



**Near-verbatim transcript of the Press Conference
By the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hilde F. Johnson
06 March 2012
The Serena Hotel - Nairobi, Kenya**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon and thank you for attending this first press conference in Nairobi. I hope we will have more interactions in the near future to talk about South Sudan and the role and the mandate of UN and the UN Mission in South Sudan.

As part of the mission's mandate to "consolidate peace and security in South Sudan and help establish good relations with its neighbours" I have, in my capacity of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to South Sudan, continued my tour of South Sudan's neighbouring countries. Last month, I visited Ethiopia and met with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. The past 6 days I have visited Sudan, Uganda and Kenya, where I met with the Heads of States and Government and other Government officials.

My meetings in the three capitals were constructive and demonstrated the commitment by the respective Heads of States to good relations with the new and independent country, the Republic of South Sudan, and engagement to help foster improved relations with the Republic of the Sudan.

The relationship between Sudan and South Sudan is critical for the two countries as well as for the region at large. A deterioration of relations will impact negatively on all parties. While the North-South negotiations are facilitated by the AUHIP and supported by UN Special Envoy Haile Menkerios, with new talks taking place in Addis Ababa this week, there are two critical and urgent issues directly related to the Mission's mandate that I discussed with President Al-Bashir and other Sudanese officials:

- **Firstly, the return of South Sudanese in Sudan to South Sudan:** The signing by the two governments on 12 February of a Memorandum of Understanding on the return of South Sudanese which recognizes the voluntary return as the right and the basis for stability was positive. We also welcome the decision to establish an inter-ministerial committee on the status of nationals of both countries. The timeline for the return of approximately 300,000 South Sudanese in Sudan was set for 8 April. However, the agencies involved in the return, UNHCR and IOM, are clear that it will not be possible to complete the return process within this timeframe. In my discussions in Khartoum, I therefore stressed the urgency and importance of granting more time to ensure an orderly and safe return for all returnees, and called for more transit routes to facilitate this return.
- **Secondly, facilitating cross-border trade, mitigating adverse impacts on food security:** The communities on both sides of the border are suffering from the current absence of trade across the border. From the UN's side we are concerned about this and the impact this has on food security. Almost 4.7 million people are expected to be either severely or

moderately food insecure in South Sudan in the coming months. To alleviate the impact of food deficits on vulnerable communities in both Sudan and South Sudan, I stressed the importance of opening up and resuming trade across the border.

In South Sudan, the security situation in Jonglei state remains of serious concern. Several reports of mobilization of armed groups from the Lou Nuer and the Murle communities continue, although the Mission's ground and air patrols have been unable to confirm these reports. The Government of South Sudan has now established its Peace Committee for reconciliation in Jonglei, which is positive. We hope to see the process move forward with speed. We have yet to see the investigation team be appointed from the Government side related to the recent inter-communal conflict. Accountability is important to help prevent a continuation of the cycle of violence, and we call on the Government to move forward with speed also on this process. UNMISS' own investigations into the Jonglei attacks are soon completed, and will release the report as soon as it is finalized.

As a measure to ensure peace and security, the government has decided to launch an important operation aiming at disarming all the communities in Jonglei state. In this regard, UNMISS fully recognizes that the widespread possession of illegal weapons and the proliferation of small arms presents a serious threat to peace and security in South Sudan, and is seriously exacerbating inter-communal violence in Jonglei.

However, civilian disarmament in Jonglei will only be successful if it is carried out as part of comprehensive approach to peace and reconciliation in the state. This implies deployment of adequate security forces to buffer points between and within the communities, and the start of a peace process which includes early confidence-building measures. Disarmament should take place in a manner which is community-led, voluntary and simultaneous between all communities. I am encouraged by the recent decision by the Government to undertake the disarmament process in a peaceful, voluntary and simultaneous manner, with use of force only as a last resort. However, the process needs to be carefully managed and adequately resourced for it to succeed.

The oil shutdown by the government of South Sudan on January 20 constitutes another significant challenge for the new and independent country. It will have a significant impact on the economy of the new nation. The Government has decided on a number of austerity measures that will be tabled for Parliamentary approval. At the same time critical steps are being taken to try to boost non-oil revenues and identifying alternative sources of finance. Still, as oil accounts for more than 95 percent of the South Sudanese income, it remains to be seen whether adequate mitigating measures can be found in the short and medium term. Unless an agreement is reached with Sudan which will allow for a resumption of oil production and exports, there is a risk that severe cuts will have to be undertaken a few months from now, with serious direct and indirect consequences for state institutions and the population at large.

It is critical that the two countries, Sudan and South Sudan, continue their negotiations and do their utmost to reach an agreement on oil and the other remaining issues that can foster the viability of both nations and protect the interests of the people of both countries.

As a new state faces such major challenges, the Republic of South Sudan will need not only the support of the United Nations but also the neighbouring countries and the international community at large. In Kampala and Nairobi, I discussed these issues both with President Museveni and acting Foreign Minister Okello Oryem and with Vice President Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, Prime Minister Raila Odinga and Foreign Minister Moses Wetangula. The commitment from both countries to support their new neighbour, the Republic of South Sudan, is strong, as is their interest in seeing Sudan and South Sudan reach agreement on the critical remaining CPA-issues.

I will be briefing the Security Council next week on the situation in South Sudan, following the second report of the Secretary General after the establishment of UNMISS on Independence Day July 9 2011.

Indeed, cooperation and peaceful dialogue is the only way forward to maintain durable peace and security, and ensure prosperity for the people of South Sudan and the region.

Thank you.

Q & A

Bloomberg News: You mentioned that you spoke with President Bashir about the returnees – the about 300,000 that are going to come back from Sudan. Did you also discuss the possibility that they could have citizenship within the Sudan if they wanted to stay?

AFP: My first question just related to that: you said that the IOM and UNHCR won't be able to get everyone back by the April 8 deadline. What was Sudan's response to that point?

The other point: I know you mentioned a report that is coming out about the Jonglei situation. I just wondered if there are any details you could reveal at the moment on some sense of the scale of what's happened there.

SRSF Hilde F. Johnson: On the first question, I stressed the importance of documentation and registration on both sides of the border – meaning both South Sudan and Sudan has to be flexible and willing to do that. So I did raise the issue. We didn't get a full kind of confirmation. However, what we have seen as a problem so far is that very few South Sudanese have been registered in Khartoum and that is one of the processes that has to be speeded up for us to be able to move the returnees.

That is now happening; the Minister of Interior is engaging on that and UNHCR is now training South Sudanese to be able to document them in the north.

Secondly; on the issue of the response on the deadline, the understanding that I have from the meetings in Khartoum is that although they are not changing the deadline or agreeing to change the deadline, there is an understanding between them and their South Sudanese counterparts and there is an understanding on their part that there is a need to look at this carefully the next few weeks and my understanding is that there might be flexibility on their part. But formally, they are not changing anything in relation to the agreement – the agreement stands.

As regards the human rights investigations, I think we can say so much that the initial numbers that were released – or that were circulated, rather – by local authorities in Pibor or in the state, the numbers we are looking at them now and we will get the reports completed and verified but we are looking at hundreds and not at thousands. That is the sort of scale that I can give.

Reuters: I just wanted to know whether you have a clue on who is behind the bombing of the oilfields – obviously South Sudan has pointed a finger to Khartoum – I just wanted to know whether you could say your thoughts on that one.

Do you see this as an escalation of the fighting or is it just ahead of next week's talk just trying to force the hand of the South Sudanese?

SRSJ Johnson: I think that the Mission as well as all United Nations and regional leaders are concerned about what we are saying as increased tension between the two countries with incidences that are happening more and more frequently. That is a concern that we all have.

We have a decision by both parties to establish a monitoring mission that would be a border monitoring mission under the auspices of UNISFA – the mission that has been deployed to Abyei to monitor the situation there. This monitoring mission is yet to be established formally. That mission is supposed to be mandated to monitor cross-border operations and any incidences that might happen both on the border and across the border. We are in a situation where, at this point in time, our mission does not have that border monitoring mandate yet the mission that is yet to be established has it. We do not have a verification mandate in relation to incidences across the border and cross-border operations on either side.

However, we are in a situation where it is possible to go to the location and try to collect evidence. It is, however, not possible for us to know the sources of the incidence because we don't have the presence that would allow us to do that.

On the question of who is behind and the origin of the incident, I am not able to provide you with any more information from our side.

Q: On the issue of oil and the loss of revenue, you talked about cuts that may be needed to be made but are you also worried that the government of South Sudan would then depend on donors ... will be asking donors for more money?

SRSJ Johnson: It is clear that with a dependency on the oil income, South Sudan needs to seek other sources of finance. There are a few options. Among them, commercial loans in the international market which are expensive but are possible to access. Others are non-oil revenues on their side both on the customs and elsewhere. There hasn't been an effective revenue collection in South Sudan so far and they are taking steps now to make that happen to close the gaps. However, significant resources would not be forthcoming that would cover gaps with that avenue. Thirdly; of course asking international financial institutions and donors for money is another avenue.

Whether they will seek that funding, it's too early to say. I have had discussion with the government about the situation and they seem to be leaning more towards loans than towards donor support but it is still early to say. Of course from the international community's side, it is also a question as to their willingness to come forward with resources of this nature – bearing in mind that budgetary support has not yet been provided by donors to South Sudan. It has been project-based funding to a large extent and funding via multi-lateral agencies. There are mechanisms that are possible to establish to facilitate that but so far there has not been movement on that side – as we have at least registered.

Q: Just wanted you to talk about the refugee situation in Blue Nile and South Kordofan - is there a big disaster expected to happen in the next few weeks and months with the situation there? How do you assess what is going on?

SRSJ Johnson: I can only talk about the refugees that have crossed the border into the territory of South Sudan and the camps that are in South Sudan. It is not within my purview to talk about the situation across the border in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

What we are seeing is a steady increase in the numbers of the refugees. There are now around 100,000 that have crossed the border and are in various refugee camps inside South Sudan. And of course if the situation continues, there would be even more refugees flowing in.

We are in a situation where the total humanitarian caseload in South Sudan is significant with around 350,000 internally displaced persons, a caseload of refugees particularly from these two states on the other side of the border and, thirdly, we are going to have a huge caseload of returnees coming back – very many of them without livelihood support – that need to be reintegrated in the communities and likely dependent on humanitarian assistance for at least some months. So the caseload for South Sudan, totally, is very, very significant with hundreds and thousands of people in need of humanitarian aid.

Of course the situation across the border then impacts on South Sudan and on these numbers. The best possible way to resolve the situation is clearly to have the tension in the relations between the two countries go down and a peaceful resolution be found which could also help the new and independent country on this front.

(Ends)