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## Office of the Spokesperson

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### PRESS CONFERENCE

Hosting Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs,  
MR. IBRAHIM GAMBARI

*Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference by Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs Mr. Ibrahim Gambari held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006 at UNMIS Headquarters, Khartoum.*

**Khalid Al-Hitti, Spokesperson a.i.:** Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

We are pleased to have with us today the Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs. Mr. Ibrahim Gambari. As many of you perhaps know, Mr. Gambari was appointed by the Secretary-General as Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs in July 2005. Before that, he was also Undersecretary-General and Special Advisor on Africa and as you perhaps already know, he was the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations and the Minister of External Affairs of Nigeria.

Mr. Gambari held various teaching positions as professor and visiting scholar in various international prestigious universities and institutions.

If you want more details on his professional background, we have arranged for you a short biographic note; it is on the shelf at the back of the hall along with his statement two days ago to the Arab summit so please feel free to help yourself.

Without further ado, I now invite Mr. Gambari to say a few remarks.

**USG Ibrahim Gambari:** Thank you very much and it is so good to see you all. I apologize for starting a bit late. As you know, the Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan has sent me to Khartoum as head of the UN delegation to attend the summit – the League of Arab States summit here in Khartoum. I am dispatched to deliver a message on behalf of the Secretary-General. The text of the message which is very comprehensive and very substantive is available, as my colleague said, for distribution in both English and Arabic.

It was also a very high level delegation because there were five Undersecretary-Generals including myself and that also consisted of Mr. Jan Pronk who, as you know, is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of United Nations Mission in Sudan, Mr. De Soto who is the Special Coordinator for the Middle-East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestinian Authority; it included Mr. Ashraf Qazi who is the Head of the United Nations Mission in Iraq and Madam Tallawi, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for West Asia.

At the sidelines of the summit, myself and members of the delegation met several participants in the summit. For example, I met with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Lebanon, Mr. Sinoura and Salouh respectively, and, while talking with the Lebanese leaders, I did mention that the Secretary-General was very pleased with the progress made so far in the national dialogue which was the first time that the Lebanese, without anybody's prodding outside, have decided to address many of the very sensitive issues before their country.

I also met with the foreign minister of Sudan, Lam Akol, whom you all know and have received an audience with President Bashir and we discussed a number of issues with President Bashir ranging from his new responsibilities as the President of the League of Arab States but also in his capacity as President of Sudan and we discussed in that regard, the latter regard, the transition from AMIS to a possible UN peacekeeping mission.

I also met at the margins the Prime Minister of Turkey Mr. Urdugan and we addressed issues concerning Iraq as well as Cyprus.

I met with the President of Somalia who was accompanied by the Speaker and Prime Minister. And this is the first time I have seen the three leaders, Somali political leaders, sitting together in a gesture of unity because, as you know, Somalia has been deeply divided and it was only last month when parliament met for the first time in Badoua. This new spirit of reconciliation and of unity is very good. Of course there is a problem in Mogadishu of the militia, as you know, and the warlords and the so-called "Islamic fundamentalist" militias battling for control of the port. The good news and the positive steps represented by the first meeting of the parliament inside the country in Badoua will not be ruined by the continued violence in Mogadishu.

Later in the evening, I met with the Special Representative of the African Union in Sudan, Mr. Babagana Kingibe, and discussed the issues pertaining to their operations in Darfur and my delegation and I also had lunch with Mr. Amru Musa, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and I congratulated him on his unanimous re-election and for really organizing this very successful summit.

That is pretty much what brought me here and of course I came to the headquarters of this mission, UNMIS, and had discussions with Mr. Jan Pronk, the Principle Deputy SRSG and with the UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Manuel da Silva who briefed me on the situation in Sudan, the work of the mission. So I am going to go back to New York to report on what I have seen and the result of my discussions during this very short but very pleasant visit.

So I am open for questions.

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** Thank you very much.

Yes please ...

**Q:** Babagana Kingibe, the African Union Representative, described the Arab logistics support to the African Union as “giving medicine to a dead person”. This is how he described it. The Arab League conference came up with the decision to contribute Arab troops to Darfur. According to my knowledge, the Darfur issue is in the hands of the UN and the Security Council. Does this mission need coordination between the international bodies or according to what the Arab League has decided and then take the process?

**USG Gambari:** First of all, I have not read the statement credited to Babagana Kingibe to which you have referred in terms of the Arab League members offering money and being compared to giving medicine to a dead person. I don't believe that AMIS is a dead person. It is very much alive; there are 7,000 individuals there – they are alive, not dead. And the way I understand it, the Secretary-General himself, Mr. Kofi Annan, is determined to work with the African Union to launch a new effort to get donor countries to commit resources to AMIS; because it is important that Africans get the resources they need because even with the best of intentions, it will take no less than six months to complete a transition from the African Union mission to a UN mission. During this time, they obviously need money, they need logistics support and I think this will well come from whatever quarters they may come from. Like I said, Mr. Kofi Annan is leading a new effort to get those resources.

The second question that was asked is the contribution by Arabs of troops to an expanded international peacekeeping mission for Darfur. I think that will be welcome but, you know, the Security Council in New York is the one that authorizes the establishment of any new peacekeeping operation. And then the department of peacekeeping operations convenes a meeting of potential Troop Contributing Countries and, depending on the specific needs of that mission, then troops are accepted for participation in a particular peacekeeping operation. So nobody is excluded but I can not say who is included at this moment because the Secretary-General is now just involved in consultations in planning for a possible peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

**Q:** You said just now that the Secretary-General is in consultations on the establishment of a peacekeeping mission in Darfur. Why does the UN hurry in planning for deployment in Darfur and what is your reading of the resolutions of the African Union Peace and Security Council?

The Sudanese government says the six months period as a period during which the African Union will continue working and after which decisions will have to be made on its future. Does the UN and the Security Council look at this six months period as a transition period?

My second question is that Arab states have pledged support for the six months after next October. Isn't this support to the African Union enough justification to stop a transition?

**USG Gambari:** Let me say that the UN is not looking for a job. Already there are 17 peacekeeping operations around the world costing about 5 billion US dollars annually. Half of this money is spent in support of peacekeeping operations in Africa. As many of you know, one of those peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo costs about 1 billion US dollars a year.

What the UN is doing is two-fold: One is to support the African Union; and there is a lot of history. I would like to really remind friends here who are in this audience that that is not the first time the UN has come to help the African Union to compliment its efforts in peacekeeping. We have Burundi where the African Union set up a peacekeeping operation and then there was a transition to the UN mission there. In West Africa we have several cases: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire, where the sub-regional organization called ECOWAS sent troops – ECOMOG – and then the UN takes over.

So there is plenty of history in Africa of support by the UN for the African Union in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter which is cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in the area of peace and security. So it is not correct to say the UN is in a hurry to set troops. It is only following on the tradition of helping and sharing between the African Union and the UN provided for in the Chapter.

Secondly; it is basing its action on the decision to which you referred by the Peace & Security Council of the African Union, which accepted in principle the transition from the AMIS to a UN peacekeeping operation.

The UN doesn't wait – may be the way it does things is a bit unfamiliar. The UN can not wait and do nothing for six months. They have to begin to plan as to the possibility of deploying because, as I told you, unlike a president of a country – the Secretary-General is not a president ... he has no army and he has no treasury. So if there is a decision to do something like starting a peacekeeping operation, he has to ask countries to contribute troops, he has to ask for money from member states and all these take time. The six months gives him an opportunity to start planning in full consultation with the Government of Sudan. As a matter of fact, I invited the foreign minister of Sudan and the President of Sudan has agreed to send him to New York for consultations to join in the discussions on what kind of force, what will be its purpose – but in any case, this peacekeeping operation for Darfur will not be against Sudan but will be for the African Union and the Sudan and for fulfilling the responsibility – that is of the Security Council – which has, under the Charter, primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Arab support for AMIS is welcome – I mean I am sure the Africans need help from wherever they can get it. One would wish that this support could have been earlier or bigger but my own personal opinion is that it is better late than never. And the Secretary-General himself is in support of getting help for AMIS from wherever and in whatever proportion or size that can come to the Africans.

**Q:** We notice a total lack of a United Nations political role in the talks in Abuja. What is the political action [*the United Nations is taking*] to pressure the parties to the talks towards a political solution to the problems?

You said that you have invited the [*Sudanese*] foreign minister, with the consent of the President of the Republic, to participate in discussions. Is his participation confirmed?

**USG Gambari:** First of all, I agree with you totally that all this discussion about AMIS or a possible UN peacekeeping operation is secondary to the primary need to get the political situation to the crisis and conflict in Darfur. But it is not correct that the UN is absent in Abuja. On the contrary; the UN has sent significant support to Salim Ahmed Salim, the chief facilitator of the political discussions in Abuja. We are there in a very big way because we

believe that that is the most important political track ... but we don't want to take over. There is a division of labor between the African Union and the UN. This is their matter. The UN is there in a supportive role to find a political solution to the conflict in Darfur through the Abuja process but we are there in a big way.

What has been missing is really a coalition of external support from the international community such as a group of friends such as the way there was one for the Naivasha process and I believe efforts are now being in place to compliment the African Union's efforts, the UN's efforts, with the support of a group of friends that will play the same role as being supportive in a real sense to the process.

The second question that you asked is the invitation extended to the foreign minister of Sudan to visit New York for consultations. I am happy to inform you that the President of the Republic has agreed to this invitation which I extended on behalf of the UN and I think I would rather go with the word of the President.

**Q:** I have one question about this assessment mission which the UN says is very important for a transition. Can this [*indiscernible*] row about international intervention and so on. What is the need for this assessment mission? Just two months ago there was an assessment mission in which the United Nations and the African Union participated. The United Nations had hundreds of reports about Darfur. There were many, many, many assessments. [*indiscernible comment about waste of time and money*]. Why is it that every time the United Nations wants to do something they make an assessment and an assessment and an assessment? What is the idea? This is just a waste of time and money.

**USG Gambari:** How should I answer this? As an African or as a UN official?

I can sympathize with your concerns and may be some of the frustrations. But here is how the UN works: the Secretary-General gets a mandate from the Security Council – he is a servant of the Security Council unlike what many people think, “Why doesn't the Secretary-General do this?”, “Why doesn't the Secretary-General do that?” He can not because he is a servant of the Security Council and Member States.

The Security Council asked him to make preparations for a possible transition. Now, when it is done – any kind of assistance of the UN to anywhere; it could be on elections for example, electoral assistance – we send an assessment mission; if it is to establish a peacekeeping force, we send an assessment mission to get an opportunity for the people who are there to explain to us exactly what they need and then what we are capable of providing. So you just can't plan in abstract without knowing what the people really want and what are we in a position to offer.

The previous assessment mission was just what technical, logistic support the UN could give to AMIS – the African Mission in Sudan. But when you are talking of a UN peace operation, that is a different ball game altogether because you have to find out how much of those African Union [*indiscernible*] are going to be absorbed into the new ... you have to accept their capacity; those who want to contribute troops, you have to find out what are they bringing – you don't know already. So there are many unknown factors but if you want to have a good mission that will hit the ground running, then you need to have an assessment mission. They are not a waste of money.

Let me tell you speaking now purely as an African: part of the problems in Africa is that we plan without facts and that is why many of the problems do not achieve the objectives. I am from Nigeria myself. We are just having our census to find out just how many people we are in Nigeria. The last time we did this was about 20-something years ago. You can't do that. You have to have up-to-date facts and figures so that when you decide and you plan and you implement, the result will be obvious.

In any case, the United Nations has its own processes for doing things and it is mandated by the Security Council and the Secretary-General is obliged to go through those processes.

**Q:** The United Nations came up with resolution 1663 asking the Secretary-General to at least speedup in trying to find modalities and whatsoever concerning sending troops to Darfur. Meanwhile the government has rejected, so far, any speaking of the resolution asking the Secretary-General to speedup the sending of United Nations troops to Darfur. Have you in your short stay in Sudan, discussed this with the government officials here?

**USG Gambari:** Thank you. Before I answer the question, I hope there will be other questions about the rest of the world – the world is bigger than Africa, than Nigeria, than Sudan and so I hope that some of you would also be concerned about the rest of the world.

Let me go back to your question; the conversation between the Government of Sudan is an ongoing conversation; because Sudan is a member of the United Nations. Secondly; the peacekeeping operations that is being envisaged in support of a request made by the African Union is going to be based on Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter. Those of you who are familiar with Chapter VI, it requires the consent of the host country. This is peacekeeping, not peace enforcing. If it is peace enforcing, that will be under Chapter VII of the Charter which does not require the consent of the government and in most cases they come into being when there is no government. But Sudan has a government and that government is a member of the United Nations. We intend to work with that government in coming to an agreement on what is to be done of course under the authority of the Security Council.

I will welcome any other questions – because the Arab League meeting here, under the chairmanship of the President of Sudan, is going to be addressing for the next year or so many issues of interest and concern to the Arab World and the Arab states of which Sudan is a member. And you have an opportunity because I am not the special representative for Sudan – I am the Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs for the world. So please, I will welcome questions other than on Sudan.

**Q:** My question is still on Sudan, but with the focal point on the Arab League.

Yesterday Your Excellency, in your presence at the Friendship Palace in Khartoum, Arab leaders rejected vehemently that they would not allow any international troops to be deployed in the Darfur region. And now you are telling us that you have discussed with the President [*of Sudan*] on the possibility of the Sudan's acceptance of international troops under the United Nations to be deployed in Darfur.

What we would like to know is how do you guarantee that the Government of Sudan is going to accept international troops under the leadership of the United Nations to be deployed in Darfur? Since we know Sudan is a member of United Nations, Sudan is a member of the African Union and Sudan is also a member of the Arab League and Sudan prefers the

decision of the leaders of the Arab League in Sudan yesterday not to allow any foreign troops while giving favor more on the Arab that they would allow the Arab League to send funds and to send troops to Darfur. We just want to know a clarification on this – the possibility that the United Nations Mission in Sudan will take over the operations in Darfur.

The second question and perhaps the last is: according to reports we have been receiving and the assessments being done here and there, what kind of name or what kind of baptism do you give to the situation in Darfur? The United Nations says it is the worst humanitarian crisis; the United States of America says it is genocide. And if I quote the Special Advisor of the United Nations Secretary-General on Genocide, Mr. Mendez, who addressed a press conference in this place, he said, “There are some elements of genocide in Darfur”. So to what extent do you agree with the United States that the situation in Darfur is genocide?

**USG Gambari:** I hope this is the last question on Sudan. I am willing to stay here as long as you want but I am just encouraging you to see Sudan as part of the world. As a matter of fact, Sudan would not be hosting the League of Arab States if it is concerned only about Sudan.

Now back to your question, I can not guarantee what the Government of Sudan would do or would not do. I am not licensed to speak for the Government of Sudan. I am only speaking for the United Nations Secretary-General who has sent me here to discuss with the leaders of the Arab states many issues including Darfur. What the Sudanese government does or does not do that is the privilege of Sudan but it is our duty as the United Nations to have consultations with the member-state, Sudan, and the African Union which took a decision on which we are basing our forward planning. So it is a continued conversation.

I feel - though as a Muslim I am not supposed to gamble or bet - if I were to bet, I would say that in the end of the day there will be some accommodation between the Government of Sudan and the United Nations on the best way to work with the African Union. Bear in mind what you said about the decision of the Arab League because the Arab League, with due respect, and the African Union do not dictate for the United Nations. Nobody does – America does not dictate for the United Nations – because there is a Security Council of 15 members – by the way, those of you who may not be aware, three of those members are Africans. The Africans started serving there, I believe, Tanzania, Ghana and ... and which is the third one ... anybody knows?

**Q:** Gambia or Congo.

**USG Gambari:** Congo. Well, you get a prize for that! Congo Brazzaville. So there are three African members there; there are other Permanent Members apart from the United States; Qatar is an Arab country that is a member of the Security Council so, together, they will decide based on the recommendations of the Secretary-General, who in turn will consult with President Konaré, the Chairman of the African Union Commission, who will consult with the Government of Sudan including in his capacity as the current President of the Arab League before a final decision is made as to what is the nature of the United Nations response to the request by the African Union to have deployed a peace operation.

Incidentally, let me stress for the fifth time, this mission is not going to work against Sudan; it is going to work with Sudan to address an issue that is of interest not only to Sudan but to neighboring countries and to the entire African continent. And some of the African troops

serving in AMIS are most likely going to be incorporated in a future United Nations peace operation in Darfur.

Your second question is about what is the United Nations position on how to describe what is going on. I don't really want to enter into any semantics. What the Secretary-General says, and I quote from his statement, he said, "aspects of the situation in Sudan remain troubling". Let me quote again, according to him, "in Darfur people continue to be killed, raped and driven from their homes by the thousands and the security situation has worsened as a result of fighting between troops and Chadian armed opposition elements on the common border" – end of quotation. That is my description of what is happening in Darfur.

What the Special Advisor says, because it is his job and he is independent in terms of whether or not this is genocide or otherwise. The Secretary-General says the situation remains deeply troubling and I want to stay close to his characterization of the situation in Darfur.

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** Any non-Sudan question? Let's see if we could give the chance to those who didn't have a chance.

**Q:** Sudan is an Arab World country; Sudan is an African country and Sudan is a member of the United Nations. According to the reports of the United Nations of the donors donating to facilitate reconstruction in the Sudan, we have been seeing around the Arab world ...

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** Excuse me; is this a non-Sudan question or a Sudan question?

**Q:** A Sudan question.

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** But we gave the chance to those who had questions other than Sudan issues.

**USG Gambari:** Let him finish first. But please, I can give you two opportunities – ask one Sudan and one non-Sudan.

**Q:** I am a Sudanese myself ...

**USG Gambari:** ... and Sudan is part of the world. It is a part of the African world and is part of the Arab World – you yourself said it.

**Q:** My question is: as I started, when we look at the list of donors to support the reconstruction of the country after the 21 year war, when my eyes are mistaken then that may be ... but I did not see Arab countries donating. I did not see some Arab world countries in the list of the United Nations in donations.

What do you as a United Nations personnel comment on this thing?

Thank you.

**USG Gambari:** Well, I think they should. But as the United Nations is not a world government, we can not tell other countries what they should do with their money. But speaking as an African, I believe that there are more Arabs in Africa than in the entire Middle East. I believe that the Arab countries should show concern for situations in Africa – all

situations; humanitarian, political and even economic. So I would like to see, speaking personally, more and more help coming from the Arab states to situations here. Particularly since Sudan is a member of the Arab League.

But I can not as a United Nations official mandate Arab or any other countries to increase their contribution but, as we are all part of humanity and as the humanitarian situation here and elsewhere, it is a common responsibility to help.

What I want to add to that is that as part of the United Nations Reform Agenda which Mr. Kofi Annan has presented to the last summit of world leaders which took place in September, one of the good things that has come up of it in relation to your question, is a decision establishing a common emergency fund so that when there is a crisis, we don't start putting the [indiscernible] in hand and begging people for support. We will create a fund that will be ready to move in support of emergencies.

I am happy to inform you that that decision has been made in that the fund has been made I believe with an initial capital of about 300 million dollars and I think that this is a positive step which is part of the reform agenda of Mr. Kofi Annan.

**Q:** A number of nations around the world and political observers and analysts doubt the nature of the work of the United Nations; they consider it a Trojan Horse used by the US to achieve its interests around the world. There are also voices calling for reform in the Security Council particularly to enlarge the membership of the Security Council and the right to veto. What is your opinion on the reforms that are urgently required in the United Nations?

**USG Gambari:** Thank you very much and I am glad that somebody is asking a question that has not only to do with Sudan.

The Secretary-General presented a report to the summit meeting of world leaders last September and he planned to reform it in several aspects: the Human Rights Commission he thought was not working well and he proposed the (*indiscernible*) of a Human Rights Council – that has been adopted. He proposed a Peace-building Commission to help countries that have come out of a conflict to consolidate peace so that they will not relapse to fighting. This was also adopted. He proposed, as a part of the reform, the adoption of an agreement by the big powers of their responsibility to protect civilian populations when they are own governments fail them – that was also accepted. Proposing a management reform of the United Nations Organization that has been tabled a couple of weeks ago is being discussed.

Where there has been no progress so far is his proposal to reform the Security Council because he agreed with the proposition that, as presently constituted, the Security Council is anachronistic and unfair because this was the arrangement that was put in place in 1945, 60 years ago. The world is different now from what it was in 1945. He included the fact that only 3 African countries were members of the United Nations in 1945; now they are about 53. Africa is the only continent with no permanent seat on the Security Council.

So he proposed two alternatives. One is to expand the Security Council membership in both categories – permanent members and non-permanent members' category. That is option A. he proposed, as option B, expansion of the Security Council membership but only in the non-permanent seat category so that there will be some countries – may be middle-level countries – that will serve longer than the two-year non-permanent member seat. Unfortunately, after a

lot of discussions some of it not always very friendly – rather acrimonious – the members have not agreed on the way to proceed. But the best way to balance power in the hands of a few is to expand the ranks of those who make those decisions that are binding on members.

So it is safe to me that sooner or later the reform of the Security Council and the expansion in terms of its membership is an idea that the time may not have come but it can not be avoided. So this is something which all member states have to what extra hard so that the reform of the United Nations be complete because right now, according to the Secretary-General – and I agree with him totally, no reform of the United Nations is complete without reform of the Security Council. It is what you call a ‘democracy deficit’. He argued, and I agree with him again, that democracy is not only good for a country within a country; it has to be good for relationships between countries and the reform of the Security Council would be the best way to democratize international relations and, therefore, make Security Council decision more legitimate and much more effective.

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** Two or three more questions. Perhaps some of the female journalists would like to ask – in order to be gender balanced.

**Q:** You have mentioned in your briefing that you met with Prime Minister Sanhoura and discussed some issues with him. The United Nations is accused in the process of the investigations into the assassination of the former Prime Minister that the United Nations is biased and is only one-sided – the pro-Syrian side – what is your comment?

You said that the idea behind the assessment mission is to gather facts through listening to the people for planning purposes. Taking for example the [AMIS-UN] transition issue in Sudan, is it important for you to listen to the views of the people of Sudan? Is the fact that the people of Sudan do not want a United Nations force here and does not trust the United Nations important to you?

Thank you.

**USG Gambari:** I know you were going to sneak in Sudan there and I am not disappointed. It just shows that I have to come back in another visit to Sudan because I realize there are a lot of concerns about the situation here on what the United Nations or the international community should do or not do.

But let me start with Lebanon. If you recall, there was a resolution 1595 passed by the Security Council in an unprecedented manner to authorize an international investigation of a crime that is domestic in nature. It never happened in the history of the United Nations. Because it was felt that the assassination of former Prime Minister Sanhoura is not just a domestic ... sorry, former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, was capable of creating problems not just for Lebanon but for the region as a whole because impunity for people just to be killed for their political beliefs is not good for the stability of the country. And then if some people are suspected to be behind this outside of Lebanon, it may also be a threat to international peace and security.

There was this international investigation called the International Independent Investigation and the first investigator – commissioner – was Detlev Mehles who did a first class job. And now we have Brammertz who took over from him to continue the investigation. I have been to Lebanon and I spoke with everybody – and I mean everybody – and the conclusion was

that everybody wants to get to the bottom of this; to get the truth of who killed former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and how to stop impunity, just killing people for their political beliefs - all of them without exception. And nobody has criticized, that I know, the United Nations investigation so far.

I want to tell you that at the last meeting of national dialogue involving all political parties, their leaders, which is ongoing, there was agreement that yes the investigation should continue; secondly, the people who indicted should be tried in a tribunal of an international character. There was an agreement. They also agreed that the United Nations should give assistance – technical assistance – to the Lebanese justice system to investigate 14 other political assassinations that have taken place from October 2004.

These elements are contained in resolution 1644 of the United Nations and at this national dialogue, unanimously – all tendencies, all political forces in Lebanon – have supported this. So to me, if there is any issue which the Lebanese are united in is the need to get to the bottom of who killed Rafiq Hariri and they want United Nations assistance to get them to do so because the independence, the stability and the sovereignty of Lebanon is very important not just for Lebanon but for Syria, for Israel, for everybody else and for the world. And this is one enterprise that I think enjoys a lot of support.

Now, this question you sneaked in about the assessment mission. It has not happened so we can not say that the assessment mission is not listening when it has not happened. So that is precisely why we think the assessment mission is important because things have changed since the last time there was an assessment mission because that last time there was no contemplation of a United Nations operation. It was how best to assist what the Africans are doing. Now the situation has changed: the political talks are going on fairly well although the wealth sharing committee on track is going much faster than the power sharing. So what we want, the United Nations shares with the African Union and the international community is to make sure that the political process in Abuja works very well. In fact now there is a deadline given by the Peace and Security Council decision of the African Union – a deadline to conclude that and I hope that deadline will be met. But when it is met and when we go in the direction of an enlarged force that would take care of the implementation of those decisions and other matters, I want it to be that the assessment mission, when it comes, will listen to all the views of the Sudanese government and the Sudanese people.

**Q:** I am not sneaking in again but actually I would like to ask about the LRA, the Lord's Resistance Army. They have been creating trouble in Africa in general I should say. Now they have fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Don't you think that these people, when they go there, will create other problems? And what are the steps the United Nations has taken in pursuing them?

**USG Gambari:** Thank you very much for that question.

The LRA is a very brutal organization. They call them the 'Lord's Resistance Army'. In my view they are not an army; they are not resisting anything in a coherent manner and they are certainly not working for the Lord so even their title is a misnomer. They kill people, maim people, cripple people, make young girls sex slaves and they have done so much damage that they must be crushed. And it is very clear now that the LRA is not just a threat to Uganda; it has become a regional threat to Sudan, to the DRC. Some of you are following may know that they killed 8 innocent United Nations peacekeepers from Guatemala. They must be

stopped and what the United Nations is doing as we speak is to talk to the Government of Uganda to see how we can be helpful in addressing the menace of the LRA.

Having said that, I think that the discontent particularly of the Acholi people from whom the LRA tries to drain some sympathy, has to be addressed and I believe President Museveni knows that one of the surest paths to peace in northern Uganda is to have an all-inclusive arrangement. But as he does that, I think the international community needs to support his efforts and the efforts of the regional leaders to treat the LRA problem as a regional problem because they are causing problems not only for Uganda but for the region.

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** Thank you very much Mr. Gambari, we appreciate your presence here. We hope we will see you again ... oh, one last question ...?

**Q:** In your speech in the summit, you mentioned something like the alliance of civilizations. A few years ago before this, there was an initiative also by the United Nations Secretary-General [*indiscernible*] but I didn't think it brought [*forth*] anything. What is the future of such peace initiatives, do you think?

The other question is that you spoke about a Human Rights Council but some say that in this new council Africa has been marginalized. The number of African seats has been reduced from 17 to 13.

The last question is that you have spoken about reforms but only about this peacekeeping commission and the human rights council. What about the administrative reform in the United Nations itself as the recent case in the peacekeeping operations' misuse of funds proves that these reforms have not been implemented although when the [*indiscernible*] it was said that the aim was to reform the United Nations?

**USG Gambari:** I think it is appropriate that we are ending this press conference on a broader note for which I want to thank you.

First of all, on the alliance of civilizations and the initiative by the former President of Iran; you know that the recent fallout from the Danish cartoon in which they denigrated the Holy Prophet Mohamed shows the importance of not waiting until we have those crisis to have mechanisms for constant communication, constant interaction, constant exchange of ideas and exchange of views so that we can respect each other's faith and beliefs. And when this last tragic event happened, the Secretary-General went and met the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Conference, the foreign ministers of Spain and Turkey who are the two co-sponsors of this alliance to say 'what can we do now; what can we do in the medium term; what can we do in the long term to be able to address and not wait until there is a crisis?'. So their need has been confirmed and I believe we should not let any initiative [*indiscernible*] to address these issues.

On your second question, the Human Rights Council is in many ways an improvement over the Human Rights Commission – I will just mentioned three: first; it will meet all year round instead of a few weeks in the Human Rights Commission. It will review everybody's human rights – not just records; not just some people who are being picked to be investigated – so it will be all-inclusive. Third; you have to be elected by almost two-thirds of the members of the United Nations and you can be removed if, having got elected, you then proceed to violate the human rights of your people. Fourth is the membership, the composition.

One benefit for Africa is that it provides for equitable geographic distribution. That is if you reduce the total number from 53 I believe – I am not sure of the number – to 47, it means everybody has to give up some seats. But I think, if your figures are correct – I don't know – they are from 17 to 13 where everybody has to reduce their own, I don't think it is a question of marginalization. The important thing is for the Africans to make sure that they elect to these bodies those members that they are sure would represent true African position and those who genuinely respect the human rights of their people.

Finally; on administrative reform, you are right. The momentum for reform has slacked somewhat. That is why the Secretary-General only last week submitted a new proposal for management reform including administration and is waiting for how the members will react. As you know the Secretary-General can only propose and it is up to members to adopt. Madam Louise Frechette is stepping down as Deputy Secretary-General I think tomorrow and a new one has been appointed, Mr. [name] from 1<sup>st</sup> of April and I believe one of his biggest tasks is to make sure that this reform agenda is implemented as soon as the General Assembly gives the go-ahead.

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen. It has been a pleasure and I will come back to answer questions on Sudan as well as others.

**Spokesperson, a.i.:** Thank you very much.