



UNITED NATION

الأمم المتحدة

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

Office of the Spokesperson

Date: 6th April 2006

PRESS CONFERENCE

Hosting Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan,
Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator
Mr. Manuel Aranda da Silva

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference by DSRSG da Silva HC/RC held on 6th April 2006 at UNMIS Headquarters, Khartoum.

Haled Al-Hitti, Spokesperson a.i.: Good afternoon colleagues and friends.

We are pleased to have with us today Mr. Manuel da Silva, the Deputy SRSR and RC, HC. He will have a few remarks and then take your questions.

Without further ado, I leave the floor to Mr. da Silva.

DSRSG da Silva: Good morning to everybody. I hope that we will have a short press conference today.

As you know, I would rather have been very happy if we would have had this press conference to speak about the situation on the ground in Darfur and about how the visit of Mr. Egeland has been a successful visit. Unfortunately, that was not the case so I would be answering any question that you want about that issue.

We are quite concerned about the fact that the situation in Darfur ... not only in Darfur but in other parts of Sudan is quite difficult at this moment and we have many problems. What happened with Mr. Egeland's visit is just one example of the difficulties humanitarian workers face in carrying out their work in Sudan. That is something that we are confronted with on a daily basis on administrative difficulties that are put to all of us to be able to work in Sudan. Some of them are quite known by you and we try to find solutions for this with the Government of Sudan. It is not very easy sometimes but we remain engaged in trying to support people who are suffering in Sudan pending that final solutions come out from Abuja.

It is also a big pity because there are also good things sometimes happening in Sudan. Even during Mr. Egeland's visit when he went to work in the south and follow upon the returning

process of IDPs to their homes of origin. These kinds of issues don't come up so much in the mass media because, of course, the other issues overshadow those positive things. It is a pity that it is like that because if we could have no restrictions on our work of course that would not be news. The news would be about how things are being done but if we have all these kinds of restrictions, then it is quite difficult if none of the mass media focus on that.

So I am open to any kind of questions from your part.

Q: Why do you think it is that the Government of Sudan is so obstructive to aid workers? Do they really care whether their people die or not?

Secondly; how is Sudan rated in terms of obstructive governments; is it one of the worst in the world for obstructing humanitarian access or one of the better?

DSRSG da Silva: Starting from the second part of your question, I think that many people in Sudan have not realized yet that a peace agreement is underway on the north-south in Sudan. And this means there is a need for a change in the situation. The Emergency Laws have been lifted in most cities, states in Sudan and accordingly, it means for example that travel permits should not be required anymore for the states that are not in war. However this is not still the case. I think that Sudan maybe is one of the last countries in the world where people are still required to travel to any state.

I don't think that everybody understands that the CPA signed in January of 2005 means also a change on the way business is carried in Sudan; means democratization of society; means freedom of the press; means that people – in an organized and following the laws – are able to speak and are able to move. I can understand that in some areas there are still some problems of security that oblige to specific measures and we know that it is the government of Sudan that has the responsibility for the security of not only citizens but also of the people who work in Sudan. There is no question about that but I don't think that systems have been adjusted to the new situation.

In terms of the consequences, what I think is that many times decisions are made without recognizing that the consequences of these decisions in this country affect the people. For example, Mr. Egeland was coming to Sudan to organize funding for Sudan – that was the main purpose of his trip. So now he has to explain to those who provide the funding how can the funding be given to Sudan if even the person who is the highest representative of the humanitarian community in the world couldn't visit the main humanitarian crisis? Do you think that is positive; in fact that is negative and has impacts – negative impacts. So when sometimes people take these decisions, they don't think of the consequences.

Q: In terms of the world, how does Sudan make it?

DSRSG da Silva: It is quite difficult for me. I don't know the world in general but in my experience, I would say that Sudan is one of the world's most difficult places to work – no doubt about it. If you go to Kosovo, if you go to Angola during the crisis in Angola or in my own country, Mozambique, during the war, there was not this kind of restrictions of movement of people.

Q: I have two questions: the first question is that I think you have seen the allegations against the African Union troops. Do you think that was [*indiscernible*] of the United Nations being deployed here?

Secondly; how do you make the case to western governments that they should give money to Sudan and to Darfur when the government is being so obstructive? Wouldn't the money be better spent elsewhere where probably you could work with a much more cooperative government that wants to work with you rather than obstructing what you are doing?

DSRSG da Silva: On the first question, I could not comment. I don't know about it but heard of it. You should ask this of the African Union. But I think it is only allegations; there is nothing that proves these allegations are founded. It is not for me to comment on that.

On the second issue, no doubt that this doesn't help. If we want to mobilize funding, we need to be able to work freely; we need to be able to move freely; we need to be able to have access to the people and there are many restrictions on this. I don't want to go into details here but I could have a list of 50 cases of restrictions on the last three months. In the capital they don't see the things. What happens is that there are certain amounts of money and that this amount of requirements and needs and what happens is that if people feel these negative news they say it is better to put the money into drought in Kenya or in other places where things are much easier and money can be used without problems and without restrictions. No doubt that is going to impact negatively on the funding.

Q: I have two questions. Referring to the Egeland visit, you said that the Sudan is among the countries where humanitarian workers suffer much. On the other hand, Sudanese public opinion speaks of great facilities the government of Sudan is granting the United Nations. An example is that you have been granted use of part of the Khartoum International Airport through which you could operate without any hindrance. Why focus on the Egeland visit as an example of obstruction to United Nations operations in Sudan?

The second question; the Government of Sudan said that Egeland's plane was not permitted to land due to the prevailing climate in the Darfur region. Does the Government of Sudan have no sovereign right for responsibility for the safety and protection of international (United Nations) officials?

DSRSG da Silva: The Government of Sudan has the right to decide on everything as a government and we don't question that right. We question if it is a wise decision to invite somebody to your own country to have a program that has been agreed with the government – has been agreed between Mr. Egeland and the Minister of Foreign Affairs – that has been submitted for approval to the Minister of Foreign Affairs; agreed with the government in detail and then when the person is already in Sudan he is denied access. If the Government of Sudan had clearly stated before he comes that it is not the right moment and it should be postponed, that would be something that of course Mr. Egeland would have followed. But it didn't happen that way and it is very unfortunate. I have a letter from the minister regretting what happened and inviting Mr. Egeland to come back to Sudan and I would like to see Mr. Egeland back to Sudan as soon as possible in the very near future. But we had agreed with the Government of Sudan for him to come on that date – it was the Government of Sudan; not somebody else.

The visit was not imposed on the Government of Sudan; the visit was agreed with the Government of Sudan.

Q: The Government of Sudan has justified that the unwelcome visit of Egeland is because of the security situation in Darfur. Is there a guarantee that he is going to come to visit the southern Sudan since security there is good? What are possibilities for his visit?

Now, according to the press release of the military personnel, the SPLA is going to be redeployed to southern Sudan from Hamesh Khoreib and eastern Sudan from the 10th of February. Is that right? And if it is right, who is going to take over its place in the east?

DSRSG da Silva: There are many questions there. On the first question, I must say, Mr. Egeland visited Sudan and had a visa from the Government of Sudan to come on that date, by the way. The Government of Sudan gave him a visa to come on that date. It is not that just he came to Sudan without consultations. He has actually met with the Vice-President of Sudan – he met with Vice-President Salva Kiir; actually, he also met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan. He met with Minister Lam Akol.

What was denied in the last minute was to visit Darfur based on the concern of the government of their security and the timing. Why I am saying it is very unfortunate is because the timing and the security has been discussed with the Government of Sudan – it was not that Egeland said ‘I am coming on the 2nd no matter what’.

We feel that that was very unfortunate. We understand that there were second thoughts but that was very late because all this could have been avoided if the Government of Sudan said from the beginning that it was not a good timing.

Now it is very difficult for us to understand that the Government of Sudan can not provide security to the Undersecretary-General of the United Nations to Darfur. It is actually a symptom of Government of Sudan lack of control over security in Darfur. But when the government says, “We can not provide security to the Undersecretary-General in Darfur”, it means that the government has difficulties in controlling security in Darfur and even in the capital because we tried to visit other parts of Sudan but couldn’t. So we take note of that that the Government of Sudan’s difficulties in controlling security in Darfur.

Q: My second question was not answered. The one on the SPLA withdrawal from the east and their replacement.

DSRSG da Silva: Oh, you are right I didn’t answer that one.

That is part of the peace agreement and there are agreed timeframes for this ritual. As you know the ritual should have taken place on the 9th of January this year but because of delays in this process, that calendar has changed and so it is now postponed. What happens after that, I can not predict ... you should ask of the Government of Sudan of what it intends to do after that.

Q: The statement of the Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that he had sent a message to United Nations Mission in Sudan to inform them that it is not possible to visit Darfur not because of the security but, he said, that we would be celebrating the birth of the

Prophet Mohamed. He also wondered why the United Nations Mission in Sudan in their statement didn't mention this.

My second question is: the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said that he was going to talk to President Bashir concerning the issue on the table. How far have they gone on this issue?

DSRSG da Silva: That was another reason. There was even a third one that was given by the government that it was because he was a Norwegian on the official letter. But, as I said, the date had been agreed on with the government. I can even tell you the date when this [*the date of the visit*] was agreed. The formal communication confirming the date after he had discussed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs was on 16th of March and after discussions took place personally between Mr. Egeland and the Minister of Foreign Affairs before that. So it should be at that time that the Government of Sudan should say it is not a good day because there are religious concerns or it is a holiday or because of any other reasons.

The problem here was that the change was when he was already inside Sudan that in a way that is not very much state; not normal state relations that all this happened. If the Government of Sudan had informed Mr. Egeland that the notification of his visit then in 16th of March is not a good date, of course Mr. Egeland would not have come and we would have discussed another date with the Government of Sudan. The reason why he was coming on this date as discussed with the Government of Sudan was because he was on a trip to Uganda and so it was a combination of several trips. He is a very busy man. He needs to plan in advance so this was planned very well in advance and it is not like he informed the Government of Sudan on the 2nd of April that he was coming.

Q: How about my second question?

DSRSG da Silva: I have no information that it [*the talks Secretary-General Annan said he would have with President Bashir*] took place already.

Q: You said that you have received a message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing their regret over what happened on the Egeland visit. Has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs set any new date for another visit?

Have there been commitments to his safety and protection on a new visit to Darfur?

DSRSG da Silva: It seems that, yes. The letter said that he is most welcome to visit South Darfur and that the *wali* of South Darfur is willing to receive Mr. Egeland in the date that would be agreed by both parties. We don't have a date yet and Mr. Egeland has a very tight schedule and now we need to see when he is available to do that so that it would be agreed with the Government of Sudan and Mr. Egeland on the best way to do it.

Of course he is very busy with other emergencies so he is traveling very soon to Kenya to launch a bid appeal for the drought in Kenya and in the Horn of Africa.

Q: I don't think that Egeland's visit, should it have taken place, would only be to South Darfur. I think Mr. Egeland would have visited most of the areas of conflict and suffering of the population [*in Darfur*]. Do you think that he would be content with visiting only South Darfur or will he also visit areas where people are in need of assistance?

DSRSG da Silva: Sudan is a very large country and I am sure he can not visit all areas but the program will be agreed with the Government of Sudan and of course we is very interested in all areas where the suffering is bigger. If there is a visit, it would be to areas where the needs are highest and Darfur, of course, is one of the areas of the biggest humanitarian needs in Sudan. So he will be there for sure. It doesn't make sense of him to come without going to Darfur. But he may want to go to other places but that could be discussed with the government ... if the visit takes place.

Q: Speaking about Egeland's trip, you got an approval from the foreign minister in March about the trip; Egeland then spoke with the foreign minister in Rumbek and couldn't clear the blockages. Is it not a natural assumption, I mean do we to take that we all accept that the government isn't a homogenous body that you can't trust the foreign minister because he doesn't have any real influence and that you are wasting your time dealing with him his previous guarantees to you have come to nothing?

DSRSG da Silva: No, We think that the Government of Sudan is the government. We can't understand very well what happened really. It is correct; it is not normal behavior from a government to invite somebody and then when he is in the country to go back on that. But it doesn't mean that we don't believe that the Government of Sudan is not able to decide on something and keep it. What I am afraid of is that it is not every day that Mr. Egeland is available to visit a country and it may take some time before he comes.

Q: Just to follow up. We all know that Lam Akol is from the SPLM. So isn't it natural to think that he is not the one making these sorts of decisions; that you will be better off dealing with someone from the north, someone perhaps a bit closer to security who actually is controlling things?

DSRSG da Silva: Actually, the letter is not from Lam Akol; it is from the state minister. But I don't think that is the case. For us he is the government. Ministers are ministers of the Government of National Unity and they have the responsibility. We believe on them and we think that they have the authority and should exercise their authority.

For us, no matter who from the government tells us that Mr. Egeland is welcome. If he is a government authority, we take it as a decision of the Government of Sudan.

Q: There were statements that the reason for not allowing him [*Mr. Egeland*] into Darfur was because of the situation on the ground there and that the government seeks to resolve those issues.

There is also talk about the expulsion of some Norwegian NGOs. Have you been notified of the agencies expelled so far?

DSRSG da Silva: On the security situation, yes we are very worried. For the last two months more than 150,000 displacements took place in Darfur. There are tens of villages that have been burnt in Darfur in the last six weeks and there are many new displaced people in Darfur. So yes, the security situation is not good in Darfur but people think by denying Mr. Egeland to go there is going to prevent this to be reported. That is very naïve. Because no matter, today there are so many ways of knowing what is happening – if nothing else, just people show it by moving away from the village and taking refuge in the different places in the country or outside the country.

The world today is a global world; you can not hide things anymore. It is not like 100 years ago that things will take years to be known. Today things are known in the same day so it is a different world.

On the second question, I confirmed that the Government of Sudan has expelled the Norwegian Refugee Council, that is the NGO that has been taking care of Kalma camp and many other IDPs in the south of Darfur, and expelled them from South Darfur.

As you know, the Security Council has discussed this issue before yesterday and expressed a strong protest about these actions. We think that these NGO's are in South Darfur to do humanitarian work to be told one day that tomorrow you need to be [*indiscernible*] they are just leaving today and tomorrow so there will be no more people from NRC in South Darfur by today. That has enormous consequences on the situation of the IDPs in South Darfur because there is nobody to replace them. That is something very unfortunate, in my opinion.

And by the way, they are a Norwegian NGO but they are not Norwegians. The staff is from all countries in the world – Kenyans, Sudanese, British, French; they don't employ Norwegians only. So it is very unfortunate.

The reasons given also for not extending authorization by the Government of South Darfur [*for these NGOs*] was also security; they couldn't ensure the security. That shows also again the lack of control by government of the security in Darfur.

Q: You mentioned that Mr. Egeland's visit was approved by the foreign minister Dr. Lam Akol. And Dr. Lam Akol is a member of the SPLM who is a partner in the Government of National Unity and as such approved this visit. Somebody answered that no, this visit was not approved.

Do you think that ... can you read that there is a problem with the CPA?

DSRSG da Silva: For us, the visit was approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Sudan. And the same ministry has changed position at a certain moment and unfortunately, in my opinion, they are late. I don't think because the minister was from the SPLM that this happened. I think it happened because there was a change in the position of the Government of Sudan.

For us there is only one government in Sudan – the Government of National Unity. And if members are from SPLM or NCP is irrelevant for us. We deal with the government. The rest is internal problems - we don't mix up in internal problems of Sudan.

Q: But the international community is responsible for applying or to see the application of the CPA in the Sudan and you are part of that international body and that is why I am asking.

DSRSG da Silva: We have a role of monitoring of the implementation of the CPA but we don't consider this a violation of the CPA. We consider this bad management on the government to authorize a visit and then when he is here change opinion.

Q: It seems you are being diplomatic in your answers on questions over the Egeland visit. You did not tell us what the Government of Sudan said on the security concerns on the visit

and popular sentiments on the occasion of the birth of the Holy Prophet are unjustified. Maybe you can give us a clear answer to that.

You mentioned that you were aware of the situation in Darfur in general. But on the humanitarian side, you did not say much about the humanitarian situation.

The United Nations has also released a statement that Mr. Egeland was visiting in order to help collect 1.5 billion dollars. On the other hand the Government of South Darfur said a few days ago in its comment on humanitarian work in general that the United Nations has more than 600 vehicles in that state; that the United Nations is spending huge amounts of money on administrative expenses, and that of the 1.5 billion dollars, not more than 300,000 million dollars. We would also want a clear comment on this issue.

DSRSG da Silva: I think you have three questions. One is that you said I was quite diplomatic on the reasons. I don't comment on the reasons given by the government. What I am saying is that it is very unfortunate that the government has given these reasons at the last minutes when he was already in the country and not from the beginning when the government agreed on this visit.

It is quite unusual, I must say. In my history – and I have been in the government myself for many years – and in my work with the United Nations for the last 17 years, I have never seen an Undersecretary-General being denied to visit a region after this was agreed by the government. That is quite unusual; there are many unusual things in the Sudan. So it is quite unusual and what I am saying is that I think, for the Sudanese government, it is not good policy to authorize him to come and then when he is here, to tell him we don't authorize. It is bad management. If they wanted to draw have on Darfur in the negative side, they managed very well. And that is quite unfortunate.

On the issue of funding, it is true that in 2005 Sudan was the biggest recipient of humanitarian aid in the world and that humanitarian aid, a lot of it, has gone to Darfur. And there are very positive things going on. When I arrived in 2004, the rates of malnutrition in Darfur and of mortality due to disease was the highest in the world at that time. And in 2005, in spite of the violence, that never changed but the level of malnutrition in Darfur went down to levels below the crisis in Darfur. In Darfur today, we have more than 2 million people receiving treated clean water that they never had before. There are more than 2 million people who have access to health services of pretty good quality that they never had before and this is why the mortality rates were reduced dramatically in Darfur during 2005 and this has been proved by the independent surveys that had been done comparing the situation in the beginning of 2004 and in the middle of 2005. There is a huge difference. This means that this money has achieved something; the situation was contained.

In the last months, unfortunately, we have a deterioration of access in Darfur because of violence. We had much more new IDPs that was not the case last year. Last year the number of IDPs stabilized at a certain level up to September it was quite stable. But now we have new IDPs because there have been newly burnt villages in Darfur in the last three months. Mr. Egeland said in his statement that 92 villages were burnt in the last three months in Darfur.

We are very worried about that. We have large areas of Darfur that we used to be able to work in that we can't work in now. And I can give you examples in detail of where these

areas are. We have over the same number of IDPs in Gereida now than we have in Kalma. Golo town that used to have 35,000 people at least three months ago, if you go there today it is empty – there is not one single soul other than a military barracks because there was fighting in Golo that has obliged people to flee and they are now displaced in the village in the foothills of the Jebel Marra. In Sheiriya, all humanitarian organizations have been obliged to withdraw because they have been attacked in the last three weeks. I can continue for hours saying what is going on in Darfur. So that is of concern and we are worried that the achievements that we have managed of stabilizing the situation are going to be lost.

On the financial situation, of course we may have 600 cars in Darfur but I don't think that is abnormal. That maybe represents 0.5% of the funding. Most of the funding is for the food, for the water – we don't provide food without cars. We need to transport the food, we need to monitor where the food is going; of course we need to spend also on staff but this is a very small part of the whole funding going and it is part of the needs to do it. If we throw up the dollars in the air in Darfur, nobody gets fed. To get a ton of food to Darfur is quite complicated, actually. To get food to Darfur is one of the most complicated operations in the world because it comes from abroad or from Sudan (when we manage to buy it from Sudan) and then we need to transport it there under all these barriers. They need to be in a store and stores need to be built. We need to have storage capacity otherwise the food disappears. And then it needs also to be transported to the village – not only to the IDP camps but to the villages many times. This needs trucks and vehicles to monitor that. That is normal.

Only those who really don't care about the people of Darfur raise these questions about the money going for the international organizations. Nobody who is going to give the money would say, "Here is the money so please eat the money!" people don't eat money.

Q: Does it take the visit of Jan Egeland for us to be informed about all these fresh displacements and all the things that are going on in Darfur? We can't be coming on to these press briefings and for the last two months we haven't been told about these things going on. I was just wondering if you could look into that with your information crew why that flow of information isn't coming. It becomes useless.

DSRSG da Silva: We reported quite often about these things. What I am talking about Gereida, I had a press conference very recently – you were not there but your colleagues were here in that briefing so I am not going to do it today again.

These things are happening every day and I am very happy to brief you on the situation. We have the Humanitarian Profile and all this is indicated there in detail.

Q: We never get that.

DSRSG da Silva: It is once a month. We do this quite often and so if you want more information we can give you.

I want to go back a little bit to the financial issues. We are only here in Sudan because the government has not the capacity or the resources to support the IDPs in Darfur. We are here because the government requested us.

Of course in places where the government can take care of its people there is no need for having this kind of operation and so we are only guests here of the Sudanese. And it is very

important that people don't forget that. If people were not dying *en masse* in Darfur in 2004 in Darfur and if the Government of Sudan has not asked for the international community to come with support, we would not be here. Because for us, the responsibility to provide support to its people is, first of all, of the governments themselves – I mean of the Government of Sudan. So that, for us, is very clear.

The international community can only help if it is requested to do it but the fact, when it comes to refugees is different but when it comes to humanitarian operations, of course if there was no need, we would not be here. There are many needs and the money is very scarce. We would be very happy to pack and go if this means that everything is resolved and there are no more problems in Sudan.

Q: Recently British parliamentarians visiting Darfur expressed the same worries as those you are expressing. They said that donors are getting tired now of donating for Darfur because the fighting is not stopping and people are continuing to be displaced – they were speaking the same words as you were.

Do you agree that donors are now tired of donating? And what do you say on their getting tired?

DSRSG da Silva: No, to mobilize funding is always difficult because, as I said, there are many competing needs. The level of funding available in the international community to respond to humanitarian needs are much smaller than the needs. So it is quite difficult. As I said, if people feel that our capacity to operate is restricted so much and that we need to spend 500,000 dollars on the NGOs who are obliged to pay only on visa fees for the visas for their staff – almost 2 million dollars in the last month to the government of Sudan. All these make donors think may be it is better to use the money in another place.

And there is no lack of places to use the money, unfortunately. It would be good if you don't need that but, as I said, the global humanitarian needs are this side and the money available to respond is this side. Our job is to try to bring as much as possible the resources to respond to the needs of Sudan.

I am quite proud that we managed to mobilize for Sudan last year not only for the humanitarian but also for development from the international community close to 1.7 billion dollars. But of course if things don't go well, it is going to be very difficult to maintain that.

Q: What I know is that Gen. Salva Kiir met Mr. Jan Egeland the day before yesterday in Rumbek. Did he meet him as the Vice-President or as the chairman of the SPLM? Lam Akol was also there and did not meet him [*Jan Egeland*] in Khartoum but met him in Rumbek.

This displacement in Darfur, you said, is increasing daily. How much violations are going on there and what about the refugees from the Chadian border – how many Chadians are there now in western Darfur?

DSRSG da Silva: On the first question, I think Vice-president Salva Kiir who is the Vice-president of Sudan is also the Chairman of the SPLM. But the discussions were state discussions and not party discussions. Mr. Egeland was here in a visit to the state of the Sudan and not on a party visit. So he met with the Vice-President of the Sudan, of course.

And I am sure that Vice-President Salva Kiir is discussing the issues that he discussed with Mr. Egeland with the President of Sudan.

On the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he met with him as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and not as an SPLM member.

On your question about the refugees, there are many Chadian refugees in Sudan – correct. We have information about some. Actually, one part of Mr. Egeland’s visit was to look into how to mobilize resources for them. But there were two problems with that: we could not confirm the numbers because many of them are not accessible to us at this moment. We have no ability to access or to visit these people. We visited some of them but we do not have a comprehensive picture of the numbers. But we have knowledge and we know that there are refugees from Chad to Sudan due to the recent clashes inside Chad. So it is quite difficult for us to provide any assistance first if we can not visit the people; second, if resources are not available to do it.

Spokesperson, a.i.: Thank you very much; see you next week.