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**Office of the Spokesperson****UNMIS NEWS BULLETIN\****6 March 2007****UNSG Special Envoy for Darfur Jan Eliasson briefs the Security Council today***

UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Darfur Jan Eliasson is briefing the UN Security Council today at 10 am Eastern Time (6 pm Khartoum time) on the joint mission he carried with AU Special Envoy for Darfur Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim as well as on the next steps the two Special Envoys will take to assist in re-energizing the Darfur political process. Jan Eliasson will speak to the press in New York following his briefing to the Security Council.

A Joint UN/AU Mediation Support Team (JMST), established to follow up on the two Envoys' last visit to Sudan during the month of February, and to prepare for their next meetings, met with representatives of DPA non-signatory movements in N'Djamena from 1 to 3 March.

***The New Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator announces plans to visit Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic***

Briefing the press corps yesterday at the UN Headquarter in New York, John Holmes, the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, whose tenure began on 1 March, said that he is planning to visit Sudan, as well as Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) from 20 to 31 March. To this end, Mr. Holmes is currently in discussions with the authorities of the three countries regarding the trip, during which he hopes to meet with Government officials, humanitarian workers and those living in camps. He indicated that the region "was clearly a major priority in the humanitarian sense, because of the worsening problems in Darfur, eastern Chad and, perhaps to a lesser extent, in the north-western part of the Central African Republic." He said that in Darfur, there were approximately 13,000 aid workers on the ground and 4 million people in urgent need of emergency assistance, including 2 million people who were internally displaced, and that number continued to rise. He added that there was also continuing insecurity for those people and for the humanitarian workers themselves. "The security problems are increasing and unacceptable and the problems of access, if anything, are worsening", he said.

He indicated that there were 230,000 refugees from Darfur in eastern Chad, another 48,000 from the Central African Republic, and 12,000 and rising internally displaced people from Chad, a number that had doubled since last October. He noted that this large refugees and IDP population was placing a lot of strain on the humanitarian system and on a very poor country in an extremely difficult and very remote area.

In the Central African Republic, he indicated that there was a very significant problem with some 210,000 internally displaced persons and 70,000 others who had fled into Chad or Cameroon. Again, the Central African Republic was a very poor country and a much neglected crisis, he said, adding that he had been trying to use the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) to improve the situation there.

***WHO: Massive emergency response operations ongoing in South Sudan to contain meningitis outbreak***

In a press release issued on 4 March, WHO's Country Office in Sudan indicated that according to the latest report issued by the GoSS Ministry of Health, a total of 2,243 suspected case of meningitis, including 174 deaths, have been reported in southern Sudan from the beginning of 2007 to 24 February 2007, some of which might have been reported as early as October 2006.

A mass immunization campaign, targeting 609,848 people in high risk areas, is being jointly implemented by the Federal Ministry of Health and the GoSS Ministry of health, with assistance of WHO, UNICEF, OCHA, the European Community Humanitarian Office, and INGOs Médecins Sans Frontières and MEDAIR.

The WHO Country Office has provided the Federal Ministry of Health with an emergency stockpile drugs for case management as well as necessary supplies for outbreak investigation. In addition, WHO is providing technical support for strengthening epidemic preparedness and response for meningitis in the country.

The disease has spread to 8 out of the 10 States in southern Sudan. Areas affected are known to have large numbers of returnees, as well as displaced people living in areas of difficult access and dispersed population settlements. Suspected meningitis cases were reported in the following States: Central Equatoria (508 cases), Eastern Equatoria (129 cases), Western Equatoria (123 cases), Warrap (452 cases), Northern Bahr El Ghazal (532 cases), Western Bahr El Ghazal (97 cases), Jonglei (107 cases), and Lakes (295 cases).

A taskforce has been set up at the federal and the state level to coordinate emergency health response operations to the meningitis epidemic in southern Sudan. Several field investigations have been conducted by both the Federal Ministry of Health and the Goss Ministry of Health for case detection, through mobilization of rapid response teams. Case management has been standardized in all affected States, community mobilization and health education are ongoing and surveillance has been strengthened to ensure early case detection and monitoring of the epidemic. Enhanced surveillance for meningococcal disease has been undertaken in all the high risk States in northern Sudan.

***IDPs return home in Blue Nile State***

IOM announced today that more than 1500 internally displaced people (IDPs) have been assisted by IOM over the past month to voluntarily return to former homes in southern parts of the Blue Nile State.

By May, some 3,000 IDPs are expected to be assisted to return to areas surrounding Kurmuk from northern parts of the Blue Nile State in partnership with UNHCR. This will allow them sufficient time to get settled before the start of the planting and rainy season. Registration

facilitated by UNHCR is ongoing to determine the overall number of IDPs to be assisted in Blue Nile State until the end of the year.

In one movement, an entire community was relocated by IOM from Jacob town to their new home in Khor Bodi.

"The receiving community had constructed a new school in preparation of the expected returns," explained Nelson Bosch, head of IOM's office in Damazine in the Blue Nile State. "So, in addition to the personal belongings of the IDPs, IOM also transported in this case all the school furniture and equipment."

The organized returns in Blue Nile State are part of an overall joint return plan for 2007 that was agreed upon by the Government of National Unity (GoNU), the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), the UN and IOM. Other operations include the voluntary return of IDPs from Khartoum to South Sudan and South Kordofan and helping those displaced in South Darfur return to home communities in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and elsewhere within South Sudan.

All IDP returnees on organized movements receive assistance consisting of basic household items provided by the United Nations Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) and a three month food ration by the World Food Programme (WFP) to help them during the initial reintegration period in home villages after many years of displacement.

Refugee returns from Ethiopia to Blue Nile State in Sudan has also resumed. Two convoys carrying nearly 3160 refugees arrived in Sudan on 1 and 3 March after being escorted by IOM from Bonga camp in Ethiopia. They were taken to Jindi in Kurmuk County and to Keli.

Blue Nile, which borders Ethiopia, is a major receiving state for refugees returning home. In partnership with UNHCR, IOM had facilitated the return of more than 2,000 refugees from Bonga camp in Ethiopia to Chali in Blue Nile State in an operation that began last December. However, operations were halted for security reasons by the UN in January.

UNHCR and IOM have agreed to assist up to 15,000 Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia and Kenya and another 5,000 Sudanese refugees from the Central African Republic to return home in 2007. IOM provides mainly pre-departure medical screening, transportation and escort for the refugees.

In a press release issued today, UNHCR indicates that the UN refugee agency launched a US\$56.1 million appeal for its operations this year to help tens of thousands of southern Sudanese refugees and internally displaced people return home and reintegrate in their communities.

The funds are needed to boost the ongoing voluntary repatriation programme to assist the return from nearby countries of more than 100,000 refugees this year; to help 25,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) return home; to provide returnees with reintegration packages; to rehabilitate health clinics and schools; and to improve shelter and sanitation. The appeal acknowledges returnees face considerable challenges and that major efforts are needed to ensure the return is sustainable. "Against a backdrop of landmines, human rights abuses and the almost total destruction of infrastructure and services, ensuring return and reintegration in safety and dignity and contributing to rebuilding economic, social, civil and political life are major undertakings, not just for UNHCR but for all partners involved," the appeal states.

### ***Departure of the first convoy of IDPs from South Darfur to Northern Bahr El Ghazal***

The first convoy of Northern Bahr El Gazal IDPs will be departing from Ed Daein camps on 7 March 2007. In this regard, UNMIS is flying participants from Government and Agencies based in Nyala and Khartoum to attend the opening ceremony which will take place in Ed Daein on 7 March 2007. The joint organized return to North Bahr El Ghazal is targeting more than 13,000 IDPs.

### ***Security and Humanitarian Developments in Darfur***

#### **North Darfur**

About 15 vehicles with armed militia on board were seen in El Fasher. The reason for this militia movement is not known.

#### **South Darfur**

On 5 March, SLA/MM soldiers opened fire at an AMIS team of 4 soldiers on their way to the Military Group Site in Gereida, killing one soldier and injuring another. The AMIS wounded soldier managed to reach the Group Site and reported the incident. AMIS dispatched a patrol to the scene and found the body of the killed soldier about 3 km from AMIS Military Group Site, as well as another soldier who was alive. The fourth AMIS soldier and the vehicle are missing. The wounded soldier was evacuated first to El Fasher and then to Khartoum for medical treatment.

In reaction to the SLM/MM soldiers shooting in Kalma camp and the detention of two GoS security officials on 4 March, GoS National Security intervened and exchanged fire with the SLA/MM soldiers. Allegedly, an IDP was killed and 2 IDP women were injured during the shooting. The situation in Kalma IDP camp was reported to be calm yesterday.

### ***Security and Humanitarian Developments in Southern Sudan and Transitional Areas***

Reports indicate that as a result of the movement of about 1,000 LRA soldiers on 4 March into Tambura town, where only 130 JIUs are deployed, the local population nearly deserted the town after gun shots were heard, though it remains unclear who triggered the shooting.

A large group of people, reportedly SAF demobilized soldiers, demonstrated on 5 March in Juba town, demanding payment of their outstanding salaries. The demonstration ended peacefully.

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