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Office of the Spokesperson

PRESS BRIEFING

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's weekly briefing (12:30PM) by Radhia Achouri, Spokesperson for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan:

UN Security Council

- The Security Council began its work yesterday with an open briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Kieran Prendergast, on the subject of Sudan and the monthly report of the Secretary-General on Darfur. Copies of the report have been sent to you, and for those who may not have received it, further copies are available after the briefing. Copies of the oral briefing made to the Security Council are also available for you.

In the oral briefing, the following main points were made:

- The month of November was characterized by an increase in violence and a deteriorating security situation in Darfur.
- The latest clashes, which threaten to plunge Darfur into chaos, are of great concern. Insecurity has reduced access to vulnerable people in need of urgent humanitarian aid.
- The international community is urged to send an unequivocal message to all Sudanese parties that violence and hostile military actions are not an acceptable means to achieve political gains.
- A reference was made to the Secretary-General's call on the leaders of the parties to redouble their efforts to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement in Naivasha, which could provide a basis to address the demands of other marginalized regions of the Sudan, including Darfur.

Council members went into closed consultations on Sudan following the briefing.

SRSG

- SRSG Jan Pronk and Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail co-chaired another session of the Joint Implementation Mechanism in Khartoum on 5 December. The JIM discussed the security situation in Darfur, particularly in Tawilla and Adwa. The SRSG renewed his call on the Government of Sudan to exercise restraint in reacting to rebel movements' attacks in order to avoid further escalation of the situation. He also urged the Government to instruct tribes' militia to stop its activities. On another issue, it was decided during the meeting that the sub-JIM on human rights and protection will hold its inaugural meeting during this week. The establishment of the sub-JIM has been agreed upon previously by the JIM members. The

new AU Special Representative to Sudan, Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, participated in his first JIM session.

- Prior to the JIM meeting, the SRSG met with the Special Representative of the AU. They exchanged views on the current situation in Darfur, the UN/AU cooperation and the Mission of the African Union in Darfur.
- The SRSG returned last night from Naivasha, Kenya, where he met separately with Vice President Taha and Chairman John Garang. He discussed with them progress made in the talks. The SRSG welcomed the good spirit shown by the two leaders and their commitment to finalize agreement on pending issues. He emphasized to both of them that every effort should be exerted in order to fulfill the commitment they made to the International community and to the Security Council on 19 November 2004. He cautioned that failure was not an option and that this time the credibility of the Security Council was at stake, since all its members signed as witnesses, the Memorandum of Understanding of 9 November.
- Prior to his meeting with Vice-President Taha and Chairman Garang, the SRSG discussed with Gen. Lazarus Sumbeiywo, chief mediator of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), progress the parties have achieved so far towards the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement.
- The African Union has announced that the fourth Round of the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur will start on 10 Dec. in Abuja, Nigeria. The Government of Sudan (GoS), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) will attend this round. The AU expects this round will result in the finalization of the Draft Declaration of Principles on Political Issues. The declaration of principles, once agreed upon, will serve as a basis for the parties to engage in substantive negotiations on political issues.

Security

North Darfur:

- An inter-agency humanitarian assessment team traveled from El Fasher to Tawilla through Serafaya and Korma on 27 Nov. The mission confirmed reports that around 6,000 new IDPs had arrived in Serafaya. They were displaced following a recent Janjaweed attack on Diribiba. However, shortly after the departure of the team, an INGO present in Serafaya reported that armed tribesmen had arrived and attacked the IDPs.
- Due to reports over the past several days of an impending attack of armed tribesmen on Kebkabiya town, approximately 10 INGO staff have been relocated from the area. The AU is monitoring the situation. UN agencies are permitted to travel to the town by air only due to numerous banditry incidents on the road.

South Darfur:

- On 3 Dec., five unidentified gunmen broke into the residence of UN staff members in Nyala town and stole personal items at gunpoint.

Southern Sudan:

- **Unity State:** The security situation around Bentiu, Unity State remains fragile. During the past week two separate shooting incidents occurred within the limits of the town, UN vehicles continue to be stopped by militia requesting payment of taxes.

Protection

- **South Darfur:** OCHA joined the AU on a mission to Adwa on 3 December. The town and surrounding area had been subject to attack by armed tribesmen on 2 December. The mission was to rescue injured civilians and assess the humanitarian and protective needs of the remaining population. The team visited two out of the seven villages in the area and found an area that had been partly looted, with a small number of elderly civilians and some injured people. The team also counted 15 bodies, mostly of men, but also of young boys. Most of the approximately 7,000 population from the area appear to have fled to Jeruf, an SLA-held location approximately 70 km north of Nyala, and Duma. SCF-UK, which operates in Duma, confirms the arrivals of new IDPs and has requested that non-food items be distributed to 500 households. World Vision (WV) reports that 3,000 IDPs from Adwa were found in a school in Duma during a general food distribution in the town. An inter-agency mission to Duma took place on 5 December to address the needs of the newly arrived IDPs.
- **Southern Sudan:** The Chiefs of Kuda and Gudele, west of Juba, reported that people entering Juba for business from the SPLA areas in the West have been subject to looting and harassment by the military. This issue has been raised with the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), who has promised to discuss the issue with the appropriate local authorities.

Humanitarian

The 2005 launch of the State of the World's Children Report (SOWCR) will take place on 9 December worldwide. In Sudan UNICEF will have the local launch in the Friendship Hall from 13:00-15:00 on that day (9 December). The speakers will include Dr. Yasir Ibrahim, Sudan's Director General for National Council of Child Welfare; Mr. Ichiro Aizawa, Japanese Senior Vice Foreign Minister, as well as UNICEF's Special Representative for the Darfur Emergency, Mr. Keith McKenzie. Following the presentations, there will be a press conference. A UNICEF press release is available for you.

- **Darfur:** FAO, SCF-UK and the Ministry of Agriculture have completed a food security and livelihood situation report based on a study of around 12 localities throughout Darfur. One of the main findings of the report indicates that due to a combination of erratic rainfall and conflict, the food gap for the year 2004 in the Darfur region is above eighty percent. A similar pattern is foreseen for the year 2005.
- **In South Darfur:** UNICEF and Save the Children UK (SCUK) held an orientation workshop on "Separated Children" in Otash camp, South Darfur on 28 November. The workshop aimed at orienting the community leaders on potential circumstances for separation of children and the preventive measures that can reduce the occurrence of separation of children during government assisted relocation (such as training children in their identification details). This initiative will also be replicated in other camps.
- **In North Darfur:** a Hygiene Promotion Workshop was held on 23 - 24 November at the UNICEF office in El Fasher attended by 22 participants from agencies working on Water

& Sanitation programmes. A similar meeting was held in West Darfur (El Geneina) and a follow up meeting will be held on 12-13 December.

- **Southern Sudan: Great Upper Nile:** WFP is awaiting conclusions of an assessment mission before conducting a food needs assessment in the areas between Malakal, Akoka and Renk, and the Sobat Corridor (Malakal to Nasir). Meanwhile, WFP plans to undertake a Post Distribution Monitoring survey in Malakal and in IDP camps in Obel and Canal.

Health

- **South Darfur:** SC-UK reports that nearly ninety percent of its consultations in the clinic in Duma were IDPs who had fled the 30 November attack on Adwa. ICRC reports that it treated 20 civilians from Adwa in Jeruf on 2 December.

Development

- **DDR:** UN DDR Unit is finalizing a “Technical Support to the GoS and SPLM/A DDR Interim Authorities” agreement for a total amount of US\$ 718,400. Agreements are schedule to be signed on 4 Dec.

Q: Could you feed us with the latest on the visa problems facing OXFAM? And do you know of any organizations facing similar problems? And do you think the government is just being difficult and making an example of OXFAM?

A: We are actually undertaking talks – diplomatically speaking – with the Government of Sudan. We were given a promise by the Government of Sudan that the whole situation regarding OXFAM and Save the Children will be resolved. We are aware of these reports on the visa issue and talks are taking place in order to try to finalize a positive outcome of the whole situation. This is what I have for you. As far as if it is a policy by the government to make an example out of this particular NGO to the attention of any other NGO, we are not aware of such a policy. We can however confirm that the visa issues are quite an issue – I do not know if they are politically driven or not – but we know that there are some bureaucratic layers in here not only for NGOs but also for the press, for instance, and for whoever wants to enter Sudan. And we are trying our best to facilitate with the government of the Sudan all the procedures and to make it as smooth as possible. We encounter little delays here and there from time to time but I am not in a position to say if it is a deliberate thought-after policy of the GoS.

Q: Could you please repeat your answer on the NGO issue in Arabic?
Two: has the AU failed in Darfur? What is their role on the ground?

A: With regards the issue of OXFAM (UK), as I said in my answer to the question from REUTERS, we are in contact with the GoS which had promised to resolve the issue in a positive manner. The latest we have on that issue is a promise from the GoS to continue to freeze its decision to expel the heads (of the organizations in question). This is what we have officially received from the GoS. On the issue of visa, we are in continued contacts with the GoS to facilitate the issue which basically seems to be of a technical nature. We will keep you informed of any developments that come to our attention on the issue.

On the AU, definitely that's not our assessment that the AU is failing. Actually to the contrary - for anybody who will see the report, you would see that we are actually praising the role insofar played by the mission of the AU. This is a very valuable role particularly

given the limited number of its troops deployed so far. Definitely if there would be a failure, the responsibility for it will not be one of the AU but it will be one of the parties who would basically fail to corporate the way they should based on the agreements that they have with the AU. So, so far, definitely, we are not saying the AU is failing. To the contrary, we are saying that it is doing a lot to help and it is succeeding in many areas.

Q: There is a sprouting of rebel movements in different parts of the Sudan. Last week saw the unveiling of the New Renaissance Movement in northern Sudan. Does the UN think this will hamper efforts by the UN and the international community to resolve the crisis in Darfur?

There is a joint proposal (a US-European proposal) to finance the SPLA. Do you have any news on that?

The third question: My understanding of your announcement was that the JAM in its last meeting was supposed to review the status of implementation by the GoS of all its commitments as laid down in the joint communiqué between the GoS and the UN Secretary General and the relevant Security Council resolutions. However, the information provided in the meeting said that the JAM meeting did not touch this issue but discussed issues related to Tawilla and Adwa.

A: The JAM was, in its last meeting, supposed to review the status of implementation by the GoS of all its commitments as laid down by its communiqué with the UN and the relevant SC resolutions. However, the information provided in the meeting says that the JAM meeting did not discuss that issue but instead discussed issues related to Tawilla and to Adwa.

The UN is definitely quite concerned of the proliferation in numbers of groups. We don't know much about these groups and whether or not they have an agenda. However, definitely we can not be but concerned because of the impact of the activities of such groups on the overall processes undertaken including the political ones. We are quite concerned of these armed groups because we not only don't know them but they are outside all the frameworks established so far, all agreements and it is quite a concern that they may have quite an impact on what has been achieved and what is in the process of being achieved at the political and the operational levels in terms of humanitarian activities and so on.

On what he referred to here as an EU-US initiative to finance the SPLA, we said that we do not have information on this but what we do know is that this issue is being tackled at the highest levels between Garang and Taha. For any further information on this, maybe he should get in touch with the countries he named because we do not have that kind of information.

On the JAM, the JAM is not supposed at each of its meetings to go point by point in reviewing its provisions in the joint communiqué or the SC resolutions. However it focuses on certain issues that are of urgent nature or are of current concern at that time when the JAM meets. For instance, the last JAM meeting did not only touch upon the issue of Tawilla and Adwa but also discussed humanitarian, protection and other issues related to the obligations the GoS has in the documents he referred to.

Q: You talked of harassment – what kind of harassment.

A: As I said it is the military stopping them and insisting to have some money paid to allow them access. That is the kind of harassment that is not supposed to happen.

Q: Ambassador John Danforth said last week that the policies of the stick and carrot do not achieve any results; does the UN share this assessment?

The UN advised the GoS not to open talks with the new rebel movements – reference to NMRD?

A: The GoS in the JAM meeting sought the opinion of the UN on its intentions to engage into talks with the NMRD in particular. However, we never, ever – Jan Pronk has never – said to the GoS that they shouldn't engage in such talks. He gave them his opinion that he did not wish to disclose to the press but that opinion definitely was not that the government of the Sudan should not engage in political talks with NMRD.

On the second question on Danforth's assessment, I said the situation is as you know it. The parties have signed agreements and so on but the situation on the ground remains the way I described it to you a little bit earlier: insecurity, attacks, retaliations, rapes, lootings and so on. The Security Council tried in all its resolutions to put pressure where it belonged to. It gave a room for political processes to be continued in putting that pressure. So to strike a balance between pressure but also in kind of inciting, giving incitements to the parties to do better, to really achieve something concrete and tangible in terms of reversing what is happening in Darfur. However that is not happening on the ground and the Security Council will be giving its own assessment and it will see if it is like Danforth's assessment or not. That is for the Security Council to decide. However our assessment has been provided to the Security Council in the Secretary General's Report. Read it and you will know where we stand on that.

Thank you very much everybody. I really have to cut this one because I really have to run but I will be happy to follow up on any of these issues with you over the phone.

Thank you very much.