**Press Conference** 

28 September 2011

## Near-verbatim transcript of the Press Conference by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hilde F. Johnson UNMISS Offices - Tomping, Juba

Good afternoon, I have just come back to Juba from New York to debrief you on the UN General Assembly and give you a report on this historic occasion when the Republic of South Sudan for the first time participated as the newest nation of the world and as a member-state of the United Nations.

On 23 September, I was able to attend President Salva Kiir Mayardit's first ever address to the UN General Assembly as the leader of the newest member-state of the United Nations. He used this historic occasion to come with the right message at the right time. This included showing commitment to peaceful relations with its neighbour in the North, and to establish a solid foundation for the new nation, based on political pluralism, good governance, transparency and accountability.

Let me then highlight three important messages in the President's statement – there were a number of messages, but I want to highlight three of them – and they were also very warmly welcomed by world leaders.

It is of great importance that the President of the new Republic of South Sudan promised to expeditiously resolve pending issues related to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the CPA, and the separation between the two countries. He appealed for constructive cooperation with their neighbour in the North to make this happen. We are really appreciative of that, and I will personally also support the UN Special Envoy Haile Menkerios in his efforts to ensure a completion of this process and in his role in relation to the North/South process between South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan.

It's also critical in my view that the President reiterated his solemn pledge that South Sudan has not and will not interfere in any domestic affairs of the Republic of Sudan.

The second issue I wanted to highlight is that the President reaffirmed his commitment to political pluralism, and he highlighted the recent formation of the new government that is inclusive of other political parties as a first sign in this regard. This is as an important first step, and this commitment to political pluralism is very welcome and bodes well for broad consultations to ensure a stable, democratic transformation of the new and independent country.

Now the Government of the Republic of South Sudan as you know is scheduled to discuss two important bills quite soon, the Political Parties Act and the Electoral Act. And in line with the commitment that was expressed by the President on political

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pluralism, we expect that both bills will be subject to consultations with the other political parties in South Sudan. And this commitment also needs to be reflected in protecting political space, and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms of all political actors as has been expressed on previous occasions by the President.

We need to remember that the eyes of the world now are on South Sudan. The management of these critical processes and the political milestones will be important for South Sudan's standing internationally, as well as the way it manages its own security, in Jonglei and in other states, and good governance, transparency and accountability.

Thirdly, therefore, I want to highlight the steps the President referred to on transparency and accountability in his statement, and also to world leaders in New York, but also the five critical actions for increased transparency and accountability that he launched upon his departure. This sets, as we know, new standards for the public finances and for government officials. This was very well received among international partners, and I happened to be able to talk to quite a number of them.

It is unacceptable when money devoted to developing the new and independent South Sudan ends in private pockets and on foreign accounts. With the actions the President is now taking, he is ending impunity for the individuals involved, and putting the country and the people first. Investigations and prosecution against those involved is a precondition for South Sudan to succeed in building a new, strong and stable nation. Only in this way can one ensure and can we ensure that what people fought for during decades of struggle is not lost, but that it actually bears fruit.

I also wanted to highlight the importance of the review and regulation of land sales that is reflected in the statement. This is significant and can also reduce inter-communal tensions. I call upon the international community to assist the Republic of South Sudan in implementing these critical steps and help recover and repatriate any diverted funds, whether from Switzerland, the UK, the U.S, Australia, or indeed elsewhere in the world.

The engagement by the Legislative Assembly and civil society the last week, requesting additional actions against corruption, is positive. To win the fight against corruption, all parts of society need to engage. And it is when the efforts of the Executive and those of the Parliament and civil society come together that real success can be achieved.

At the UN, another important gathering also took place, apart from the statement by the President, welcoming the most recent arrival to the world of nations. A dinner was held in honour of the youngest member-state of the UN with a number of foreign ministers present, and the Secretary General of the UN and the senior leadership. The international community's message was very clear: it stands ready to provide the necessary support for the development, security and prosperity of South Sudan. It would also like to see that the Government takes vigorous action in the implementation of its pledges towards the people of South Sudan and towards the international community.

When I accepted the UN Secretary-General's appointment as his Special Representative for South Sudan last July, I undertook to provide full support to the nascent Government in its efforts to achieve democracy, accountability and stability for the

people of South Sudan. This is also what we, my colleagues and I here at UNMISS, are here for.

In the area of security, UNMISS has been actively supporting the Government in restraining and preventing further escalation of communal violence, and this is particularly related to the Jonglei crisis. In the wake of last month's tragic violence in Jonglei State, we promptly deployed peacekeeping troops to defuse tensions and provide a deterrent presence. The mission has also been facilitating visits by prominent religious leaders to the State for conflict mitigation. In addition, we have carried out robust ground and air patrols across the State on a daily basis. We hope that this presence now can avoid and prevent any retaliatory attack, and we really call upon the continued efforts of the reinforcements of the SPLA into the area to deter further violence, and we will continue our vigorous efforts to try to do the same.

President Kiir's granting of a second amnesty on the occasion of South Sudan's Independence Day has also borne fruit, and integration of several rebel militia groups into the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the SPLA, is already underway. These include forces led by Peter Gatdet and the late Gatluak Gai in Unity State and those of David Yau Yau in Jonglei State. UNMISS and we in the UN have supported this process at the request of the Government through the provision of aircraft assets, verification and third party presence and assistance with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. This is positive. It is only when all rebel groups come back that we can really trust that stability will prevail in South Sudan. This is critical for the security in the country, and for the possibility for South Sudan to succeed as a stable nation.

As a UN Mission to South Sudan, based on a very extensive mandate, it is our obligation to report to the Security Council. And we hope to report to the Security Council that the Government of South Sudan is not only conveying the right message at the right time, which I think the President did in New York last week, but it is also doing the right things and doing things right - in accordance with the principles the President so clearly has expressed. With the recent events, I am hopeful that we will be able to convey a very positive message. And I also hope that the violence in Jonglei State also can be contained and that we can prevent any further escalation in the state.

I think I'll stop there and open up this press conference to your questions. So many thanks again, and I am open to receive any points from you.

Q & A

Gurtong Trust: The UN supports the President's statements in which he said that South Sudan would not interfere in the affairs of some countries. I am wondering, however, what is the UN's say on the issues of Abyei, oil, border, etc. – the outstanding issues between South Sudan and Sudan. What is the UN's say on these?

**Reuters:** You talked about corruption and the pursuit of funds that have gone abroad. Is it possible to get an idea of how widespread this is? Do you have any data or can you characterize how big a problem for South Sudan corruption is?

**Sudan Catholic Radio Network:** I wanted to ask you in terms of security because if the police are to be a problem in the country, then what is the role of UN Police to build South Sudan Police into a professional force?

My other question is on the people of Abyei who were working with the UN. For approximately two months now, some of them who were transported to the south, their contracts were terminated because the argument is that they are no longer South Sudanese. These people lost their property when Abyei was invaded and the UN did not compensate them on that. Could you shed light on that?

**Radio Miraya:** When the President was giving his speech at the UN General Assembly, he talked about the need for political pluralism in the country. But on the ground, looking at the setup of the present Government, representation of other political parties is yet very poor. Does the international community have any leverage to convince the current administration so that other political parties like SPLM-DC, UDF and others can be brought into the government to reflect what the President said in New York?

**SRSG Hilde F. Johnson:** Firstly; on the United Nations in terms of the post-CPA issues and the issues around the separation between the two countries, the UNMISS – meaning the United Nations Mission in South Sudan – which is a new Mission with a new approach, does not have jurisdiction or a mandate across the border. This means that we don't deal with both the Republic of Sudan and South Sudan. It is the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haile Menkerios, who has the responsibility for the north-south issues, the post-CPA issues and the issues related to the separation between the two countries.

In terms of the UN generally – so it is not UNMISS of me as the SRSG talking – the UN clearly has called for three things:

- 1. Support for the full implementation of the CPA which was critically signed by a number of international actors and which has been reflected in a number of UN Security Council Resolutions. So that is one: full implementation of the CPA;
- 2. A peaceful resolution of the remaining issues. In terms of how that should be done, I think UN Special Envoy Haile Menkerios is working intensely with the Parties, together with Thabo Mbeki and the AU High-level Implementation Panel, to resolve them. I think it is not in our interest at the moment to say where and what type of solutions should be found on the border issues, Abyei and oil. What we do note, however, is that border-monitoring arrangements agreed by the Two Parties are now being subject to Security Council Resolution recognition so that the border-monitoring arrangements under UNISFA are going to be under the UN auspices. But I can not give any positions or details from the UN on how to resolve the different issues and it is not, as I said, under my mandate.

On the issues around diversion of funds and corruption, clearly it goes without saying that it is always very difficult to get data on this. What you can have is calculations of money that is not accounted for, for example, in relation to budgets, aid money or in relation to the transfer of oil income. The World Bank has done some tentative calculations on that, but that does not say that this money has been stolen or is abroad. The only way normally that countries that have seen diversion of funds to foreign accounts can approach this is to be in touch with the relevant international banks and countries involved. There is increasing intelligence available but it can only be provided with special procedures. This intelligence is available in some of these countries. Of course, as the UN we do not have access to this but there is the possibility to learn from other countries – Nigeria and other post-conflict countries have gone through this and have been able to repatriate some funds and there is a registration of accounts in several of the countries.

So we don't have numbers, but it is of course clear that there has been significant progress in this area, which is why the President himself in his statement called for repatriation of funds.

As regards the security issue and UN Police and what we are doing, we have a commitment from the United Nations Security Council to have 900 police during the period here under UNMISS and they will have a number of functions. I would highlight that it is a different function from that of the period of the former Mission, which was sent to monitor the implementation of the CPA and to monitor the situation on the ground. The police mandate this time is much more to support the nascent independent country of South Sudan and assist in building the capacity of the police. This is a different kind of mandate. We are working on that now, and there is a dialogue between the Ministry of the Interior and the leadership of the South Sudan Police Service (SSPS) and our UN Police Commissioner and his team.

Among the things we will work with them on, one is helping them in the transformation process of the SSPS – changing the system. As we know, a number of them came from the SPLA, and a number of them are to be subject to disarmament and demobilization to be reintegrated into the communities. We would be part and parcel of that process.

Secondly, apart from the transformation of the SSPS, it is also critical for us to be present at the different levels of the police both at the county and at the state level. We are planning to work with counterparts in the South Sudan Police Service and help them strengthen their institutional capacity.

The third issue which is critical is respect for human rights and training in human rights standards. As we all know, there have been several episodes lately of people that have come under arrest, detention, been beaten up, which is unacceptable and which the government also has acknowledged is unacceptable, and where the training in human rights standards needs to happen with speed. The challenge we have is that almost 80 per cent of the police force, actually, is illiterate. To educate illiterate police

in human rights standards is not easy, but we are going to look at creative ways of being able to do so. In relation to this, of course, community policing is one important way of working which we would also do more at the county level – working with the police; helping them build their capacity to do policing in the right way.

Those are the three elements I wanted to mention from our side and, hopefully, we would be able to increase and improve the standards of the Police Service, together with other donors and together with the Government, going forward.

With regards to the situation on Abyei, you were asking specifically about the UN staff. In relation to the departure of UNMIS – what we called the "liquidation of the former Mission" – all staff have experienced that their contract with the former Mission has ended. However, the Abyei staff has been provided with the opportunity to work within the UNMISS until further notice. No one is therefore in a situation whereby they have not been catered for. There was a period of time where there was insecurity about the contracting arrangements because they had to leave Abyei abruptly, as you all know, as a consequence of the military action in Abyei, but we have been able to sort that issue out. So there is no staff at the moment that are not catered for. We are in a situation where they will receive their salaries, and we have asked them to work within the different sections within UNMISS where they have had their competencies and their skills. If there is any glitch here we need to know because at least the instructions have been clearly given, and we followed up on it.

Radio Miraya and the question on political pluralism: there are many ways of ensuring political pluralism, and for me and for us the greatest test would be the practical implementation of the democratic transformation process. This implies that key legislation needs to be in place, political space needs to be secured and those that are active politically whether or not in position, are protected both in terms of human rights standards, in terms of their ability to have freedom of speech, as well as their political activity. So the test of political pluralism isn't always that everyone should be in the government but that the opposition that holds government to account can do so without interference. It is also about being able to abide with core democratic principles. As I mentioned in my intervention, it is going to be important what the Political Party Act looks like, what the Electoral Act looks like and that there have been adequate consultations with the different parties on the acts. In addition, we have a very important constitution review process coming forward. So both from the perspective of the community and the people of South Sudan but also of the parties, having an inclusive and broad consultative constitution review process is going to be one of the most important tests as well.

These key political milestones down the road, for me, are where we would see the test of political pluralism rather than necessarily in the formation of the government. That can be done in different ways, and I don't think there is one recipe for how it should be done.

**Nile Fortune**/ **Voice of America:** My question is concerning the Jonglei crisis and the cattle-raiding. It has recently intensified in Jonglei but we know it has also been taking place in different areas like Warrap, Unity states. May you please highlight us on the number of troops you have deployed in Jonglei?

Other than that, in terms of taking preventive measures, have you also deployed forces in other areas like those areas that are prone to cattle-raiding?

**New Times:** Yesterday we attended a press conference and the Minister of Interior said that we rank number five as terrorist targets. As UNMISS here, how safe are we? We would like more information about that from you.

**UNMISS Public Information Office:** In one of your initial statements to the press, you said that the new mission would engage with South Sudanese at the grassroots level. You also talked about forming an Advisory Council, of establishing UNMISS county support bases and about conducting a survey to gauge the perception of the people of South Sudan towards the Mission. To what extent has the Mission achieved this?

**African Union:** I was hoping that you would mention what is going on in Abyei. I would like to take the opportunity to request UNMISS to tell the United Nations Security Council to advise the two partners – the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan – to abide by the 2 July 2009 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration as concerned the Abyei issue. A comprehensive ruling was given by then, and it was up to the two partners to abide by that ruling.

SRSG Johnson: With regards to the different incidents of inter-communal violence, I just want to reiterate that at the moment UNMISS is not only a new mission with a new mandate, it hasn't got its troops in yet. So we have less of a capacity militarily than we will have when the new mission is up and running properly. We are now getting in commitments from governments – what we call Troop Contributing Countries – so that more of the troops can come in. But we don't expect it would be possible before around the end of the year to see the full deployment - and that is the earliest opportunity. We do have troops – we have around 4,000 – that have been transferred. Some are on their way out, but some are still around. We are managing with what we have. That is one of the reasons why I would want to respond to your question by saying that we are responding in Jonglei - and I would say a little bit about how we are doing it – but our ability to deploy in other states is more limited because of the lack of capacity.

In terms of Jonglei, which is our highest priority at the moment because of the scale of the violence, we have been taking action quickly. As I said when the crisis happened when all those still unverified reports of around 600 people were killed, I said that the cycle of violence must stop. So far, the cycle of violence has not turned another corner. We really hope we are able to deter it, but we can only do that with strong SPLA presence on the ground and our own presence in addition. What have we been doing – we have basically been following three tracks:

First, on the deterrent side, we first had a combination of integrated teams going in from one community to the other consisting of military, police and civil affairs, in an integrated manner, both talking and engaging with the local communities, showing presence, as well as gathering intelligence about whether a potential counterattack or retaliatory attack can come and where it can come.

The second action we have taken militarily is to deploy a company at Likuangole that was there for 14 days. We did not have the capacity to continue to deploy it for a longer stretch of time due to supply issues. We have, however, replaced that with a continuous presence of platoons in the different areas of the state. We are dropping platoons in the different communities and they are remaining for a while and then leaving. In that way, we hope we are creating a deterring presence, but at least so far it seems to have worked. But as I again said, it is in support of the SPLA deployment and the presence of SPLA troops who have an obligation to respond and to react in protection of their own civilians that we can be effective.

The second track we have used is to work with politicians from the communities concerned and really call for them to call for restraint.

The third and very important track we have done is to support reconciliation efforts that have been underway in particular with the use of religious leaders but also working with traditional chiefs to assist in really working with the communities to prevent a further escalation.

Clearly, creating stability in Jonglei is a long-term venture, and it can only happen with a multi-pronged approach. What we are doing now is stop-gap measures and trying to get processes in place that can help resolve the issues over time. But it is only through a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy that stability and peace in Jonglei can really happen.

In Warrap, we are following this with our State Coordinators. Presently we are following this with other areas where cattle-raiding has taken place but, again, deployment of troops has not been possible.

We are engaging with communities, but I think what is important to note is the escalation that has taken place in Jonglei has a threshold that is much higher than we have seen in other states. The scary party of the Jonglei crisis is that both in June with the attack on the Murle outside Pibor, and in August by the Murle against the Lou Nuer, in both cases we saw very large movements in army-like fashion, new arms, new weapons and Thuraya phones. This is not normal cattle-rustling. This is something way beyond that, and it is something that is extremely worrisome. And if it gets out of hand, we would be in a situation where the cycle of violence would escalate to unknown proportions in South Sudan and this is what we really have to avoid. So this is not normal cattle-rustling – this is a completely different approach, and we need to acknowledge that this is a serious crisis. This also implies that if you look at what happened to women and children, it is much worse than what has happened in traditional cattle-rustling. This is not normal; it is abnormal and that is

why there needs to be very decisive action taken both by the Government, the SPLA, and by us in the Mission.

On the point with regard to listing South Sudan as number five in the list of terrorism, this is one list by one agency or bureau that follows certain indicators. And the only reason why they have arrived to this conclusion is that they are listing LRA as a terrorist organization. As we know, LRA at the moment is not operating significantly within the borders in South Sudan. They are moving up to Western Bahr El-Ghazal and into the Darfur area and we don't know when they might cross the border again. But we are in a situation where they have termed LRA as a terrorist organization.

We have, for this reason, looked at what the definitions for terrorism are and who is using this term. The US has dropped the label "terrorist organization" for the LRA, and we have also seen that the UN does not use it, so this is not a generally agreed definition of LRA. We can call them many things, but it is generally not agreeing.

There was a question raised about the Advisory Council that I will appoint. I have consulted and sent invitations to a number of key leaders in South Sudan proposed as my Advisory Council with terms of reference. We are still awaiting responses from all members proposed. When we have received confirmation that they want to join my Advisory Council, we will indeed share that with them.

Preparations for the survey are underway and that would happen.

As regards the county support bases, we will have presence in a number of counties in South Sudan for engagement with communities and for their protection. That is underway and we are waiting for our budget to be approved in New York to get the numbers that we would like to share with you for year one, year two and year three – which I think is a sequential approach to build county-support bases in different parts of the country ... those which are most conflict-prone.

As regards the United Nations Security Council and Abyei, I think I mentioned that this is not my portfolio and my jurisdiction. I think it is the Security Council and Haile Menkerios that has to advise on how to approach the Abyei issue, including the arbitration without an outcome.

Q: [inaudible question on UN preparedness in the case of an outbreak of violence].

**SRSG Johnson:** The UN is definitely not unprepared. We mobilize and send the troops in immediately when we get knowledge of the attack. We have now prepared an early warning, early action strategy; we have prepared an approach on state levels and response, and we have prepared a strategy on protection of civilians. All three are almost done, and we are going to agree with the Government on the approach.

We actually took action on Jonglei even before any of these instruments were ready. Because we have been with half capacity on the military side, we have been there with only four to five weeks. We have now prepared all these key instruments and tools so that we are prepared the next time something happens.

However, since we are a little bit over half-capacity, our ability to deploy for a long time – for example, a company that remains in a particular area for a long time – is difficult. We have done that, but capacity-wise we can not sustain that for a very long stretch of time. And the challenge, of course, is that Jonglei State is as big as Bangladesh. You need to know where the retaliation attack would come for that protection to be effective. If you are deploying in an area to protect civilians, there might be a situation where the retaliatory attack circumvents that presence. So you need a significant presence to act as a deterrent and protect civilians. This is why the SPLA presence is so significant. They have a division in that state and they have decided to deploy two battalions, and that is a much stronger military capacity than we have at the moment.

As I said, we need to be fully operational and we are supposed to have 7,000 troops when we are fully operational. That would allow us to be able to potentially deploy two companies at the same time. But again, you need to place them in the right locations so that they can protect civilians.

Again, we would need to rely on the SPLA to deploy in adequate numbers for that combination to be in a position to protect civilians from an attack.

This is the challenge we have, and we need to have intelligence about where a potential attack is coming, we need to have enough lifting capacity to get troops on the ground. And so the main effort we have now is deterring an attack to try to prevent it from happening and the SPLA presence to deter an attack. Whether we would succeed in doing that remains to be seen, but we have continuously been doing that also with airlift and presence. We are doing daily air surveillance all over Jonglei and the affected areas so they see that they are monitored and they see that they are subject to monitoring and verification. We are dropping platoons at different parts of Jonglei on the basis of the intelligence that we get.

At the moment deterrence is our main strategy. We have the mandate to protect civilians but there are logistical constraints on the number of troops. At the moment, we can be in a situation where attacks can happen and we don't have troops exactly there, which would be unfortunate, but we can't deploy over the whole of Jonglei State.

So we are ready, we are moving, we are acting, but we don't have the full capacity on the ground to be able to protect civilians anywhere in that state. And we need to rely on the government to take the primary responsibility and to use their own troops to protect their own civilians, and then we would support them from our end.

**Sudan Catholic Radio Network:** Just a follow-up on the Abyei staff. How many are there here in South Sudan? I have already talked to one staff member whose contract was terminated since the end of July because, they were told, they are not South Sudanese and can not work here. How many staff from Abyei are here?

**SRSG Johnson:** I have to get back to you on that. What we have done is that we have been working with the National Staff Association and with the Abyei leadership on this, and we have been in touch directly also with the staff members concerned and they have been approached by UNMISS. So if there is one family here that hasn't been informed, then there must be a glitch in the system because we have taken care of this issue and I have personally followed up on it.

I do not recall the numbers of staff; I have to find that for you afterwards and Joe {UNMISS PIO States' Coordinator} would follow up on these.

(Ends transcript)