

Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in Chad and Sudan

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Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on my recent visits to Chad and to Sudan.

Mr. President, I visited Chad for a second time to look at the humanitarian situation and response, particularly in the light of the deployment of EUFOR and MINURCAT and the transition to MINURCAT II. In eastern Chad, I visited refugee and IDP camps, and a village where IDPs have begun to return. In N'djamena, I spoke with the Prime Minister and other ministers. National tensions have eased since the attack on N'djamena last February, but the situation remains fragile and volatile. In the East, banditry has worsened and poses a significant threat to IDPs, refugees, aid workers and the local population. The underlying tensions from long years of internal conflict and the spill-over from Darfur have not gone away.

The humanitarian situation is relatively stable in terms of numbers. Around 263,000 refugees from Darfur, 57,000 from the Central African Republic and 180,000 IDPs are currently receiving humanitarian assistance. Emergency needs are being mostly met, and the quality of aid reaching IDPs is much better than on my last visit in March 2007. However the long-term presence of such large numbers of refugees and IDPs is resulting in growing tensions with the host population, and additional strain on the already fragile environment.

The politicization and militarization of the refugee camps and some IDP sites are major and increasing concerns. In particular, recruitment by armed groups, including of children, notably by the Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM, is threatening the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps. This needs to stop if the humanitarian effort is to be able to continue successfully. UNHCR have already been unable to deliver assistance in one camp for two months for related reasons. I asked the Government of Chad to do all it can to prevent this, and call on the JEM leadership in particular to recognize their responsibilities too.

There is unfortunately little immediate prospect of return for the Sudanese refugees, who have been in Chad for the last five years, in the absence of a settlement in Darfur. The focus is therefore on increasing self-sustainability. There are, however, some signs of hope for the IDPs. There have been limited voluntary returns to their villages of origin in recent months, particularly in locations further away from the Darfur border. Others are moving between the camps and their previous smallholdings, to restart agricultural activity. In Louboutiqué, which I visited, the return process has been greatly facilitated by effective locally-led reconciliation efforts. I hope these can be replicated elsewhere, without putting undue pressure on the IDPs. Security remains critical, and must go hand in hand with provision of basic social infrastructure and a stronger presence of state authorities.

The presence of EUFOR and the progressive deployment of MINURCAT have helped stabilise the situation overall, provide much needed general reassurances to refugees, IDPs and the local community, and to improve security for humanitarians. However, EUFOR has not had the capacity to tackle the growing problems of local banditry and criminality, which remain the biggest single concern for the humanitarian community in eastern Chad. Since the beginning of the year, about 160 serious incidents have been recorded, including the murder of the head of the Save the Children team. This banditry, largely for profit, on the pattern of what we have seen in Darfur, is encouraged by the proliferation of small arms throughout the area, the presence of armed militias, and more or less total impunity for those responsible, in the absence of any meaningful local judicial system. Some NGOs have already withdrawn, wholly or partially, and we will need to work hard to fill these gaps and provide the best basis possible for others to stay.

A speedy and effective deployment of MINURCAT II, and a smooth transition from EUFOR, are therefore vital to help improve security for refugees, IDPs, the humanitarian community and the original population alike. The deployment of the newly trained Chadian gendarme force, the *Détachement intégré de Sécurité* (DIS), fully supported by MINURCAT, is equally vital. They have the mandate and training to provide the kind of local police protection in and around the camps that is so badly needed. Deployment has already begun and I was encouraged by the attitude of members of the DIS that I met. But there is a long way to go, and some key issues of equipment and operational capability to resolve. The Council will soon be voting on the future of the UN presence in Chad. I urge you to ensure that MINURCAT II has the resources to cover the key geographical areas covered currently by EUFOR, and one or two others, with the necessary logistical support, and an appropriate mandate.

In my discussions with the Chadian government and local authorities, I also strongly encouraged them to increase their effective presence in the East, and live up to their own responsibilities for ensuring security, providing basic services, and supporting development. They, in turn, drew attention to the need to take into account the unequal treatment of the original population, many of whom are themselves on the edge of extreme poverty and food insecurity. We need to add to our existing assistance projects a package to address this, as well as the environmental issues. I hope donors will look favourably on this, as on the overall CAP 2009 requirements of some \$389 million, in the same way that they have responded generously to humanitarian needs in 2008.

Overall, I left Chad with slightly more optimism about future prospects, including in terms of our efforts to provide life-saving humanitarian aid, than I had expected. However, the risks of rapid deterioration remain high. The international community, and this Council, cannot afford to neglect Chad.

Mr. President, let me now turn to Sudan, where I visited all three Darfur states, South Kordofan, Juba and Khartoum.

The billion-dollar humanitarian operation in Darfur, still the largest in the world, will soon enter its sixth year. The needs are not diminishing and the situation remains grave. This year more than 315,000 people have been forced to flee from violence and inter-tribal conflict. Even if this displacement or re-displacement is only temporary, the destruction, including to

humanitarian infrastructure, and the consequent delays in relief assistance, redouble the suffering. Many of the problems noted in the past are equally relevant today, to the frustration of all. The operation nevertheless continues to achieve its primary goal of keeping people alive – not least through the sheer determination of thousands of aid workers to overcome the obstacles. But at the risk of stating the obvious, the things most urgently needed are a ceasefire, declared and respected by all parties, and a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Mr. President, the critical humanitarian challenges today are access and protection of civilians. There are many reasons for our access problems, including the continuing violence, travel restrictions, the politicization of the humanitarian environment, including in the IDP camps, and the dramatic increase in attacks on humanitarians and their property.

2008 has seen these attacks reach unprecedented levels. As of 30 November, 261 vehicles had been hijacked and 172 compounds broken into. The cars and other valuables stolen seem to find their way mostly to Chad or to Libya for resale. Rebel movements, or groups or individuals linked to them, appear to be primarily responsible for the majority of these terrifying incidents in rural areas. However, many also occur in main towns in Government control. I call on both the Government security forces and rebel leaders to put a stop to this banditry once and for all. It seriously damages the quality of assistance – just as one example, World Food Programme rations are still only at 70% because of attacks on their convoys - and it damages the credibility of their promises to ensure our safety.

Mr. President, nobody can be satisfied with only keeping needy people alive. Alleviating their suffering and protecting them from abuses are as much a part of humanitarianism today as are food, water and other material assistance. For example, throughout my trip in Darfur, I was confronted with the pervasive risk of sexual violence. I met many women who had the courage to speak out. It was therefore particularly disturbing that programs aimed at preventing or responding to this violence are under increased pressure from government authorities, with South Darfur presenting the most difficult challenges and one or two unacceptable incidents.

The authorities there have also recently forced the closure of two NGO mental health projects. An air of unnecessary suspicion continues to hang over the aims of this type of project. I raised these issues with the Government at all levels, and I hope that we can reach a better shared understanding of the essential purpose of protection and find ways of working together to help people living amid these brutal risks.

On the long-standing issue of administrative obstacles impeding humanitarian operations, the government recently extended the Moratorium on Restrictions through January 2010. I welcome this early decision. We should be able to harmonize procedures and practices between the federal and state levels, and address issues together before hasty unilateral actions are taken, such as harassing or closing projects or expelling staff. I have also asked the Government of Sudan to provide international NGO humanitarian staff with multiple-entry visas, to increase operational efficiency, and to avoid the anxiety of having to wait for exit visas, for example in urgent compassionate circumstances. This would reduce bureaucracy for both sides, and significantly improve the atmosphere of relations.

Mr. President, we must also be aware of the effects of continued violence, stress, and upheaval in Darfur. Those in camps are increasingly frustrated. The longer they stay there, the more questions such as land and property rights increase militancy. Fears are increased by renewed pressure by Government authorities for rapid return, even when security conditions are clearly not right for safety or sustainability. Some camps are particularly sensitive, such as Kalma or those around Zalingei in West Darfur, both of which I visited. Just yesterday, tensions came to a boil in Hassa Hissa camp in Zalingei, resulting in a tense standoff which required UNAMID to position themselves between the camp and an armed group. To help address these issues, I have asked the government again to allow UNHCR to support them with camp coordination and management. I also strongly urge rebel leaders to respect the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps.

Frustration and problems are not of course confined to the camps, but are in many rural areas too. We are trying to engage with and help all communities, including Arab nomadic communities, and promote early recovery and development wherever possible. Local reconciliation efforts between communities, as well as wider political negotiations, are essential for future normalisation, and I was encouraged that these were already under way in some places, for example to allow the recent harvest to go ahead in relative peace in some areas.

Mr. President, overall, my discussions with the Sudanese authorities, while frank at times, took place in a constructive spirit. We now need to see rapid results on the ground. We are also intensifying our contacts with the rebel movements to persuade them that they too must respect humanitarian personnel and aid efforts.

From Darfur, I went to South Kordofan to assess the humanitarian response to May's serious violence in Abyei that forced some 50,000 civilians to flee, many to nearby Agok. Talking to the displaced Dinka, the message was clear: without continued progress on the Abyei Roadmap, including further support to the Joint Implementation and Police Units, most of the population will not return, primarily due to fears of renewed violence. I also discussed this with the new Abyei Administrator and his Deputy, in particular the importance of ensuring the resources required to implement the Roadmap are made available. This is a point I strongly took up in my meetings in Juba and in Khartoum. The importance of Abyei to North-South peace can hardly be overstated.

Mr. President, I also visited Juba for the first time since March 2007. Juba itself has boomed in the meantime, with the good and bad sides that boom implies. But outside the capital, the process of construction remains painfully slow and little of the oil revenue flowing to Southern Sudan has so far been seen.

Southern Sudan, while no longer a humanitarian emergency as such, still has some of the worst child and maternal health indicators in the world. For example, maternal mortality is twice as high as in Darfur. One child in every seven dies under the age of five. Agriculture has huge potential but three years on from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, more than 90% of fruits, vegetables, and consumer goods are imported from Uganda or Kenya.

The good news is that some 12,000 kilometers of roads have been de-mined, 3,000 water points rehabilitated, 2.4 million former IDPs and refugees returned, and primary school enrolment rates have risen dramatically. Some of the 'peace dividends' hoped for on the signing of the peace agreement have begun to appear. But there is a long way to go. While Darfur's problems tend to take the spotlight, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains of huge importance for the whole country. The UN, NGOs and donors must all continue to help ensure effective recovery and development. But the Government of Southern Sudan also needs to allocate additional resources for basic services.

Mr. President, let me conclude with a few general points. The situation in Darfur remains a huge challenge, above all for the people of Darfur, but also for humanitarians, for UNAMID and for the political process. There is plenty of room to criticize the Government of Sudan for continuing human rights violations, for not disarming the militias, for not always facilitating humanitarian relief, or for declaring a cease-fire then almost immediately violating it. However the rebel movements have neither declared a cease-fire nor shown great readiness to engage in a political process, and are also not helping relief efforts. They have a lot to answer for, too.

Meanwhile, the situation in Darfur cannot continue without causing incalculable damage, not only to the physical environment, the risks to which in areas like forest cover and water resources struck me particularly forcibly on this visit; but also to the ability of Darfur to recover its culture and way of life in the future. A generation is growing up in the camps with no knowledge of what went before. How will they respond if and when real peace returns? How many will go back to villages, in some cases already occupied by others? Humanitarian relief cannot answer these questions. Only decisive political action can.

Meanwhile it is important that UNAMID continues to use its current and future capacity to improve the physical protection of civilians, in particular in the camps near the main towns, as they have now done so successfully around Kalma camp in South Darfur. This will not only improve the safety of civilians and humanitarians, but will also help contribute to reducing tensions overall.

Lastly, Mr. President, let me make one comment on the ICC issue in Sudan. Regardless of what may happen in the coming months, it is in everyone's interests to ensure the safety of humanitarians and to sustain the humanitarian operation. I took every opportunity to remind the Government of Sudan of their fundamental responsibilities in this context. For our part we will do everything in our power to maintain our operations to help those in need.

Thank you, Mr. President.