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SRSR PRESS CONFERENCE

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference by SRSR Jan Pronk held on 12th July 2006 at the UNMIS Press Briefing Room, Ramsis Building.

Deputy Spokesperson Bahaa: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and thank you very much for coming.

We will start with a brief introduction by SRSR Jan Pronk and then we will open the floor for questions and answers.

So I give the floor to the SRSR.

SRSR Pronk: Thank you.

Tomorrow I will go to Malakal. Malakal is one of our main offices in our sectors. From Malakal we cover also the Jonglei area. The Jonglei area is area where there was been quite some violence. It is an area where that has been some violence of a different character than elsewhere; it is a combination of violence which is related to the disarmament of the so-called "White Army" which is not another armed group but a rather independent self-defence group, it has led to quite some violence. It is to a certain extent also tribal.

We have covered the area by making a number of assessments over there - sending observers. We have decided to do that on a more permanent basis. We do not have at the moment the possibility to develop another so-called "permanent team site" - we are a bit over-stretched at the moment in the south - but we will establish what I am calling a "permanent presence of the observing function" and what the military are calling a "standing long-range patrol" whereby it would be possible also to give some back-up to United Nations agencies and NGOs to show some presence in the field and to carry out their developmental and humanitarian activities which are also related to reconciliation work which is necessary over there. Some of these activities have started. We will concentrate our activities around 03:10 but we recently also did send representatives to Akobo where there also was a problem of violence related to the developments which I sketched. I understand that had been successful. But sometimes the successes are temporary and not lasting. You have to organise some

lasting presence which is difficult; it is a very big part of Sudan. We have about 12 offices and team-sites; the roads are hardly accessible so we always have to use air transportation; we have to make a choice between being present in a number of areas from where we can cover the areas around and spreading our activities which will be a bit thin.

There is of course insecurity still. In the south, one of the very bad accidents which took place was a couple of days ago when a Non-governmental Organization working with the United Nations, the German organization GTZ, ran into an ambush on the road from Juba to Torit. Five people were killed. There is one aid worker – an international staff member of the German NGO, who is still missing.

This is just an example and there have been other attacks over there and it is discomfoting and that means it is very difficult to stretch our activities because we also do not have adequate, in quantity in terms of protection coverage so that we could spread our work further.

Very often, the allegations are that such ambushes and killings are the work of the LRA. It is uncertain whether that was the case; there are other forces also at play in the south and reports have been sent to me but, like always, not any report really is a definitive report. Reports have been sent to me regarding incidents of the last two major attacks. This one on the GTZ, and we have been informed of a government convoy of civilians on another road out of Juba, not very far from the city by the way, where attacks by others were blamed on the LRA. I hope that is the case and I fear that that is the case.

I fear that that is the case because that means that there are more groups active and ambushing and fighting and not only one – that is my fear.

I hope that this is the case because that would mean that the LRA has kept a promise that they would not carry out attacks while discussions are taking place facilitated by the Government of Southern Sudan with the Government of Uganda.

I am pleased, anyway, that these talks are starting and that President Museveni is taking the talks seriously after some long consideration – to which the Government of Uganda was very much entitled - because, I think we all were taken by surprise when Kony announced that he was interested in talks again. As a matter of fact, the ICC made clear last year November that it did not expect any possibility of political talks with the Lord's Resistance Army. That was one of the reasons why they issued at that particular moment the indictment.

Of course it would be very difficult to establish a relation between peace and justice. Peace resulting from talks; justice resulting from an end to impunity on the basis of a trial. It is not up to me to advise on the way to proceed. I am pleased anyway that the talks now can start with a serious prospective.

Thinking about talks, I am looking forward with some hope to the talks in Asmara with the Eastern Front. I understand that the Eastern Front has had the opportunity to organise a pre-conference just across the border in Eritrea itself and that they have formulated a number of objectives, political objectives, for the talks.

I also understand that they have tried to learn the lessons from Abuja – how not to negotiate. There are a lot of lessons to be learnt from Abuja for instance the lesson that you always have

to stick together otherwise peace is not lasting. It is a very important lesson. And I understand that the people in the east have committed themselves anyway to serious talks and to stay united. And that is offering some prospective for a good outcome if all parties are serious - and there is no reason to expect that government is not serious. I think that at the moment all parties including the facilitator in Eritrea are quite serious about the talks in Asmara.

The United Nations has not been invited as an observer to the talks. We had hoped that that would be the case in all of my earlier press conferences, and I never have asked to facilitate these talks but the presence of the international community and whoever is a better representative of the international community than the United Nations as such and not just a country but representing all countries together, the presence of the international community is always helpful to watch what is going on in talks that maybe would get some advice.

We will have observers in the corridors and that, for the time being, is what it is.

Turning to Darfur, a couple of points: as I said last week, the attack on Hamrat el-Sheikh was a very sorry event because it might result in spreading the violence beyond Darfur to other states of Sudan and I really hope that will not be the case.

Any movement, whether it has signed or not signed or whether it is a new group, which starts using violence, has to be condemned. The peace agreement in Abuja, however fragile it is, is a peace agreement. It is an agreement not meant to be the final end to the conflict but to be the final end to the fighting. Abuja was meant to be the closure of the fighting. Anybody who continues or starts, or relocates the fight to other parts has to be condemned. That is a violation not only of the agreement but also of the peace prospective of the people in Darfur and outside.

Such attacks provoke counterattacks and then you get action and counteraction, retaliation, revenge and you get the same spiral again as you had in the situation before the 5th of May. So that means that those who started that attack in Hamrat el-Sheikh bear a heavy responsibility for authorising a new spiral of violence.

Secondly; I am very concerned about the increase in violence in some specific areas of Darfur. It may not be in the whole of Darfur – there are areas that are areas which are quite calm – but the very sensitive areas in the northern part of North Darfur always have been contested. And also in the eastern part of the Jebel Marra between Kutum and el-Fasher, for instance and there is a lot of fighting. And the fighting results in a new humanitarian displacement. We had thousands of people in and around Toweela who were displaced because of the intra-SLA fighting. They go into camps, the Zamzam camp for instance, and the people on the road to the camps can not easily be met. There is uncertainty about numbers and you know that because of insecurity, we do not have a humanitarian presence. And exactly the Darfur Peace Agreement in Abuja was meant to establish a situation whereby all parties would stay where they were; would indicate their own zones so that in between there would be buffer zones, humanitarian zones and demilitarized zones. And in that period, following the Abuja agreement, the various submissions of the zones would have to be checked and reviewed by the monitors of the peace agreement.

I can only come to the conclusion that none of the parties has submitted results which they did control; that all these border between the various zones could not be checked because the monitors have not gone out; hence that parties are changing the zones which they did control

on the day of the signature. The day of the signature perhaps may not be very important any more because the African Union took initiative not to see the 5th of May as D-Day but the 16th of May. There was some discussion about another date but, anyway, the deadlines, either on the basis of the 5th or the 16th of May, 20 days later, have long been passed without the obligations being met. That means that parties are resuming their original activities with quite some reports from IDPs that they also as civilians are being attacked.

We can not confirm all those reports. We get reports from IDPs, from humanitarian agencies in the field. We don't have monitors. We, the United Nations, have not been given the task in the Abuja agreement to monitor the peace agreement. That task has been given to the African Union and the African Union has not given us that specific information. But we have a humanitarian task. We have to report on the statements made by victims of a conflict that indeed human rights violations have taken place. We want to confirm it but we can not wait until we are in a position to confirm each and every statement before we report it because that could also feed the parties in making it impossible to confirm it. The fact that there were no monitors at the moment to go to the field is due to the fact that parties have not made available their monitors – the government did not do so. Mini Minnawi has made available his monitors to the African Union but you have to go together – the African Union, Mini Minnawi and the government – they are not complete so they can not go on. That means that weeks and weeks and weeks are passing by, crossing the deadlines.

I give an example: at the moment, IDP females were abducted by soldiers who were suspected to be of the AbdulWahid faction. They were tied to a tree, beaten forced to eat donkey dung, raped in turns for three days by about 30 men who had accused the women of espionage because they were married to Zaghawa men. That means that civilians are being attacked and that the tensions becomes also of a tribal character.

That is especially what we wanted to stop with the peace agreement: no fighting; no attacks on civilians; no International Humanitarian Law and human rights violations; no escalation of the conflict into a tribal escalation which gets out of control even beyond the political escalation, the political conflict between parties with political objectives and the government. That is just one example. I mentioned now an example of a human rights violation which is alleged to have taken place by soldiers belonging to the AbdulWahid faction. In an earlier SitRep [*UNMIS Situation Report*] we have some information about allegations by other civilians against soldiers who belong to the other factions. We have to highlight it. We have a humanitarian task saying that they do not know everything and sometimes an allegation may be accounted in more eloquent terms than the facts but I have always said, in these press conference also, “first trust the victims”.

First trust the victims. As soon as people who are sitting safely somewhere in another city, in an office or press conference or people with power and with weapons do not trust the victims anymore, then the whole situation is really beyond any humanitarian value.

Start trusting the victims. As I said in previous press conferences when there were doubts on accusations by women about rape carried out by militia and Janjaweed, [*I said*] trust the women. They are the victims. Don't always say it is not true, it is not true, there is no proof; start trusting the women, start trusting the victims and then assess, assess, assess – send the monitor, send the human rights monitors, send the monitors of the peace agreement and the ceasefire in order to help stopping the further escalation by such a monitoring exercise.

And I deplore that that is not possible at the moment.

I also deplore very much the fighting in the northern part of North Darfur. Of course there are parties and there are non-signatories. And the non-signatories have to be blamed for the political decision not to sign.. I criticised AbdulWahid that he has not signed or not yet signed the agreement. I think it was not wise to do so and I don't think there was any reason for him not to sign because the DPA is a good text, it is a good compromise, and I do not think that any prolonging of the negotiations would have resulted in a better text. At a certain moment there has to be an end to the talks and I have and I repeat that I have commended the government and the Minnawi wing that they did sign – a good step. But that agreement, of course, is not the end. I have always very clearly stated that the Abuja agreement is a necessary but not a sufficient step as I did repeat also last week. It is an important hurdle that has to be taken on the road to peace but after the hurdle there is a further road. It is not the finish. The Abuja agreement is not the finish and you have to get the others on board.

The Darfur Peace Agreement does not give a licence to parties which have signed to fight parties which did not sign. The Darfur Peace Agreement does not give the licence to parties which did not sign but who were participating at the talks to continue fighting because they did sign earlier agreements which already did result in a ceasefire. Nobody has the right to fight; nobody has the right to attack another party and that has to be made very clear – press conferences, meeting of the CMC, in international meeting. When that is not being said, the Darfur Peace Agreement turns into something which does not function anymore and we have to do everything in order to have the Darfur Peace Agreement functioning. Implement it, get the support from all other parties ... that is the most important thing.

I have said in a meeting which I had two days ago with Minister Khalifa, and he quoted me to the press – and I will not quote him because I do not think that it is done to say something about what your partner in a meeting is saying to you – but I would like to confirm that what he said to the press about my statement is true. For me, a transition is important but it is not my priority. The first priority is implementation of the peace agreement. My second priority is the broadening of the support to the peace agreement. And I am also very much interested in a transition. But the transition doesn't take place tomorrow, it can not take place tomorrow. Tomorrow or today you can implement the peace agreement; you can do what you promised to do. Tomorrow and today you can do everything to get all parties behind the peace agreement who were in Abuja or outside Abuja to sign it. That is the priority of today.

A transition is also important but to me it is number three, the other two require most of the attention.

I could mention many more details of attacks which have taken place on villages which have taken place and I am writing down all these names, but it is too many. Too many attacks are taking place at the moment in a broad area around Kalma and Gereida and also even in the south in the neighbourhood of Gereida.

So I am quite concerned about what is going on. I hope that the meeting which has been scheduled for next week in Brussels where the international partners will sit together with the African Union and the United Nations and also the government of Sudan to discuss finance and support of the African Union will be successful.

I have hailed the announcement which was made – although I think it was not in the communiqué of the African Union summit two weeks ago – to extend the operations to the 31st of December, I understand that it is to be qualified yet by an official statement by the African Union Ministerial Peace and Security Council because so far the mandate is until the 30th of September; I have hailed the intention to go home until the 31st of December. I hope I hope that there will be enough finance and resources and equipment for the African Union to do a good job. They need more money, they need more services and they also need more troops for this.

It is difficult for them to do a good job at the moment.

May I end by saying that all the attacks on the African Union are to be regretted very much. Let me say: there was an AMIS helicopter which was shot at. They missed but it was very clear what the target was. People on the ground firing – I am not a military person so I don't know what is or is not a missile – but firing a deadly weapon at a helicopter. It has to be condemned. The African Union is an impartial facilitator of the implementation of a peace agreement and can not be a target.

I condemn also statements made by that party which is fighting in [*indiscernible name of place*] that the African Union is the enemy. The African Union is not the enemy; the African Union is the facilitator of the a peace agreement. The African Union is therefore the ally of anybody who is in favour of peace and any statement that the African Union is the enemy has to be condemned.

I condemned also the attack on a convoy of the African Union on the ground which was ambushed and 30 soldiers were taken hostage. They have been released but cars have not been returned to the African Union and they can be used of course by fighters again who took them hostage, as weapons. And, I understand, that their identity cards have not been returned which means that people can use AMIS identity cards also in an effort to create confusion.

These are war crimes. All of them are war crimes as I call as a war crime the use of a white helicopter - which is completely in violation of International Humanitarian Law - with AMIS markings on it. Not an AMIS helicopter. There is a lot of talk about AMIS taking sides – somewhere flying a white helicopter whereby somebody took the liberty to put AMIS' marking on that helicopter, this has to be condemned. It has happened before about six months ago. We have pictures of an airport whereby people took off, after they had landed, a big sheet of plastic with AMIS on it in order to bring the helicopter back to its original state as a white helicopter. It is a crime. It is also very dangerous because the United Nations is flying with white helicopters, humanitarians, neutral, and anybody who thinks that AMIS is an enemy and that AMIS is flying around and that AMIS has taken sides – all three completely wrong, wrong suggestions – may also think that then it is accepted to fire. Which will then also bring our own humanitarian activities in danger.

I warn against such irresponsible activities.

Thank you.

CPIO Somerwill: Mr. Elkoussy is not feeling too well, he had to go out for a moment, and so I will continue for the moment and hope that he will be back soon. Thank you very much Mr. Pronk, I would like to throw it open now to questions from our colleagues from the press; Let's begin...yes you sir, would you please come up and identify yourself thank you

Q: In more than a press briefing you described the issue of Darfur as a complex one and that the Darfur Peace Agreement also came out complicated as a result. It may seem that your description or your assessment of the Darfur Peace Agreement look rather complex itself. You did mention that the Darfur Peace Agreement is a good agreement and that the text be maintained but added that it needs some additions. You described it as fragile, not final but added that the war must be brought to an end. You also said that you are very concerned about the situation in Darfur and that the agreement has not brought an end to the war and the fighting is going on.

I would like to know clearly what your assessment is of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Does it meet your wishes?

My second question is: who is it that uses these white helicopters you mentioned? Is it the Sudan government?

The third question: will the United Nations be far from the talks on eastern Sudan and not participate even as observers? How do you see this? My second question is: who is it that uses these white helicopters you mentioned? Is it the Sudan government?

The third question: will the United Nations be far from the talks on eastern Sudan and not participate even as observers? How do you see this issue?

SRSB Pronk: The United Nations is everywhere where we are welcome and have been invited. We have not been invited to the eastern talks, not as participants nor as observers so we stay away. We do not impose ourselves on anybody - neither with troops, politicians or diplomats. As I have said so often to the politicians here, "We are not coming if you don't want us with troops, neither with politicians or diplomats. If they don't invite us, we are not in the meeting".

That means that we are far way from any place where we are not invited and I did say, we are in the corridors, the corridors are far away from the place where decisions are being made but not so far that you can not listen a bit and talk a little bit. And as soon as the door opens, I mean, as soon as the government and the Eastern Front and the facilitator – the Government of Eritrea - opens the door and invites us and others, by the way, then we will gladly enter and listen and answer questions if we're being asked and give advice if we're being asked to give advice.

Secondly; I don't know whose flying helicopters sir – I don't know. I cannot know because we have no monitors on the ground. We do not have that task. I only know that is happening. That is for sure and I condemn that.

Thirdly; the Darfur Peace Agreement is a good text. It can, in terms of substance, meet the aspirations of all parties halfway, not fully but halfway. Any compromise meets expectations halfway, always, by definition. It should meet one expectation a hundred percent and that's the cease-fire, cease the fire, cease the hostilities, no fighting anymore for a hundred percent. But it did not. It turned out that at the moment, this is not taking place.

Stick to the text, it's a good text, but go beyond! And that means as I said, make more money available for compensation, bring all the others who did not sign on board in one way or another and you do not do so by fighting them. You do not incite non-signatories to participate in an agreement by attacking them. The problem is not the peace agreement in itself, the problem is that it hasn't been signed by everybody and it is not being implemented. That is the problem. Not the text. And that's the answer

Q: The situation on the ground [*in Darfur*] is getting bad and you are describing the Darfur Peace Agreement as not to be sufficient for bringing peace in Darfur and things are going from bad to worse. Kofi Anan said that he will try to convince President Bashir in order to allow the UN forces to keep peace in Darfur. What is [*the UN*] role in convincing the parties who did not sign to come up and sign the Darfur Peace Agreement in order for it to be a total agreement for all the people of Darfur? Thank you.

SRSB Pronk: We try to contact the non-signatories. I cannot disclose my contacts, I have some contacts. For instance, with G19, by phone etc. through my staff.

I did ask to see AbdulWahid, he also wanted to see me, but the Eritreans said it is not possible. Can we go and see him in Eritrea? It is a bit difficult at the moment. So we make our efforts and we are regularly in contact with representatives, from all parties by the way. The Mini Minnawi faction visited us here; we had discussions with them and we did have our discussions with the government. So we talk with signatories and non-signatories; we do everything within our capability to get them on board.

I understand, after having a meeting with Vice-President Kiir that he is travelling to Asmara and that he is scheduled to see, also AbdulWahid. I hope that AbdulWahid is also so wise to see him because President Kiir went to Yei, you remember, a couple of weeks ago, and he himself was waiting for 3 days [*to meet AbdulWahid*] and afterwards [*AbdulWahid*] thought 'I am not going'. This was a bit arrogant, to say the least. And I hope that now President Kiir who is doing everything despite that, I would say insult, that his discussion partner didn't show up, that he will have an opportunity. He [*Kiir*] went not to him [*AbdulWahid*] and that is quite a step. The government of Sudan sent the Vice-President to try to have a talk and I am very much in favour of that.

So we underpin that. We are critical of those parties who have signed and do not what they have to do – they fight – but we support them, in our context, if they do what they have to do. That's the answer.

Q: You've repeatedly said that the text of the DPA is good but it needs to be implemented. What or who is the main obstacle to implementation and what's the best way to overcome this?

Second question: what impact - if at all, does the candidacy of Mr. Minnawi as a Senior Advisor to the President have on the DPA?

SRSB Pronk: I think there are many reasons why there is no implementation. There is the internal strife between the faction of SLM-Minnawi and AbdulWahid – I think that is a main factor and that is the responsibility of the leaders. There is also the distorted news which has been given to the people on the ground, particularly the IDPs, about the content of the DPA. They are being told bad stories that the DPA is not a good text [*while*] it is really much better than what people think. That's the second problem. Thirdly, the fear of the Janjaweed. One of the elements of the DPA is that the government has to submit a plan to disarm the Janjaweed. They should have done that already. I'm told that there is an informal, kind of draft plan that has been submitted but I have not seen it. It has not been officially submitted to the CMC. I stand to be corrected if so because today there is another meeting of the CMC, following last Monday's meeting and last Monday nothing was submitted to the CMC. But this is crucial. It is crucial that there is a credible plan to disarm the Janjaweed - that it will be implemented within the 6 months period following submission and approval. And, when I say credible, it means that people have to be disarmed and the arms have then to be given to the facilitator, the African Union, people have to be demobilized and a recruitment of Janjaweed in other forces just like that - so that you are no longer Janjaweed but you have another hat - that is not a credible plan. People (IDPs) will not trust that. This is a third major issue.

Second question; that is an internal political affairs [*issue*] of the government of Sudan. The United Nations is not giving any comments on any nomination or appointment of any political party within a country. That is the system itself so you cannot expect me to give any comment on this. There are so many appointments and nominations in this country. It is not a [*United Nations*] task, because then, the GOS would rightly say that we are intervening, we are not. We are not intervening in domestic political affairs.

Q: Since you will be travelling to southern Sudan tomorrow, there are reports of tens of victims killed as a result of forceful disarmament exercised by the SPLA. As far as I know, there was a meeting held three days ago between you and the DDR commissions for the north and south of Sudan. What can the United Nations do to halt this forceful disarmament?

My second question is on Darfur. You said that additions have to be made in the Darfur Peace Agreement. A few days ago, President Bashir said that negotiations and talks have fully been closed on those who reject the Darfur Peace Agreement in its current form. How can you balance between these two points?

Third question: with regards the unknown aircraft you talked of, everybody knows that such aircraft are either government, the African Union or the United Nations and that such aircraft could not be operated by another party other than these. Can you explain?

SRSB Pronk: There are 3 categories of helicopters. That's what you're saying; I think there are 4. It's not a UN helicopter. You must believe me. AMIS has said that, and I believe them 100% that they would of course say the truth, that they are not siding with any party. Please, it's not an AMIS helicopter. Is it a government helicopter? I had a discussion in the JIM, many months ago, and I criticized the government for using a white helicopter. - they do the same, by the way, in the south, SAF did so and admitted to doing so in Jonglei – and they promised to paint it green. They didn't keep their promise; it's still white over there. They did not admit it however in Darfur and I have to believe the government also. They did say there

are private commercial helicopters also and they cannot control them. Okay, if they so, that's a fourth possibility. I do not apportion blame if I don't know it.

I only know that there is a helicopter flying around with AMIS markings which are not attached to AMIS itself. That is not acceptable and that's the answer.

Thirdly; yes, you're quite right about Jonglei. There is information that many people have been the victim of the forced disarmament, which is the disarmament of (which I mentioned myself) the "White Army" and others. The Government of the South has the right to disarm people who do not have the right to carry weapons. That is a law and order issue. The way in which it has taken place has resulted in casualties, I think, more than would have been necessary though people resisted being disarmed. Some resisted being disarmed because they were afraid that if they give up their arms they would be vulnerable and attacked by others. That happens in the South. Others resisted being disarmed because they did not accept the authority of the GoSS and they have to. The GoSS has the right to establish its authority, but has of course to obey human rights and humanitarian law consideration.

I had a discussion about this with Riek Machar, the Vice-President of the GoSS, and also separately with Paulino Matib – because there is also an element of the presence of Other Armed Groups still. There are a number of OAG commanders like Gordon Koung and Ismail Kony (not Joseph Kony) and others who are still active in the area around Akobo and Jonglei. That is why I was, in the beginning of my comments, highlighting the need to establish a peaceful solution to the conflict and I hope that we can play a role in this. I have been informed – because we have sent missions to the area but not yet a standing mission but missions in and out – that the worst is over. I am pleased that if that is the case, and I hope that that will be the case, that there is more calm at the moment. I also think that what is being said internationally is a bit inflated. That there are accusations about many victims of which our missions which we had sent to Jonglei can not provide proof. But it is true, for instance to be complete, that in that forced disarmament campaign villages have been burnt down. I don't know how many. The international story was 12. we have sent missions and they saw two and could not find others. Very often a story has the right core and then it becomes bigger and bigger in the news and you have to be as concrete as possible.

We hope to be able to influence the process with assistance to the people and reconciliation activities when we are on the ground.

Q: On the situation in Jonglei, you said that there are some armed groups but you did not name these groups. Are they those forces known as "Sam" or the Popular Defence Forces or others?

My second question is on the formal apology that SLM-Minnawi demanded from you and on the demand from an international probe over what you described as "humanitarian violations" in Kurma and Toweela. Are there any contacts with the African Union or the other armed groups over such a probe?

SRSB Pronk: I did identify or label the groups. I did say the "White Army" which is well-known as a group for civilian defence in Jonglei and has been active for many years – that is the main group. And there are so-called "Other Armed Groups" (OAGs) who are not following or are not yet following Paulino Matib – and I mentioned Gordon Koung. I said "Gordon Koung and others". That is my labelling or identification.

Secondly; I did dwell upon this issue at length in my introduction and I did say that we have to report on allegations. And then I went into that theme, Believe the Victims.

But you are right; they have to be investigated and assessed and it is the task of the ceasefire committee to send monitors to the field and I did say that that has not yet happened.

Q: The G19 is saying that the African Union evacuated wounded army troops Mini Minnawi troops from a recent bout. If that is true, do you see that as possibly sucking the African Union into an internal SLA conflict?

SRSB Pronk: We have checked that statement and AMIS has confirmed that it did do so.

Let me refrain from my judgment.

Q: My first question is a follow-up to an earlier one by a colleague. There are three descriptions of the Darfur Peace Agreement attributed to Mr. Pronk: that “no coma could be added to the agreement”, “it is a fragile agreement that does not meet the aspirations of the people” and, “the text of the Darfur Peace Agreement is a good text and could not be amended”.

Can Mr. Pronk give us his final description to the Darfur Peace Agreement? Can we take one of these as Mr. Pronk’s final view on the said agreement?

There are reports of financial and administrative mismanagement within UNMIS and others accusing Mr. Pronk of obstructing the work of auditors. What are the facts surrounding this issue?

SRSB Pronk The first and the third are exactly the same. I have not said that you can not add a coma, I have said, “you can not change a coma”. Adding a coma is nonsense; I would never have said so because if you add a coma then you have to add something after the coma so that the sentence is over. You can not change a coma and I have said you can not change the text. Why not? Because it is a good text – and that is the substance. Why not, politically? Because if you are going a text, then parties who did sign it are going to run away. So politically it is unwise.

I have said you can add things to the text without changing it. I give an example: if, in the text, the government has said we make available an initial amount of 30 million dollars for compensation, then adding a hundred million is not a change because the initial text is 30. you don’t change the agreement by adding money to something which has been called initial. That is logic and I try to be as logical as possible.

Secondly; I have said that you add to this an international guarantee. In the text, it is not said – and that is the statement always by the Minister of Foreign Affairs – that the United Nations should come in after a transition. That is true; it is not said. But then my response to Minister Lam Akol is: in the text it is not said that the United Nations should not come in.

So if you would have a transition to a United Nations force, that would be a separate political decision by the government, the parties, the African Union and the United Nations. You don’t change the text if you add security arrangements. These are two examples.

And I have never said what you are saying as the third description that the text is weak and feeble. No. I have said that people in the camps and on the ground consider the text meek and not meeting their expectations and I went out of my way in many meetings in Darfur and also with representatives of civil society in a big meeting here in Khartoum to convince them that it was a good text. But I continue to say, “a peace agreement is never finished”. After the peace agreement follows a more difficult task – the implementation of the peace agreement.

Yes, I have said before and I gave you the information at a press conference which you perhaps had not attended in January, that two staff members of UNMIS together with staff members of other United Nations missions in the world have been requested to come to New York for administrative leave with pay – they have not been suspended, they have not been punished – in order to assist in an overall investigation, worldwide, of procurement activities of United Nations missions which are being carried out sometimes by the missions themselves and mostly by United Nations headquarters. The big procurement contracts are common contracts for United Nations missions together on the basis of bidding procedures carried out by New York. Smaller contracts are being carried out by individual missions

These two staff members are at the moment still in New York; that is already six months as they were asked to go to New York in early January and they are still on the United Nations payroll and still assisting in the investigations.

Investigations are based on an audit being followed by an investigation. And I have made clear that the rights of United Nations staff members have to be respected in an investigation and that you can not, before an investigation has been completed, declare a person guilty; you need proof. And that is a statement also with regards to human rights of United Nations staff members.

I made that clear to New York and I know that on that basis some people have said that I am making the audit difficult. That is a lie. I have given instructions many times to all staff members in UNMIS to cooperate fully with all audits and all investigations; so there is no blockage of audits and no blockage of investigation, on the contrary. I declare again, nobody is guilty without proof.

Q: Before coming here, I was at a press conference of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission of the CPA. They highlighted that one of the big stumbling blocks to [indiscernible] is the question of Abyei and the [indiscernible]. Can you give us a rundown of the current situation in Abyei from the United Nations point of view and what current United Nations operations are there in the area?

SRSB Pronk: The final decision with regard to the future of Abyei is in the hands of the Presidency. It is already, since about a year, in the hands of the Presidency and the President and the Vice-President will have to agree together with the other Vice-President.

They clearly were postponing a decision. There was a good meeting of the National Congress Party and the SPLM as political factions since about 6 weeks ago which gave suggestions to the Presidency on how to deal with it: go to arbitration, request representatives of the [Abyei] Boundary Commission back to Sudan and ask them questions, find a political solution or a compromised deal or put it to the Constitutional Court in Sudan.

I have in a press conference here a couple of weeks ago said that these are four interesting options and that I hope the Presidency will take a decision on such options. It is of course a difficult political process which takes time.

The most important thing is that on the ground, between the Misseriya and the Dinka, the postponement of the results will not result into tension and increased fighting. And I am very happy that that has not been the case. Sometimes you have to use time to find a solution if in that period there are no conflicts escalating on the ground – and that is not the case.

I hope very much that soon a decision can be found. I have the impression that the more and more the President and the First Vice-President are able to meet each other and to find solutions.

The second part of my answer; we can not move to the north of a specific line which has been drawn by the SAF and we consider that a violation of the CPA and made that clear. It can not be discussed anymore in the institutions – the CJMC at the military level or the CPC at the political level – because the SPLM and the NCP and the government did not agree on this issue and have put it forward to the Presidency again. So we can not move.

It also means that we are only in Abyei and not in the northern part of this particular part of the ceasefire zone. The question is: where is the border. There are different views about where the border is because that is related to the different views on the status of Abyei. The government says you can only be in the ceasefire zone and if you have different views of the ceasefire zone they block us from going to the north.

My position is that everything which is being disputed should be monitored because that is our task. But SAF and the government have blocked us so far. We protested against it; I brought it to the attention of the Security Council. It is a problem which is with us for a year already and which has not been solved. We are being asked by the Misseriya in the northern part of Abyei why we are not giving humanitarian assistance to them and are only giving some assistance to the people in the southern part, the Dinkas. We are saying that we can not go there because the government stops us from going there. So we have a stalemate in different directions.

That is the present situation. My tactic is: don't (UN and Khartoum) make it a big political issue; try to solve the problem as much as possible on the ground so that politicians in Khartoum understand that people want to live with each other and want to find their own solutions.

At the same time it is more important that an overall legal solution to this finally problem of co-existence.

CPIO Somerwill: Thank you very much. Any other questions to Mr. Pronk?

No? Thank you very much.

