



Near-verbatim Transcript of the Media Stakeout at the Conclusion of the
United Nations Security Council Delegates' Visit to Sudan
Salam Rotana Hotel, Khartoum

UNMIS Spokesperson Ashraf Eissa: Ladies and Gentlemen, we have with us representatives of the United Nations Security Council delegation visiting Sudan to give you an overview of their visit to Sudan. We have with us Ambassador Ruhukana Rugunda, the Representative of Uganda. We also have with us Ambassador Susan Rice, the US Permanent Representative to the UN and Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant, the UK Permanent Representative. They will start with a few thoughts on the visit and an overview and then they will be taking your questions.

Now I hand the floor over to Ambassador Rugunda to start with.

Thank you.

Ambassador Ruhukana Rugunda: Thank you. Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen to this briefing on the Security Council mission to the Sudan. During this visit, we had Mark Grant, the Permanent Representative and Ambassador of the United Kingdom, heading this leg. We also had Susan Rice, the Ambassador of the United States of America, leading the leg in Juba. Actually, she led the leg in Juba, Mark led the leg in Darfur and, together, the two of them led our mission in Khartoum.

Since we have both of them here, I would ask Mark Grant to say a few words, and then Susan and we would be ready for questions from you.

Mark ...

Ambassador Mark Grant (UK): Thank you, Mr. President of the Council. I would make a short statement and then we would take some questions.

The United Nations Security Council has a strong interest in a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sudan. The Security Council has been concerned and remains concerned about conflict in Sudan and the continuing risks to peace and security and that is why it has mandated two large peacekeeping operations – UNAMID and UNMIS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Sudan, the Government of Southern Sudan and Special Representatives, Mr. Gambari and Mr. Menkerios, who are helping to organise this important Security Council mission.

On it, we have visited Juba, we have visited El-Fasher in North Darfur, and today we have been in Khartoum. We have had the opportunity during the visit to meet representatives of the Government, including the Vice-President Taha and the Foreign Minister here in Khartoum, the First Vice-President Salva Kiir in Juba and other representatives of the Government. We have met the UN Country Teams and Force Commanders of the UN peacekeeping operations; we have met representatives of civil society and humanitarian aid workers; we have met representatives, the members of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission. And as a result of these various meetings over the last three days, I think all members of the Council have a better understanding of the challenges facing Sudan at this critical moment in Sudan's history.

During this visit, we have focused primarily on two main issues. The first is the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). We have had a strong commitment by both parties to fully implement the CPA; the recognition of the need for the referenda to be held on time, to be peaceful, to be credible and for the

outcomes to be fully respected. And we have had a commitment also from both parties to tackle the key outstanding issues – both the technical and other funding issues – faced by the referendum commission and also the other more strategic issues covering citizenship, border demarcation, Abyei and revenue-sharing.

The timetable for the discussion and resolution of these issues and the referendum is extremely tight. But with strong political will on both sides and the manifestation of that political will by implementation and strong support from the international community, we believe that that timetable is doable.

The second issue on which we have focused is that of Darfur. We are deeply concerned about the insecurity and continuing conflicts in Darfur which has led to significant suffering of the Darfuri people and the IDPs in particular. There is an urgent need for a successful peace process. And we take this opportunity, again, to urge those rebel groups who are not participating in the Doha peace process led by Mr. Bassole to do so immediately and without preconditions. We also urge both sides to cease the hostilities and to cooperate fully with the operations of UNAMID in Darfur.

Finally, the Security Council would continue to follow these issues extremely carefully over the next few months.

Thank you very much.

Q & A

Reuters: How can there be any chance of the Abyei Referendum happening on time, or at all, given the lack of a commission and a lack of progress in Addis-Ababa?

Spokesperson Ashraf Eissa: Perhaps we would take two more questions.

Q: You said that technical and financial issues pertaining to the referendum may hamper the conduct of the referendum. Could the international community accept a delay in the referendum as a result of such issues?

Ambassador Susan Rice (US): Abyei is obviously a critical issue among many that needs to be resolved going forward and that's why the US, at the request of both parties, has been hosting for the last several days intense discussions in Addis Ababa to try to resolve the crucial issues relating to conducting the referendum in Abyei on time, coincident with the referendum for the south, as we are all committed to, on January 9.

The latest information I have is that those discussions are ongoing, they have been intense and both parties have come with a seriousness of purpose and are working to try to resolve these critical issues.

Ambassador Grant: On the question on the Referendum Commission funding and technical issues. Clearly the Referendum Commission has taken some time in getting established, and that is one of the reasons why the time is very tight. But progress now has been made in recent days.

We heard some of the challenges from the Chair and some members of the Referendum Commission this morning and one of the challenges they face is funding. That is being discussed, as I understand it, over the next few days. We raised that issue with the Foreign Minister of the Government of Sudan today and we were assured by the Finance Minister that funding would be forthcoming and had already been allocated.

Clearly there would be international funding as well and the international community would do its part in making sure that the Commission's work is fully funded.

Thank you.

Al-Arabiya: It is obvious that there are lots of problems between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) with regards to the referendum. Besides the border demarcation problem, there are still a lot of problems remaining and each party blames the other for the obstacles and time is running out. Has this visit produced in terms of assurances that the referendum would take place on time and without problems?

Ambassador Grant: As I mentioned in my opening statement, we have received commitments from both sides that the referendum would be held on time, that it would be held in a peaceful manner and that it would be credible and the outcome would be respected. What is required now is for those commitments to be turned into action on the ground. As I mentioned, there are still many issues to be resolved and time is short and therefore it is vitally important that that commitment is implemented and that we see a real dynamism on the part of both parties to tackle those issues so that those commitments can be fully upheld.

The international community can help but it is the two parties that are responsible for the holding of the referendum and making sure that those commitments are upheld.

Radio Miraya: What are the concerns that the United Nations Security Council delegation raised with the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the Government of Sudan?

Ambassador Grant: The questions we were asking were what were the challenges they face; what were the problems they encountered and how could we assist them. What we have heard is what I mentioned already and that is that they do have a delay in the process; that under the Referendum Act clearly there is some slippage in the timelines that are set and, therefore, the timelines are extremely tight between now and January 9th in order that all those processes would go through.

We particularly focused on the question of registration that is a crucial part of this process and that registration process, I understand, would now begin on the 14th of November. It is extremely important that enough time is given to the registration process so that it is a credible process and that all those who are entitled to vote in the referendum are able to vote. That would be a critical part but there are other elements in the timeline which are also important and need to be tackled.

It was those issues that we were discussing with the Referendum Commission.

UNMIS Spokesperson Ashraf Eissa: Ladies and Gentlemen, the delegation has a flight to catch. Thank you very much and we will see you again.

ENDS
