



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference held by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi

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UNMIS Headquarters, Khartoum

SRSQ Qazi: First of all, I would like to thank all members of the media, print and electronic, for coming here to UNMIS. I would like first of all to say how honored I am to have this opportunity to be in UNMIS - the United Nations Mission in the Sudan - as the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in the Sudan. This is an extraordinary and important mission and the prime mandate that has been given to us by the Security Council is to assist both parties of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I arrived here a little less than two months ago now. I have had the opportunity of paying my respects to His Excellency President Omer al-Bashir, and His Excellency Mr. Salva Kiir the First Vice President of the Sudan and the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, as well as other prominent members of the political leadership, both in the North and in the South. I am still in the process of meeting all the necessary people. That will be important for me to discharge my responsibilities here.

As you know, there have been some challenges with regard to the implementation of the CPA, especially after the 11 October decision of the SPLM [to freeze participation of its members in Government of National Unity]. But I think as a result of several meetings between the two leaders, the First Vice President, and their senior advisers, progress has been made and now we can look forward to overcoming that particular impasse. There will also be positive movement with respect to the redeployment of forces North and South of 1.1. 1956 Line and we hope that demarcation of that Line will begin soon early next year. Preparations are also being made with respect to census, which is essential for the holding of the elections before July 2009. And we also take note of the fact that the important issue of Abyei has been taken up by the Presidency itself. So, and according to the latest [agreement announced], the Presidency will seek to either reach an agreement or to reach an agreement [on Abyei boundaries] on how to resolve the issue by the end of this year.

So there are challenges which are definitely there, but progress has also been there in recent days and recent weeks as a result of initiatives taken by the President of the Sudan, the First Vice President, the Committee of Six and other senior officials. As UNMIS, we are ready to assist in every way possible that is required by both the parties with respect to all the issues that are related to implementation of the CPA.

So I come here at a critical and important time, and also a hopeful time despite the fact that, as I said, challenges are there and need to be overcome. But I think the leadership has demonstrated that the determination, willingness, and ability to deal with these challenges and overcome these challenges are also there. That is a very hopeful sign which encourages us in our own mission.

With these words, once again I would like to welcome you in UNMIS Headquarters and to reiterate my great sense of pride and honor in having this opportunity to, along with my team here in UNMIS and the UN country team, to be of assistance to the people and Government [of National Unity] of the Sudan. Thank you very much.

Q&As

Q- There has been some suggestions that the international or UNMIS forces may be deployed along the North – South borders to at least address security, since the SPLA has withdrawn from the Government. Can you give us more details on this issue? Secondly, about the census you mentioned, is there any idea about starting date, or when it might happen?

SRSG Qazi: First on the census first. The beginning of the census has - with the agreement of both parties - been postponed from February to April 2008. And, apparently, we can still hope that despite this delay the census may be completed before the rainy season comes which, as you know, poses a serious logistical problem to the census preparations. We do hope that there will be no further delay. This particular delay is caused by the preparations for the census exercise for which more time is needed. So it is true that there has been a delay, but we are hopeful it will not impact on the wider schedule and that the census will be held on time on time with the implementation of a number of other commitments. There are also essential preparations for elections. We hope to have the elections on schedule before July 2009. There have been serious delays with regard to the census. There has been delays in the funding of the census but that is also being addressed as there has been agreement [by the CPA parties] to fund the census. Now that the two parties have agreed, we can expect the release of funds. The agreement on funding the census encourages the authorities to abide by the schedule the parties had agreed upon. With regard to the redeployment, we hope that tensions along the border will be eased. The July 9th target [of redeployment] was missed and hopefully by January the 9th the redeployment of forces from the South and North of 1.1.56 will be met. We have an agreed schedule for redeployment on we hope that by January the 9th it will be completed. JIUs [Joint Integrated Units] will also be deployed and co-located, and progressively integrated, and this will hopefully contribute to easing the tensions. With regard to forces that will stay in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, we hope there will be an agreement on that also and that target date of January the 9th will be met. If that is achieved, then of course it will help in easing the tensions in the area. There have been reports in the recent past of mobilization of troops and reactions to that.

So there is progress. There have been extensive meetings between the parties and these issues are being addressed and timelines have been established, and hopefully, we are now going to see movement in the positive in direction.

Q. My question was about the possibility of UNMIS and International troops to be deployed along the border?

SRSG Qazi: No that is not under consideration. The JIUs will be there, and they will be assisted by the international and the donor community. We will assist in training them and helping them. We also have the CPC [Ceasefire Political Commission] and the CJMC [Ceasefire Joint Monitoring Committee] that will take up issues in that regard, and UNMIS and the country team, the international community, and the donors will be there to assist.

Q. There are challenges you spoke about. That is the differences between the two partners. But these are not the only problems facing the partners. There is also the problem of funding which is withheld by the donors in many western capitals. This is also an obstacle for the partners. The UN is now accusing the GOS of obstructing deployment of the hybrid operation at a time when donors are not releasing the funding. What is your reaction? Are there difficulties facing the deployment of hybrid operation?

SRSQ Qazi: I should first make it absolutely clear that as Head of UNMIS, I do not have responsibility for UNAMID which has a Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Rodolphe Adada. Much of your questions need to be addressed to him, including with respect to the funding of UNAMID.

As far as funding related to the implementation of CPA and of course donor funding for humanitarian operations in southern Sudan are concerned, we are looking forward to the Government developing its plans and its budget, so that these can be presented to the donors so that they can take decisions with respect to funding various operations with respect to census, elections, DDR, RRR, returns to various areas. For these programmes, there need to be concrete plans, they need to be budgeted, so the donor countries can have the time necessary to release funds. These activities also take them a little time to process. But as far as funding of UNAMID is concerned that is not the responsibility of SRSQ for UNMIS. We have a separate Joint Special Envoy so I would prefer not to comment on that issue, you can address it directly to UNAMID.

Q: Mr. Eliasson mentioned at a conference the existence of arms in IDPs camps. Do you have any information about who is responsible for bringing these arms into the camps? My second question is that this is the first press conference of Mr. Ashraf Qazi, so what update you can give on Darfur?

SRSQ Qazi: I would like to re-emphasize that my mandate does not extend to Darfur. I can say a few general words with respect to the situation there, but it is not appropriate for me to speak on a subject which is the direct responsibility of the Joint Special Representative for UNMID, as well as the Special Envoys for Darfur. The Joint Mediation Support Team is dealing with the political aspects of the Darfur issue. However, what I can say on Darfur is that the Secretary General himself has expressed concern with regard to the security situation in Darfur and with regard to the situation of the IDPs in the various camps. As far as the weapons in the camps are concerned, we do support the need to collect them if there are any, but I do not know the factual situation inside the camps. The existence of weapons in the camps poses a danger and they need to be surrendered and taken away, but in a manner which is completely consistent with International humanitarian law and international human rights law. That the process of disarming or of taking away weapons from camps where they may be located should not lead to violation of the human rights of the people concerned inside those camps. It is a general proposition which we will continue to emphasize and we will continue doing so. Mr. Adada has been discussing these matters in detail with the local authorities there to ensure that any plan to take weapons away does not involve violation of human rights and is consistent with the international law. If there is to be movement of people from one place to another, there is also need to be done voluntarily and in a manner consistent with the rights of the people concerned.

Q. There has been some tribal fighting in southern Sudan in the Lake State and Upper Nile. What is the role the Mission could do to stabilize the security situation in Jonglei?

SRSQ Qazi: We recognize that some of these intertribal clashes in the South have had an adverse impact on the overall security situation, and they have also led to considerable loss of lives of the people. We do have joint monitoring teams there. But this is primarily the responsibility of the government and the local authorities. We are there to assist in any way that is acceptable to the parties by providing training programmes and workshops, and by raising the capability of the local police in dealing effectively with these problems and always in a way consistent with the international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We are quite active there and the joint monitoring teams, the CJMC, the Area Joint Monitoring Committee, including our Sector Commander, as well as representatives from the parties, are active. They have a record of being able to respond quite quickly to these situations and defusing tensions when they take place in the past. So we do have a role and a function in providing logistical and other support in those regions. And

this is a priority issue that needs to be addressed. We know it happens in various seasons, we understand cattle raising and other security incidents take place, but in the ancient past the casualties associated with these incidents were much less. Today, this is the age of machine guns and Kalashnikovs, and clashes which used to result in injuries can now result in mass killings. That is of course not only humanly totally unacceptable, but socially and politically, it destabilizes other processes.

Q: You are very optimistic about the crisis between NCP and SPLM. Few months ago, I interviewed your deputy who said that 90 % of the concept paper, which was prepared by the UN, has been accepted by SPLM and that the GoS is studying the paper. Can give us an update on what has happened with regard to this paper? UNMIS is responsible for following up the implementation of the CPA. Given the last crises between the CPA Partners, has UNMIS any early warning system to warn of future crises? There is shortage of funds for returnees, can you update us on that?

SRSQ Qazi: Thank you for your question. First of all, even in the worst of circumstances there is a principle known as hope springs eternal. We do nothing if we are completely pessimistic. As I mentioned earlier in my opening remarks, while there has been progress, serious challenges still remain and need to be addressed for us to be confident that all the targets of the implementation process will be met. So I think we are being realistic, while taking note of the positive development which can be a basis for further progress. When I arrived here, I was told by many experts that the CPA was in serious trouble. A lot of work is being done in order to lessen the gravity of that situation and some progress, important serious progress, has been made in that direction. I do not want to sound overly simplistically optimistic, but I think optimism is warranted by the progress we made in recent weeks.

As far as funding is concerned, the international community is ready to assist in a number of ways with regard to various activities of the implementation of the peace process, including those relating to the census, elections, DDR, redeployment, and training of JIUs. Plans and budgets do need to be prepared sufficiently in advance for the donor countries to be able to respond positively to that. I am just coming from Geneva where the donor countries met to discuss a work plan, the fourth work plan for the Sudan for the year 2008. An amount of 2.29 billion was agreed to in principle. A large segment of that will go to Darfur. But there is also a large segment of it that will go for recovery and development in Southern Sudan. There is a donor willingness and the two Ministers [from the Government of National Unity] Minister Tijani Saleh [Minister of International Cooperation] and Minister Martin Elia [Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Acting Minister of Regional Cooperation-Government of Southern Sudan]. They were there and they had intensive interactions and discussions. For 2007 Work Plan, the 70 per cent of the target has been achieved in terms of donor financing and we appealed to the donor countries to exceed that target. So hopefully with this process over and the budget preparations been done, we look forward to having actual funding in excess of 70% or may be much more. There will not be a shortage of funding. Lack of clarity and insecurity and political impasses all these things of course do impact on funding. But as I said, there are signs of positive movements and therefore we have the right to be realistically optimistic. This is always the best attitude to deal with any challenge, particularly in my case since I just arrived here. I do need as much open-minded attitude and as much optimism as I can. We have Secretary General Report to the Security Council and on the basis of which we will see what changes in the mandate [of UNMIS] may be called for. In this report, we will be approaching the major targets of the implementation process of the CPA, and we will be reorientation our strategy and restructure our Mission. That is the work in progress right now.

Q. My question about Darfur. You mentioned you have no link with Darfur. My first question is that the transfer to the hybrid operation will take place at the 31 of December but

it is clear that the operation is facing difficulties as the donors did not fulfill the pledges they made at Oslo conference to support CPA and DPA. According to AU, the number of troops is still small, what are your efforts to address this problem.

SRSQ Qazi: Well as far as UNMIS is concerned, it is helping to set it up [UNAMID]. My mandate does not extend to what you asked about, but yes, we are concerned that the deployment of UNAMID forces is taking a while. The TCCs (Troop Contributing Countries) also have to come up with certain equipment and we have to complete the support packages. The light support package has been implemented but the heavy support package needs to be implemented. We hope that further progress will take place as a result of consultations with the government, and there are a number of issues that have to be taken up. Once again, I do not want to go into any details. These questions can be addressed to my colleague Mr. Adada and Mr. Eliasson. I do not want to say something in which they are actively involved but I will say yes, we are concerned that the hybrid force is taking longer than what was planned. The issue of forces committed also need to be addressed and this is a priority issue and the Secretary General himself has referred to this issue. But beyond that, as the Representative of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the CPA, I would rather not go into details of issues that are the active concern of my other UN and AU colleagues.

Q. My question is about the redeployment from South Sudan, southern Blue Nile and South Kordofan. The UN reports say that SAF has redeployed over 80% of its troops and that SPLA has redeployed only small number but SPLM is still accusing the SAF of having more troops in the South Sudan oil fields i.e. more than the number that SAF has admitted. Can your office give us specific figures on the numbers of troops that have been redeployed by both parties?

SRSQ Qazi: I don't have exact figure. But according to the CPA, the redeployment of forces north and south of the 1.1.'56 line was supposed to be completed by 9 July. In that date, according to monitors and verification units, particularly those who participated in the CJMC and the AJMCs, these you mentioned were confirmed. But it has been the south's position that they were to complete their redeployment within a period of six months after the establishment and deployment of the JIUs. So if their percentage is much lower, it is because of the positions that they have taken; it is not because we or anyone else is suggesting that they have been less inclined to abide by the provisions of the CPA. However, in the November 1st meeting of the CPC – that is when a breakthrough was made – it was agreed to have the JIUs established and the redeployments completed by the ninth of January. And that is progress beyond the previous position where there was a conflict between the target date of 9 July and the stipulation that the SPLA would redeploy within a period of six months after the redeployment of the JIUs. That particular conflict has been resolved; that is progress and there is no assignment of blame on either party. I think both parties are now committed to implementing a phased program for the redeployment of these forces north and south of line 1.1.'56 by 9 January and for the deployment of the JIUs, also by 9 January. There is also agreement on the forces that remain in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States by 9 January 2008. That is an important target date and we are urging both parties to do everything possible to ensure that that particular target date is met so that mutual confidence and trust is further strengthened and tensions are reduced. We are willing, with the cooperation of the partners including the donor community, to assist in the training of the JIUs so that they can effectively take up their new responsibilities.

Q: You talked about the DDR. The Government needs funds to enable it demobilize troops. Why there are delays in the DDR? What is UNMIS position on the militias such as the PDF and other unaligned militias?

SRSQ Qazi: As far as the DDR program is concerned, we are committed to the funding and to the implementation of this program. However, progress has been slow from both sides. But there has been an agreement, I think last November, with regard to a national DDR program and we are encouraging both the north and the south to also come up with their own plans which can be funded. This is primarily the responsibility for the competent authorities in the of north and the south. We need, as I have said earlier with respect to this program, a detailed plan and a budget from the government so that the donors can take action. Last year we had to surrender a certain amount of money – I think it was forty million – because there was no finalized agreed-upon plan. This time, there is. The national plan has been established and we are encouraging plans to be also finalized by the two Commissions [DDR Commissions] in the north and in the south. We expect further progress to take place over the course of the following year. But this can only be done when the two parties also prepare their plans and budgets for submission to the donor community so that we don't have to surrender money that we had because it hasn't been spent.

As far as the Other Armed Groups (OAGs) are concerned, we are encouraging their integration – rather the SAF and the SPLA are reintegrating them. With regards to the PDF [Popular defense Forces], I am not aware of all the details as yet. I think there is a view that they are regarded in a different light than the Other Armed Groups by the government but I would need to get more details of this subject which you mentioned – what is their relationship; are they to be treated exactly the same way as OAGs or they have a different status. I can come back to you on that; I have been here for just over a month and so maybe I am not up-to-date with some details on that. Our policy, of course, is that other armed groups should not be there. There are two forces, I should say- the SPLA and SAF – and if there are other forces which are affiliated to one or the other, they need to get integrated into those forces so that there aren't groups running about doing things on their own.

On redeployment figures, we have 39,262 SAF forces that withdrew from the south to north of the 1.1.'56 line and 4,568 SPLA soldiers – which is just r 7.7%- and 84.6% for the SAF. But, as I mentioned, these figures are the result of different [indiscernible] on redeployment. The position of the SPLA was that, according to the CPA, they were required to redeploy within a period of six months of establishment of JIUs which had not been completed. We have moved beyond that position and now there is an agreed target date for the completion of the redeployment, both north and south, by the 9th of January 2008.

Q. Do you think that the SPLM was right in its decision to withdraw from the Government?

SRSQ Qazi: I think it is not for me to make comments of that kind. I think what it did represent was that there was a crisis, an impasse, that would have adversely impacted on the implementation of the CPA. I think the leaders have shown statesmanship in addressing this issue and we can look forward to the SPLM returning to the government and to having a full cabinet, and that can only assist in the implementation process. And, of course they have accompanied this agreement with progress in other issues and also on the Abyei issue has been taken out from the committee of six and taken up by the Presidency with a target date to either come up with a solution or to come up with a way to reach a solution by the end of this year. I think these are important commitments which we should not ignore and they do suggest that we can look forward to further progress and that the various goals of the implementation process of the CPA will be met.

Spokeperson: Thank you very much. That was the final question and before we conclude, I wish you all *Eid Mubarak* and Happy Holidays and we will see you in the New Year.

SRSQ: *Eid Mubarak* also.