

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL****BRIEFING TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY****New York, 20 April 2007**

Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I am grateful for this opportunity to brief you on recent developments in areas at the top of my agenda. As you know, since taking office, I have been committed to strengthening the capacity of the Organization by restructuring and consolidating the way we operate.

A week ago, I chaired my first meeting of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination. I was impressed with the collaborative spirit of this body. We had a wide-ranging discussion on how best to reform arrangements for cooperation among UN organizations, and ways to ensure a more transparent, cost-effective and coherent approach to developing common programmes.

I am fully committed to strengthening the sense of one United Nations family through every possible avenue; including the CEB mechanism and the recommendations on system-wide coherence being discussed in this Assembly.

System-wide coherence depends both on decisions from you, the Member States, and on work by the agencies, funds and programmes to define and implement improved ways to work together. I am confident that the UN's various entities are ready to put in the required effort. As you know, the Deputy Secretary-General will help me coordinate and support this endeavour from within.

On the intergovernmental process, the Deputy Secretary-General and I look forward to working closely with you in the weeks and months ahead. We hope for a productive discussion among the general membership, and, as ever, Madam President, we look to your constructive leadership.

System-wide coherence will be key to the UN's work in development, humanitarian affairs and the environment. That includes climate change, one of the most serious challenges facing the planet in our lifetime. The United Nations has a unique and important part to play in addressing it, and I am committed to galvanizing action. If I can, I will help facilitate discussions among Member States to explore what is possible and desirable. This week, I will announce the appointment of three special envoys on climate

change. Their mission will be to consult with Member States about the scope of the United Nations' role.

Protecting the environment is high on the agenda as we move forward on a project which directly affects all of us who work in this building: the Capital Master Plan. Following decisions taken by the General Assembly in June and December of last year, the Secretariat has been engaged in intensive procurements, including complex contract negotiations to retain a construction management firm and leases for office and library swing space.

The renovation plan calls for a phased approach which will allow for the UN campus to continue functioning on site. All the elements are coming into place: we are close to finalizing the contract with the construction manager, as well as the contracts regarding swing space. We are placing an emphasis on "green technology", and we will work with United Nations Environment Programme to reduce energy consumption by up to 30 per cent. Once the project is completed in 2014, we will not only have a more functional, more pleasant and healthier work environment, with the highest safety standards; we will also have a more energy-efficient and sustainable Headquarters.

On my proposals to restructure the UN's capacity to support peace operations, I take this occasion to call on Member States to reach a quick and positive outcome in the impending legislative process. I urge you to find a way to act on the recommendations in my comprehensive report at the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee, opening in May. The need to strengthen the Secretariat's capacities to mount and sustain peace operations is acute. For that reason, I have pushed the Secretariat to prepare the detailed information before you in very limited timeframe. The report does contain a considerable volume of information. But these are exceptional circumstances. I fear that unless we act with great urgency, we will not be in a position to handle the current and potential future peacekeeping demands.

Madam President,  
Excellencies,

Nowhere are the growing demands on peacekeeping more evident than in Darfur - which I have identified as my most pressing priority since taking office. Allow me to take this opportunity to update you on recent developments.

As you know, we are working in close collaboration with the African Union to implement the conclusions reached at the high-level meeting between my predecessor and the Government of Sudan in Addis Ababa last November.

To provide extra political space for the peace process, I resolved to re-engage the parties in a robust, pro-active manner. A key initiative took place during the Riyadh summit last month, when Chairperson Konare and I met with President Bashir, in the presence of His Majesty King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and Secretary-General Moussa

of the League of Arab States. On that occasion, the Government of Sudan agreed to high-level consultations with the African Union and United Nations to discuss the UN heavy support package aimed at assisting the AU operation in Darfur. In consultations in early April, a breakthrough was achieved, allowing us to move towards implementing this crucial package, which would involve more than 4,000 UN personnel and substantial material assets totalling almost 290 million dollars.

Obviously, the success of the package will depend on human, material, financial contributions and support from Member States, as well as full cooperation from the Government of Sudan. In the meantime, the bulk of the first package -- the light one -- which includes more than 200 military and civilian personnel and more than 21 million dollars' worth of equipment, has already been delivered and is working for the African Union operation.

These two support packages will lay the groundwork for the eventual establishment of an AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping operation, the planning of which is being finalized with the African Union. We expect to present its concept to the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council by mid-May. I am determined to make it a highly effective operation, based on solid command and control principles.

Also earlier this month, I convened a special meeting in New York with Chairperson Konare, Special Envoy Eliasson, and AU envoy Salim, focusing on how to accelerate the peace process. Enduring peace in Darfur can be achieved only on the basis of a political solution. The meeting agreed on a common UN-AU strategy, including the need for a political road map, which is also expected to be worked out by mid-May, thus bringing the two processes into one stream. Furthermore, at a meeting of interested Member States and special envoys in Tripoli on 28 and 29 April, agreement was reached *on the need for all international initiatives on Darfur to converge under UN-AU leadership.*

I thank the many individual Member States that have lent unwavering support to the Darfur peace process. I am particularly grateful to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia for his leadership and commitment. I also thank the Security Council and this Assembly.

And yet, despite these efforts, the violence in Darfur continues. Its scale is unacceptable and deeply troubling, exacting an intolerable toll in human lives and displacing tens of thousands from their homes. Everything possible must be done to secure an immediate ceasefire, terminate military operations and bombardments, and disarm rogue elements -- whether they belong to rebel groups or the vicious Janjaweed.

Above all, we must try our best to improve the humanitarian situation in Darfur, which remains highly precarious. That is why, most recently, I sent Emergency Relief Coordinator Holmes to the region to conclude an additional humanitarian agreement with the Government of Sudan. As you know, humanitarian workers themselves are being targeted, while African Union troops have suffered immensely. I would like to once again

put on record my admiration for the dedication and perseverance of the AU troops on the ground. We owe them a debt of gratitude and every necessary support.

Excellencies,

While international attention continues to focus on the Darfur conflict, we must also ensure that we give our full and unqualified support to the North-South agreement. Although progress continues to be made in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the “spirit of Naivasha” has been gradually receding. For the most part, CPA signatories have cooperated in those areas of implementation that shore up their respective positions. However, distrust persists between the parties and several key issues, including the management of other armed groups, remain unresolved.

There are also increasing concerns about the timeline for the redeployment of forces from the North and the South, the elections scheduled for 2009, the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Programme, and the demarcation of the 1 January 1956 border, which all remain well behind schedule.

As I have said before, peace in Sudan is indivisible. The international community must continue to provide support and focus on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, even as it exerts its full efforts to bring lasting peace to Darfur.

Madam President,

Let me also turn to the Middle East. As Secretary-General, I remain deeply committed to addressing the complex conflicts in this region, whether it is Iraq, Lebanon or, above all, the Arab-Israeli conflict. To this end, I have travelled twice this month to the region, visiting nine countries and attending the Summit of the League of Arab States in Riyadh. This week, I return to the Middle East for a meeting of the International Compact with Iraq, as well as for an expanded meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Iraq’s neighbors being held at Sharm El Sheikh. I am delighted that both Syria and Iran, amongst others, have confirmed their participation at these critical meetings.

Iraq, as we all know, faces many complex challenges. Violence continues to take an unbearable daily toll in civilian lives. The people of Iraq have my deepest sympathy and admiration at this most difficult period in their history. A priority for the UN at this juncture is to help facilitate a meaningful and deepening national dialogue among Iraqis. This must urgently be combined with efforts to muster support for this dialogue both regionally and internationally. The meetings in Sharm El Sheikh this week will provide an important opportunity for the international community to present a united front in support of the government and people of Iraq.

I am also deeply concerned that the number of displaced people, both within Iraq and beyond its borders, continues to grow at an alarming rate. Meeting their needs is an urgent priority for the United Nations. Two weeks ago, the UNHCR organized an international conference in Geneva on the humanitarian needs of Iraqis who have been

driven from their homes. I believe that it was an important step towards addressing this grave and growing challenge.

Excellencies,

The situation in Lebanon -- which has been the subject of repeated Security Council resolutions -- is also high on the Organization's agenda. Security Council resolution 1701 was crucial in bringing an end to the devastating war of last summer. The cessation of hostilities has held well, and the military and security situation in the UNIFIL area of operation is generally stable. UNIFIL plays a vital role in preserving the calm along the Blue Line, and I am grateful to its many troop contributing countries.

As you are all aware, Lebanon's political impasse continues despite sustained regional and international efforts to encourage dialogue and compromise. Here I should pay tribute to the efforts of the Arab League and of Saudi Arabia in particular. There are two major issues at stake: the establishment of a Special Tribunal to try the perpetrators of the Hariri assassination and other related crimes, and an agreement on the formation of a national unity government. Two weeks ago, I sent the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Nicolas Michel, to Lebanon. He conducted consultations with the political leaders of all parties in an effort to advance the ratification of the Statute of the Tribunal in accordance with the Lebanese Constitution. I regret that he was not able to report progress on these issues.

During my own trip to Syria last week, I discussed the Special Tribunal with President Assad, and asked him to use his influence to help the Lebanese reach an agreement. President Assad told me he would do what he could to encourage the Lebanese people to work for national reconciliation.

Syria has renewed its commitment to implementing Security Council resolution 1701, and has also announced that it is reactivating its border committee with Lebanon. Syria's role is critical in finding a way out of the present impasse. For my part, I stand ready to work actively for the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, and to support Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, stability and security.

While I was in Syria I also had the opportunity to visit UNDOF, which through its presence on the Golan Heights for 34 years has made a vital contribution towards peace and stability in the region.

Distinguished Delegates,

In the Middle East, and across the world, the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, remains an issue of profound concern. I believe it is incumbent on us to encourage all positive developments, and to build on current opportunities.

In this regard I draw comfort and hope from several developments. The Quartet will soon meet for the third time in three months, a demonstration of its commitment to find a way forward. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas are meeting on a regular basis. And the Arab League at its recent summit, hosted by Saudi Arabia, underlined its commitment to peace with Israel by stressing the continued relevance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

As I found in my own travels in the region, President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert have both shown determination to try to find a solution. Their voices are not alone and their dialogue can be supported by the important work of the Arab League and of the Quartet. I take this opportunity to appeal to both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to exercise the utmost restraint and maintain the ceasefire, given the recent violence. I very much hope that we shall soon see the release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, accompanied by corresponding measures on the Israeli side. I also take this opportunity to plead for the immediate release of the BBC journalist Alan Johnston, abducted in Gaza.

I will do everything possible to encourage movement towards the shared goal of all parties for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, based on Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515.

Madam President,  
Excellencies,

As developments in the Middle East bring home to us, never has there been a more profound need to strengthen our efforts to promote dialogue between faiths and civilizations. I recently appointed Jorge Sampaio, the former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations -- the first such appointment in UN history. President Sampaio will provide the vision and leadership needed to promote the Alliance as a credible and viable attempt to ease the dangerous tensions between diverse societies, and the threat these tensions pose to international stability -- as assessed in the report of the High-Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations.

When I visited the Holy See last week, I extended an invitation to Pope Benedict XVI to visit the United Nations. I am delighted that he has accepted my invitation. The Pope has an important contribution to make in our ongoing efforts to build understanding between peoples and cultures.

Distinguished Delegates,

A full and taxing agenda lies before us. But all of the items demand that we proceed with speed and determination. I pledge to keep Member States fully informed and abreast of developments as they occur. I will continue to look to you for guidance and support in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you very much.