



Hilde Johnson
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Head of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS)
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Near verbatim transcript

Opening Remarks:

Thank you very much.

It is just over three months since the new state of South Sudan was declared as an independent country, the 9th of July 2011. It is also just over three months since the new independent Republic of South Sudan became a member of the United Nations. And it is also just over three months since the peacekeeping mission, the new Mission for South Sudan, UNMISS, was established. This also was on the 9th of July 2011.

As many of you know, its main mandate, the mandate of the new Mission, is also followed by a new approach that is linked to supporting the new and independent country with peace, stability, the consolidation of peace, and also providing long term state-building. In addition to this, it also has a strong mandate in enabling development to take place.

Clearly, as a new and independent country, the government needs all the help it can get to ensure that stability and peace prevails and it can be established on a very solid footing. I am honoured to have been appointed by the Secretary-General as his Special Representative for South Sudan and to head up UNMISS (double SS), and I'm therefore also very pleased as a first opportunity for me to brief you quickly on where we are. I am looking forward to meeting you regularly as I visit to brief the Security Council on progress in South Sudan and on other occasions.

I will make four points today, briefly.

Firstly to recognize the progress of South Sudan in establishing the key institutions for the country, the new republic, and not least the key institutions that need to be in place for democracy to be developed and prevail. In the first three months we have seen progress in the establishment of a new government that has been more representative of the



different communities in South Sudan than previous governments and is also including a number of stakeholders from different parts of society.

The second important achievement on the institutional side is the new legislature for the new republic, including not only the Legislative Assembly but also the Council of States, which is a critical new invention. Of course, there is much to be done to strengthen and develop these democratic institutions but it is important to acknowledge that these have been put in place. Similarly, consultations have commenced on critical Acts - the Political Parties Act, as well as the Electoral Act - and the country is on its way to also start the consultations on the constitutional review process.

So, the second achievement is related to the return of South Sudanese to the new and independent country. It has been a significant challenge both prior to independence but also the last three months, since independence, to get the returnees back to their own country. A number of people have returned, actually in the hundreds of thousands, and their return is facilitated by the United Nations family and not least the humanitarian agencies, who have worked and continue to work with both governments to facilitate their return. A huge logistical challenge is on the way and more remains to be done. There is a 9-month grace period for Southern Sudanese outside the country to return from the North, from the Republic of South Sudan, and by March/April we should see the process completed.

The third issue I wanted to highlight is the security challenges in the new country. Very major achievements have to be noted in the area of integration of rebel militia and renegade militias that have decided to reintegrate and return to the government. Three important rebel militia groups have been integrated in the past three months and are in the process of being integrated - David Yau Yau, Gatluak Gai, Peter Gatdet forces. However a few still remain and this process is also being supported by the amnesty that the president has issued – the amnesty to return to the government and the army without any repercussions. We hope to see more of the remaining (rebel) militia leaders coming back.

The situation in Jonglei has been the first test of the new Mission as well as the new Government in ensuring security and stability in relation to its civilians and not least protection of civilians. The new Mission has a stronger protection of civilians mandate under Chapter VII in the Security Council under Resolution number 1996. And we have taken actions in relation to the killing that took place in August and in trying to prevent retaliatory attacks that would have rendered hundreds of civilians also suffering and



potentially being killed. Through a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach, we have together with the Government of South Sudan been able to so far deter a retaliatory attack. And we have also facilitated a reconciliation process where the church has taken the lead in trying to bring the communities together and prevent a retaliatory attack from happening.

These are among the challenges we are foreseeing that we will have to address in the new Mission, in UNMISS, in relation to our protection of civilians mandate but it is encouraging that the SPLA has been deployed and provided with a strong protection of civilians instruction from its President, the Commander in Chief.

Let me move to the last issue, which is related to North-South. Clearly, for South Sudan to retain its stability and for peace and security to prevail it is very important that its relation with its neighbour in the north is peaceful and that all the challenges that are still on the table are addressed in a peaceful manner. And where the remaining CPA issues, separation issues, are finalized and completed with agreement between the two parties.

Clearly, this is not an UNMISS mandate. The mandate to deal with these issues rests with Haile Menkerios, who is the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in this area, and these outstanding issues are primarily his responsibility to work together with the AU HIP, the (African Union) High Level Panel, headed by Thabo Mbeki. It is still important for me to emphasise the criticality of these issues being finalised and completed. It is clearly one of the pre-conditions for South Sudan to succeed as an independent nation - that good neighbourly relations are established between the two countries. So those were my comments and we can leave it open for any questions that might arise. Thank you.

Question: Thank you Ms Johnson, may I ask you about the progress of disarmament, apart from the reintegration of the rebels. To what extent is the United Nations involved in disarmament? Is it civilian-led or is the UN involved? And do you have any numerical targets? How many weapons do you want to disarm or what kind of weapons? And do you see any need for the United Nations or the Government of South Sudan to disarm weapons in the capital Juba as well. Thank you.

Hilde Johnson: Do you want me to answer one by one?

Deputy Spokesperson Eduardo del Buey: Please.



Hilde Johnson: Clearly civilian disarmament and disarmament overall is critical for peace to prevail in South Sudan. As regards the formal part of the UNMISS mandate it is mainly linked to demobilisation and reintegration, DDR, of former combatants. The case load we are expecting over the next three years is 150,000. So I won't be able to list the weapons for you, but clearly a case load of disarming former combatants is around 150,000. They are comprising SPLA, police as well as wildlife services in three categories.

The civilian disarmament process is critical and is also an area we are engaging in, however, carefully, since it is not firmly anchored in our mandate - but we are supporting through advice, and through presence, the process from the government side. So far in three states there are civilian disarmament processes going on. One almost completed in Lakes State, where I had the opportunity to visit myself. This has been a successful disarmament, in the sense that it has been community led, it has been led by chiefs, traditional leaders, and it has been both in its phase one, voluntary disarmament, as well as in its phase two, been undertaken in a way that has been successful and without any incidence whatsoever. So, what look like a successful process in Lakes we hope can be replicated elsewhere. Of course, there is never any guarantee that there won't be incidents around civilian disarmament. It has a history of being complicated and difficult in South Sudan but we hope to see similar developments taking place also in Unity State as well as in Warrap, which are the two others. Further states are expected to take place during the course of the next few months. So we will follow that very carefully.

Question (follow-up): And of Juba?

Hilde Johnson: In terms of the capital Juba, the Government has not initiated a formal disarmament process. The situation in the capital Juba is more linked to criminal activity and the use of weapons in that regard, than in weapons being used in conflict between communities. We have from that perspective started to engage at the request of the Minister of the Interior, to strengthen the police presence as well as approach in securing a better situation in Juba and preventing more violence taking place in the capital. This is not seen as a civilian disarmament process, it is more seen as a policing obligation.

Question: You mentioned before that one of the goals was to accelerate the movement of people from outside South Sudan back into South Sudan. So I have a two part question. First to what extent, if any, has that been impeded by the Sudanese Government in the north, and if it has, how has that been dealt with by the UN? And secondly, is there any screening for people, let's say from Darfur, or if I'm pronouncing it right, the Nuba Mountains, or other regions that are part of the north? People who want



to leave the north and come into the south, is there any screening of who would be eligible for citizenship in the South?

Hilde Johnson: On your question related to the returnees, there is a strong returnee process which has been negotiated initially between the two countries, between the north and the south with a nine month grace period. The implementation of that has been somewhat hampered by the insecurity on the border. Three entry points for the returnees have been partly blocked due to the conflict. For example, the entry points in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, what has basically happened is that one entry point has become the primary entry point, which is Renk. I also have to say that a couple of the other entry points have been prevented not by insecurity but by the rains and by the rainy season basically, and that might change. But the main entry point is Renk and it has become a little bit of a bottleneck where the humanitarian agencies have had to engage quite actively to make sure that the returnees are being facilitated and their return goes quickly from Renk and southwards. It is a huge humanitarian operation, a very challenging and a lot of people are still waiting to come to their homesteads. Partly also because of the lack of infrastructure and the rainy season again. So it is not as far as we can see a political decision in any way. It is more practical reasons why the returnee flow is slower at this point in time but still speedy enough for the humanitarian agencies to have to struggle to keep up with the pace - because of logistical challenges.

In terms of the screening, clearly those that are coming from the Nuba Mountains or potentially can come from Nuba Mountains, and some of them that have come over the border are now in a refugee camp that has been established by UNHCR. It is UNHCR and IOM that are working together on the crossing of refugees. They are being helped and of course there is screening as you follow the normal UNHCR procedures. So those that might be crossing the border wanting protection are being handled as refugees in accordance with normal UNHCR procedures. So that is what is happening on that side.

Question: Question for Ms Johnson regarding the Janjaweed militia. There were reports recently that the government in the north of Sudan is transporting some of the Janjaweed from the south to the north using government aircraft. And the second part is that how far the Republic of South Sudan is progressing on the issue of the Nile Basin agreements with the Indigo members. And if you have time, the third part would be regarding the development projects needed at the moment. Yesterday the Secretary-General commended Japan for sending a company of engineers to help with the infrastructure but what are the areas that are most pressing at this moment?



Hilde Johnson: Thank you. On your first question I'll have to revert. I am not familiar of any flights transporting Janjaweed across the border from the South to Darfur. I have no knowledge of that and I would have to check that information and revert.

As regards the Nile Basin initiative, yes, the South Sudanese Government has taken a decision to join as I understand it as a member of the Nile Basin initiative. And of course this has an importance for a number of the neighbouring countries which are also members of the Nile Basin initiative. What this means in terms of policies remains to be seen.

In terms of development challenges, clearly for South Sudan everything is needed. As I think the President, Salva Kiir Mayardit, also said in his intervention at the General Assembly in September, in South Sudan we are not talking about reconstruction. We are talking about construction. Before, in 2005, to our knowledge there were only five kilometres of tarmac road in the whole country and the whole country, as we might know, is as big as Germany and France together combined. So basically everything is needed. The infrastructure challenges are huge, the investment in the agricultural productive sector is huge, there are immense needs also in health and education. The public services in this area are very significant. Eighty to 90 per cent of the population live in the rural areas and the rural areas are not at the moment serviced in any tangible way by services, infrastructure and basic human needs. So the challenges are significant. From our side, in UNMISS we, alongside the Secretary-General, really welcome the decision of the Government of Japan to contribute one engineering company to our Mission. This engineering company will create or will provide a very significant assistance in infrastructural areas.

Clearly in accordance with the mandate of the Mission, any company that is deployed as part of a military deployment would need to assist with infrastructure projects that are related to the needs of the Mission, and in that respect, to ensure that security can prevail - so infrastructure that implies that movements can be more easy to areas is of the highest priority. We hope of course that we can find infrastructure programmes that have a dual impact, meaning it makes true sense in relation to our Mission at the same time that it has development dividends for the population and the country overall.

So we would like to see that we can find projects that combine the two, and we're going to be in dialogue with the Japanese battalion and the engineering company when it is deployed and I understand it is due to begin already in January 2012, which we truly



appreciate. And then we'll see which specific areas they'll be deployed to and which tasks they will be tasked with.

Eduarod del Buey: Time for one more question over here.

Question (NHK television): My name is [*inaudible*] for NHK Japanese public TV. My question is a follow-up of my colleague about the decision of the Japanese Government to send in troops. And so, it is true that they have decided to send in the troops but on the other hand there are many concerns among the Government, high ranking officials and lawmakers, about the safety of the field where Japanese troops are actually operating. What is your answer for those kinds of concerns, is it really safe for Japanese troops to activate?

Hilde Johnson: Well, thank you very much for that question. I think if you compare South Sudan with a number of other countries where peacekeepers are being deployed, whether Afghanistan or Iraq - I mean peacekeepers with different types of mandates, I have to say, not all UN - or in other areas of Africa, Côte d'Ivoire for one, I think you'll find that that the security situation in South Sudan is more peaceful than almost any other of these locations, and I think that security concerns should be limited related to deployment in South Sudan.

The challenges are much, much more of a different nature. We have seen peace prevail between the two parties ever since the CPA negotiations took place – so for the last six years since 2005, peace has been prevailing. The security challenges are more in the inter-communal areas and of course this is not likely to impact on an engineering company and its security. So I think the Japanese public, and any Japanese officials that may have question marks of this - and we truly appreciate that the Government has taken it's decision and has actually assessed the security threat, since they have actually decided to deploy - and secondly we would really like to see the Japanese public support this very important decision.

I have to say that in Haiti, where I know the Japanese engineers have deployed before, you have seen very, very high quality delivery of engineering capacity, of use of equipment, and significant speed. So from our side, it was of significant importance that we could receive an engineering company that comes from Japan exactly for this reason: the speed, the quality, very well known, and well reputed. So from our perspective we are really, really happy to see this be the result.



Eduardo del Buey: Thank you very much Ms Johnson for this excellent presentation. I'm sure we could be here for a while longer, but we are right now eating into the time of the Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly, so I'm going to thank you and wish you all the best.

Hilde Johnson: Thank you.