



# UNMIS

Press Conference

20 July 2009

**Near-verbatim transcript of the Press Conference  
by Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan,  
Ashraf Jehangir Qazi**

**SRSG:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to UNMIS HQs. You are here at a critical time as we are all on the verge of getting to know what the “award” of The Hague-based PCA [Permanent Court of Arbitration] would be with respect to Abyei boundary. We are very gratified to know that both parties would remain committed to maintaining the peace of the area and its vicinity no matter what the outcome of the “award” will be. UNMIS is also enhancing its presence in Abyei and in other places in the Abyei area to help in the maintenance of peace and security, in cooperation with the JIU [Joint Integrated Unit] and JIPU [Joint Integrated Police Unit] which are the security forces that are authorized according to the Abyei Road Map Agreement to be in the Abyei area. However, Abyei while in front of us and the most immediate issue, it is not the only issue with regard to the implementation of the CPA [Comprehensive Peace Agreement]. There are a number of other outstanding issues which are required to have the attention of the parties. You know that the US Special Envoy Scott Gration is also in town working with both the parties to get progress on these issues related to elections, referendum and border demarcation. These issues were also recently taken up in the recent Washington conference where the international community reiterated its commitment to assist both parties to make progress and breakthroughs on the outstanding issues of the CPA even though the time remaining is short, 18 months or less to go for the referendum. The Abyei issue and the reactions and the maintenance of peace and the performance of the security forces in Abyei primarily the JIU and the JIPU will be a real test that none of them can afford to fail. This test will of course also confirm they [JIU and JIPU] are confident that they will come through this test successful and this will also confirm the ability of all concerned to ensure the peace in the run up to and after the referendum itself which is scheduled for 2011. On the referendum, the two parties are currently discussing whatever differences there may still exist with regard to the bills and as you know the setting up of the referendum commission that is also like many other benchmarks has been considerably delayed. We hope that there will be progress between the parties on all the outstanding issues so that the timeline for the referendum, which is January 2011, will be adhered to. Similarly, before that [the referendum], you know that the elections are scheduled for April 2010. Beyond that date, it will be difficult to postpone it any further because you have the advent of the rainy season which makes the holding of the elections extremely difficult. The NEC [National Electoral Commission] is very much involved in developing an operational plan and on its budget, which will enable the donor community to assist it in the implementation of the elections schedule. As I said, we are confident that elections would be held on schedule because there is a dearth of much room, if any at all, for further postponement. The Abyei issue is not the only challenge. There are a number of challenges that the success of the two parties in dealing with the Abyei issue will be very important indicator of the success that they will hopefully also achieve in overcoming the other challenges and ensuring a peaceful implementation of the CPA, no matter what the outcome of the referendum is. So with these introductory remarks, I close.

## Questions & Answers

***Q: The SPLM [Sudan People's Liberation Movement] has denied that there are any soldiers in the Abyei area. Are you still concerned that there are armed troops in Abyei area?***

***SRSB:*** As you know, I issued a statement in which I expressed my concern with the fact that we have sighted, the JMTs have sighted the presence of some soldiers, of the police. [inaudible]... Because one thing I am completely convinced about, absolutely, that the complete commitment of the two sides to the peaceful implementation of the Abyei "award" no matter whether they are completely happy with it or not. Obviously, in arbitration of "award" one side might turn up to be the most satisfied than the other. But the important thing is the commitment of the leaderships and the commands of the armies and the armed services to the peaceful implementation. They have reiterated that in a number of occasions. That is consistent with the fact that we did have sighted elements of some forces who showed up in the area and we do believe that action has been taken to ensure that the area will be clear of such elements and that is reassuring.

***Q: The SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army] described your statement at this moment as "irresponsible" and "baseless" and is provoking the south. How do you react to that? Will you be in Abyei after tomorrow to make the same statement to confirm that what you said is true?***

***SRSB:*** As you know, I am not looking to pick up a fight with anybody. We have a certain responsibility and any statements that I make, please take not very carefully, are not lies. They are based on facts and sighting. What is important is that the leadership of both north and south are committed. And to the extent that we are now seeing and witnessing a situation where unauthorized forces, hopefully will no longer be present there, will be a clear proof of the commitment that they have reiterated on a number of occasion [inaudible]...my obligation after having pointed out with such a little time left and keeping in mind what it happened last year and the lessons that we learned from that experience to underline our very concerns at what we had witnessed and to the extent that action had been taken. Now I think that we only reiterated to ourselves the commitment of the leaderships of both sides. My statement was balanced, my statement was based on facts and I had a very good meeting with the Foreign Minister yesterday and I stand by what I have said but I also welcome the latest developments.

***Q: Last year when there was escalation by the SPLA and the NCP [National Congress Party] in Abyei, UNMIS did not provide protection to the civilians. Can you confirm whether you have mandate to protect civilians if there is again escalation in the area?***

***SRSB:*** Thank you for your question. This is a very important question. We do have in our mandate a Chapter VII paragraph, ... with regard to protection of civilians. We are mandated to protect civilians who are in imminent danger of physical harm within our capabilities and in accordance with our mandate without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the two governments, the GoSS [Government of Southern Sudan] and the government of Sudan, the SPLA and the SAF [Sudan Armed Forces] and the JIUs which comprise soldiers from both armies and the JIPU which has been set up by the Abyei roadmap agreement. Without prejudice to the primary responsibility of these institutions for protection of civilians, we have a mandate but our mandate is limited by the fact that we have two national armies there and we have the JIU and JIPU who have the primary responsibility. We will robustly implement our mandate within our capabilities and with the full cooperation of the JIU and JIPU. We have reinforced our contingent in Abyei town, in Agok and in Diffra, in order to be able to meet these responsibilities towards UN personnel and UN property and civilians in imminent danger when it lies within our capability to assist, protect and escort them to safety. That is Chapter VII obligation within our mandate and we will fulfill that. However, we must never lose sight of the fact where the primary responsibility lies. That was the case last year and will be the case this year also.

***Q: You have said that the postponement of elections has become difficult or not possible due to natural obstacles but there are also political factors like census issue and others. The census has been disputed bearing in mind that it will be the basis for distribution of geographical constituencies for elections; do not you think this can lead to further election reschedule?***

***SRSG:*** It is a very good question. With regard to the disagreement over the census and whether it will affect the elections schedule, certainly it could affect the elections schedule because according to the CPA, the census results are supposed to be used for constituency delimitation. As you have tried to point out that there is a difference between the two sides with regard to the census results, that is why it is an urgent hope to encourage both the parties to resolve their differences on this issue so that there should not be any further delay. There are other challenges that the NEC will need to overcome. As you know, especially with regard to implementing and developing its operational plan which includes also the development of feasible and credible budget so that the donor countries that will be expected to significantly assist the process, are able to secure the necessary financing for their assistance. But very much a part from that, it is absolutely essential for the two parties to abide; I think this is going to be more a case of political understanding to overcome the differences with respect to the census results.

Thank you.

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