



UNMIS

Office of the Spokesperson***Press Release No. 33/06*****UNMIS Starts Wrapping Up its Activities in Kassala State After Successful Completion of its Mandated Tasks**

Khartoum, 29 July 2006: The Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General in Sudan, Jan Pronk, accompanied by a senior level UNMIS delegation, including UNMIS Force Commande, Lt. General Jasbir Lidder, attended today a farewell ceremony organized at the initiative of the Government of National Unity by the local Government of Kassala for UNMIS, on the occasion of the completion of its operation in the State of Kassala (Eastern Sudan).

UNMIS Regional Coordination Headquarter in Kassala is the first Sector that has successfully completed its mandated tasks with the withdrawal of all SPLA forces from Eastern Sudan to the South (around 5600 troops), as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

In his farewell speech, the Governor of the State of Kassala, on behalf of the State's authorities and the local population, praised the performance of UNMIS and the exemplary discipline both its military and civilian personnel have been demonstrating while carrying out their tasks. He welcomed in particular the United Nations' assistance in clearing the road between Kassala and Hamesh Koreib from land mines. He expressed hope that the UN will continue extending its assistance to the State of Kassala in clearing the remainder of roads and fields from mines so that developmental projects could be expanded for the benefit of all the State's communities. He reiterated the commitment of the Government of Kassala to maintain close cooperation with the United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes which will continue operating in Eastern Sudan in humanitarian and developmental fields.

Mr. Jan Pronk, on behalf of the United Nations, expressed his gratitude for the hospitality extended by the people of Kassala State and the local authorities to UNMIS team. He stressed that he was particularly pleased that the Mission's personnel deployed in the State has been viewed by the local communities as exemplary guests who showed utmost respect for the culture of the society they have been serving. He indicated that the Mission will complete its pull-out from Kassala State over a period ranging from six to eight weeks and stressed that the United Nations agencies will continue to carry out their humanitarian and developmental programs. He indicated that he was pleased that direct talks between the Government of National Unity and the Eastern Front have started and reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to assist the parties in this process should they request such assistance.

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Background information

- UNMIS is currently in the process of phasing out its presence in Eastern Sudan. The pull-out process of both Civilian and Military components of UNMIS Regional Coordination Headquarter in Kassala, which was established in February 2005, is to be completed over a period of approximately two months.
- UNMIS Military component is of total of about 250 personnel and the civilian staff is of a total of around 80, most of whom are Sudanese staff; with a total of 16 international staff members.
- The core mandate of UNMIS in Eastern Sudan as stimulated by the Security Council in its resolution 1590 (2005) and by virtue of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is to monitor and verify the redeployment of Sudan People's Liberation forces (SPLA) south of Line 1/1/56.

This task has been successfully completed with the withdrawal of all SPLA forces from Eastern Sudan to the South (around 5600 troops), which represents a significant step in the process of the CPA full implementation. The success of UNMIS monitoring and verification operation in Eastern Sudan lies in the fact that this redeployment that involved large bodies of troops and non-combatants, was carried out peacefully without any incidents.

- During its presence in Eastern Sudan and besides its verification and monitoring tasks, UNMIS has been engaged in a wide range of activities that benefit directly to the local communities and support the wider objective of achieving sustainable peace in the region.

UNMIS troops, like all of its counterparts in other sectors of deployment in Sudan, engaged in a number of humanitarian activities that had earned it the appreciation of the local population and Government. The following are some examples of these activities:

- The Nepalese contingent launched in October 2005 an anti-malaria campaign in Kassala to help the local community fight that menacing disease. The same troops embarked on another campaign dubbed "Clean Kassala" to increase awareness of hygiene and sanitation among the township's population.
- The contingent had also restored the electric power for the people of Hamesh Korieb by repairing and reinstalling a broken generator left behind by the non-governmental organization Samaritan Purse.
- For the first time, a medical camp for women and children was set up in the same area by a lady doctor of the Nepalese Contingent. This was a project the local community appreciated as it showed concern for the conservative nature of the local population. Those efforts and services were praised by the people and authorities in Kassala.

- Furthermore, UNMIS's Nepalese Contingent and civilian personnel deployed in Kassala have also assisted in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in that region and have supported other U.N. programs in their activities and projects.
- The Civil Affairs section of UNMIS in Kassala has been engaged in actively in promoting inter-tribal reconciliation and dialogue. The Section has also successfully carried out, in collaboration with other UN Agencies, the local authorities and national and international NGOs, seven (7) quick impact projects (QIPs) in areas such as health, education and support to community livelihood.
- After the withdrawal of UNMIS, the UN Agencies, some of whom have been operating in Eastern Sudan since 1980, will continue working both in the humanitarian and development fields to tackle chronic underdevelopment, widespread poverty and marginalization of large portions of the population, especially IDPs and refugees. They intend to step up response not only to ongoing humanitarian needs, but also to early recovery programming, including capacity building.
- Achievements in Eastern Sudan have been made in all fronts. SPLA withdrawal has been completed; the Government and the Eastern Front are currently engaged in direct peace talks which would hopefully lead to a definite and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the East. The humanitarian efforts in the region helped improving the daily lives of the communities.
- The UN remains concerned that nutritional and mortality levels could easily worsen if there is not enough assistance and/or adequate access granted for the humanitarian agencies to the people in need throughout the region. All UN humanitarian actors have expressed their willingness to continue their activities and to work closely with the authorities as well as with the civil society in order to effectively address the needs of the people in the region.