

**Office of the Spokesperson****UNMIS BRIEFING TO THE PRESS****25 July 2007**

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference held by United Nations Mission in Sudan Spokesperson, Ms. Radhia Achouri, on 25 July 2007 at the UNMIS Press Briefing.

DARFUR POLITICAL PROCESS

In a press statement issued yesterday 24 July, the AU and UN Special Envoys for Darfur, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim and Mr. Jan Eliasson, announced that they issued yesterday invitations to leading personalities of the non-signatory movements to the Darfur Peace Agreement to participate in a meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, 3-5 August 2007. Invitations were also issued to partners, who presented initiatives in support of the political process. The meeting takes place at a time of intensified consultations undertaken by the Special Envoys and the AU/UN Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST) as part of the second phase of the Road-map, the pre-negotiation phase.

The objective of the Arusha meeting is to take stock of the progress made in the Road-map and for the Special Envoys to consult with the movements on the preparations for the up-coming final negotiations. Discussions will focus on the key role to be played by the Sudanese parties concerned in ensuring a speedy, negotiated and sustainable settlement of the Darfur conflict, including the negotiations format and venue as well as participation in the negotiations.

UNMIS ACTIVITIES***CPA related activities*****Security Arrangements**

Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun will participate in the meeting of the Ceasefire Political Committee (CPC) to be held in Juba on 26 July. The meeting will consider the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee reports on a number of issues related to the implementation of the CPA security arrangements. The CPC meeting will be preceded by a CJMC meeting to be held in Juba on 26 July.

Promotion of the CPA

UNMIS Public Information Unit in Wau visited Kuajok on 17 July, and donated 200 copies of the CPA translated in Dinka language to the Warrap State newly appointed Minister of Information Aisha Abbas. The CPA copies will be distributed to the general public as part of an effort to disseminate the CPA. PIO also donated an additional 50 copies to the Minister of Information of Western Bahr El-Ghazal State.

Reconciliation

In Lakes State, UNMIS mediated reconciliation talks in Yirol on 16 July 2007 between the Ador Nuers of Unity State and the Dinkas of Lakes to help settle their ongoing conflict resulting from

cattle rustling. Unity and Lakes States authorities have proposed mobile courts to try cattle theft cases.

Gender

On 18 and 19 July, UNMIS in Rumbek met with the Director of Gender of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Religious affairs to discuss training needs for eight social workers who are being employed by the Ministry in each of the eight counties of Lakes State. UNMIS is currently discussing with UN agencies and partners funding and implementation of training programmes for the social workers upon deployment.

Human Rights

On 19 July, UNMIS Human Right Unit, in conjunction with UNMIS Civilian Police (CivPol), trained 120 local policemen in Rumbek on basic human rights standards, the use of force and the rights of detainees. The training is part of the four weeks UNMIS CivPol training (10 July- 7 August, 2007) of local police.

Return (UNMIS and UN Agencies activities)

This week, 116 IDPs returned to Central Equatoria and 258 to Tambura, Western Equatoria thanks to air operations organized by IOM. The total number of returnees for the season stands at 43,902, which represents 70% of the revised target under the GNU/GoSS/UN Joint Plan for return.

UNMIS in Rumbek has focused its activities last week in Lakes State on coordination and planning of the distribution of resettlement/reintegration packages to spontaneous returnees in their host communities.

On Monday July 16, UNMIS Recovery, Return and Reintegration (RRR) Unit followed up with the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) on the need to synchronize the tracking and monitoring mechanism for spontaneous returnees. Meanwhile, SSRRC has provided all counties with record books to be used for registering names of returnees and their locations to facilitate the distribution of resettlement/reintegration packages.

According to WFP, by 19 July, the agency had served food to 14,540 spontaneous returnees in Western Bahr El Ghazal State.

UNMIS RRR, SSRRC, IOM, UNICEF, UNMIS Radio (Miraya), and Wau State Radio are designing messages to be broadcasted over the two radios to sensitize the returnees about the initial assistance and services available to them upon return. County authorities and the SSRRC secretaries in the payams will assist in the dissemination as well. This information and communication strategy is intended to create awareness about the initial and longer term absorption and overall reintegration of people returning.

UNMIS RRR Unit, in collaboration with UNDP, facilitated last week a workshop for 98 local government and SSRRC members on planning and budgeting in greater Tonj 3 counties. All participants welcomed the ideas presented by UNMIS RRR, and accordingly included emergency support to returnees in their plans and budgets, and allocated support funds to SSRRC for field monitoring aimed at tracking and monitoring spontaneous returnees.

Protection

UNMIS Protection examined the situation of the women held in the Northern Bhar el Ghazal prison on a recent assessment mission. The visit revealed harsh, unsanitary conditions and lack of medical care. Many of the women do not have family members in Aweil town to give them the support they need.

Darfur related activities

UNMIS attended a workshop on returns organized on 19 July in Al Fasher by the Wali of North Darfur. The recommendations of the workshop included strengthening the role of the native administration in providing security; empowering and better equipping police forces, provision of basic services and reconstruction of destroyed villages, compensation to war victims, implementation of security arrangements under the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), and confidence building activities between IDPs and security forces. IDP representatives who participated in the workshop noted that there is continued insecurity in areas of origin and that militias have still not been disarmed, and warned that distrust of police forces remains high. The representatives urged the government to do more to engage non-signatories for an effective ceasefire rather than focus on return.

During the week, UNMIS El Geneina good offices to facilitate the resumption of AU patrols in the Sirba, Silea and Abu Suruj areas made progress. Armed movements in Abu Suruj have accepted the proposal and are consulting with the community militia. In Jebel Moon, JEM commanders have accepted the proposal for patrols and SLA commanders expressed a willingness to discuss the issue. AMIS will visit Jebel Moon and major area villages to build local confidence and negotiate resuming patrols.

In Kalma camp, violations against civilians perpetrated by armed groups have been reported, including killings, sexual violence, physical assault and theft. The presence of illegal detention centers, where IDPs have been detained and beaten, has also been reported. Confrontations between armed groups have also resulted in civilian casualties - On 8 July, a five year-old girl was hit by a stray bullet while collecting water and killed.

In El Salaam camp, armed men linked to SLA-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) have been accused of sexual violence, abduction, theft and illegal taxation. UNMIS Protection has also received reports that persons who refused to pay illegal taxes have been illegally detained and put before an SLA-MM court, where they have been beaten, ordered to pay fines or forced to provide labor. UNMIS Protection will engage with the SLA-MM command in the camp.

SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS

Darfur

Carjacking and robbery of UN and INGO convoys have increased in the week from 17 to 23 July. With a total 3 carjackings and 8 attacks on convoys that occurred this week, the number of humanitarian vehicles hijacked this year reaches a total 76 and the number of convoys attacked and looted 77.

In West Darfur, an INGO announced the relocation of its staff from Nereti (62 km E of Zalingei) for an indefinite period, as it was the target of three armed robberies in the last month. In addition, two INGOs relocated their staff from Sileia, West Darfur, as a result of heightened tensions in the area. Humanitarian workers have been temporarily relocated on 20 occasions so far this year, which impacts negatively on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in some areas.

HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENTS

Darfur

In North Darfur, new IDPs continue to flow in from the Tarne/Tabit area to Gallab, from the Jebel Marra to El Fasher and Shangil Tobayi, and from Saraf Omra to Zalingei, West Darfur. Recent humanitarian assessments in Jebel Marra (West Darfur) found 3,350 new IDP households near Kutrum and 3,200 IDP households near Golol. Unconfirmed reports speak of 12,000 new IDP households in the Kutrum and Kuila areas. An inter-agency mission will verify these reports next week. IDP camps almost everywhere in Darfur are overstretched and urgent measures need to be taken to accommodate the continuous influx of IDPs in a safe and adequate environment.

Q & A

Q: Regarding the forthcoming meeting of the DPA non-signatory factions, do we know for sure what groups have been invited to the Arusha talks?

Second question is we hear of reports that the Sudanese government has proposed that South Africa host the coming round of negotiations with the rebels and the mediators are [*indiscernible*] in the neighboring countries. Could you comment on this?

Spokesperson: On the participants to the Arusha meeting, if I had the information that you were asking for I would have announced it in my briefing. No, I do not have information on who has been invited but I these names will be known to you all in due time.

On your second question on South Africa, yes, I read the information you are referring to in the newspapers today but I can only reiterate what Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Salim said – both and on different occasions. The last time this issue of the venue was raised was during the press conference of Mr. Eliasson of last week and he said that this issue is going to be considered during the pre-negotiations period and it is going to be one of the items to be discussed with the participants during the Arusha meeting. Let me add also that I do not recall any statement from neither Mr. Eliasson nor Dr. Salim – they speak in one voice in any case – that they ruled out neighboring countries. I am sure that they have some ideas about the venue, which yet to be discussed.

Q: [*Indiscernible about US Envoy Natsios Government responsibility for delaying CPA implementation and he mentioned in particular the census and elections.*] What is your assessment?

What would the United Nations do to punish those that do not participate in the Arusha meeting? On the other hand, the US president has said that he will consider anyone who does not participate in the Arusha meeting as an obstructionist.

Spokesperson: On your first question and our assessment, this assessment has been made known on many occasions but I will refer you back, for instance on the issue that you raised on the elections, to all the Reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Resolution 1590 and also the implementation of the CPA and our mandate in this regard. The issue of elections, the population census and the establishment of both the required legislations for elections and also the institutions that deal with the elections has been always highlighted by the United Nations in its reports to the Security Council, as a priority issue that has to be tackled and called for the delay to be overcome, because it is one of the most important CPA timelines and the timeline is coming soon. We made our views on this issue and all the implementation process very well known in the United Nations Report to the Security Council. The Security Council, in its Presidential Statement issued three months after its consideration of the Secretary-General quarterly report, highlighted what they considered as priority issues for the two parties to expedite implementation as stipulated in Resolution 1590 and the CPA.

On what you said about Mr. Natsios, I am sure you know by now that we do not comment on what a member state of the United Nations says about a particular issue. That is their call; that is not ours.

On your question on what you said about what would be done regarding those who do not participate, I would again refer you to two documents. One is the Road Map itself and the second is the final Communiqué of the Tripoli meeting of the 15 and 16 of this month. I don't have a copy of the Communiqué with me right now but if you go back to the exact language used there, there is language about the African Union and the United Nations that will follow closely the extent of cooperation from the parties concerned and, in particular, those who would obstruct the peace process and take appropriate measures. I do not have specifics about what these could be and what kind of action would be envisaged. But obviously there is a momentum, internationally and regionally supported, and also we tend to believe that it is also supported within the Sudan itself, that there is need to expedite this political process and it is due time for everybody to commit to a political solution. They all – in their discussions with the Envoys and prior discussions with other officials – committed and actually stated the conviction that the conflict in Darfur can only be resolved through negotiations. But we are not speculating yet on who is going to be obstructing or not obstructing. Maybe your question should be dealt with when we would reach such point and we hope that we will not reach such point. For now, we are telling everybody that this is your conflict; this is your problem; it is your responsibility before your people; history at some point will judge you about what you did for the benefit of your own people. Hopefully, all will heed the appeal.

Q: Is there anything new on the ban by authorities for journalists from using United Nations Mission in Sudan flights?

The Office of the Spokesperson of the SAF has issued a statement saying that you lied when you reported information on the meeting of the CJMC and that there are SPLA soldiers still in the Blue Nile area. What comments do you have on this?

Spokesperson: On your first question, my understanding is that talks are still ongoing between the mission and the authorities concerned in Sudan on the issue of non-United Nations personnel flying on board UNMIS aircraft, not only about journalists. The issue is about having non-United Nations personnel, non-United Nations staff members flying on board UNMIS flights. Hopefully we would have soon a definite settlement of this particular issue.

On your second question, many of your colleagues asked me before to respond to that question and I always repeat the same thing: I do not comment on what appears in the press regarding my very humble person. The CJMC and competent mechanisms are the foras to handle these issues. The CJMC issued a Press Release on 8 July and we have copies of it. Go back to it; read it.

Anyway, my understanding of what the Sudan Armed Forces is that they did not said that “I lied” as you said. They said that I omitted to say other things that they thought should have been included in our release. My advice to all the Press Corps here is that when you are reporting something, at least use the exact words used by the people who make statements. *Akhbar Alyaum* [daily], if I am not mistaken, printed out the Communiqué from the Sudan Armed Forces as is.

Q: There are reports of deliberations within the Security Council on a new draft resolution on Sudan. Could you give us more clarification?

Spokesperson: I am really sorry. I have no information except what I read with you from the press. We are not part of the deliberations of the Security Council so we don't know what they are discussing. Our understanding is that there is intensive work on the draft. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made it clear on various occasions since the agreement in Addis Ababa between the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of Sudan on the Hybrid Operation that he would press ahead for a speedy authorization from the Security Council of the hybrid operation. Your questions can only be answered by the members of the Security Council and not the Secretariat. Our job as the Secretariat is to present the Council with reports and recommendations, and the Secretary-General, together with Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, presented the report on the hybrid, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations presented its explanations on the report and our

job ends there and will resume once there is a resolution from the Security Council to implement it. But deliberations and how decisions are made and negotiations of texts is not for us at all. Sorry.

Q: Have you any information on recent reports of renewed clashes between the Abbala and Turgum tribesmen and what is your comment on these clashes?

Spokesperson: To be honest with you, I don't have information on that particular issue. I saw it in the newspapers and reports are not clear and sometimes conflicting. I raised it with the competent colleagues in the mission to check this information. Therefore, I cannot comment on that particular report. We reported before on conflicts between these two tribes and, to our knowledge, there have been some attempts to reconcile the tribes and we always highlighted concern over these conflicts. The two Special Envoys, the African Union Envoy and the United Nations Envoy, stressed tribal conflicts as one of the major concerns and they always called for these particular types of conflict to be tackled as soon as possible, as they add to the complexity of the situation in Darfur.

I would go back to the colleagues and see if we have any information from our side on this. Please leave your phone number so I could get in touch with you once I have information.

Q: Now that the census and the elections are very near, what can UNMIS in Sudan comment on the Sudanese refugees?

Spokesperson: I do not pretend that I understood fully your question but obviously the issue of census, elections and the operations for returns of refugees and IDPs are inter-related. There is an operation ongoing within the joint plan between the Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan and the United Nations to return IDPs and refugees and obviously these are supposed to take part in the population census. The population census is one of the major elements for preparation for the elections and, later on, for the referendums foreseen and stipulated in the CPA .

Yes, as I said, we do consider the census a priority. We are aware of the fact that there are difficulties that might obstruct timely completion of the census, for instance in Darfur, you have some 2.2 million people in IDP camps. So there are difficulties in that regard, we however reiterated that preparations for the census and the conduct of the census have to be expedited and that the parties should do everything they can to meet the deadlines as stipulated in the CPA.

Q: There are reports of voluntary returns in Darfur be it through agencies or others while UNMIS keeps reporting increases in the number of IDPs. The statistics cited are also conflicting. I am not interested in the figures or the incidents as such but would like to know: is insecurity mostly to blame for the displacements or that there are IDPs that go to these camps for food and medicine since it is known that the war in Darfur has eroded the economy in Darfur?

Spokesperson: I would refer you, on this particular issue, to my colleagues from OCHA. For instance, at least to help you have the background for it, and I would refer you to the latest Humanitarian Update issued by OCHA in cooperation with the United Nations agencies and partners. It was issued yesterday. Look at it and I would facilitate, if you wish, contact between you and OCHA.

Q: The United Nations presented to the Government a plan to disarm the Janjaweed. What is the status of implementation of this plan?

There is talk about deployment of an EU force in eastern Chad and the CAR to protect Sudanese refugees. Will the United Nations be involved? To what level is there coordination between these efforts and, say the UNMIS?

Spokesperson: On what you mentioned about the disarmament of militia or Janjaweed, the United Nations did not present a plan. What actually happened was that the Government of Sudan presented a plan for the disarmament of militia. That plan has been discussed. The United Nations and all the other actors involved in the discussions, and of course the African Union, presented

remarks and comments on the plan presented by the Government of Sudan. From that point on, I don't know whatever happened to it because the issue is mainly followed up by the African Union Mission in Sudan given the fact that the plan presented by the government for disarmament of the militia is part of their obligations under the DPA and the African Union is the lead in terms of following up on the implementation of the DPA, as stipulated in the DPA itself. I recommend therefore that you talk to the African Union because they are the ones having the lead in this particular issue.

On your other question, I am here only to address issues related to Sudan within the geographical borders of Sudan. The situation in Chad is relevant to Sudan as it is part of the regional context but it is not part of our portfolio. I read exactly as you did from the press, that there was a proposal, presented by France. It was subsequently presented to the EU as a whole and the decisions of the European Council for Foreign Relations were issued a couple of days ago. I honestly do not remember exactly what was in it regarding Chad. For the time being the issue is discussed within the EU, with Chad, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. I know that Mr. Guéhenno, the Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, went to Brussels to discuss with the EU this particular issue but I do not have information on what was exactly discussed. But you could contact the Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General in New York and see if they could get you in touch with somebody from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Q: Back to the issue of the status of redeployment, the United Nations Mission in Sudan said last week that it is yet to verify the SPLA claims on redeployment south from the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile areas. Has this been verified?

Since they are both members to the CPC, why has the meetings of the CPC been postponed twice?

Spokesperson: The first part of your question is going to be addressed tomorrow by the competent institutions. I told you that the CJMC will be having a meeting tomorrow morning to be followed by a CPC meeting. I can not give you information before the information is provided to the CPC itself. Once I have information from the CPC, I would let you know.

On your second question on why the CPC was postponed, it is not something that one should worry about. The first time, the CPC postponed its meeting because some of the SPLA representatives had other urgent commitments to attend to. The second time it was because SAF representatives also had urgent commitments to attend. So it is just a matter of conflicting commitments, I would say, and that is that. I hope it clarifies the issue because many has been asking me the same question and these are the only reasons why the meeting has been postponed.

Q: In the last four months, the government and the United Nations signed a declaration on the facilitation of humanitarian activities. Can you tell us more and has the government implemented its commitments in this declaration?

Spokesperson: According to the press releases issued after every meeting of the High Level Joint Committee composed of the United Nations, the Government of Sudan, donor countries and NGOs, their appreciation of the implementation of the implementation of the Joint Humanitarian Communiqué has been so far positive so far. Again, maybe I should circulate to you these documents from OCHA – the Humanitarian Profile. We distributed these press releases widely. They actually mention in the Humanitarian Profile the Joint Humanitarian Communiqué. Please read through it and make reference to this particular aspect.

Here is the section. They say [*reading from the text of the Humanitarian Profile*], “Building on the signing of the Joint Communiqué to facilitate administrative procedures governing humanitarian activities

in late March, a high-level community comprise of representatives of the government, the United Nations and NGOs has met 3 times since 2 May and a delegation of the high-level committee visited el-Fasher and Nyala on 30 May and el-Geneina in 4 July to begin implementation of the Joint Communiqué. The delegation met with local authorities to explain the mechanisms of the communiqué and to consider any issues that remain to be addressed.”

Q: The new arrivals you explained earlier in North Darfur, could you explain a little more why this is happening?

Spokesperson: We have been reporting on this for at least the last two months and we mentioned in every briefing what are the reasons ... at least the reasons that have been mentioned by the IDPs themselves. I have to refer you back to my last briefing as the new arrivals are a continuation of the influx of the IDPs in the same areas for the same reasons and we mentioned this in the last briefing and the briefing before. For further information on displacements, I recommend that you talk to my colleagues from OCHA.

Thank you.