

**Office of the Spokesperson****UNMIS BRIEFING TO THE PRESS***25 April 2007*

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference held by United Nations Mission in Sudan Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri, on 25 April 2007 at the UNMIS Press Briefing.

UNSG REPORTS ON SUDAN***UNSG Report to the UN Security Council***

As you know, the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on Sudan (document S/2007/ 213), was issued and we do have copies for you, both in English and Arabic, in the room. The report summarizes progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Mission in Sudan and the UN family in Sudan in support of that effort for the first quarter of 2007.

The report was introduced to the Security Council on 23 April by UNMIS Acting SRSG Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, who highlighted the following:

-Although progress continues to be made in implementation of the CPA, there remains mistrust between the parties as was publicly aired in Juba on 9 January during the celebration on the CPA second anniversary.

- The priorities for the remainder of 2007 should be : 1- ensuring that the Joint Integrated Units are fully formed and redeployment completed, and that DDR programming is expedited, 2- further progress on implementing the CPA in key areas, including agreement on an interim administration for Abyei, and development of integrated services and equitable development for Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, 3- focusing on the preparations for elections in 2009, by creating a political environment that realises the general principles of inclusiveness and participation of the CPA and the Interim National Constitution , and accelerating the technical preparations, including the requisite electoral law, the formation of an independent Electoral Commission, the holding of a national census and a voter registration process. International support to these preparations is of vital importance, including through technical assistance to the Electoral Commission and capacity-building for political parties who must re-engage with their constituencies and develop programmes that reflect the needs of the people.

-The next steps towards implementation of the CPA, including the holding of elections in 2009, would be greatly influenced by the political stability and security of the whole country, including in Darfur. That is why the joint UN/AU initiative to re-energise the political process and bring on board non-signatories is of particular importance and deserves the full cooperation and support of all stakeholders.

-The agreement on the Heavy Support Package is a positive development, but this Package is only the second step of the three-phased peacekeeping plan for Darfur and the ultimate objective remains

the deployment of a Hybrid Force in Darfur. To this end, the UN is finalizing the planning with the AU and the intention is to move forward with deliberate speed. Obviously, the unequivocal and clear consent of the Sudanese Government and eventual authorization from the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council will be required. In addition, for this operation on the Heavy Support Package to be effectively implemented, all bureaucratic impediments faced in the past must be removed. Violence and military action in Darfur must cease, and Janjaweed as well as other spoilers must be disarmed, and attacks on humanitarian workers and peacekeepers must stop.

-The focus of international attention and efforts on Darfur make sense only when they are undertaken in the context of a meaningful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which remains the bedrock for sustainable peace in Sudan, and as such, needs and deserves the undivided attention and support of the international community.

-As the interim period advances, key milestones will serve as important indicators of the commitment of the parties to the peace process. Achieving these benchmarks will require rebuilding trust between the parties, and a more unified and consistent engagement of the international community. Two critical reference points bind the middle phase of the Interim Period, namely the conclusion of the redeployment of forces in 2007 and the holding of elections in 2009. The UN hopes that the former will help reduce the mistrust between them and the latter will help reinforce their partnership, so that the last and delicate phase - the decision to stay together or separate - be addressed in a responsible and peaceful manner.

UNMIS mandate will expire on 30 April and the UNSC is expected to renew the Mission's mandate before the end of the month. In his report, the Secretary-General recommended the extension of UNMIS mandate for a further period of six months, until 31 October 2007.

UNSG Report to the UN General Assembly on UNMIS Budget

The General Assembly will be soon considering the UNMIS proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, submitted by the Secretary-General, which amounts to **\$849, 575,200**. The report was issued in February and copies of it are available in the room. It is also available at the UN website in all official languages.

DARFUR

Revitalization of the political process

The Special Envoys continue to work with regional partners as part of their efforts to reinvigorate the political process in Darfur. Both Special Envoys will attend the impending high-level meeting on Darfur to be hosted by Libyan Leader Muammar Qaddafi on 28 April.

Light Support Package

Progress is being made in implementation of the Light Support Package. After the matter was taken up by the UNMIS in the Tripartite Mechanism meeting of 18 April, this week, the National Customs Department facilitated prompt clearance of pharmaceuticals needed for UN medical support to AMIS. This is a welcome step and UNMIS urges similar cooperation in the future.

Heavy Support Package

Following the acceptance by the Sudanese Government of the Heavy Support Package, and in a letter dated 17 April addressed by the President of the Security Council to the Secretary-General,

the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to take all necessary steps to implement the Heavy Support Package. We have for you copies of the letter which was issued as an official document. The request made by the Security Council allows the Secretary-General to request the General Assembly to approve the budget required to fund the Heavy Support Package, which amounts to \$287.9 million.

UNMIS ACTIVITIES

The quarterly Report of the Secretary-General, which I mentioned in the beginning of this briefing, provides an overview of the different activities undertaken by UNMIS in implementation its mandate as stipulated in Resolution 1590 (2005) and other relevant resolutions. These activities continue, and I would like to highlight for you some of them:

As part of its continued capacity-building efforts, UNMIS Civilian Police coordinated a training course that was carried out in Abyei from 14 to 16 April, 2007. Thirteen local police officers attended the course. UNMIS Police is currently following up on the course to assess the participants' performances and prepare for a higher level course, in order to further improve the ability of local police in meetings universal agreed principle in the area of policing.

UNMIS Civilian Police, together with the GoS Police and the UNDP, launched on 25 March a Community Policing Program at Al Baraka IDP Camp, in Khartoum, to train GoS Police and members of the IDP camp on community policing, gender sensitization and human rights. The project was launched following a series of consultations between UNMIS CivPol and senior Government Police officials. UNMIS CivPol intends to begin facilitating the establishment of community aid posts and vocation centres for IDP Women, as well as the introduction of neighbourhood watch schemes. UNDP agreed to support the initiative, by providing basic equipments like bicycles, torches, and other required items.

As part of its efforts to promote the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and follow up on its implementation, UNMIS Gender Unit organized a workshop dedicated to the issue in Juba on 20 April 2007. The workshop was attended by several GoSS officials and civil society representatives, including women associations. The focus of the workshop was to discuss steps that need to be taken to further ensure the implementation of the Security Council resolution as well as on the commitments stipulated in the CPA and the Interim Constitution, including on empowerment of women, gender equality, and addressing violence against women. UNMIS Gender Unit plans to conduct similar workshops in other areas, and the next workshop on Resolution 1325 will be conducted in Yei on 26 April.

UNMIS supported the conduct of two workshops in Rumbek for peer educators on HIV/AIDS related matters. The workshop, which was organized by the HIV/AIDS Regional Committee in Rumbek, trained 104 peer educators from the SPLA, the SSDDRC and the local community.

UNMIS HIV/AIDS Unit, in collaboration with UNDDRC, UNDP, SPLA and South SDDRC, organized a workshop in Rumbek from 19 Mar to 07 Apr 07, on Voluntary Confidential Counseling and Testing (VCCT) services. The Workshop had 39 participants drawn from the SPLA, local Police, and local prisons' officials, SSDDRC, NGOs, religious Groups, UNDDRC, and UNMIS HIV/AIDS Unit. The workshop graduates will assist in offering confidential counseling and testing at their workplace. The UNDP, in collaboration with UNDDRC, funded the workshop.

Besides its mandated activities, UNMIS is also extending humanitarian assistance to local communities. In 21 March, thirty staff members, national and international, donated blood at Juba Teaching Hospital to help addressing the acute shortage of blood at the hospital's blood bank.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

As you know, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr António Guterres, is currently in an official visit Sudan. He will hold a press conference on Thursday 26 April at 17:45 at the UNHCR office. For More information on the press conference and the visit, you can contact Ms. Annette Rehl, UNHCR Public Information Officer.

Also, the Executive Director of WFP, Ms. Josette Sheeran, will start today an official visit to Sudan. You should contact Ms. Emilia Casella, WFP public Information Officer, for further information on this visit.

Q & A :

Q: How long will it take to get United Nations peacekeepers that have been recruited in the Heavy Support Package on to the ground in Darfur and will any of the peacekeepers in the south be sent to Darfur to speedup the process?

Spokesperson: I will start with your second question which is easier. No, there is no intention or plan whatsoever for the United Nations to shift resources, military personnel, authorized for our mission under Resolution 1590 to Darfur.

On your other question; it is a recurrent question that everybody is asking. Nobody can give you an exact timeframe. And you heard Mr. Ban Ki-moon and Mr. Konare saying that they would do everything they can to try to expedite the process. But you would recognize also that it is all not in the hands of the United Nations Secretariat. We need the Troop Contributing Countries to come forward with actual offers; we need, with the cooperation with the Government of Sudan, to prepare the infrastructure for these people to be deployed on the ground – by that I mean, for instance, the accommodation for these people in terms of offices and in terms also of private lodging and so on; we need many things. We are discussing that for the time being and we are exploring this with the African Union to see how we can take that process forward; we need definitely also resources to be made available for us to go ahead. So far, we do not have a problem – money-wise – but if we have shortage of resources, we need that to be taken up immediately. There are so many considerations to bear in mind.

The other thing is that everybody thinks that this issue can be done today, if not yesterday. That is not the case. Bear in mind, for those of you who happen to follow this debate over the peacekeeping aspects including Support Packages, you would recall that the initial timeline submitted by the African Union and the United Nations for this Heavy Support Package for instance to kick in was January. Now, everybody is saying that the United Nations has to do this and we have to do that and we have to expedite the process but, bear in mind, that we are also making up for a delay that was not of our making, because this Heavy Support Package was supposed to have been approved and start being implemented in January.

That is my answer to your question.

Q: Is there any plan laid down so far by the Government of Sudan on how to disarm the Janjaweed?

Spokesperson: You should ask that question to the Government of Sudan. But I do recall that the Government of Sudan at some point presented a plan on disarmament of militia. You know that the

Darfur Peace Agreement includes provisions of disarmament of militia – Janjaweed included. That happened, I think, four, five months ago or even more. But the government put up a plan. The plan was submitted to the competent authorities headed by the African Union. In any case, that plan submitted for the partners – the African Union and the other partners – but mainly the African Union to react to. We as the United Nations made some comments; we gave them back. I think the other partners made some comments and from that point on I haven't had any updates on that. But your question is best addressed to the Government of Sudan to update you on what happened to that disarmament plan of militia, in particular the Janjaweed.

Q: I read a report in one of the newspapers that at least 46 people died so far of cholera in Jonglei State and that the situation between Juba and Bor is not all that good in relation to security, etc. You have given us a very good update on your activities in southern Sudan and perhaps I could guess that the United Nations Mission in Sudan concentrates its activities in big towns like Juba, Rumbek, Wau and Malakal and perhaps towns like Bor and Jonglei are being neglected. A good example is this report of 46 people dying of cholera in March and April. I would just like some highlights on this situation ... are you aware of such a situation in Jonglei, Bor and these other towns?

I have also been reading reports of some news agencies that the Government of Sudan camouflaged aircraft in the white United Nations and African Union colors. Was this a fabricated report or a true report and not a fabrication?

Spokesperson: On the issue of Jonglei and just to address your general remark, no, we are not neglecting Jonglei. May be we did not put forward some information on Jonglei but you know that I only put information when I have something concrete, factual and so on. But when you actually go through the Report of the Secretary-General on our activities and what is going on, you will see that Jonglei is highlighted. We do not discriminate between cities in southern Sudan or any other city in Sudan for that matter.

On the question that you asked specifically about cholera, I think you should get in touch with our colleagues from the humanitarian community because this is an issue to be addressed by the humanitarians. I do know that they are trying to address outbreaks and so on. Our colleague Dawn Blalock is sitting at the back of the room and if she has the answer she could give it to you or otherwise direct you to those who are involved in fighting outbreaks or assisting in fighting outbreaks. But yes, your question is very relevant. Our job as the United Nations as a whole should not focus only on security issues . And you do know that the humanitarian aspects are the biggest bulk of what we are trying to do in here. I do not have detailed information of what we are doing exactly – I'm not referring to United Nations Mission in Sudan because we do not deal directly with medical issues or fighting outbreaks except maybe report on them or maybe provide information to those who can act on those issues. But, yes, this is an important thing and whenever we can help, we should help. That is my statement on that.

On the Darfur issue and what you cited; first of all and as far as I am concerned, this report of the Panel of Experts cited in the New York Times officially, to me, does not exist since it has not been issued officially as a document of the United Nations. Yes, it has been leaked to the press but for me I deal only with those documents that have been issued officially by the authoritative sources – that is one.

Two; I am in no position whatsoever to tell you whether these are allegations or actual facts that happened. What I can tell you however is that the Secretary-General made a statement – and we circulated it to you – in which he expressed concerns at this particular information circulated in the media about the use of United Nations marking for Sudanese aircrafts and he expressed utmost

concern and said he will be seeking clarifications on this matter. That is what I can tell you and I have nothing further to add to this.

Q: But the picture of the plane was on the website.

Spokesperson: I saw the same thing but I am in no position to tell you whether that picture or that information is a fact or something that could be proved not to be true . Please understand that the issue of the Panel of Experts' report should be looked at procedurally as follows: the Panel of Experts has been established by virtue of Resolution 1592, sorry 1591 . That Panel of Experts was mandated to do researches, investigations and so on and to report back to the committee of the Security Council established by virtue of the same resolution. That committee looks at the report of the Panel of Experts and decides whether they agree with the findings of the Panel of Experts or not. And then they forward recommendations of decisions to be taken to the Security Council. So by the end of the day, this mission *per se* is not involved – not at the executive nor the legislative level – of what happens with the Panel of Experts' report. I hope that addresses your question.

Q: You mentioned a few minutes ago that envoys Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim will be traveling to Tripoli on the 28th of this month. Will a new initiative be launched there by the Envoys to bring the non-signatory factions on board the DPA? What form will the meeting take?

Spokesperson: You should address this question to the organizers of the meeting. The Libyan leader, Colonel Gadhaffi, was the one who called for this meeting and invited the two envoys, among other people. I do not know what will happen in this meeting but we hope that this meeting will give new impetus to the political process.

On the issue of a road map for peace in Darfur and so on, you are aware that Mr. Ban Ki-moon told the press in New York in a joint encounter with Konare following a meeting between the two, that he and Mr. Konare have tasked their respective envoys to draft a detailed road map to push the process forward. This is what I know. I am not in a position to link between these two issues.

In general, since the road map has been requested by Ban Ki-moon and Konare, then it is only fitting that the envoys present the road map, once they draft one, first of all to Ban Ki-moon and Konare and then the process would start from there.

I do not know what will happen in the Libya meeting. We will only sit and see what comes up. But I think the question on what exactly is on the agenda for the Tripoli talks should be addressed to the authorities in Libya.

Q: The US is pushing for a draft resolution from the United Nations Security Council to extend the United Nations Mission in Sudan mandate for only 3 months [*as opposed to the usual six*] and includes sanctions. What could possibly happen now that the mandate is almost ending? Is there a possibility that the mission could suspend activities?

Is there any progress on what has been agreed upon concerning the Heavy Support Package?

Spokesperson: On your question about what is taking place at the Security Council, I would like only to focus on the issue of extension of the mandate . The issue of a 3 or 6-month mandate is an issue that the Security Council collectively decides upon. The United Nations Secretary-General had recommended a 6 months extension of the mandate of the mission but the final decision rests on the Security Council.

There is no possibility that activities of the mission would be suspended. No matter what differences the members of the Security Council could have on some issues regarding Sudan, there is however a clear consensus, unanimity, that the ongoing processes in Sudan be supported through the presence of the mission. So a suspension is not an option that we contemplate. We will wait to see what will happen and what the Security Council's final decision will be on how long the mandate will be extended and what other issues the resolution would contain. These are issues we follow as you do because the decision lies with the Security Council and we do not have any authority over it. We can present recommendations and we did that ... i.e. recommend a 6 month extension of the mandate in addition to other practical aspects concerning the activities of the mission, progress in implementation of the peace agreement and so on. The Security Council will have the final say on the issue.

Your second question was on the Heavy Support Package. I do not know what exactly you meant by "progress". The latest I have heard on the issue of arrangements to start implementing the Heavy Support Package is that a joint team of the United Nations and the African Union that are actually on the ground in Darfur are touring the African Union Mission premises for an assessment of the way to launch the logistical preparations for the Heavy Support Package. For instance the issue of water, the area to be used to lodge offices, personnel and so on. for the equipment and so on. The team was in el-Fasher yesterday and is to go to el-Geneina and Nyala.

At the levels of New York, a meeting took place I think last Friday with potential Troop Contributing Countries. I do not have details on this meeting but what I do know is that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York has presented a detailed account of the requirements in terms of military personnel, equipment and so on, and this has been presented to the Troop Contributing Countries that have also been requested to make their offers of contribution. This is what I know and if we have any more information on these issues we will let you know. Again please do understand that the United Nations has no magic wand to supply these things because we depend on more than one party to facilitate our work – we depend on the Troop Contributing Countries, we depend on the local and central authorities to facilitate our work and we depend on the states that provide the financial support to facilitate these operations we carry to support the African Union.

Q: The Libyan initiative is a good one but we would like to know what role the United Nations has played to unite the DPA non-signatory factions.

Spokesperson: I do agree with you that the Libyan initiative is a good one and you do know that the mandate of envoys Eliasson and Salim is to work with all those who have such initiatives in order to unite these initiatives. This of course does not mean that ongoing initiatives should be cancelled. We look at these initiatives as complementing each other. The most important thing is to ensure that these initiatives – you know that there are a number of initiatives, the Libyan, Eritrean, Egyptian, Chadian and others- do not conflict and that all of them are funneled towards the same direction ... better still if they are brought together under the leadership of the two envoys. The two envoys are of course in constant contact with all parties concerned with these initiatives.

As to the non-signatory factions, the United Nations role, in whatever manner, could only be limited because the idea of uniting primarily concerns the parties concerned. We are in continued contact with them through the joint task force to support the joint mediation carried out by Envoys Eliasson and Salim. There is a dedicated team following up on the endeavors of the envoys that has been delegated to make contact with the different parties to follow up on what has been agreed upon and also to prepare for the next activities of the Envoys. We are urging them to unite because their unity will facilitate the negotiations process should it start. Instead of having 15 or 20 different parties sitting on a negotiations table, it is more helpful to have only four or five.

The non-signatory factions have been issuing statements saying that they are exerting efforts to unite their ranks not only on the field but also on the political front and this is what is required in order to facilitate the negotiations process. Whether we will succeed in these efforts or not is in the hands of the non-signatory groups should they commit to this goal. But if they only speak of unification without taking any steps towards that goal and continue like this for a couple of years, then this is an issue that we really would not want to see. I would like to mention that when the two envoys were asked on the issue of a timeframe, they said that people should not expect them to come up with miracles because their efforts are in the long run contingent on the commitment by the parties, their level of cooperation and the extent of their commitment to a political solution. Secondly, it is not easy for one to draw a timeframe because there are a lot of complications among which are the issue of the need to unify the factions and so on. However, the Envoys did say they wish the factions would unite but not to take forever to do so. And then if they reach the stage of direct talks, the Envoys pointed out that they do not want to cite a timeframe but pointed out that they would not want to see the talks drag on and on as was the case in Abuja. They said that yes they will give enough time for the parties to get ready but that does not mean that the process should continue indefinitely, or be open-ended, because the situation on the ground cannot bear such a delay.

Q: Are you as the United Nations Mission in Sudan hopeful that the meeting going to take place in Tripoli would come up with something positive at least to lessen the violence in Darfur? Do you think, since the two envoys are going to meet Gadhaffi and the non-signatories, there is a chance that the DPA will be open for discussions? Do you think there is need for it to be reopened for discussions?

Spokesperson: On Tripoli again, the only thing I could say is just to hope that this meeting of Tripoli would result into boosting the ongoing efforts to move forward with the political agenda. Obviously if there is something that comes out from Tripoli like, for instance, a statement on a cessation of hostilities, obviously we would be more than happy and very much supportive of such a move if that is what is going to be suggested in Tripoli. You would recall that one of the statements highlighted time and again in every statement Salim and Eliasson made be it joint or separately is that for a political process to start getting credibility and for the two Envoys to be able to help, there is a need for a cessation or at least a decrease of violence in Darfur. So by the end of the day and regardless of what will happen in Tripoli or any other forum, no matter what kind of effort any third party would try to do, the cessation of hostilities in Darfur is the decision of those involved in the violence. They are the ones responsible for the violence and once they stop then violence will no longer be there. The United Nations stand is that ending violence is a prerequisite, though the link some make between ending violence and engaging in the political process is not reasonable. One cannot argue, “as long as violence continues, I am not ready to talk”. One cannot also argue that “as long as the political process is not finalized, then I am entitled to wage war”. This can not be the way to move forward. Everybody we talk to, all parties involved, say they have the interest of Darfur at heart. The only way to prove it – and that is for all sides without exception – is to commit on the ground to stop violence and to start talking. If this doesn’t happen, the whole process will be completely irrelevant because if you talk about a political process and if you have issues with the DPA and so on, then let us come and talk. Fighting is not the way to stand for the Darfur people. The best way to do so is to protect them by not waging violence that brings a spiral of violence. The guns have to stop and that is the obligation of everybody. Dialogue is the way and the only way.

Now whether the DPA will be reopened for negotiations and what we think as UNMIS, first of all it is not for United Nations Mission in Sudan to decide on that. The revitalization of the political process is being handled now by Mr. Eliasson and Salim. The DPA is owned by the people who signed it. It is a Sudanese document; it is not ours to say it is good or bad or has to be changed or

not. What we kept saying, nevertheless, is: regardless of the virtues of the DPA – it could be the best document ever – because there are people who are not happy with it on the ground, some kind of solution to move forward has to be looked at and this is why envoys Eliasson and Salim have been appointed in the first place. Their job, and they made it very clear in press conferences here, is to explain to everybody that there are two extremes that are not going to be accepted, one being to stick to the DPA on extreme a take it or leave it basis. And the other position is to says, “we need to drop the DPA altogether and start from scratch a whole new process of negotiations”. These two will not be accepted by the mediators.

So, basically though there is no plan so far presented, the basic parameters for the Envoys’ work is the following: the DPA stands as is and is kept as is as a basis. The talks with the non-signatories and the signatories that they are after is to try to fill gaps, complement, add to the DPA without touching the DPA. Keep it as is but try to build on it. This is what is expected and this is what the envoys are trying to do. Whether this will happen or not will be contingent on the actual and real political will of those involved in the process.

Obviously, if there is a consensus in the Sudan, regardless of who is talking, everybody wants the situation in Darfur to be settled. There are differences on how to settle it but definitely the international community would not accept any attitude by anybody that would make the way of the gun the way to settle the issue of Darfur no matter who that party is. And anybody who says that violence and war would still be an avenue to pursue, should expect that this will not be accepted by the international community. The only thing the international community expects and supports is for all concerned to sit and talk. What they come up with is their business and not ours. We are not going to tell them how to resolve their problems. We can try to get their views closer and help them get a consensus on certain things but it is not our job to tell them what to do. They are the ones who own the process. We can only help. The only thing we can tell them not to do is to continue violence. That is what we can do and that we cannot accept from anybody no matter who the party advocating violence as something still to pursue in the context of Darfur. That is not acceptable by the United Nations, by the African Union and the whole the international community.

Thank you very much and hopefully we will be seeing you regularly from now on.