in the spirit of partnership, of respecting fully the sovereignty, the territorial integrity of Sudan, a

sovereign government, a strong country, discussing with us the relevant issues. That is the approach that I and all my colleagues have brought to it.

What I would like to do now is to invite two of those colleagues to briefly add to what I have said. And both of them having contributed actively in the discussions, from Ghana Ambassador Effah-Apenteng and, from China, Ambassador Wang.

Thank you.

Amb. Effah-Apenteng: I just wish to reinforce the points that have been made by the leader of our team.

As he said, we had interesting discussions with government officials and we also had very interesting discussions with the Speaker and some parliamentarians this afternoon.

In all this, the point that we emphasized was the need for better cooperation between the United Nations, especially the Security Council, and of course the Sudanese authorities. but we came here purposely to try to reinforce the message that we need to work together to be able to implement all the agreements faithfully. You know the Darfur situation has focused international attention on Sudan and therefore it is only fitting and proper that soon after the adoption of the comprehensive agreement we come here to show support for the implementation of that agreement.

We are at the same wavelength with the government. We think that if this agreement is implemented faithfully and effectively then of course peace and normalcy will return to Sudan.

We also emphasized in the course of the discussions the importance of this country to Africa as a whole. You know Sudan is the biggest country in Africa. It is at a strategic location and given its size and potential, we think that the fate and fortunes of Sudan will affect the fate and fortunes of the whole of the continent and therefore it is important that we support the government to be able to implement the agreements faithfully and ensure the return of peace and security to this country.

We also hope that in the process we can count on the support of the African Union. A technical assessment team is expected here soon and thereafter we will discuss both with the African Union and with the Sudanese authorities how best to take the peace process forward.

Thank you.

Amb. Wang: Thank you.

I think that the Security Council attaches great importance to the current visit by this mission not only because the situation in Sudan has been on our agenda for the last three years, but also you can see that this mission is represented by all fifteen Security Council members – both permanent and non-permanent members – are all here and this is the first time that all 15 members are represented at ambassadorial level.

I think that from today's discussions both with the President and the minister, I think that it turned out to be very useful. Through these discussions, I found that first of all there is this

convergence of objectives between the two sides whereby you get the government of Sudan wants to achieve peace throughout this country and also wants to see the humanitarian crisis relieved. And this also is the objective of every Security Council member.

We appreciate the role the government has played not only in the peace agreement between north and south but also in relation to the Abuja agreement. We do hope that others who have not joined the peace agreement would do so in the near future.

Secondly; from these discussions I feel there is a convergence of partnership between the Security Council, the government of Sudan and also other partners, particularly the African Union.

We are here to discuss and to exchange views. I think that there are some misperceptions from the Sudanese side on what role the United Nations can play but also there are some misconceptions from our side. I think that this face-to-face discussion between the two sides will certainly promote this partnership in the days ahead.

We want to see peace throughout this country; we want to see that his relationship between the United Nations and the government will be the cooperative one we hope for. This is our purpose here.

Thank you.

Q: I would like to go back to the Ghanaian ambassador. As an African member of the Security Council how do you see your role in getting over the distrust that has been out there between the United Nations and Khartoum and what have you done in trying to reassure the Sudanese that any United Nations peacekeeping force needs Chapter VII in order to protect itself and civilians?

Amb. Effah-Apenteng: Well, I think that as an African member of the Security Council, together with my colleagues especially the two other African members of the Security Council, we should serve as an interface between the African Union, the Security Council and the Sudanese government.

In the course of the discussions, we assured them that whatever decision that the Security Council takes, we think would be in the interest of the government and people of Sudan. We even drew analogy with some of the situations that we find in the African continent. And I particularly referred to Cote d'Ivoire in the course of my interventions today.

There are some misconceptions about the resolution evoking Chapter VII and we tried to explain to them. We did that purposely to reinforce the Darfur peace process which is very fragile. And, of course, the African Union communiqué which was issued soon after the Darfur agreement had been signed also drew attention to the need to deal with those people who will violate the agreement and of course will pose a threat to peace. And I think that with these explanations, some of the misconceptions have been dispelled.

But of course we are yet to deal with the fundamental issue. The fundamental issue will come up when we are dealing with the mandate for whatever transition or United Nations operation that will eventually be set up to deal with the Darfur situation and of course I think it is

premature for me to prejudge what is going to happen. A lot will depend upon the outcome of the outcome of the technical assessment team which is expected in this country very soon.

Q: My question is to Ambassador Wang.

You spoke of misconceptions on both sides. I am interested in the misconceptions from your side. Is there any change of mind?

Amb. Wang: I think that over the last two years, Sudan has been with us.

I believe that this is the first time for the Security Council members to sit face-to-face with the leadership of this country and also with parliamentarians to get their views on the actual situation and also to hear their complaints about what the Security Council is about, and what the Security Council resolution is about.

In my view, it is good to wait because we are going to work on a course of action as well. The complaint from this side will certainly help Security Council members when they try to consider their next step.

Therefore, I think that we have to be sensitive to each other and to show due respect to each other. That is my view.

Q: Any change of mind?

Amb. Wang: I think that we have a better understanding of each other. Thank you.

Q: [*in Arabic*]: My question is to the UK Ambassador.

Is it possible to avert a United Nations role in Darfur if the African Union forces prove capable and able to carry out their duties in Darfur?

Amb. Parry: The African Union has done a magnificent job in Darfur. From a very low start with very little experience of a peacekeeping operation, the African Union has done the job in Darfur. But it itself has asked for that mission to come to an end and that the United Nations take it over.

Why is that? Because actually, technically, sustaining a force of that nature, rolling over troops, having the necessary command and control, the transport that you need to actually do the job, is very difficult. For the most sophisticated of arrangements, the African Union is relatively new to this sort of exercise.

We now have a much reinforced need: the need to ensure the safety of individuals in Darfur. That is what is set out in the Darfur Peace Agreement. And the question is: how can that best be done. Because there is a need to sustain forces, to be able to finance it, to provide the necessary capacities and to have forces which are interoperable, the judgment we have made – and crucially the one that the African Union first made – was that there should be a transition to United Nations; that the burden should be shared. That is what the objective is and I hope we can achieve that.

What is clear though is that the African Union force, AMIS, too needs to be reinforced for as long as it is there. And that too is one of the urgent priorities. There would be a pledging conference specifically for that purpose within the next few days in Brussels.

Our hope is, again, to deliver in concert with the government here – the term in the peace agreement is – “better security throughout Darfur”. And we think that the African Union can sustain a little longer, or be it reinforced, and then the United Nations should take over.

That is our approach but, I stress, it would be done in concert between the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of Sudan.

Q: The problem of the African Union in the protection of civilians as I have understood from several of their officials was the mandate and the sufficient logistics. If it is transferred to a UN operation, what is the guarantee, if you would have the same mandate, that you would be protecting the civilians?

The other thing is that as long as there is conflict in Chad – we have a long history in Sudan – as long as there is a conflict in Chad, it is reflected directly in Darfur. What are the Security Council efforts in this case?

Amb. Parry: The answer on the mandate is relatively straight forward – that the mandate as of now, for the African Union needs to be made more robust because there is now a new requirement in the peace agreement which is to protect civilians. That would be carried over to United Nations’ force mandate. And the reason to do the transfer is what I tried to set out that the African Union itself has asked for that transfer because, having got this far, it has made the judgment that the best way to see it through to a state of sustainable security in Darfur is for the burden to be shared by the wider international community through a United Nations operation.

As far as Chad is concerned, of course one thing we would explore on Friday when we are in Darfur and on Saturday in Chad is the interrelationship through a fairly porous border of how those issues come together. I think it would be anticipating a fact-finding visit to Chad to try to answer the question now. But you are absolutely right; it is a fact that we have to take into consideration.

Q: You said that the mandate has to be strengthened and there is still this discussion on a Chapter VII which the Sudan government fears and which some Security Council members right here are not sure should be designed. How are you going to resolve that?

Amb. Parry: I think it is always a mistake to try and carry out the internal Security Council negotiations in the full glare of media publicity so I will pass on the second part of the question.

But on the first, especially with parliamentarians, we had a very, very open discussion about the role of Chapter VII. We understand why there was a perception that the Chapter VII resolution meant more than it did. It did not imply any sanction of use of force. It did recognize that the circumstances in Darfur, the potential threat from the rebels who had not signed, and that the overall circumstances justified Chapter VII because of the element of a threat to international peace and security.

Looking forward, Chapter VII as we sought to explain it is partly, to say bluntly, what it isn't. It is not an open-ended use of force justification. But if it is to be applied in a future resolution, it will not be targeted against the government of Sudan but it would be targeted at those circumstances and potentially those out there who want to undermine the agreement. It is in that sense, and because the mandate needs to be more robust and we have to have an element of permitting the mission itself to defend itself if needed, that that may justify a Chapter VII. Those are the arguments we are trying to put forward and of course the next ongoing discussions with the government will explore how exactly this should come out.

Q: I would like to ask, ahead of your visit to Juba, Mr. Ambassador, when you meet with representatives of the government of southern Sudan, will you be urging them to arrest the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony, or would you be offering the Security Council's support for their attempts to mediate between him and the Ugandan government?

Amb. Parry: It is certainly an issue on which the Security Council is fully seized. In two resolutions this year, we have referred to the LRA; we've had briefings in the Security Council on the LRA; we understand fully the noxious influence in northern Uganda, in southern Sudan and now in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

How that is handled is certainly one of the issues that we want to discuss with the government of southern Sudan. As I understand it, as it has been put to us, the argument has been because of the threat that they represent, it's been better to offer them actually a degree of support to avoid the threat becoming real and in the sense that, perhaps with some agreement with the government of Uganda, that it would be better to try and bring the LRA into some discussion with the government of Uganda. I think it is an issue which for us is unexplored in that much detail; we need to go into it.

But let me be very clear; the LRA has been a menace. 1.7 million people are currently displaced because of its activities; it represents a threat to other countries as recognized in our resolution and we will look very cautiously at any suggestion that we should support or that anyone should support the LRA.

Q: My question is not connected with the sitting of today but it is something that took place in January this year.

The chief political affairs officer of the United Nations Mission in Sudan, in an enlightenment of the CPA to a Christian community that was celebrating its silver jubilee, stated that the UNMIS is mandated by the UN mission in New York to make unity attractive.

My question is: what are the reasons to make unity in Sudan attractive?

Thank you.

Amb. Parry: I don't think it is for us, in answering questions on our visit, to comment on something that we are not cited on.

But let me be clear: we have throughout in our discussions with the government underlined our support for a sovereign government, for the territorial integrity of the Sudan and that we come prepared with a range of different policies to give support to the different aspects that apply in Sudan. That is to say, support for the CPA, for the Darfur peace agreement, for

humanitarian relief not just in Darfur but in the east and the south and a whole range of work being done by UN agencies throughout this country.

That is our agreement to a fellow member-state of the United Nations and that is the position which we stick to.

Q: Media reports have it that Mr. Jones Parry, on departing from New York, recommended a UN mission in Darfur working under the mission currently operating in the Sudan. Has agreement been reached with the government of Sudan on something of this sort?

Amb. Parry: There has been no agreement and discussions continue. I think, as Ambassador Wang said, there is a keener appreciation of the different views on the subject. I do personally believe that the exchanges we have had will make it easier for the technical assistance mission to come to a conclusion as to what sort of mission should take over from AMIS. So I am optimistic in that sense.

But let me be clear. It is not going to be under UNMIS in quite that way. There would be two discreet forces, each with different mandates but each answering to one overall commanding officer. That would be the idea. One common headquarters and then divisional headquarters to run two semi-autonomous operations.

Q: You said that the AMIS is still new to such operations, lacks support and the capabilities and so on. Why doesn't the Security Council resort to supporting the AMIS to be more capable in carrying out its duties in Darfur bearing in mind that AMIS is composed of people from African states that know well the problems in the region and so on?

Amb. Parry: What is there is that the AMIS requires more capabilities to do the job as long as it is there.

But you know it is the African Union and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union which has asked for the UN to take it over. It has asked that for the reasons which I tried to set out earlier but they include the fact that sustainable financing and, I people, an ongoing provision of troops to do the job, is best secured through a UN operation.

So one looks at what needs to be done and who is best equipped to do it. The answer which is commonly shared between the African Union and the United Nations is that it should move to the United Nations.

Q: Last month when Lakhdar Brahimi came to Sudan, he mentioned that some UNMIS force will transfer some of its troops to Darfur. How many soldiers does UNMIS now have in southern Sudan and how will this mandate be implemented?

Amb. Parry: I think it is always unwise to try and anticipate what the results of a mission would be and what sort of conflict of operations it presented to the Security Council. There is another faction out there that is who are the Troop Contributing Countries and what will they be prepared to provide. So we need all those factors before we can hazard a guess on numbers.

Q: I would like to have the three ambassadors comment on how they feel the government leaders they spoke to reacted on the Security Council's assurances specifically on the issue

that has been key here that is that the United Nations was planning some kind of intervention force.

Just following up on that, how optimistic are you that there actually will be a UN force that will take over and how long is this going to take?

Amb. Effah-Apenteng: My reading of the situation is that from the exchange of views, I think there is a better understanding and appreciation from the part of all the players. As I said earlier, there was some misconception as to the intentions of the UN Security Council and we tried to explain this to the government side. And I think that the fact that we underlined that whatever decision we eventually will be taking will be the result of consultation between the Security Council and the Sudanese government went down well.

We emphasized that nothing that should be done here will be above the head of the Sudanese government. It will be impossible and unrealistic and therefore we are going to work together as a team not only with the government of Sudan but also with the African Union. And that is why the technical assessment team is going to come and then after that we decide how best to proceed.

But I think there is a better understanding of the difficulties and the concerns on all parties.

Amb. Wang: And I think that the very fact that Lakhdar Brahimi has just visited this country and now this mission is here and will be followed by a technical mission of the United Nations shows that on this particular issue we attach importance to the views of the government. The exchange of views is very important.

I think that after all, when the Security Council decides to take a decision to have this transfer, definitely Sudan and the African Union will have an ownership in this whole process.

Secondly; I have to emphasize that of course when there is a change of hat, if it happens, I do believe that even in the future composition of a UN mission here, that the African countries will play a very important role in this composition as well.

Amb. Parry: Very quickly, there is no question of an intervention force. We hope there will be a United Nations force to give effect to the Darfur Peace Agreement.

I think that the point made by the Ambassador of Ghana, the clear message that any force will only be with the consent of the government of Sudan, I think has been very reassuring.

We are paid to be optimistic. I think the earliest that this United Nations force could get there would be to have full operating capability by the very beginning of 2007. But the transition would have to start some time before that.

Q: My question has been asked but I want to have more clarification. Has the government of Sudan accepted that the UN should be coming down on the ground in Darfur or not?

If yes, why did the government of Sudan reject the intervention three months ago even demonstrating on the roads that “we protest against the intervention of the UN”?

Amb. Parry: I think following our discussions today, there is agreement that the technical assistance mission comprised of the African Union and the United Nations representatives, that that mission should negotiate with the government of Sudan in good faith to establish the conditions for the United Nations to take over. But of course the final decisions will have to wait those negotiations.

Q: My question is to His Excellency the Ambassador, the leader of the delegation.

My question is about your position towards the other factions that have not yet signed the Darfur Peace Agreement and also the people of Darfur. Not all the people of Darfur welcome this DPA as it is called in Khartoum. In Khartoum a few days ago students from the universities have been demonstrating and protesting that they are not in favor of the DPA because they see the DPA as betraying the people of Darfur.

I would therefore like to know what is the position of the UN and the UN Security Council towards the factions that did not sign the DPA and the people of Darfur who are not in a position to support the DPA.

Thank you very much.

Amb. Parry: Let me be very clear. The Security Council believes that the Darfur Peace Agreement is very beneficial to the interests of the people of Darfur and to the Sudan as a whole.

Secondly; we acknowledge that more needs to be done to explain those advantages. The Darfur dialogue is part of that. But the more that can be done to bring home the real advantages, the better.

But at the same time we need to establish on the ground the real improvement stemming from that agreement and that means that the protection of people and the humanitarian relief needs to be improved so that there can be a tangible gain for the people of Darfur.

For those who have not signed and two; are in a position to sign, our message would be what we said in our resolution and what we said in the Presidential Statement that we believe firmly that they should sign and that they put themselves now at a disadvantage because they are outside.

It is a source of regret to us that humanitarian access has not been as good as it ought to be. There is a massive exercise to deliver relief. That has had to reduce partly because the level of financial commitment was not as great as we had hoped. The process has been rectified because of the generosity of the United States again. What we need is to guarantee continued access, no obstructionism – and most of this has been bureaucratic – but at the operational level on the ground, the United Nations and the Non-Governmental Organizations need to be able to go there and do the job and do it in an unfettered way to bring the relief that we would like.

As for those who have not signed, our message would be: we would like you to sign. And if you start impeding the agreement, then the Security Council would be watching very carefully indeed.

I would say no more than that but people who stand in obstruction of this agreement may well find themselves at a considerable disadvantage.

Thank you very much indeed.