



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson

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**UNMIS deplores distortion of the Special Representative
of the Secretary-General's statements**

Khartoum, 25 November 2005: With reference to some media reports carried by some Sudanese daily newspapers in their editions of 23 and 24 November 2005 on remarks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan, Mr. Jan Pronk, made in the press conference he held on 22 November 2005, Mr. Jan Pronk states the following:

“The reference I made to the next AU Summit to be hosted by the Sudan was completely taken out of context by *Al Watan*, *Akhbar Al Youm* and *Sudan Vision*, besides the fact that it was misquoted. My statement on this particular issue was made as part of my answer to questions on the future of Darfur should the peace talks fail to reach an agreement and on UN efforts to pressurize the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) to take part in the upcoming round of Abuja talks and commit to a political negotiated final settlement of the Darfur Conflict. In my answer, I indicated that I have always urged the parties to expedite their negotiations in order to achieve a final peace agreement by the end of this year, so the next Summit of the AU to be held in Khartoum in January 2005 will be an occasion for all Sudanese to take pride at the fact that their Nation would be hosting such an important event at a time when all its people are enjoying peace. I was specifically referring in this context to my message to the SLM that if there would be no peace because of them, they will be the ones to be held responsible, indicating *“that if peace is not achieved when the Summit is held, that would be a black spot”* for the country when it will be celebrating 50 years of its independence while hosting the AU Summit. I added that *“the government understands that, and SPLM also understands and that I am putting pressure constantly on SLM also to understand that and I am telling them that if there is no peace because you are not working with us (the UN and the AU) and with the government and with JEM, then you, the SLM, will regret it. I am saying of course the same to the government and the same to JEM but at the moment I have more reason to say that of the SLM. And then I can speak for the international community. We will report to the Security Council and members of the Security Council will draw their conclusions. I did read in the newspapers that the United States representative, Fraser, said to the SLM, ‘you can forget (US) political support if you don’t make peace on the 1st of January’ which is quite a statement. Maybe other countries will say the same. And I hope the SLM will draw its own conclusions...If SLM is not helping to make peace, they also forget their own people and then they also will be held accountable for it. I said that explicitly to all the SLM leaders whom I’m meeting with regularly. There will be consequences”*. This is what I said during my press conference.”

The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) would like to add the following:

- 1- UNMIS deplores the distortion of the comments made by Mr. Jan Pronk on the Sudan hosting the African Union's Summit in January 2006 by the Sudanese daily "Al-Watan". The newspaper went ahead with its misleading articles although none of its reporters attended the press conference the Special Representative held and hence, was in no position to ascertain the quotes falsely attributed to him. Needless to say that such a behavior goes against the basic requirements of professional journalism, which make it the responsibility and the duty of the media to verify the accuracy of the facts it publishes before it presents to the public. If the newspaper had a reporter during the press conference, the Mission could have at least attributed the misrepresentation of the Special Representative's statement to inaccurate Arabic interpretation of what he said, otherwise all the other Sudanese newspapers who have reported the same story
- 2- For the sake of transparency and in keeping with its responsibility towards the Sudanese public in providing it with accurate information on issues relating to its activities in Sudan, the transcripts of all UNMIS press conferences and briefings are posted on the website of the Mission (www.unmis.org). In addition to the statement above of the Special Representative, the full transcript of the press conference held by Mr. Pronk on 22 November will be available on the website shortly and will be also circulated to the media in order for all interested to see for themselves what he did say on the issue of the AU Summit.
- 3- UNMIS wishes to reiterate its commitment to the Sudanese people in assisting the Sudanese Nation and its leaders in their quest for sustainable peace and a better future for the country and its entire people. It also reiterates its commitment to full transparency in keeping the public informed of its activities while fulfilling its mandate. The United Nations highly regards the role of the Sudanese media in informing their readers on what's taking place in their own country at times historic changes towards a bright future. The United Nations values any constructive criticism from the people it came to assist in order to better live up to their expectations and has been always an active advocate for press freedom. However, the United Nations expects in return those who arbitrarily feed the people with false information, that in some instances amounts to incitement of violence, to live up to their commitment to responsible journalism.

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