



UNITED NATION

الأمم المتحدة

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

## Office of the Spokesperson

Date: 15 February 2006

### PRESS BRIEFING

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

#### UNMIS ACTIVITIES

##### SRSG

- SRSG Jan Pronk accompanied with an UNMIS delegation met yesterday in Addis Ababa at the AU Headquarters with an AU team headed by Ambassador Said Djinnit AU the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. Ambassador Baba Gana Knigibe, the Head of the African Mission in Sudan took part in the meeting. This meeting was held in response to the UNSC presidential Statement dated 3 February, whereby the Secretary-General was requested to start immediate contingency planning jointly with the AU on options for a possible transition from the Au mission in Sudan to a UN operation. The meeting discussed the UN/AU partnership for this purpose and the needs to be addressed to ensure the smoothness and the success of an AU/UN transition if and when it takes place. Mechanisms of UN/AU joint contingency planning have been established in Addis Abba, Khartoum and Al Fasher. Meanwhile, contingency planning for the possible AU-UN transition is also underway at UN headquarters. The UN and the AU are also working jointly to identify AMIS resources' requirements for the transition period, to be submitted to the Pledging conference scheduled to take place in Brussels. We want the AU in the next couple of months to be enabled to expand its activities during the transition period and we will request the donors to provide necessary resources for that purpose.

Related to this issue, I would like to draw the attention of the Sudanese English Daily Sudan Vision to an error in the article published in its 14 February edition under the headline "**Jan Pronk: AMIS didn't have logistical and Mobility Support**" attributing an interview to SRSG Jan Pronk. The interview published is actually some excerpts from the UN Secretary-General press encounter on 9 February prior to leaving to Washington.

- SRSG Jan Pronk met on 13 February with General Paulino Matip, SPLA Chief of Staff.. Discussions included the general security situation in Southern Sudan and the CPA implementation, including the issue of the Other Armed Groups. It was agreed that Gene Matip and UNMIS will maintain regular contact to follow-up on these issues.

-The SRSG undertook a three-day trip to North and South Darfur (10-12 Feb). His visit included meetings with the Government authorities in the two States as well as Representatives of other political parties, civil society and tribal leaders, whom he briefed on the ongoing discussions around the issue of a possible transition of the AU mission in Darfur to a UN operation. The SRSG explained the chronology of events that brought the issue on the agenda of the UN Security Council to address misgivings about the UN role in this issue, i.e, the UN forcing itself to take over from the AU. He explained in this regard that the initial decision came from the AU Peace and Security Council in its Communiqué dated 10 January 2006 to support in principle such a transition. He added that the AUPSC is yet to state its final stand on this issue in its upcoming meeting at the ministerial level. The SRSG explained also that the Presidential Statement adopted by the UNSC on 3 February is meant to prepare for a possible transition of AMIS to a UN operation in case the AU decides for the transition, in order to avoid any vacuum in Darfur. The SRSG met also with SLA commanders and his message to them was to unite and commit to a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Darfur and stop fighting. He urged them also to refrain from alliances with groups of other countries and to distance themselves from and isolate those who are involved in such acts and in arms trafficking and violations of the arms embargo. On 12 Feb., he visited Daya, the site of the helicopter crash, and thanked the local villagers for assisting in the rescue operation. He also paid respect at the grave of the GOAL staff member Ms. Hadja Hamid.

-Related to this issue, UNMIS has agreed to a request from SLA Minni Minawi to fly him from Al Fasher to Abuja on board of an UNMIS plane. The SRSG urged Minni Minawi in a phone conversation they had yesterday to join the talks in Abuja the soonest because of the current speedy pace of the negotiations.

## **Military Update**

**Strength:** Deployment of military observers and the protection force is progressing. Currently UNMIS has 614 Military Observers, 164 Staff Officers and 5369 Protection Force and Enabling Personnel deployed throughout the mission area. The total number of Peacekeepers in Sudan presently stands at 6147 personnel. Other than Russian and Chinese Contingents, all other TCCs have joined the mission area and are well established on ground. Chinese troops are likely to join by the end of this month.

## **Tribute to SAF victims of Plane Crash**

The Force Commander Lieutenant General Jasbir Singh Lidder visited Aweil on 13 February 2006, the site at which SAF aircraft caught fire and paid tribute to the victims of the crash. He also conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

## **CJMC**

The CJMC meeting was held on 14 February 2006 in Juba. The CJMC observed a minute's silence in the memory of the SAF soldiers who died in the tragic plane crash of 10 February.

The Chairman (UNMIS Force Commander) reviewed the issues relating to the SPLA redeployment plan from Eastern Sudan and reiterated that it was vital that these matters be dealt with by the Joint Defense Board (JDB).

The Chairman noted that Joint Monitoring teams (JMTs) in HAMESH KOREIB have commenced verification of actual ground positions held by various parties. He informed, however, that they are experiencing cooperation problems with the PDF. The SAF confirmed that the PDF in HAMESH KOREIB is aligned with the SAF and that they will pass necessary instructions to the PDF to cooperate with the verification process.

The Chairman stated that the cooperation shown by the Parties in defusing tension at HAMESH KOREIB should become a benchmark for resolving likely future flashpoints. The Chairman underscored the need to maintain peace, in conformity with the provisions of the CPA.

The Chairman requested the parties to provide the lists of the “non-aligned Other Armed Groups” (OAGs) at the earliest. The SAF advised that they have provided the lists of groups aligned to them, but could not provide lists of those who weren’t aligned to them.

The CJMC agreed that the movement to assembly areas must be expedited and completed not later than 15 March 06. Accordingly, the Parties must provide full details and cooperation for implementation of this aspect at the AJMC level.

It was emphasized that all JIUs must be formed and trained by 9 October 2006. The Chairman noted that JIUs will be vital in developing Sudan’s security and there should be no further delays in their formation.

#### **UNMIS Police:**

UN Police during the week were involved in working out modalities for training 500 SPLM Police Officers in Juba. UN Police assistance were sought to train local police officers in VIP security, security for vital installations and conducting patrol in and around Juba. The proposed course will last 21 days and will be conducted either at Buluk Training School or in some unengaged schools. Other training assistances include inviting Dr. Wani Edward from WHO to train local officers at Juba on First Aid while lectures on democratic policing and homicide investigation and “Community Policing” were delivered by UN police at Melut for GOS police officers. Similarly in Ed Damazin, lectures on “Rule of Law” were delivered by UN Police at the Roseires Training School. 102 officers attended this Refresher Course.

The strength of UN Police is 402 from 30 PCCs. Thirty-eight officers are attending induction courses and 38 are waiting for deployment.

#### **Civil Affairs:**

On 12 Feb., in an effort to engage religious parties throughout Sudan, UNMIS Khartoum met Sheikh Abdelmahmoud Abbu, Secretary-General of El Ansar Affairs Corporation, and Imam of Syyed Abdelrahman El Mahdi Mosque in Omdurman. El Ansar is one of the main religious sects in Sudan, led by Sadiq El Mahdi, current President of the Umma National Party. The Sheikh welcomed UNMIS’s role in Sudan and remarked that the UNMIS mandate and Charter of the UN were compatible with the values of the peoples of Sudan and did not contradict Islam. Despite reservations on some of its text, the Sheikh still supports the CPA. It was agreed to arrange meetings with all religious leaders and Imams of Mosques and organize a workshop with all religious sects in Sudan to explain the objectives of the CPA and the role of the Mission.

## **Gender**

From 5-9 Feb., UNMIS carried out an assessment mission to Nyala in order to identify entry points for interventions by the Gender Unit on gender-based violence (GBV). Possible entry points identified included advocating on frequency and scope of AU patrols, and enhancing the capacity of local NGOs to carry out awareness-raising campaigns on GBV. The Unit met with 16 national/international NGOs, UN agencies, and the AU, and attended the weekly meeting of the State Committee on GBV.

## **Security**

The Security situation in Darfur remains volatile. As most of you reported, there is information on an SAF helicopter that was shot down in Rhill village in Shariaa area by the Sudan Liberation Army yesterday. We were told that the helicopter was shot down during a fighting between SLA and SAF following an attack by Government forces supported by militia on the area. An AU team headed to the incident site by road to investigate.

In southern Sudan, On 10 Feb., a group of 20 to 30 armed men dressed in military combat uniform attempted to gain entry to the UNICEF compound at Yambio (Western Equatoria) and shot in the air when denied access. A short while later a detachment of SPLA soldiers arrived and a running engagement followed. Several members of UN staff including UN Police and UNMOs were in the compound. No casualties or serious injuries were reported and none as a result of firearms. The identity of the attackers is still not known and investigations are ongoing. Some looting of communication equipment has taken place.

This is the end of my briefing but before I end the briefing, I have seen in *AlAyaam* – I hope they have a representative here today – announcing some news about me “getting a promotion” and leaving Sudan. Thank you very much for your interest but I would like to highlight the following:

I am just a civil servant of the United Nations. I would like for my private affairs to be kept private. I don't think it is a matter of interest for the Sudanese people to know about my whereabouts if I am in Sudan or leaving. I can confirm to all of you that most probably – I would say 99% - that this is my last press briefing to you as UNMIS Spokesperson.

Yes I am leaving UNMIS because I have been called for other duties in another country. It is not a promotion; it is just a regular thing that happens – nobody stays in one duty station for a long time and all of us are rotating.

Thank you very much for your cooperation, I did appreciate it very much. I wish you all the best; I wish the best to the Sudan and, more important, to the Sudanese media. Hopefully, your role in this very delicate phase of the history of your country is going to be increased and is going to be more targeted to your very noble mission which is to keep your people and your readers abreast of what is taking place, sensitizing them, informing them, discussing openly the challenges ahead; having a critical eye on everything that is taking place including the United Nations presence.

There will be no press briefing next Wednesday. Next week you will be having a press conference with the SRSG Jan Pronk next Tuesday. Please take note of it. If I am here, I will join him.

Thank you very much, I am done with my briefing and the floor is open for your questions.

## Q & A

**Q:** My first question is on what you mentioned in one of your previous press briefings about 5 or 6 weeks ago that the international community has projected possible scenarios to end the conflict in Darfur. These possible scenarios are now being discussed in loud voices. One of these is the AMIS-UN transition. Are there other scenarios apart from this?

The second question is on the issue of eastern Sudan. What is the latest development on this issue?

My third question is on the increasing criticisms over the implementation of the CPA. How do you as UNMIS assess the situation? Is the process going on slowly or at a satisfactory pace?

My last question is on donor commitments and their contributions – how do you assess these?

**Spokesperson:** On your first question, the scenario currently under discussion is the one of the transition of the AMIS to a UN operation. We have started studying and preparing contingency plans for such a scenario should the AU Peace and Security Council confirm in their meeting at ministerial levels in March that such a transition take place because their first decision was to support in principal such a scenario.

I am not aware at this moment of any other scenario currently under discussion.

On your second question on the eastern Sudan issue, we follow the situation in eastern Sudan at the political. Like you, we are aware of what took place in Libya and we learnt of what took place there and the outcome of the mini-summit held in Tripoli. For further information, please contact the relevant parties in charge of this dossier because they are in a better position to tell you the details surrounding what happened in Libya.

On the CPA, our general assessment, which you will find the information we have in this document “*The CPA Monitor*” published by the mission on a monthly basis. You have copies of it so please go through it. It is a monthly publication that tracks what has and has not been implemented.

In general, one should expect some difficulties in the implementation of any agreement, particularly one like the CPA, a very ambitious agreement and this is only normal and is not strange and only unique to Sudan. We are not alarmed however. We have the conviction that the two parties are greatly and irreversibly committed. There are some obstacles but all these can be transcended. True, we do believe that it was possible for the Parties to settle some of the lengthy prolongation sometimes in the implementation of some clauses of the agreement but, in general, we believe these issues can be resolved and that they are issues that do not jeopardize in any way the CPA.

On your last question on our assessment on the donors' response, this assessment differs depending on the field you are talking about. If we talk about Darfur in general, our assessment of the role of the donors is positive. Yes, UN humanitarian agencies did encounter some minor difficulties in funding of their Darfur operations. If we talk about the other parts of the Sudan especially the Transitional Areas and southern Sudan, in general – you are aware that we have received almost all the funds we had requested in the Work Plan 2005 but the problem we faced throughout the year is the great delay in getting the cash pledged in Oslo. This, of course, contributed negatively on our capabilities to implement our programs according to the schedules we had set.

As for the Work Plan 2006, I do not have much information on the issue. Please give us some time to confirm the information from our colleagues who are directly in charge of this issue.

On the AU, Donor states played a major throughout last year when the AU received the necessary funds for running their operations – at least with the numbers they had on the ground - but we had said in a number of occasions that the response of the donor community in its logistics, technical and other assistance to the AU was not sufficient enough to enable her operate in the required and the effective manner that we all want for the AU. On the cash side, you are aware that the AU has a problem. This problem is in fact one of the basic reasons the AU has in principal supported a transition to a UN operation. Our assessment therefore to the donor response is good in some aspects that enabled us to curb the humanitarian crisis to a large extent in Darfur but below the required levels in the Transitional Areas and southern Sudan. As for the AU the response has been satisfactory from the start of AU operations to last year. But there has been a clear shortfall of this support since the beginning of AU operations here with regards to logistics, technical and communications equipment.

This in general is our assessment of the donor response. We lay great hopes in the forthcoming donors' meeting that will take place in Brussels, Belgium, in March to provide the necessary requirements for the AU operations in Darfur – at least to enable it to carry out its duties during the transition period should the transition to a UN operation be confirmed, of course. This is what we will strongly push for. As I said, we work together with the AU to determine the needs required for this role in the coming months during the transitional period if the transition has been decided upon.

**Q:** I know it is not the right time but would like to thank you very much for your cooperation with us during your stay in Sudan.

My first question is if the AU requires only 160 million dollars and a UN operation may require up to a billion dollars, why then would the UN not provide funding to the AU? Your answer in the last press briefing was not very clear to me.

What is your assessment of the situation in Abuja? You said last week that SRSRSG Jan Pronk would be traveling to Abuja – we do not know what happened.

**Spokesperson:** I did tell you in the last press briefing of Mr. Pronk's visit to Abuja and his talks with the parties. This was in the briefing notes distributed to you.

First of all, on the Abuja process, I prefer that you ask the party in charge of the political assessment of the Abuja process that is the AU. Of course we are present in Abuja talks,

support the mediation efforts and have experts working with the AU on the three issues of Security, Power Sharing and Wealth Sharing. We do have experts working on these issues and supporting the African efforts but the AU is in charge of the political management and as such, the general assessment must first of all come from the AU.

We support the political assessment of the AU in all its recent statements. You will find in the room the most recent Press Release issued by the AU which carries some good news which is that the pace of negotiations on some of the issues tabled seem to have picked up speed following the slow pace witnessed since the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> round of talks. We do hope that this momentum be maintained. On this 7<sup>th</sup> round of talks, we share with the AU the same assessment. The parties have not managed to achieve considerable success; the pace was very slow; there was insecurity on the ground while the talks were going on; there were a number of factors that affected the negotiations process. So, as I said, our assessment is the same as that of the AU. We keep reminding all the parties that since they all gave themselves the authority and responsibility to represent the people of Darfur, they must then rise to that level of responsibility. While the talks are going, there are people dying every day; you have people in the IDP camps; you have killings, rape, people can not harvest; you have land that the farmers can not cultivate; there are women being raped; there are villages being raided – everyday spent in talks sees loss of life in Darfur. We are talking here of millions and not 10 or 100 people. This is and has been always our common message UN and AU and everybody else to the negotiating parties.

Your second question on the transition, I would first of all want to clarify some point: we are talking only of the possibilities of a transition from the AMIS to a UN operation. This does not mean that every single aspect of the Darfur dossier will shift from AMIS to UN hands, as the colleague said. The Darfur dossier has a political side to it which is the talks and so on; and a military side to it. At the moment we are only talking about such a possibility with regards to the military side – AMIS operations on the ground in Darfur. We do not speak on the political side and the current focus is on the field presence and not the dossier as a whole as was said by the colleague.

On the issue of funding, thank you for this question because it is a lot of unclear and even in Mr. Jan Pronk's last visit to Darfur and during his talks with representatives of political parties and the civil society, the general impression is that the UN directly finances the AU. This is not and has never been the case at any time – the UN does not give the AU resources. What it does is to urge donor states to grant these funds to the AU. AU funding was therefore through some donor countries and has never been through the direct resources of the UN. This answers part of your question.

I do not want to go into details but what you must know is that no organization can fund another organization through its own budget. For example, the AU can not finance an operation the Arab League is undertaking in some place and *vice-versa*. The AU for instance can not directly fund the UN and *vice-versa*. These are financial regulations that govern all international and regional organizations and not the UN alone.

As for the issue of funding, since the funding originally comes from donor states, you should ask the donor countries.

**Q:** You told us that the UN was informed about a Sudan Army helicopter shot down last night without mentioning the number of people who died in that particular helicopter crash ...

**Spokesperson:** (*interrupting*) Before you proceed with your other questions, one; I told you that that is the information that we have. We don't have any further information. The United Nations, we informed you about this many times, is not present on the ground in the area. That is one consideration – because we withdrew our staff, you may remember. Two; it is not our mandate to provide this kind of information because that is the core of the mandate of the AU. This is an issue to be investigated by the AU . The initial report that we have is that of fighting between two of the parties of the N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement and that is the core of the mandate of the African Union. If we have something from the AU, definitely we will inform you.

**Q:** The second question: we have been reading in the media that today, the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, Nuer traditional leaders are supposed to present the UN a Letter of Protest with regard to the recent attack in Jonglei State and they have accused the SPLA of taking women and children hostage. I would like to know whether such a reality has been established by the UN that women and children have been taken hostage by the SPLA. What has the UN done so far on this?

They have also said that the UN is too slow and moving at the speed of a chameleon in monitoring and deploying its soldiers to monitor the ceasefire in southern Sudan. Have you received the Letter of Protest from the Nuer leaders? What are the contents of this letter?

Finally; UN Secretary-General and US President George Bush met last Monday to discuss possibilities of sending troops to Sudan's Darfur region to help. What are the facts beyond this? Nothing has been clear on the meeting of these two leaders with regards to the Darfur region. Can you clarify some points: what kind of assistance has the UN asked of the US for Darfur?

**Spokesperson:** On your first question, I don't have any details to give you except the following: I can confirm to you that there was a gathering of people – mainly from Dinka – who went today to the UNDP building and submitted a letter to the official there in UNDP addressed to UNMIS. We haven't seen the letter because it was submitted at around 11 in the morning to the UNDP. So I haven't seen it and don't know its contents. But we do understand that it is a protest on recent violence in Yuwai and the surrounding areas in Jonglei State.

Once we have the letter and see what is in it, then we can come back to you with the feedback about what is the UNMIS answer to this particular letter.

On your second question, there have been lots of coverage of the recent visit of the Secretary-General to Washington and also lots of misunderstanding surrounding what is it that we requests the US to do. To avoid any misunderstandings including the possibility of myself misquoting the Secretary-General, we have the actual transcript of what the Secretary-General said in his press encounter following his meeting with President Bush. At no point of time did the Secretary-General say that he asked the US to provide troops. The transcript is here and I do recall that I sent it to you by email but if you didn't receive it, we have the hard copy. But at no point of time did he say that.

First of all, however, you have to understand that it is part of the contingency planning - to prepare for the contingency planning that the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to do. Two; when we get in contact with some member-states, including the United States for



instance, that does not mean that we are necessarily asking for troops. Developed nations, including the US can contribute many other things than just troops. What is required from countries like the US, for instance and not only the US exclusively mind you but the rich countries in general, are required to provide the needed equipment, logistics and the expertise. When you send sophisticated equipment to some country, like Sudan and otherwise, you need the person who can handle the equipment. Nobody at this time is talking for troop contributing because we are not at that stage yet. Please read what the Secretary-General said.

The SG is also calling on these countries to support the AU Mission during a possible transition period that we don't know how long it will last. It is part of our effort to get the AU stronger on the ground.

**Q:** Since the UN and the AU need support and if the US can send troops to Iraq, why not to Darfur since these are also internal problems? Why doesn't the UN ask for US troops for Darfur? In Iraq there are US troops.

**Spokesperson:** That's not the issue. What we are saying is that it is too early to discuss troops because we are still having a decision in principle from the AU and we are only doing contingency planning for the time being. This contingency planning is mainly focused on a transition. Assuming that in March the AU would decide to confirm the transition, and the UNSC Council decides to authorize a UN operation, then we will discuss the issue of troops. That is where the word 'transition' comes from. This is why they did not say 'hand over' – they said 'transition'. The biggest priority for the time being is to make sure that the transition is done, as I said in my briefing, smoothly and successfully. And as I said also today, we would like to have the AU in the next couple of month or for the duration of the transition period if it is confirmed, to extend and strengthen its activities on the ground and we would be requesting the donors to provide the requisite resources for that purpose – that is the focus.

If we have a decision to deploy in Darfur, the procedure in the UN is to send a *Note Verbales* to its members, asking them if they can contribute troops. The UN deals equally with all its members. When it comes to resources that are not available with the troop contributing countries, we ask the countries who can contribute logistics, equipment and so on. . We do not segregate or exclude or favor – nothing of that matter.

**Q:** Tom Vraaslen, the head of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, said that the UN has not sent its representatives to the Commission up to this moment and he made other comments. What are your comments on this?

**Spokesperson:** My answer would be the following: first of all, the UN is not a member in this commission and is not even an observer. There are however regular meetings and exchange of information between UNMIS and the head of the Commission.

In general and with relation to what has been attributed to Mr. Tom Vraaslen, we do not comment on such issues until we have confirmations from the source itself. Up till now, we have not confirmed the exact statements of what has been attributed to Mr. Vraaslen.

**Q:** I am asking about the truth behind sending UN troops to replace the AU troops in Darfur. I came late and do not know whether or not I understood the answer. It is being said that the AU suffers from a calculated financial crisis from the UN in order to ease the take over.

**Spokesperson:** I have been answering this question four weeks ago and don't have anything else to add. What I have said time and again and you don't seem to take it as "the truth" is the following: the AU Peace and Security Council adopted a communiqué on 10 January – and we have distributed this statement to you and we still have copies if you want – in which it mentioned that it has financial difficulties and that the amounts it has in its budget is only enough to cover for its operations until March. Based on this, the AU goes on to say in its statement that it supports in principle the transition to a UN operation. It also said that this issue will be looked into at the Ministerial level of the African Union Peace and Security Council next March in order to come up with a final decision.

The UNSC, on its side, has been informed of the decision by the AU and has adopted a Presidential Statement requesting the Secretary-General of the UN, based on the AU Peace and Security Council statement, to start setting contingency plans jointly with the AU in case the AU decides on a possible transition. I do not have anything more to say on this issue. I told you that the UN does not provide funds to the AU and our truth is that there is no conspiracy from the UN to hinder the work of the AU which we've been supporting from the beginning.

**Q:** Some government officials say they will view this situation as a form of colonialism should UN forces replace the AU in Darfur. What are your comments on this?

**Spokesperson:** I have not heard statements of such sort. True I have heard and seen a number of statements and have seen on Sudan Television some Sudanese officials expressing their support to the AU role. To date, there is no official confirmed position from the Government of National Unity in Sudan expressing its official view on this issue. There are comments and some positions expressed by some Sudanese officials and some reservations expressed by others. Once there is a decision to have a UN operation and official position of the GoNU on it, then we could address such a question.

**Q:** I was going to ask this question but my colleague happened to do so. This is a follow up on the Evaluation and Assessments Commission. You said that you don't have anything to do about it but I remember that Mr. Jan Pronk himself was stressing that this commission was not being formed and has not acted as quickly as possible.

The four observers in this commission were the AU, the EU, the Arab League and the UN.

**Spokesperson:** You are referring to the decree establishing the commission? Yes?. Well, I can confirm officially that the UN. Although it was cited in the decree as an observer, we are not. We are not members and we are not observers.

We don't have any capacity in that particular institution – not observers; not members.

**Q:** But you are involved with them; this is part of the requirements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement ...

**Spokesperson:** As I told you, we cooperate with the Assessment and Evaluation Commission but we are not part in its meetings. Remember that we are accountable to the Security Council. Remember that the Assessment and Evaluation Commission is accountable to the Parties and the Partners to supporting the implementation of the peace agreement. We are accountable and we report to the Security Council. So our reporting includes also evaluation of the work of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. Please do understand the difference.

**Q:** I just want to tell you one thing. We are sorry that you will be leaving us and thank you very much for your cooperation and your patience with us as sometimes we tend to be very troublesome.

**Spokesperson:** Not at all. It has been my pleasure. Thank you all very much for everything. Actually I am here to serve you and not anything else.

It is the duty of the United Nations to inform the people. We try to do it as transparently and as openly and as frequently as possible. I hope that we provided you with things that were useful.

**Q:** About these contingency plans being carried out by the UN for a possible Darfur operation ... we know that this (the transition) will happen. The UN has made us used to that.

**Spokesperson:** Excuse me but on this specific issue, I do not know what your reference is when you say the UN has made you used to this. The initiative was from the AU and should you have any doubts, please ask the AU.

If you expect the UN to leave a vacuum and rescind its responsibilities towards preserving international peace and security then I am surprised.

If your assumption is that you do not want the UN to come in even if the AU lacks the resources, I do not think that this is logical because, in the long run, the UN is primarily responsible for preserving international peace and security. Secondly; Sudan is member of the AU but are also of the UN. The funding of the AU comes from states and these states have said they will not contribute money beyond a certain date. This is an issue that concerns the AU and the donor states.

If there is anyone who can bear responsibility for the creation of a vacuum in Darfur against the background of the AU-UN debate despite the fact that the UN is primarily responsible for preserving international peace and security, then they should do so. This is a general answer to your question. The debate has to be logical. It is not only an issue of 'we want only the AU' and that is all. He or she who says this will tomorrow have to answer when the AU comes and says well I have run out of funds and winding up my operations and going. What then will be the alternative? Could anybody expect that the UN, after making efforts to face one of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world turn back and leave the situation to slip to levels worst than before and bring the situation back to 2003 levels.

To conclude, I would say that to date I have not seen any logical, confirmed and documented basis for all this apprehension against the UN which some see as a tool to colonize. The first thing the UN did in its history was to decolonize. Without the UN, neither Sudan nor most countries in Africa and elsewhere would have become independent. Please go back to the

history of the UN and see the important role it played in decolonizing and its work for the people.

**Q:** (*indiscernible* but the question is on issues pertaining to relations between states, in particular US and Sudan)

**Spokesperson:** The issue of relations between States is an issue that concerns those States. The UN does not represent the interests of a State or a group of countries.

The utmost importance at this time is to resolve the issue of Darfur in a final and decisive manner. This is the priority on which issues should be based and not on the argument on AU versus UN. In our view, this is not the priority. The priority lies in resolving the ongoing crisis and not allow the creation of a vacuum. This is the issue we must concentrate on and not theories of conspiracy and so on that would not change the situation in Darfur today.

Thank you very much and I wish you all well. Thanks also to my colleagues the interpreters Mr. Jan Pronk will be briefing you next Tuesday and if I am available I will be there and if not then this is my last appearance before you. I will continue to follow the Sudan issue from far through the press and through what you write.

Thank you very much.