



UNMIS

Press Release No. 06/07

The UN works with the Government of Southern Sudan to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in Southern Sudan

Juba, Khartoum – 20 February 2007: In collaboration with the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), United Nations Agencies and international and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) organized on 20 February, in Juba, a one-day workshop on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in Southern Sudan.

The workshop was attended by high-level GoSS officials, including the Vice President of the Government of Southern Sudan, Dr. Riek Machar, and the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Samson Kwaje. The workshop was also attended by over eighty participants from UN Agencies, international and national NGOs as well as local community leaders.

Dr. Riek Machar opened the workshop with key note speech in which he confirmed the Government's commitment to the protection of vulnerable women and children. The Vice-President added that the Government of Southern Sudan was caught unawares by the recent article alleging sexual misconduct by UNMIS staff. Dr. Machar added that his Government does not want the UN's presence in the South to be disrupted by the actions of a few, whether UN or national personnel, including members of the three armies (SPLA, Joint Integrated Units, remnants of SAF) currently based in Southern Sudan.



Ms. Aster Zaoude, the head of UNMIS conduct and discipline team, David Gressly, the UN's resident coordinator and GoSS Vice-President Dr. Riek Machar open the SEA workshop in Juba.



Participants look over literature on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse during the SEA workshop in Juba.

The focus of the workshop was to help prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure that there is no impunity or immunity for SEA perpetrators who must be identified and punished. The UN representatives indicated that rumors and broad allegations may provide important warning signs, but that those who have specific evidence must provide it if such heinous crimes are to be punished.

False allegations and blanket accusations, motivated by interests other than the protection of children, should be denounced by all concerned. In this regard, UNMIS informed the workshop that it has not received any cooperation or evidence, despite repeated requests, from the Daily Telegraph journalists who made allegations against UN peacekeepers on 2 January 2007.

The workshop was an opportunity to reaffirm the United Nations commitment to maintain the highest standards of professional integrity and good conduct. UNMIS officials explained that the UN policy of zero-tolerance for SEA means no complacency and no impunity. They indicated that UN staff immunity has not been an excuse for impunity and that two UNMIS staff members found guilty of SEA were repatriated and severely punished. They added that two other SEA allegations were investigated, found unsubstantiated, were dismissed.

The workshop achieved two major objectives. First, it established a new joint monitoring task force comprised of the GoSS, UNMIS, and the UN agencies within the Resident Coordinator system, international NGOs and local community groups. The task force will be convened by a representative of the Government and UNMIS Chief of Conduct and Discipline Unit, also acting as the UN focal point for SEA in Sudan. The second achievement is the agreement to launch a public information campaign on SEA to raise awareness among UN personnel and local communities and follow up on the recommendations of the workshop.

For further information please contact Ms. Radhia Achouri, Spokesperson, UNMIS. Tel. (+249) 187 086 02, Mobile (+249) 912 392 270 , e-mail: achouri@un.org