

BRIEFING BY

HIS EXCELLENCY
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
AU SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DARFUR,

TO THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND
SECURITY COUNCIL

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

12 JUNE 2008

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Your Excellency, Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission,

Your Excellency, Philip Okpara, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, current Chairman of the Peace and Security Council,

Your Excellency, Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security,

Excellencies, Members of the Peace and Security Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to address this august Council session on Darfur. I am grateful to you all for the opportunity given to both of us, my dear colleague and friend Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the United Nations for Darfur and myself, to jointly brief you on the current situation of the peace process in Darfur, the difficulties faced and the challenges ahead. We were both of the view that since we have been working together for our two organisations it would be proper that we have this joint briefing before the Council. Similarly on June 24 we will be briefing the UN Security Council in New York.

Allow me at the outset to reiterate my heartfelt congratulations to the Chairperson on his election and assumption of the high office. Having known and interacted with Chairperson Ping for many years and in different capacities including that of the Presidency of the UN General Assembly, I am only too conscious of the wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience that he brings to this important office at this crucial period for our continent and our continental organization. He is indeed a worthy successor to a distinguished, dedicated and committed Pan Africanist, President Alpha Oumar Konare. I also wish to salute the Commissioner for Peace and Security and all the Commissioners for their recent election or re-election. To Commissioner Lamamra, let me just recall how closely we worked together when he served here as his country's Permanent representative to the OAU. I wish the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson and all the Commissioners full success in the fulfilment of their mandate. May I also take this opportunity to pay special tribute to President Konare and Ambassador Said Djinnit with whom I worked very closely during their tenure of office, for their dedicated services and important contribution to the cause of Peace and Security in our continent.

Your Excellencies,

You would recall that, Former Swedish Foreign Minister and President of the UN General Assembly, Jan Eliasson and I were appointed respectively by the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union to serve as Special Envoys for Darfur, following the High Level consultations between the African Union, the United Nations and the Government of Sudan (GoS), held here in Addis Ababa, on 16 November 2006. The mandate given to us was to re-energize the political peace process by bringing the GoS and the non signatories to the negotiating table with the aim of achieving a more inclusive and durable solution to the conflict in Darfur.

Since then, with the assistance of a very capable and dedicated AU-UN Joint Mediation Support Team based in Khartoum, we undertook several missions and conducted intensive consultations with a large spectrum of Darfur Stakeholders, including the Government, the DPA signatory and non-signatory movements, neighbouring countries and other regional actors, international partners, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, intellectuals, representatives of IDPs, women and youth groups, international NGOs, and others, with the view to assessing their positions vis-à-vis the situation and the prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the Darfur crisis.

One of the major conclusions we drew from these consultations was that the Parties were still not ready to engage immediately in substantive negotiations. Therefore, the Mediation, in conjunction with the regional and international partners, envisaged several steps to move the process forward. Roadmaps, strategies, work plans, ways forward, were conceptualised and put on track for implementation leading to the meeting in Arusha.

The objective of holding the Arusha and N'djamena meetings by the Mediation, respectively in August and September 2007, was to give the movements bearing in mind the difficulties they encountered to unify their ranks, the possibility to meet and discuss issues of concern, in preparation for their participation to the negotiations. We laid great emphasize on their unity. At the same time, when the goal of unification became increasingly elusive we encouraged them to arrive at common negotiating positions and endeavour to form if possible and certainly most desirable, a common delegation.

It would be recalled that in Arusha, the movements were able to agree on and submitted a common negotiating platform on the issues they wanted to be part of any agenda for the Talks. These included power sharing, wealth sharing, security arrangements, humanitarian and land issues. Unfortunately, this common position and the spirit of understanding and cohesion manifested in Arusha were short-lived. The cohesion demonstrated in Arusha suffered a severe set back when due to divergences of views within its leadership there was a split within JEM. Perhaps essentially because of this development, JEM asserted that from now onward, they would not accept to sit in the same meeting with what they termed as "small

and insignificant movements and individuals". At the same time SLM/A-Abdul Wahid continued its unwillingness to attend any kind of talks. It became then clear that the movements were not prepared for the talks and it was not surprising that the meeting which took place in N'djamena did not produce any tangible progress.

In the meantime, the dynamics changed on the ground with the eruption of new inter-tribal clashes, unrest in the IDPs camps, and spread of violence and banditry activities. This in turn resulted in increased displacement of civilians, growing difficulties in humanitarian access and delivery to the needy population, carjacking and looting of commercial and humanitarian convoys. We also witnessed a further fragmentation of the movements despite several efforts geared towards helping them maintain a degree of cohesion within their ranks. On the other hand, the Government of Sudan despite our repeated pleas against the use of aerial bombardment and urging for a proportional response continued to engage in such bombardments whenever they considered opportune to do so with terrible consequences for the civilian population including especially women and children.

The Sirte Process

The deteriorating situation on the ground and the clear recognition and acceptance by all sides that there cannot be a military solution to the conflict prompted the Mediation with the full support of the international community to initiate the launching of the peace process in Sirte, Libya in October 2007. Unfortunately the meeting in Sirte eventually had to be postponed. The refusal of the major movements including the SLM/A-Abdul Wahid and the JEM-Khalil Ibrahim to attend meant that we did not have a critical mass to enable us to commence an all inclusive Process. Furthermore some of the parties, like SLM/A-Unity, asked for more time to unify ranks and consolidate positions. SLM-AW reiterated its series of pre-conditions, including provision of security, full deployment of UNAMID, disarmament of Janjaweed, return of IDPs to their places of origin and payment of compensation. JEM under the leadership of Dr. Khalil continued to object to addressing invitations to "insignificant groups with no military presence or popular support base whatsoever in Darfur".

It is worth recalling that this was also the time when the GoNU was going through some difficulties with a rift between the CPA partners, the NCP and the SPLM. This rift certainly did not help matters. In addition the status of participation of SLM/A-Minni Minawi, a principal signatory to the DPA, in the ongoing political process, constituted another unresolved issue.

Initiatives after Sirte

After Sirte, the Mediation continued its intensive consultations and took several initiatives to encourage the GoS and the Movements to build confidence and gradually move towards substantive negotiations.

Some of the initiatives included support for the then ongoing efforts undertaken, under the auspices of the SPLM, to unify the 16 Darfur factions present in Juba, Southern Sudan. These efforts, culminated in the emergence of two groupings: United Resistance Front (URF) and SLM/A-Abdul Shafie. This development which helped to reduce the number of factions was welcomed by the Mediation and the international community. At that point, the number of recognized leading movements stood at five: Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM/A)-Abdul Wahid, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)-Khalil Ibrahim, SLM/A-Unity, SLM/A-Abdul Shafie and URF.

The Mediation and the Regional and International Partners continued to direct their efforts at urging these movements to adopt common negotiating positions and possibly form negotiating teams. At the same time, consultations were maintained with the GoS and other stakeholders, including Political Parties, Darfur civil society organisations, women groups, tribal and religious leaders.

Challenges

Despite all the attempts, the security and humanitarian situations continued to deteriorate due to the escalation of violence, renewed clashes between the Sudan Armed Forces and some movements on one hand and sometimes movements against each other, on the other hand.

Fighting in the area of Western Darfur involving JEM-Khalil and the GoS, has resulted in civilian casualties and increasing number of displaced persons. JEM, which seems to pursue both military and political options, recently brought the fighting to Khartoum, on May 10, 2008, with the attack against Oumdurman. The consequences in the short and long terms are enormous for the political process where recent efforts have been focused on confidence building measures and on attempts to reduce violence.

Humanitarian activities have been jeopardized, with less aid and assistance reaching the IDP Camps. Banditry and car hijacking as well as several killings of humanitarian aid workers have been reported. This prompted the humanitarian organisations to cut their food supply to half, rendering more acute the sufferings of the already conflict affected population.

Repeated attacks against UNAMID staff and equipment are also on the rise. UNAMID deployment has been agonizingly slow, with no noticeable improvement in the size of its forces and required equipment. Today, it has almost the same strength it inherited from AMIS in December 2007. The long time agreed light and heavy support packages are still to be fully implemented and the expected troops are yet to be deployed. The required tactical and strategic equipments have not been provided, in particular the transport and attack helicopters. This state of affairs is adversely affecting the expectations raised from among the Darfurians, who pinned great hope in the arrival and capacities of UNAMID to create a more secure environment for them.

The current efforts

It was against this gloomy backdrop and the risk of conflagration because of the deteriorating security situation, that the Regional and International Partners met in Geneva, on 19 March 2007, under the aegis of the Mediation, to assess the situation and chart the way forward. During that meeting, it was largely recognized that not all the parties were ready to engage into substantive negotiations but expressed willingness to start informal consultations on security related issues to reduce the level of violence and eventually discuss modalities for a cessation of hostilities.

The Mediation thereafter continued and intensified consultations in preparation for the informal consultations. In this framework, my counterpart Jan Eliasson and I made two trips to Sudan, to meet the Parties between 10 and 19 April 2008. We met Senior Government officials including a working session with the Chief Negotiator for the Government, Assistant to the President Nafie and his team. We went to Juba and met with First Vice President Salva Kiir and the SPLM Task Force on Darfur and in Darfur we met with Senior Commanders and officers of SLM/ Abdul Wahid as well as with the JEM leader Dr. Khalil Ibrahim and his Commanders. JMST members on their part held several discussions with movements' leaders inside and outside Darfur.

On the basis of the positive reactions of the parties and despite the fact that some of them placed pre-conditions on their participation, it was our considered view that the informal consultations could be held with an adapted choreography to cater for the concerns expressed by some movements. The security meeting was expected to bring the parties together, as a confidence building measure and set the pace prior to securing their commitment to a gradual agreement on cessation of hostilities or a kind of truce, given that a ceasefire agreement is a longer process.

The dates of 29 May - 4 June 2008 were set as a preliminary period for these informal consultations in Geneva. The venue was chosen to satisfy the call by some of the movements for what they described as "a neutral European place" which was to facilitate the participation of their leadership from abroad. Regrettably, despite initial reactions of disposition to participate, it became clear that some of the parties were not yet ready for these informal consultations. We therefore decided to defer the consultations to a future date but in the meantime continue to engage the parties through shuttle diplomacy.

Current positions of the parties

The position of the Parties on the issue informal security consultations can be summed up as follows:-

- 1) **GoS** previously indicated willingness and readiness to enter into any discussions with all the other parties. The recent attack in Oumdurman by JEM-Khalil Ibrahim made it change its position. The Sudanese

Authorities have clearly stated recently that they do not consider anymore JEM as a Darfur Movement since it has a different and wider agenda and has declared that it was pursuing a military option to seize power through military means.

- 2) **SLM/A-AW** has continued to insist on preconditions despite several attempts by the mediation to convince its Leader to consider the pre-conditions as issues that should be brought to the negotiation table. Reassurances were given to them on the informal nature of the consultations which in no way were meant to be substantive negotiations or even pre-negotiations. The Leadership of the movement has informed us that it is neither willing nor prepared to attend any meeting or consultations however informal unless their pre-conditions are met ("minimum" security in Darfur, UNAMID full deployment, and disarmament of the Janjaweed etc.)
- 3) **URF** which has always stated its readiness to go for any consultations or negotiations has however put as pre-condition for its participation. It is insisting that it should be granted a better proportion of representation than the others, on the ground that it is an umbrella organization of five movements (sic). It argues on proportional representation and therefore should be allowed five times the representation of other Movements or at least be given a preferential treatment compared to the others. Presently the URF is experiencing a deep split within its ranks: two of its components (SLM/A-Khamees Abdallah and United Resistant Forces Front (URFF) of Commander Zubeidi have issued statements announcing their withdrawal from the coalition.
- 4) **SLM/A-Abdul Shafie** has expressed its readiness for the consultations. It is obvious that it still has a problem of ascertaining its presence and constituency on the ground. For this reason most of the movements are reluctant to sit with this group in any discussions format.
- 5) **JEM - Khalil Ibrahim** has declined to attend for several reasons. The recent attack against Oumdurman is being interpreted as an indication that it has not renounced the military option. It also claims that it is the only force to be reckoned with on the ground, because it is the only one militarily facing the Government. Negotiations with the participation of other movements are unacceptable to JEM. However, the movement is ready to negotiate directly with the GoS under the auspices of the AU/UN mediation. JEM wants to negotiate within the parameters of a general framework, beyond mere discussions on security matters.
- 6) **SLM/A- Unity** appears to be the only movement that is ready to engage in negotiations and to commence dialogue with substantive issues, but also discuss security issues under a broader political framework.

Given these developments, we convened earlier this month meetings with the Regional Partners and International Partners to review the situation and chart the way forward. The two meetings were held in Geneva, with the regional partners on 4 June 2008 and with the international partners,

including the Regional countries, the Permanent and African members of the UN Security Council, on June 5.

The participants recognized that the peace process had come to an impasse and that therefore there was a need for a rethink of the strategy adopted so far. A holistic approach need to be taken. National, regional and international dimensions should be taken into consideration. In this connection, the Sudanese Government of National Unity was requested to take a more vigorous approach towards the Darfur problem by taking steps which can lead to the resolution of the conflict. This Geneva meeting provided an opportunity for a frank and in-depth discussion on some of the issues and bottlenecks facing the Peace Process. We have made available to the council members the Chairmen's summary of there consultations and I will therefore refrain from any further elaboration.

**Chairperson,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have taken some time to give a somewhat lengthy expose of our efforts and the various activities. I have done so because I believe and so does my UN count-part – that the time has come for both the African Peace and Security Council as well as the UN Security Council to review critically the unfolding situation and see what contribution the two bodies can make in order if not finally overcoming the crisis but at the very least consider measures which can be taken at least for the immediate period reduce the level of suffering and give hope to the people of Darfur and Sudan as a whole.

It should be recognized that so far all attempts by the Mediation and the international community to create favorable conditions for the Parties to meet and discuss formally or even informally, have failed to produce the desired results. We welcome expressed willingness of the Government of Sudan to enter into any kind of meaningful discussions with the movements.

At the same time however, the Government can help the process by being more proactive in creating conditions which can give confidence and trust to the Movements. Equally important, in its actions and reaction the Government should resist from taking drastic measures such as aerial bombardment which cause considerable casualties to the innocents. It should show example as indeed when it made its declaration on ceasefire in Sirte in October Las year. But more crucial such declarations must be accompanied by concrete action on the ground. It cannot be over emphasized that the primary responsibility for security in Darfur is that of the Government. The Government therefore should strive to ensure an end to the violence or at least a de-escalation there of. And its response, whenever necessary must be proportionate.

Sadly, the positions of some of the movements had been marred by procrastination, no solid engagement vis-à-vis the peace process, shifting of goal posts, lack of cohesion, clear vision and programme, absence of

structured leadership and continued fragmentation of some of them. In addition, increased violence and banditry activities, difficulties encountered in the deployment of UNAMID, further deterioration of relations between Chad and Sudan, had compounded the situation and created more difficulties to jump start the negotiations.

It is obvious that any further delay in reducing the level of violence through a cessation of hostilities or a truce, a visible role of UNAMID, will engender more tension, increased number of displaced persons, result in more sufferings for the civilian population, likely more fragmentation in the ranks of the movements, and making the prospects for a peaceful settlement more remote.

The high expectations for an improved security situation pinned on the deployment of the UNAMID forces has not yet materialized due to long and worrying delays. It was hoped that the deployment of UNAMID would contribute to creating a conducive environment for peace talks. The priority concern of Darfurians, as it unambiguously transpired from our consultations on the ground, **is security**. UNAMID is yet to receive the troops and equipment, in particular, transport and attack helicopters. Without this, it would be difficult if not impossible to fulfil its mandate, including providing protection to the civilian population in the vast areas of Darfur. Chad/Sudan faltering relationship has entered into a new turmoil. The increased allegations and counter allegations of supporting each other's rebels following the recent JEM attack against Oumdurman has complicated the already strained bilateral relations between the two countries and rendered more complex the search for a durable solution in the Darfur conflict.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

In spite of the frustrations caused by the lack of tangible progress, efforts should be intensified to bring the parties to engage in serious negotiations to solve the long standing problem of Darfur.

The ongoing efforts by the African Union, regional actors and some others aimed at achieving the normalization of relations between Chad and Sudan, must be urgently, strongly and effectively supported.

The AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council should send clear and strong messages to the Parties for them to accept to seriously embrace the path of peace good neighborliness and normalization. The regional and international partners should shoulder their responsibilities, use their comparative advantages on the Parties so as to contribute more efficiently to the solution of the strained relations between Chad and Sudan. To this end, they may wish to accord a concrete and strong support to the work of the Dakar Contact Group. They should also use their leverage on the parties either directly or through third parties to rein on the reluctant movements.

The influx of arms into Darfur should be scrutinized and controlled. Trans-border military activities should be checked. Methods used in other previous conflicts around the world could be applied.

UNAMID deployment should be accelerated. The international community should see to it that the Mission is provided with the required military, police and civilian staff as well as with the indispensable logistics it needs to properly discharge its mandate.

It is evident that the task ahead is both challenging and daunting. It requires the commitment and preparedness to act on the part of the Sudanese and Darfurians in particular. It also demands the full engagement of this Council as well as the UN Security Council. The role of the Regional Actors as well as the International Partners is crucial. The Joint Mediation is also very conscious of its responsibilities. My colleague, Jan Eliasson and I have continued to do our utmost to discharge the mandate we have been given. That mandate was specific namely to re-energise the political process. It is at the same time very evident that the Joint Mediation Support Team needs to be led by someone who will be there in Khartoum and Darfur on a more permanent basis. Furthermore when negotiations actually begin it is wise to have only ONE Common Chief Mediator. This is why since November last year we have recommended the need to appoint a Chief Mediator. Our recommendation has been accepted by both the two Heads of our Institutions. Consultations have been going on in to order to realize this objective. We expect that very soon such an appointment will be made by the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

I thank you for your attention.