

Press Conference

25 June 2004

The Secretary-General: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming this morning. I know it is a bit early for some of us, but I am leaving this weekend for a long overseas trip, and I thought I should talk to you and answer your questions before I go.

One of the countries I will be visiting is Sudan, particularly Darfur. I am very anxious to see this problem for myself. The people of Darfur are suffering a catastrophe. Terrible crimes have been committed against them. On the humanitarian side, the needs are massive. As so often, the initial response was too slow, partly because of the severe restrictions on access we faced and security. But in the last couple of months, agencies and their non-governmental organization (NGO) partners have made significant progress.

In May, the World Food Programme provided food to nearly 600,000 people. The goal is to reach twice as many, 1.2 million, by the end of August. By the end of this month, we will have enough material and blankets on the ground to reach 90 per cent of the displaced population. A massive measles campaign in June has targeted more than 2.2 million children. About 350,000 needy people now have access to safe water. One of the most acute needs, if we are to prevent the spread of disease and epidemics during the rainy season, is for latrines. Large numbers of these are now being constructed.

I have repeatedly appealed to President Al-Bashir of Sudan to make it easier for humanitarian workers to reach the population. Access has now improved and the number of international staff in Darfur is increasing. But more are needed, and serious problems remain. Entry of supplies and equipment, including trucks, must be facilitated. Threats against humanitarian workers must cease and delays in registering NGOs or granting them visas must also be removed.

There is still a desperate need for funds. We have a shortfall of \$140 million for this year, which severely affects our ability to deploy more staff and resources, especially in key areas such as health, water and sanitation. I appeal to all donors to convert the pledges

they have made and to provide substantial additional funding. We have also asked them to provide engineers and a range of equipment such as water tankers and mobile field clinics. We need all this assistance now, not in one month or two months time when it may be too late. Hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake.

Humanitarian relief is the most urgent need, but of course it is not a solution. The most sacred responsibility of any Government is to protect its people against the kind of crimes that have been committed in Darfur. The international community must hold it to that responsibility and that, above all, is the purpose of my visit. And if the Sudanese Government does not have the capacity to protect its population, the international community must be prepared to assist and the Sudanese Government should seek such assistance.

Behind the atrocities lie complex political and social conflicts over land and other issues. These problems must be solved urgently through inclusive negotiations. The conflict in Darfur is also a threat to the process that is at last bringing an end to the war in southern Sudan, which lasted for decades, costing untold misery to many millions of people. I have just appointed Jan Pronk as my Special Representative to lead the United Nations contribution to peace-building in Sudan. He will be with me on my visit, as will Mohammed Sahnoun, who has been representing me at the North-South talks and whom I have now asked to work with the parties in Darfur in search of a political solution. And of course, Jan Egeland of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) will also be with me.

I will report on my findings to the Security Council and also discuss it with leaders attending the African Union summit in Addis Ababa. As you know, the Union has already been involved in efforts to solve the Darfur conflict, notably by deploying ceasefire monitors. The United Nations fully supports those efforts, and I will look for ways to strengthen our support and make it more effective.

At the summit, I hope to have meetings with heads of States involved the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, another African country where a labouriously negotiated peace process offering hope after years of

slaughter and misery is in acute danger of being swept away by renewed conflict. We must do everything to prevent that from happening.

I also look forward to meeting the leaders involved in efforts to resolve the almost equally worrying situation in Côte d'Ivoire, where we have to prevent the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement from unravelling. I shall be discussing with the leaders of both Eritrea and Ethiopia how to implement the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries. And of course I will continue to Nairobi to see the United Nations operations and hold consultations with the Government. From there I will be going to another very important conference, the XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok.

Meanwhile, next Wednesday, the long-awaited restoration of sovereignty will occur in Iraq. I regret that security on the ground appears to be deteriorating. We shall continue to monitor it very closely, but meanwhile, the United Nations is doing everything it can to help Iraqis prepare for free and credible elections in January next year. It is vital that the interim Government is given a real chance to exercise sovereignty in the meantime. I appeal to all concerned to do what they can to facilitate its formidable task.

Thank you very much, and let me now take your questions.

Question: Good morning, Sir. I know you think we all have one-track minds, so I apologize in advance for asking about Iraq. But after what you called the illegal invasion of Iraq, you fought to obtain a central role for the United Nations, in part to recover some prestige for the Organization that had been lost. The Security Council gave you that leading role. But your people are all stuck now in Amman, and they can't return, or they're being killed and beheaded. So you're essentially left with providing technical assistance for the elections, and what else? What is the United Nations doing in Iraq to fulfil this role that the Security Council has now given it? Can you be anything more than scapegoats for the ongoing security fiasco there?

The Secretary-General: Let me say that we are doing more than offering them assistance with the elections.

Let's step back for a moment. I sent in a team led by Lakhdar Brahimi, which helped establish the Iraqi interim Government. We sent in the electoral team, which has helped put in place the legal framework for elections. We now have a team of Iraqis who are being trained in Mexico, preparing for the elections.

Over and above our efforts in the electoral area, and eventually in the constitutional area, those in Amman are operating within Iraq through the local staff and contractors. UNDP, for example, is handling a programme of more than \$200 million on the ground; UNICEF is involved in education and water. So we are doing whatever we can from Amman, and where necessary we do cross-border trips. We are trying to find creative ways to assist without necessarily overexposing our staff.

Question: It's hardly a leading role, though, Sir, is it?

The Secretary-General: Well, call it what you wish. But I think that when you look at the electoral process and the transition that we just through, those are very critical activities. Quite frankly, if we are going to resolve the conflict in Iraq, it's through political reconciliation, it's through political work, it's through inclusive, participatory elections and the national conference that will be held next month. There are limits to what force alone can do; you have to go the political route. So please do not underestimate efforts to get the political process going and to get the Iraqis engaged and talking to each another, democratically and otherwise. I think that that, in the long run, is going to make much more difference than any air force you can put in.

Question: You said just now that the Sudanese Government has a sacred obligation to protect its people. You've said they must cease putting restrictions on aid workers and people like that trying to get in. My question is, isn't it really much worse than that? Isn't it a fact that the Sudanese Government is funding and equipping militias who are committing what your own Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, has called ethnic cleansing and what many other people are calling genocide?

The Secretary-General: In fact, I myself have appealed to the Sudanese Government to stop the Janjaweed - that is

the militia - and disarm them. Not only that, we have recently sent in the Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Rapporteur, [Jayanga ?], who will be submitting a report on this situation to us. And I am going in myself to assess the situation on the ground, support my people and put additional pressure on the Government to do what it has to do.

As it happens, Secretary of State Powell's visit and my visit will coincide, and we will be together for at least one day in Khartoum, where we will be collectively putting pressure on the Government to do what it has to do. And, of course, given the atrocities that have happened and the crimes that are being committed - these are universal crimes. So the perpetrators ought to be put on notice that they will be held accountable, whoever they are. It is not just the field commanders, but also some of the leaders who are giving the orders, who may also be held accountable.

Question: There have been some recent statements of concern about the possibility of holding elections on schedule in Afghanistan in September. This is going to be an issue at the upcoming NATO summit. To your mind, how important is it that the international community, and in particular NATO, contribute more troops to Afghanistan?

The Secretary-General: As far as the elections are concerned, let me start with voter registration. It is moving quite well. We are registering Afghans at the rate of 100,000 a day, and the pace of registration shows the interest of the Afghans in taking charge of their political destiny. To date, we have registered 4.5 million people. So that is going well.

If we can get the security situation under control, we should be able to hold the elections in September, as planned. But that is a big "if". We do not have enough troops on the ground. ISAF has not deployed outside Kabul. I would appeal to them and to NATO to deploy the five provisional teams to the provinces that have been promised. I think the American and NATO forces on the ground need to help us and work with the Government and with the warlords in the regions to ensure security. There are places in Afghanistan to which our staff cannot go - even places that we had thought had been safe once. So we are on track with our preparations, but the security situation has to be monitored constantly.

As I have indicated, the troops that have been promised are not in yet. We not only need additional NATO troops outside Kabul; we need the five provisional teams promised to other regions to be deployed.

Question: Relating to the ongoing six-party talks in Beijing, three quick questions. First of all, how positively did you see the United States plan that was presented a couple of days ago? Would you urge the North Koreans to accept such a plan? And beyond that, how concerned are you about at least the illusion of a threat - if not an outright threat - by the North Koreans to go ahead and test a nuclear weapon?

The Secretary-General: I think the proposal put forward was a positive step. This also shows that the parties are determined to find a diplomatic way to resolve their differences and that at least they are beginning to exchange ideas and engage in dialogue seriously.

I cannot comment on the threat by the North Koreans, whether it's a bluff or whether it is real. But obviously, we need to get the parties that are involved in the talks, also to engage them. The Chinese are playing a very important role here, and I hope they will be able to dissuade the North Koreans, if they are not bluffing, not to go in that direction. My own Special Envoy, Maurice Strong, was there recently and had a very good, very encouraging trip. He had the sense that the North Koreans are keen to engage. Of course, the crisis has three aspects: you have the nuclear problem, immediate and urgent humanitarian needs and the need for long-term economic development, including energy needs.

Question: Back to Darfur: is it time for the Security Council to act in a stronger way to hold the Sudanese Government accountable, responsible for its actions - sanctions or really concrete steps beyond a press statement or a presidential statement?

The Secretary-General: The Council is seized of the matter. I myself have given them several reports, and they have issued a statement.

I think what is important here is that not only the Council; I would say all Governments with influence in

Khartoum must engage the Government of Sudan and insist that the Government must protect its people - it must disarm the Janjaweed, it must create an environment that will allow the displaced to go home, and it should engage with the rebel side very seriously in political settlement and in negotiations.

We also have to make clear to all those who are involved in the peace process in Sudan that, yes, we have made progress on the north-south track, but you cannot have comprehensive peace in Sudan if the west continues to burn. So we have to settle Darfur to be able to talk of a comprehensive peace in Sudan and so that the Sudanese can hope to receive their peace dividends and serious engagement by the international community.

Question: But you aren't really willing to go beyond that to call for the Council to really take a strong action.

The Secretary-General: I think the Council - the time may come for the Council to do that, but I think we need, in the meantime, to put collective pressure and encourage the Government to do what it has to do. But the Council should be vigilant and remain engaged, and it should not hesitate to do that, should that be necessary.

Question: Back to Iraq, the United States is talking about unilaterally extending immunity for soldiers and contractors after 30 June, and it is unclear if the interim Government actually wants that. In the wake of your statements about the ICC exemptions, is this the - is this move desirable and is it an expression of the full sovereignty that you expected?

The Secretary-General: I don't have the details of the discussions that are going on right now, but if they are doing it with the consent of the Government - that is, the Government that will take over on 30 June - then there is nothing that one can say about that. And so I hesitate to get into it without knowing all the details. If the Government were to agree, then, of course, we cannot argue about that.

Question: A quick follow-up first on Warren's question. Do you not - or do you - consider what's going on in Darfur genocide, ethnic cleansing?

And my question is about the report by your Under-Secretary yesterday, Sir Kieran Prendergast, to the Security Council, in which he made very clear that the Israeli excesses continue, thousands of people are displaced, still demolition of homes, building of the barrier. The Egyptians are pressuring the Palestinian Authority, according to the meeting of the Quartet yesterday. What are you going to do beyond just another appeal and another ... sort of like the Israelis, turning a blind eye to what you're saying? And do you seek the US help on that, just like the Egyptians are pressuring the Palestinians?

The Secretary-General: Let me say that on the question of what is happening in Darfur, there has been lots of discussion as to whether it is genocide or ethnic cleansing, and I myself in Geneva had indicated that, from the report I was getting, it was bordering on ethnic cleansing.

But let me say that the issue is not to discuss what name to give it. We all agree that serious crimes are being committed. International humanitarian law is being broken, and there are very serious human rights violations - grave ones - that we need to act on. We don't need a label to propel us to act, and so I think we should act now and stop arguing about which label to put on it. And, as I said, I sent in a human rights rapporteur, and I'm waiting for her report in the next week or so.

With regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yes, I am aware of the demolitions and the desperate situation of the Palestinians who have lost their homes, and I know that from the reports I get from UNRWA how difficult their living conditions are. We - the Quartet - have engaged the Government, and in fact the envoys met recently and that is where they made the statement about the Egyptian and Jordanian efforts to assist the Palestinians. But that is more on the security side and restructuring of the security arrangements.

We are also looking at the whole question of withdrawal from Gaza and have indicated that if it is done in the context of the road map and is a total withdrawal from Gaza, to be followed by similar steps in the West Bank, it could re-energize the peace process. And we - the

international community should be prepared to work with both parties to manage the withdrawal in order to avoid a situation where the withdrawal leads to even further chaos. In the meantime, the agencies on the ground - UNRWA and others - are doing as much as they can to give assistance and to give support.

But, of course, no one has condoned what has happened. I have spoken often. The European Union has done quite a lot. Governments have appealed to the Israeli Government to be careful not to harm the innocent.

Question: But, Sir, do you not have any other recourse? These are - as you said in many of your reports - violations of international humanitarian law and international law. So, is there no other recourse for you but to issue statements and go unnoticed? You are doing something on Darfur, and I hope you succeed in doing something about it. Why not dare go further on the Israeli violations of humanitarian law?

The Secretary-General: I think on this issue, first of all, we as a Quartet are working together to try and deal with the situation. When you ask, "go further and do ...", the two situations are quite different. I don't think you can equate Darfur or the Sudanese situation with the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. So I wouldn't accept the comparison that you are making.

And you also know that we as a Quartet work as a team, and we need to get everybody on board for us to be able to move in the direction that we have to. I think our report of last month, on 4 May, gave you an indication of what the Quartet wants to do. You would want to see immediate action by the Quartet to either stop the demolition of the houses, and that is going to take the kind of action and will and resources and confrontation that, quite frankly, today I don't see anybody on the international community willing to take. And you know that. And so - and I cannot, as Secretary-General, move in. I don't have troops. I don't have horses. And I don't think the Governments are prepared to do the kind of thing that you are indicating.

Question: You have just said that everyone agrees that serious humanitarian crimes have been committed in Darfur. Do you think in that case that the International Criminal Court could possibly play a future role in dealing with

this? And, secondly, how would you compare the international community's response to Darfur thus far with what happened in Rwanda 10 years ago?

The Secretary-General: Let me say that the Sudan has signed the Rome Statute but has not ratified it. So it is morally bound to live by the provisions of the Statute. I would also say that the crimes being committed in Sudan are universal crimes, and so even if the ICC does not have a jurisdiction, the culprits can be arrested and tried anywhere in the world if they step out of Sudan, and so they may not be able to hide.

Your second question - no, that's it.

Question (*spoke in French*): Darfur - in your view, what is the responsibility of the Sudanese Government for what is happening? And, secondly, would you be in favour of sanctions? You say that we must act now. Diplomatic pressures haven't been working. You have been trying that for several weeks. What else can one do?

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): Obviously, the Government of Sudan is responsible for the protection of its citizens. If that situation continues, I hope that the Security Council will act. Sanctions have been proposed, or other actions, and I hope that they won't be excluded. But the Council must maintain the pressure, and I expect that if the situation does not improve, the Council may take other measures.

Question: So can you do Arabic?

The Secretary-General: *Aiwa*. No, no, at least I've said yes. Yes, I want to see where he goes from there.

Question: Iraq, then southern Sudan. Notwithstanding the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, people in the Arab world who have always wanted you to go to Iraq are saying now you're going to Doha. The SG's going so far and no further. What do you say to that?

And on Sudan, Sir, both London and Washington have rejected Khartoum's charges that they have a political agenda in Sudan. Will you be seeking to give the Sudanese assurances that basically the UN will not provide

diplomatic and humanitarian cover for those political agendas?

Just one last more on John Danforth - John Danforth, the new US Ambassador to the UN, he's obviously - he's been working as the US envoy to Sudan. He will be bringing a special understanding of the situation there. But he is also an Episcopalian. And dealing with Sudan, where the conflict has been depicted as a conflict between the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south, is his appointment going to be an asset for the UN or toil and trouble in Sudan?

The Secretary-General: Let me start with your first question. You are right that I will be in Doha on my way to Sudan. Specifically, I think I will be in Khartoum or in Darfur on 30 June. Also, the security forces on the ground are extremely stretched. I do not think we should impose additional responsibilities on them by taking them away from their essential duties to look after VIPs. It does require quite a lot of security to look after visiting VIPs. Besides, both the CPA and the Iraqi Government want to make this a low-key affair. And I think it is appropriately right. So, I will be in Darfur as the handover takes place, but of course we are following it very closely and are involved.

On your second question, I am not aware of any political agenda that the Washington Administration and the UK Government might have. So the possibility of our being used as a cover for these political agenda, I think, is not going to be like -- We are there to help the Sudanese people. We are there to carry out our humanitarian work. We are there to encourage the Sudanese to reconcile and settle their differences. We are there to encourage them to protect their people and to seek comprehensive settlement in Sudan.

As to your question on - maybe I should call him Ambassador Danforth, since he has now been confirmed. Ambassador Danforth, I think, is going to bring lots of experience from Sudan. Despite his background, he has managed to work extremely well at the talks with both north and south. If the kind of suspicion you imply were there, I think his role as mediator in the process would have been almost impossible. So my sense is that he will be an asset

here and that he will bring useful knowledge that will perhaps energize the Council - and all of us - on Sudan.

Question: The first question has to do with allegations against the head of the OIOS. The question is, have you decided yet whether to launch an investigation and, if it ever merits an investigation, who can investigate the head of OIOS?

The second question: in the wake of your call for the membership of the General Assembly to adopt the Berlin declaration on anti-semitism, I asked the Foreign Minister of Ireland whether as head of the European Union he can bring it up again in the next session of the General Assembly. He said that because of their experience last year, it's not going to happen, basically. My question is, can the General Assembly pick it up?

The Secretary-General: On OIOS, since it was established, it has done some very good and successful investigations and has tried to improve excellence and integrity in the Organization. I know that some personal charges have been made against Mr. Nair - most of it anonymous - are being looked at and trying to clear it. Of course, if there is reason to go further, there would then be reason to worry about who would inspect the inspector. If that were to become necessary, one always has the means of getting someone to do the job. But we are not there yet. These are allegations at this stage, and we are doing preliminary checks.

[About the other question,] I hope it will require a group of Member States to take it up. The General Assembly cannot do it spontaneously. It has to be proposed and sponsored by a group of Member States. I am surprised by what you tell me that the Irish Ambassador said, that the European Union is not going to try again. Last year was last year.

Question: Secretary-General, a couple more questions about your attempts to root out corruption here at the UN. Paul Volcker said the other day that there seems to be a lot there, and he even said something -

The Secretary-General: A lot where?

Question: A lot of issues with the oil-for-food programme and his investigation - that he has seen a lot of smoke. I would like to know how you see the investigation going and comment on his comment about a lot of smoke.

The other question is, a brass (?) report was issued looking into corruption by the Office of Internal Oversight. That report did find a lot of issues, and that report has not been released to the public. I am trying to get your sense of that report and how we might be able to take a look at that report.

The Secretary-General: First of all, let me say that I didn't see the interview that you are referring to. I saw one by Mr. Volcker where he indicated that he has all he needs to do the investigation. In fact, he was asked "Do you have subpoena power?" And he said, "I have something better than subpoena. I have access to all the UN documents. I have access to UN staff. I have access to documents of UN contractors and companies dealt with the UN on this issue." He was absolutely satisfied with the material and information he has. He also went to say that he has put together a first-rate team who are going to do a very good job.

I think these are things one should note. I would urge you that we should take these things from Mr. Volcker. He, Judge Goldstone and Pieth are the ones in charge of the investigation. I think they will do a very thorough and credible job.

We cannot prevent those who write stories based on leaks or bits of information here and there. That can be dangerous and distracting. But I think we should leave Mr. Volcker, Goldstone and Pieth to do their work, and then let's judge. We have lots of work to do, and we have appointed a very, very good team to carry it out. Mr. Volcker is not out to make a name for himself; he's not on the make. He is completely disinterested. He is doing it for one dollar - if you need to know. I don't know where you got your information from.

On the brass issue, I haven't been involved. I don't know much about it.

Question: Should the report be released to the public?

The Secretary-General: I don't even know the report. So I think we have to find a way. Fred may direct you to those; you should check with him. I haven't seen the report. I don't think that it was a general report. You are referring to a report done by a department, a departmental report. I think one has to check with that department, and Fred will direct you to the individual you should check with.

[background voices]

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, I would like a quick follow-up on Sudan. When you say that in Sudan, if the Government cannot protect its people, it should allow the international community to do so. What specifically are you thinking about? Are you thinking about having some kind of multinational force come in, or whatever?

My real question was on the International Criminal Court. You took a very outspoken stand. Your stand prevailed. Are you now concerned that the United States might follow through with the threats that it made initially, two years ago, to block peacekeeping operations and to make great difficulties for those missions authorized by the United Nations?

The Secretary-General: On Sudan, I don't think we are ready to send in the cavalry, and I am not sure I have that many countries ready to go. So the Council will have to think. If it becomes necessary to take concrete action, the Council will have to decide what to do. Someone has suggested sanctions, and there is also a series of actions the Council can take. It will be up to them to decide.

We have had other situations where the Government concerned has failed to protect its people and the international community has gone in to help. East Timor is a case in point. When Indonesia couldn't do it, a force did go in to help them do it. I was on the phone almost night and day with President Habibie, saying, if you cannot do it, let international community come in and help. But that willingness to go in and help must also be there and be demonstrated, and I think we should all begin thinking about that.

On the question of the International Criminal Court, I hope that this is the end of the - well, let me step back.

Let me say that I think the outcome was a good one for the Council, and I think also for the Americans. We should not forget that the Council, after divisions, just came together on Iraq. The unity of the Council is extremely important - it is not form; it's substance. When they are united and they work well together, they have greater impact and their decisions are usually sound. We are going to have to deal with lots of tough issues along the way, so I was concerned that the Council be divided on an issue like the one before it on the ICC. I hope everyone will see it as a helpful decision, and I hope the US will not introduce other threats or, as you say, carry out this threat made two years ago to withdraw from peacekeeping operations.

Question: I have two questions, one on Sudan, one on Iraq. You are in Sudan at the same time as Secretary of State Colin Powell. Are you meeting, or have you coordinated anything? Secondly, Mr. Egeland said last week that the NGOs were not getting their supplies in, while the UN was. Do you think this has changed at all? A quick question on Iraq: I do not see how you can be a player if you are not going to have a Special Representative there. Are you going to name one by 30 June?

The Secretary-General: Yes, I expect to meet Secretary of State Powell in Sudan. On your last question, I will be naming a Special Representative shortly, and his duty station will be Baghdad.

Question: When?

The Secretary-General: Shortly.

Question: Before the 30th?

The Secretary-General: Let's say in about a week, within a week. The third question dealt with the Sudan, where the NGOs are not getting their visas and are not allowed in. That is part of our - I have spoken to the President about this, I have spoken to the Sudanese about it, and that is beginning to improve. But we will need to press ahead and ensure that they get their visas. They tend to differentiate between the United Nations and the NGOs, but the NGOs are essential for us. We work in partnership, and we cannot do what we do without them. So we have tried to get the Sudanese Government to understand that it is no

use letting us in and refusing to let in our essential partners.

Thank you very much.

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