



AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN THE SUDAN (AMIS)	UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN (UNMIS)
	

Press Conference

Hosting AU and UNSG Special Envoys to Darfur Salim Ahmed Salim and Jan Eliasson
African Union Mission in Sudan Headquarters, Khartoum
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AMIS Spokesperson : Ladies and gentlemen, good evening everyone and thank you for coming to this joint press conference held by Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the African Union Special Envoy for Darfur, and Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Darfur .

The two Special Envoys are going to brief you about the outcome of their second mission here to Sudan and, without further delay, I will give the floor to Dr. Salim.

Dr. Salim: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like also to join Nouredine in welcoming you to the Africa House.

Last time after our mission to Darfur and Khartoum, we had a press conference at the United Nations Mission’s Headquarters. In that occasion it was up to me to start. So I reciprocate the hospitality. This time we are at the African Union Mission, so I would like to request my colleague first, Jan Eliasson, to start.

Mr. Eliasson: Thank you very much Salim. This is a sign of the very close and very good cooperation between friends who work side by side to bring about a political process for the Darfur tragedy. We are working very hard on this; this is our second visit here together but we have been here several times before. And we have had almost a week of consultations and discussions. The last time we visited Darfur, we visited North Darfur. This time we visited South Darfur and we hope to visit West Darfur next time.

We have had meetings with the government. We have met First Vice-President Salva Kiir, Foreign minister Lam Akol, Dr. Majzoub Khalifa and of course Mini Minnawi, the Presidential Advisor, twice in fact – we will come back to that subject.

If I were to be asked what the added value of this visit is, I will say that we have tried to broaden and deepen the contacts. The process to peace in Darfur has to be encouraged and strengthened both by goodwill from the parties – the government and the signatories and non-signatories – but it also has to grow from below; it has to be also a bottom-to-top process. And if there is to be a lasting solution to the Darfur problem, we know it has to have popular support – support among the people of Darfur and amongst the people in Sudan. Therefore this time we have had thorough discussions will civil society. We have had two very good meetings with civil society. We

received the recommendations from the conference we had with civil society. We have met tribal leaders both here in Khartoum and in Nyala and we will continue those discussions with all tribal leaders if possible. Lastly, we have been in contact with the political parties in Sudan. All these meetings have been very fruitful and we feel that we have now a wider and deeper perspective on this very important issue.

We also have been in contact with actors outside Sudan. As you know, we can not divorce and separate the Darfur problem from the relationship between Chad and Sudan for instance. So therefore I will go to Chad tomorrow and meet not only with members of the Chadian government but also with some of the non-signatories in Chad. I have also represented us together in my visit to Asmara – we have a division of labor and sometimes I go to some meetings, sometimes Dr. Salim goes. I have visited Eritrea last week at the invitation of President Isaias Afewerki.

I'm saying all of this to tell you that we think that there is a need for coordination of initiatives and that with very positive reactions from the outside actors, particular the countries in the region, to coordinate and cooperate with us, we will get there. We have plans, for instance – Salim has a particular invitation to visit Libya– to contact for instance Libya and Egypt.

We hope now to see a mobilization of political will. We hope now that there will be a mobilization of such political will inside the country. We hope there will be mobilization of such will in the same direction from the region and also from our two organizations. This is a joint venture – African Union and the United Nations – and it is very important that we now move in the same direction from all quarters, and we hope that we will see a consolidation of positions and preparations for negotiations, both from the side of the government and from the side of the non-signatories. We have met with several of the non-signatories; we still have meetings to hold, but it is important now that we move towards the consolidation of positions and as much cooperation and coordination as possible, so that negotiations can take place in a smooth manner at an appropriate moment.

In the meantime, we hope we will see improvements of the situation on the ground. We have just had a meeting with the NGOs and, unfortunately, the signals and the information from them were very disturbing about problems of access, problems of harassment, problems of bureaucracy and so on. These need to be addressed and I hope very much that in the next day or two we will see progress in this regard. We have had, as you know, the visit of the United Nations Undersecretary-General [for Humanitarian Affairs] John Holmes, and I hope we will see a result of those talks that have taken place in connection with his visit. We also hope that we will see a reduction of hostilities and improvements in the security situation. It is very disturbing and very worrying in many respects, and we must recall and understand that the whole humanitarian operation is in a very fragile state of affairs, and I can't even imagine the chaotic situation that could arise if we had a breakdown of that huge humanitarian operation – 13,000 people working for a billion dollar operation to help millions of people. It is the Darfuri people who will in the end pay the price. I hope now that we will see progress. I will say that time is not on our side. The Darfuri people have suffered long enough; this is a great strain on the great country and the great people of Sudan. It is a threat to peace in the region – you know already it has ramifications for Chad and the Central African Republic – and it is a matter that is of great concern to the United Nations. I have reported to the Security Council only two weeks ago and I felt in that meeting tremendous impatience and expectations that a political process could lead to

results. Now it is a serious moment which should be grasped and we hope that all parties will take responsibility.

There are two phenomena that are also distinctly worrying and that are growing in seriousness: one is the tribal fighting. The fact that tribes are now facing each other in battles and that actually more people are dying in tribal confrontation than in confrontation between the government and the non-signatories. We hope very much that everybody takes their responsibility and in no way promotes this type of fighting. The situation is bad enough. The second issue is of course the poisoning effect for the region and for Darfur and for the country if life continues in those unbearable ways in the IDP camps. This can not continue; it will create new cultural and social patterns. You have a whole new generation that will grow up in a culture of war and conflict rather than peace.

Lastly; just a few very concrete points that have just come up and I know Salim will say a few words about this: we have received information of the tragic incident here involving SLM/A-Mini Minnawi members some of whom were killed only a couple of days ago. We want to offer our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who died and we hope there will soon be an accounting for the dead, wounded and the detained and also that there will be a fact-finding mechanism set up. We understand that such plans are on the way and I hope that that will take place not only from the human and humanitarian perspective, but also from the perspective of preserving the relations and cooperation the government and I think it is important that this relationship between signatories remain as good as possible. We follow this matter with great interest and hope it will be resolved in an appropriate manner.

Thank you very much and now back to the host, Dr. Salim.

Dr. Salim: Thank you very much, Jan.

The first point is an obvious point made by Jan that our objective this time was to broaden the circle of consultations. Last time we confined ourselves to the government leaders and to the signatories and we met, of course with the commanders in Darfur. This time, in addition to meeting with the government and meeting with Mr. Minnawi and others, we really spent a lot of time talking to political leaders. We met Mr. Turabi, we met Mr. el-Mahdi, we met the leader of the Communist Party and we had extensive discussions with representatives of the civil society. The idea is that since the issue of Darfur involves all Darfurians and involves Sudanese, it is our opinion that we have to try and make sure that we get as broad a picture of the views as possible. We found these discussions extremely useful. If you recall, when we had the discussions last month in United Nations Mission in Sudan, one of your colleagues raised this issue and said, "When are you going to meet the political leaders?" and I replied them and said that the next time around we will do that.

Secondly, in our meeting with the government, we have also been able to pursue some of the issues that we had in mind. Our meeting with the First Vice-President Mr. Salva Kiir was particularly significant in terms of our joint efforts in trying to promote a lasting solution to the crisis and in first to try to bring the unity of the movements. Last time around and this time around we want to emphasize that it is important for the movements – especially those who are non-signatories – to work together. Preferably they should have a united movement. But if this is not possible, then the second best thing is that it is extremely important to have a common position or a common vision of their position so that makes negotiations much more possible. You can not deal with so many groups and with everybody having his own agenda. So it is

important to have that, both in terms of the peace process and in terms also of the actual negotiations. We are concerned, on the basis of what we have seen so far, on a number of areas. One area, of course, is the issue of humanitarian operations and I sincerely hope that the much expected joint position between the government and the Humanitarian Coordinator will go a long way to improve that. Whether we were in Nyala or here, in our meetings with humanitarian organizations, they did express serious worry and some of them have real concerns that I think have got to be addressed, not only in terms of overcoming bureaucratic red-tape that is there, but also in terms of recognizing that these are people who have come here for one objective alone – namely to support and to provide support to those unfortunate people who live in IDP camps. So the issue of humanitarian concerns is important and is, frankly as we said before when we met with them, though our task and responsibilities is essentially political, we have spent a lot of time dealing with humanitarian concerns because you can not simply ignore the realities as far as humanitarian concerns are concerned.

We have been frankly depressed – for lack of a better expression – by the continuing insecurity in South Darfur where we have been. But also what is more depressing is the accusation and counter-accusations on the part of the signatories of the DPA. And, furthermore, what is very unfortunate is the incident of Omdurman. We have had different versions of what happened but, frankly whatever the version, a situation like that should not have happened and, as Jan said, I do hope that in order to restore confidence, real investigations could be undertaken to know exactly what actually happened and who was responsible for what, and more importantly, what should be done to overcome and to avoid situations of that nature. And I want to stress this: the SLM-Mini Minnawi is a signatory to this agreement – and so is the government. They are supposed for the time being at least to be the principle partners in the peace process. They should show example of the value of this partnership in the peace process. If they fail to show example in the value of the partnership, then it is going to be much more difficult to convince those who are not in the peace process to join it. So, again, I am saying that I wish this incident did not happen. But it has happened. We are not completely conversant with all the circumstances of how it happened and who is responsible and so on. All we know is that people died. There are a number of SLM people who died there and also some officers of the police also died. It is important that there should be an independent investigation to look into that.

Now as to the way forward, we hope in the next few weeks to be able to close the consultation process. In other words by making sure that we get involved with the other stake holders who can not be contacted in Khartoum and who can not be contacted in Darfur. Once that has been done, we will be in a better position to look at what practical suggestions and ideas we can come up with.

In the meantime, we have set up here in Khartoum a joint task force of the United Nations and the African Union to support the effort of the Special Envoys, and its role will be to monitor the situation on a daily basis, and on the basis of the consultations the task force will have, it will be able to advise us accordingly.

As Jan also said, we know the role of regional actors. It is important to involve them; it is important to have their views; it is important that all these efforts that have been made end up in one common objective, because the last thing we need is a situation where we say one thing and other colleagues say something else. In this respect, we are encouraged by the position taken by the Eritrean government conveyed to Jan Eliasson in Asmara of not only being able to work with us but really hoping for coordination. We were also very encouraged by the position of Chad

which conveyed to our people very clearly that they support the efforts we are making and that they will work with us. We will do the same and interact with the others with that particular objective.

Thank you very much.

Q & A

Q: Can you give us an estimate of how many people have died in this tribal fighting and some kind of timeframe? Also you talked about the fragile humanitarian effort but no one is really talking about any concessions you want from the Sudanese government. Any concrete things on these?

Mr. Eliasson: I can't give you the exact figures on tribal fighting, but it is already in the hundreds this year and it is going on right now. It is not a new phenomenon really but some of it hasn't really been surfacing too much in the world media. This is a matter we should look at at the earliest stages to prevent it – it is serious enough. It is also exploited in a way because it has ethnic dimensions and will pitch people against each other, people who traditionally have lived together. There are traditions in Darfur, as you know, that are of a very peaceful nature and now we are going to a different direction and the tribal fighting is a sign of a deterioration of the situation that we have to watch very carefully.

As to the concreteness of the humanitarian issues, I can tell you that Salim and I have been extremely concrete in these discussions. We have gone through the harassment cases; we have gone through the access problems; we have gone through the bureaucratic impediments in detail, and at some of the meetings these issues have taken up at least a third of our talks. And we are glad that there are ongoing discussions, and we hope that we would in the next few days see results of these ongoing discussions. But of course, in the end, what really counts is if the situation improves on the ground. Today we have heard with some depressing accounts which prove that we have not seen that progress on the ground yet.

Q: The Security Council has cited 30 June as a deadline to resolve the Darfur issue. The deadline is now about 2 months down the line. Have contacts with the DPA non-signatories, namely the NRF and the Greater SLM and AbdulWahid come up with clear demands from their part on the issues of compensations, power sharing and have you noticed any positive response from the part of top government officials here to these demands?

You mentioned that there are efforts to unify the different initiatives proposed with the support of neighboring states like Chad. Has a date and tie been cited for the next round of talks?

Dr. Salim: There had been some contacts with non-signatories but we have not completed the contacts. We have met with some of the SLM people but a number of them, including AbdulWahid, we have not yet met.

In terms of their demands, and as we go along consulting with all stakeholders, they will be in a better position to see what among these demands is possible and durable when we get in with the negotiations. I think also the meeting which the First Vice-President of Sudan is planning to hold in the south – which hopefully will bring together all the movements – will help us because we

have agreed also with the First Vice-President, and have agreed with the Eritreans, that this is a joint exercise and whoever has more information should be able to share this information.

So yes, we are aware of the demands but these demands, some of them are new, but the situation is dynamic and we have to see on the basis of consultations what is the position of all the parties before we start coming out with solutions.

On the issue of initiatives that you referred to, the Addis Ababa decision was that all these initiatives should be under the African Union-United Nations umbrella. Last time I said and would like to repeat it again: the two of us do not have a monopoly. What is important is to have a breakthrough in Darfur. Whoever can contribute to that objective is certainly welcome. We believe, and I am satisfied now, that on the basis of the preliminary consultations that I have had, it is important for these initiatives to be coordinated and it is our intention to do everything possible to ensure this coordination. The what we have heard so far during our consultations is very encouraging. The original actors who are taking some initiatives have made it very clear that they would like to see also coordination.

Q: Mr. Eliasson, in light of what has just been remarked, does this mean that negotiations will be re-opened to encourage non-signatories to come on board?

What new is there on discussions over the support package?

Mr. Eliasson: On the first part, certainly there is not going to be a re-negotiation of Abuja but there is also, as the government has already stated, not going to be a “take it or leave it” attitude made to the DPA. We have been given diplomatic space and we have now excluded these two extreme alternatives – re-negotiations or “take it or leave it”. We have also received assurances from the government that they would like to consider amendments and improvements of the DPA.

As far as the non-signatories are concerned, we have not concluded the talks yet. They of course have very firm negative views to the DPA. On the other hand, we hope to have – and we have signs to that direction – an interest in discussing the factual issues ... the problems of power sharing, wealth sharing and security ... and that there is a discussion going on among the non-signatories about the positions to take. We hope to see more of such consolidation of positions.

It is necessary for us to go into this with an open mind and we hope also the parties will go into this with an open mind. Already we have discussed openly such issues as the compensation fund, which we hope can be increased and we hope, by the continued consultations, that we will see more and more preparations for the negotiations and preparations on the issues that will come up for such discussions. But we certainly don't expect or hope to see a negotiations process of the nature of Abuja, in terms of timing at least. We hope that this will be a condensed and concentrated type of negotiations as soon as possible.

Of the peacekeeping, this is not part of our mission. We have two parallel tracks now between the United Nations and the African Union. One is on the political process for which Dr. Salim and I are responsible, and the other is the peacekeeping track. They are of course interdependent and interrelated. There is a need for an international presence for whatever scenario you have. Even in the best scenario, there is a need for monitoring of a ceasefire and so on. It has been a slow progress and we hope very much that the agreement in principle that was reached in the end of December and which we are now implementing, will be translated into reality – both the first and second phases on which there is a correspondence between the President of Sudan and the

Chairman of the African Union and the Secretary-General. And we hope that by that we will see progress towards the third stage. But as I said, this is not part of our mission although it is getting a lot of attention of the Security Council and also of the Secretary-General. It is a matter that we follow with great concern.

Q: Mr. Eliasson, following all these talks, do you see some light at the end of the tunnel on the crisis in Darfur?

Mr. Eliasson: I think, as negotiators, facilitators, we have to have hope. It is a very difficult discussion and will be very difficult negotiations. It is a huge task and it is no coincidence that this crisis, this tragedy, has gone on for over four years. But for us, there is no choice; we have to do our job. We will never dare use the word “optimism” about what we are doing, but we will pursue this matter with great seriousness and earnestness. We have no hidden agendas; we want to pursue peace above all for the people of Darfur and for the people of Sudan, but also for regional security and stability. This is a dangerous conflict and we see, as I said earlier, new signs of new problems cropping up with the continuation of the situation in the camps and with the tribal fighting that I just mentioned. But it is also a matter for the international community. The Security Council has this matter on its agenda, there are Security Council resolutions, there are Presidential Statements and, as I said, I reported to the Security Council last week. And this, I think, is evidence that this tragedy is followed closely by the whole world. It is the people of Darfur that deserve to have peace, but it is also the concern for the world that we should contribute. In the end, of course, it is up to the parties to come to a conclusion of this tragedy ... of this tragic conflict ... but we will do what we can to help the parties to help themselves.

Q: Don't you think that the recent tragic incident in Omdurman will cause fears to the non-signatories due to negotiate as you struggle to bring them in?

Dr. Salim: It will not certainly be an incentive, and that is why I said it is extremely important that first, for example, what happened there be investigated, and that secondly, every effort should be made by the signatories to avoid occurrences of this nature. They don't help the peace process; they lower the morale of the people concerned; they send wrong messages; they create a negative impact for the country as far as the international community is concerned and, certainly, I would very much and sincerely hope that this will be the last of such an incident. And in this respect, as I said, the signatories who are the partners in the peace process, have a greater obligation in their actions, in their behavior, to do everything possible to maintain that spirit of partnership and where there are problems, these problems should be settled as far as possible in a peaceful manner without resort to the situation that we had in Omdurman.

Q: Do you think the call by the UK Prime Minister and lately the German Chancellor for punitive actions against the Sudanese government and some personalities could poison your environment in your discussions with the government?

Mr. Eliasson: I will not go into detail in commenting on the positions taken by individual governments. I think you should see it as a reflection of the growing concern about the continued conflict in Darfur. We of course hope that we will have a meaningful political process which could lead to positive results. We also of course hope for progress in the area of peacekeeping. We need to see those results and we hope that the parties to the conflict realize that we need to see results of the political process. If we see a reduction of violence, a cessation of hostilities, if we see an improvement on the ground, if we see real and credible preparations for negotiations, then of course we have hope for positive development. If we can't report that, reactions like the

ones you described are to be expected, and I picked up those signals very strongly when I was at the Security Council on the 6th of March.

So there is much at stake, and that is why it is so important that this political process gets underway, and that the parties realize that we must take advantage of this political process being started only two and a half months ago and that it be given a chance. But impatience is there and expectations are there – it is a fact of political life. But we hope very much that this political process can be credible ... but it requires the cooperation of the parties.

Q: What suggestions did you receive from the opposition leaders – especially given the fact that one of them was talking about the views on participation of the Arab tribes of Darfur in solutions to the political crisis?

Don't you notice a sort of slowness in the political process?

Dr. Salim: The discussions we had with political forces, the tribal leaders and Arab tribal leaders are important. They give us an insight of how they see the situation, an insight of their own concerns and this helps us. At the end of the day, when we come up with whatever recommendations we will make, we will certainly take into account the various proposals that have been made to us by the various stakeholders. And as I said, the difference this time around, which is different from the Abuja process, is that in the Abuja process we were more confined only to the government and the armed movements. This time around, we hope we have benefited greatly from the input of civil society, from the input of political forces, because at the end of the day, we are talking in terms of the future of Darfur and the future of Sudan that concerns all.

On the process pace, it is true that it is slow but I don't think it is that slow. I wish we had a magic formula and we could just come and say "Let there be peace in Sudan" – if I had that opportunity I would have proclaimed that at the top of my voice. But in order to achieve peace, you need to go through the various intricacies and the various difficulties that are involved. For example, when I went last time to southern Darfur sometime in November, the issue of inter-tribal fighting was not there. Well the tribes always fight as they do normally but the escalation of the fighting was different. So you have that and you have also difficulties among the signatories that I referred to; you have difficulties in terms of the positions of the signatories. So really, whatever we do, we want to be sure that what we do is the best we can do in the circumstances. In this, patience is important. So it is a question of balance – balancing the need for speed and also the need for caution. Let me say one thing for example: up to now, some of the principle people that need to be involved in the negotiations have made very clear they want more time. The commanders we met in Un Rai said they want more time in order to unify their position; the people in Abeche said they want more time in order to settle their position. So, in that relation, you can not simply say, "No, you must come to the negotiation". The message we are also giving our brothers and sisters in those areas is, "Look, fine that you need time but this process can not be endless because the longer the process takes, the more difficult the situation becomes and the more people suffer". We are conscious of the need for speed and I will tell you frankly, we are under a lot of pressure – Jan in the Security Council; myself in the African Union Peace & Security Council – because people want to see results ... people want to see movement. Even here when we talk with the government and others, they talk about a need to move. But we have to be cautious; we have to know exactly that whatever we present is something which has a chance of getting progress ... a chance of obtaining a durable settlement.

Q: Back to the question of meeting with the opposition for the first time, we know that some opposition leaders have direct involvement in the issue of Darfur and some of them have got very strong persuasion in the affairs there. My interest is to know what Dr. Turabi, for instance, has proposed. Is there any new, fresh ideas?

Dr. Salim: All the political leaders we have met have been extremely supportive of the efforts we are making and all of them have said they will do whatever they can do within their means to help the process, and that, for us, is very encouraging. That has been their position, whether the people of the Popular Congress, the Umma Party or the Communist Party. And we know that these organizations are basically national in character and have their influence. Some of them have influence in Darfur. So what we are saying and I think this is important, our message to them is that first we wanted their own views and ideas but we also wanted them to use their influence, their role, to support the peace process – which is in the interest of everybody else.

Q: But some of them are opposing the DPA and there must be a view of what their own ideas about solving the problem are. So could just tell us if there is anything new or fresh on this?

Dr. Salim: There is always something new. The truth is that none of these we met told us, “Let the DPA go to hell!” They know the position there and want to see improvements and some of them have said that they understood that the DPA will not solve that problem, because other people are not involved and so on, while some of them are very supportive of the position in connection with the demands of the movements. We found this to be a very healthy exercise. But, as I said, we have a continued exercise but I think it is too premature for us to be definite about our position whether the people we have met will use their influence in support of the peace process or not, only time will tell. They have told us they support and will do their best to support the process. This was given by all of them – the leader of the Community Party, Dr. Turabi and Mr. el-Mahdi.

Mr. Eliasson: Can I also add that, as Dr. Salim just mentioned, we have a task force here. We can't be in Darfur and in Khartoum all the time but we have opened the door to our taskforce, to political leaders, to tribal leaders, to civil society, to always be able to communicate to us the views on this process. So we are now opening up channels of communications and will work with maximum transparency. The goal is just to have full support for a political process to make it lasting and we have received a number of concrete proposals of a very constructive nature and hope that this process will continue – we have all to gain from that.

Q: We have been noticing the shuttle movements being conducted by the envoys for the peace process in Darfur but these movements seem uncoordinated. There are a number of initiatives- Chad, Libya, Nigeria – would it not be better to unify these initiatives for the sake of the peace process?

On the recent incidents in Omdurman, has an investigation committee been set up by the African Union and United Nations as partners in the peace process to look into the issue?

Can what you have come up with on this your last visit to Darfur be added as an essential part in the ongoing peace process?

Dr. Salim: Ideally, there should only be one initiative – that is the ideal. But you see, in the world, you have to deal with the ideal or the perfect and the possible. The ideal is that there is already a decision in Addis Ababa that all other initiatives should come under the umbrella of the African Union and the United Nations. This was the decision taken by the two organizations with

the participation of the Permanent Members of the Security Council, the participation of the Arab League and a number of other African countries which are directly involved in the issue. But let me say that I don't think we should be more concerned about the nature of the initiative as long as the initiatives tend to compliment the efforts. And so far, as I said before, from the discussions we have had, we believe that these efforts are well meant, it is important to encourage them and it is important to have coordination with them. So, with respect to the Eritrean initiative, as I said, Jan Eliasson was there and was assured by the President of Eritrea that they want to coordinate with our position. We think that is a very healthy situation. We had a delegation which went to Chad. They met with senior government officials there who told them the initiative of the African Union and the United Nations is welcome. We have met with First Vice-President Salva Kiir who was extremely articulate in telling us what he is trying to do and we found his presentation extremely helpful, and he again told us he wants us to work with him. I think this, quite frankly, is a positive thing. We are also in touch with the Libyans and know of the Libyan initiative. As I said, we are going to go to Libya.

These are actors and you can not simply be dismissive of them. They are actors and their roles become important. And really our hope is that we will be able to work together and don't see a reason why we should not be able to do so.

On the question of what we have learnt in Darfur, of course, that will be part of the knowledge that we are going to use in terms of whatever recommendations we are going to make. I have also been speaking very strongly here on the need for the partners in the peace process to work together, because it is in Darfur – it is in Nyala - that we are confronted with the a situation of continuous fighting, or continuous accusation and counter-accusations between the signatories of the agreement and we think that is something to be looked into very seriously.

As far as the tragic incident in Omdurman is concerned, what we are calling for is really a proper independent investigation. As to the details of that investigation, that is something else.

Q: I toured Darfur for three months and I was in all IDP camps. They are still saying that to date nobody has consulted them on the DPA and stress that any peace agreement without their consent will never be implemented. The African Union and United Nations are just making consultations with the government of Sudan, with the non-signatories – what did you do concerning the IDPs who, I think, are more of a stakeholders than the others?

Mr. Eliasson: This is a matter of great concern for us and we take the dialogue and contact with IDPs very seriously. We think that it is important that those who have not taken up arms – the victims; the people of Darfur – have to have their voices heard. So at every visit that we have made to the area, we have seen the IDPs or representatives of the IDPs.

This is part of the same philosophy which we tried to describe at the beginning of this meeting with you, and that is the fact that we recognize that we have to have the involvement of as wide a spectrum as possible of political and social life of Darfur. That is why we see the tribal leaders. That is why we see civil society. That is why we see political parties who have connections to different groups inside Darfur.

How exactly this influence can be; what shape it would take is yet to be considered but it is very important that we find a process of listening to the people. And where there are millions of people displaced, it is absolutely crucial that we have such a dialogue. We will discuss how that

will be taken up in the process of negotiation but definitely their voices have to be heard and we are fully aware of the importance of listening to them.

Dr. Salim: Let me just add: when we went to el-Fasher last time, we met with representatives of IDPs and had long discussions with them and they were quite vociferous in their position as far as the DPA is concerned and so on, and it was very healthy. When we went to Nyala this time, we were also scheduled to meet with IDPs but could not meet them because they had their own concerns about the decision not to allow the local NGOs to function. So it was a form of protest from their part that they want the government to do something about the local NGOs there. But clearly, I agree entirely with you that at the end of the day you can not really find a definitive solution or definitive peace which can be sustainable unless you also, in one manner or the other, actively involve the representatives of those who are in the camps and those who are in the refugee areas.

Q: I understand there are some calls for sanctions on the Sudan. Don't you think that this will worsen the situation on the ground now? Of this is going to happen, what then is your advice on such a situation?

Dr. Salim: I think he [*Jan Eliasson*] has answered that. This is not we who are calling for sanctions against Sudan. Clearly there is nothing to prevent individual countries from coming up with their positions. The only thing I can say is that anytime we make progress here; anytime there is a relaxation and there is much more access to address humanitarian needs; anytime people feel that the degree of insecurity has decreased and things are getting better, the call for sanctions and the call for measures become less credible. But if none of these things take place, then of course you will find that people who are frustrated, people who have genuine concerns and genuine anxiety will resort to what they think is the best option. But, as negotiators, quite frankly we are not going to make ourselves involved in the pros and cons of that.

Spokesperson Mezni: Thank you very much and I have to thank Mr. Eliasson and Dr. Salim for this opportunity and we are looking forward to meet with them again during their next visit to Sudan.

Thank you.