



Hervé Ladsous
Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
Press Conference, 8 February 2012

Near verbatim transcript

Opening Remarks:

Thank you very much Martin, and a good day to everybody, *bonjour à tous*. It is a pleasure to be here with you again and to say again that I do intend to have regular *rendez-vous* with all of you throughout the year.

Today I would like perhaps to focus on a few issues that are going on this year, about some situations to which I have been recently, notably the Congo, the Sudans, possibly Somalia. Of course you are very welcome to ask any questions about any other subject subsequently.

I would just like to say that we also have for DPKO an important event in less than two weeks now that will be the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations - known as the C34 - which will be an opportunity to discuss with Member States a number of issues both operational and of substance, I would say: how to keep on the reforms, the strengthening of peacekeeping and above all nurturing this, which is to my mind, an essential element of peacekeeping; the partnership that we have to keep developing between the organs, and especially the Security Council that gives us our mandates, the troop and police contributing states and also the countries that finance most of the operations.

You know there is a special advisory group which is working on this of course but this is definitely something that we keep working on, as indeed we keep working on developing our partnerships with other international organisations. I am thinking of the African Union. I was pleased last week after the African Union Summit to co-chair with the African Union Peace and Security Commissioner, my old friend Mr Lamamra, a steering group to develop our joint operations, and there are indeed several. And similarly in Brussels last week, to oversee the relaunching of the steering committee we have with the European Union to work together, the EU and the UN, on a number of operations in a very operational sense.



So let me start perhaps by sharing with you a few impressions about the Democratic Republic of Congo where I spent almost a week recently, which is as you know our second largest peacekeeping mission. Those are difficult circumstances, as you know, in Congo after the first phase of the elections on the 18th of November last year, which obviously were far from being very perfect. Of course it is one of the challenges for MONUSCO to work, in particular, with the Congolese authorities who have of course the responsibility for the election process, to work with them towards making the next phase of elections - provincial, local - work better in a way that satisfies the Congolese political actors and that can contribute to what is our goal in that country that is to have dialogue, opening of the political space and, at the end of the day, institutions which can actually respond to the various challenges, the numerous challenges in that country.

Another aspect, a very important one, was that of security and especially security in the eastern part of the country. I spent two days in the Kivus and I was absolutely interested by what I saw there. You have to imagine a region where state intervention, state presence is extremely limited. The FARDC, the armed forces of Congo, are in the process of structuring themselves but they are nowhere present everywhere where they should be. The same goes for the police. So in fact it is MONUSCO which has - one should always remember - the protection of civilians at the heart of its mandate. It is in fact MONUSCO which provides to many Congolese in that part of the country the essential security they legitimately require.

Let me tell you just for a second, about a place called Ntoto. Now Ntoto is in the middle of nowhere. It is in the middle of the tropical forest, about 80 kilometres west of Goma. It is a valley where two rivers merge, where several pathways north, south, east, west converge, cross themselves. And those paths of course are very much used by a number of traffickers, and unusual characters but mostly linked with the armed groups, of which there are many in that region. And right in that valley there is a population which has been the subject of attacks from every side.

So I saw a small garrison of 80 peacekeepers who are actually doing all they can and they are achieving a lot in protecting the thousands of civilians living, living in this valley to the extent that around their little camp were 1,000 displaced persons who were simply congregated there because they knew they had some safety there from the various groups. And I think this illustrates what our peacekeepers, very bravely, are doing in that part of the country. I should add that there are more than 18 "Ntotos"



in the Kivus. So it gives you the scale of the operation. And of course I talked with many of the local people and I think they did feel safer thanks to our blue helmets and in a better situation to go on with their livelihood.

But clearly the solution has to be the elimination of armed groups and some progress has been achieved. It has to be pushed further. It will be, I think, a long task. You would know that yesterday, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Roger Meece, and I briefed the Security Council and I was heartened to get the feeling that the Security Council thought that yes, the job was being done, with many challenges, many difficulties, but that we had to keep on with the effort because it is important for Congo. It is important also for this region.

Another subject I would like to mention is the Sudans, because as you know the situation between Khartoum and Juba is a very tense one. The Sudans altogether have three UN peacekeeping missions and these three missions represent almost one third of UN peacekeeping presently. So it is very significant. It is full of challenges, be it in Darfur, be it in Abyei, be it in South Sudan.

But I would say the most pressing issue right now is the relationship between north and south, the relationship between what has become two countries who decided to divorce last year, actually went through the divorce but have left aside so far the so-called practicalities that have to do with the fact that they have to live together. You can't change geography. You can't change realities and there are a number of issues which have to be sorted out. They have to do with the borders, they have to do in particular with Abyei, they have to do with the sharing of the oil revenues, they have to do with the mutual accusations of support to armed groups in the other's territories, and of course there are a number of other aspects including humanitarian with refugees or displaced persons, and the very fact - and the Secretary-General was a witness to that in his meetings in particular with President Kiir in Addis Ababa a week ago - there is no trust, there is no confidence between north and south.

As you know former president Thabo Mbeki chairs the African Union High level panel and interacts extremely actively with the support of the Special Representative of the UN, Haile Menkerios, and they try to broker deals and facilitate contacts. It is not easy. There will be another meeting in Addis Ababa later this week but the fact is that we must watch this with considerable attention because the potential of tension going beyond a certain point is always there.



And of course let us not forget the domestic problems of each country. In the case of South Sudan clearly it has to do with building a state almost from scratch, building institutions, solving the local problems which were illustrated for instance around the holiday season by this terrible wave of inter-tribal combat in Jonglei. So the problems are huge, the challenges are huge, but our colleagues are doing, I think, a very good job in trying to handle them.

A third issue which is very much *dans l'air du temps*, as we would say in French, is that of Somalia. Somalia where, as you know, we have a window of opportunity given to us by the fact that the Shabaabs have been pushed out from essentially all of Mogadishu where the intervention of regional countries in the south and in the west is creating an entirely new strategic situation. I think we have to seize that opportunity to drastically diminish the nuisance power of the Shabaabs and at the same time help comfort the political process which as you know is a subject of a road map which is being implemented in the context of the forthcoming London conference on the 23rd of February. And of course of the very voluntary, proactive attitude taken by the African Union in deploying, with our support, the AMISOM, and of course with its proposal that AMISOM be expanded and so with our support, of course subject to the decision of the Security Council. So all of this is ongoing, it keeps us, I think I can say, very busy.

Let me finish, perhaps, with two issues I would like to highlight which don't have to do with situations here or there, but which are extremely important.

The first one has to do with sexual abuse and exploitation. There have been renewed incidents recently and that is simply not acceptable. We have as you know a policy called zero tolerance and of course we stand by that, but I would add yes, zero tolerance, and at the same time 100% attention. And I would like to tell you that we are presently developing a policy which will go further, much further I think, than the one that has been applied so far, with the goal of really trying to do away with the actions of some individuals which contaminate, which actually spoil completely the image of UN peacekeeping and is completely wrong. And saying this about peacekeepers, I do say uniformed personnel but I say also civilian personnel because that is something we should take into account. We really are working very hard with my colleague Susana Malcorra to take effective action, even more effective action, much more effective action to prevent those acts and to address them when unfortunately they happen.



The second thing of course, and I have been on record since I took my duties last year, is to work ceaselessly, tirelessly, towards ensuring the security and safety of our personnel. We get people in very volatile circumstances, very harsh conditions and we owe it to them, who show their courage, their dedication - and that is of course the immense majority of our staff - we owe it to them to provide them with the maximum possible protection wherever they are. I saw them on the terrain in Afghanistan, in Darfur, in Congo also, of course, and we must do our utmost to that end.

So thank you very much and we are ready to take questions.

Spokesperson Nesirky: Please, questions, yes.

Question (Celia de Lavarène, *Radio France*): Regarding the zero tolerance policy that has never, you know, been implemented, how do you intend to do that? Which kind of measures are you going to take?

USG Ladsous: Well, I think we have first and foremost to strengthen the measures taken. You would realize, of course, that Member States have decided that at least for military personnel they would handle the matter. So that is a major difficulty ... it has been a constraint, a constraint which does not apply, however, to police personnel. For police personnel we can deal with it. And there is one particular case in Haiti, right now, on which we have acted very, very swiftly ourselves. We sent some investigators, they are presently completing the investigation and I would hope that that enables us, if the facts of the allegations are proven, to act decisively and swiftly to remedy the case.

Question (Celia de Lavarène, *Radio France*): How?

USG Ladsous: Well, we can very simply let the people go through a judicial process, you know, if charges are brought against them. We can also, once the due process has been gone through, we can send them, possibly the hierarchy, packing and forbid them at any stage in the future from ever serving again in a peacekeeping mission. This is the sort of thing, you know, the principle of responsibility, not only of the individual concerned but also his hierarchy. Because at the end of the day, if something goes wrong it proves that the messages have not been spread around, that the vigilance of the hierarchy has not been effective. So all this is in the making, but I do want that we can really act because this is totally, totally unacceptable.



Question (Kristin Saloomey, *Al Jazeera*): Can I follow up on that? We've reported extensively on that story. Can you give us an update on where that case stands? Because we were told by officials in Uruguay that they were waiting on the UN to coordinate contact with the victim in Haiti before they were able to proceed with their claim and they were having issues with the claim so maybe you can update where that process is?

USG Ladsous: The case, I think, is a little different. Basically, it is first and foremost between the Haitian Government and the Uruguayan Government to agree on the way to proceed and we the UN, we MINUSTAH, are doing all we can to facilitate the coming to agreement between Montevideo and Port au Prince. You would know that on the Uruguay side, they have gone through a first stage of the procedure which had to do with military justice. But of course, the next stage, and it is very clear, has to be civil justice, criminal justice. And the main element of course is that the case can be built. So we are mediating between the Uruguayans and the Haitians so that the case, the file, can be built and in particular that the alleged victim can be heard by a magistrate from the Uruguayan justice. And this is our role, this is what we are doing but we cannot act in the stead of either of the two main actors. I would hope that before long they can, before long I mean quickly, because this has been going on for too long, that they can come to an agreement, audition the plaintiff and proceed with the correct procedure.

Question (Kristin Saloomey, *Al Jazeera*): Can I just follow-up with a related question? As you know cholera victims in Haiti have also filed a complaint against the UN seeking damages. Has MINUSTAH decided how to respond to that complaint or has the UN decided how to respond to that complaint? Will the dispute tribunal that was never set up in Haiti be set up in order to answer that claim?

USG Ladsous: Well, the claims that were submitted are being studied very thoroughly by our legal experts so I would not be able to comment further at this stage. But I will say, though, that regardless, cholera is a reality in Haiti and therefore it is a priority for the UN Country Team in agreement with the Government of Haiti to develop actions, projects, having to do with water sanitation, with water treatment plants. Because, simply, the issue is there and we are doing all we can to address this because it is a matter of the livelihood of the people.

Question (Kristin Saloomey, *Al Jazeera*): Do you think that they deserve some sort of compensation or help?



USG Ladsous: I am not talking of compensation. As I said, the claims are being studied and we have not reached any conclusions, so I cannot say more. But my point is that the very fact is that there is cholera and therefore all that can be done, all that we can contribute to, you know to mitigating the problem for the population, we are pitching in, actively.

Question (Masood Haider, *The Dawn*): On Somalia, do you expect that piracy in Somalia can anytime be contained or eventually eliminated as it stands now? Because that has been bothering the international community the most and it doesn't seem to have fought back.

USG Ladsous: Piracy definitely is a big problem in that part of the world, and ... there is of course international action. I think one of the goals we are trying to pursue is that if we can reduce, as I said, drastically the threat of the Shabaabs – the Shabaabs who derive a substantial part of their revenue you know from piracy related activities - from smuggling related activities. I think fighting piracy in the western Indian Ocean will actually meet somewhere, you know, with the action to bring civil peace again to the country. So this is one of the angles that are being taken into account in our common work with the African Union on what is to follow regarding the strengthening of AMISOM.

Question (Alexandra Geneste, *Le Monde*): Regarding sexual violence in DRC, since you just came back from DRC, can you tell us at what level the UN is involved in the fight against impunity, after all the incidents that happened and took place and even still are taking place today.

USG Ladsous: It is one of the priorities, it is one of the important pillars of the protection of civilians. Let me share with you an experience which was quite a shock. In Goma, I went to visit an incredible place. It is a hospital called Health Africa which has been set up with some international support, specifically to address the issue of raped women.

It treats them physically, it treats them psychologically, and it goes beyond by also giving them some sort of professional training, you know, which will help them survive when they try to return to their communities where they might be shunned sometimes by the village, or even by the family. It is a very comprehensive endeavour in difficult circumstances. I mean, they have limited equipment, they don't have a very large



budget, but they are doing a fantastic job and we are trying to help them as much as we can.

The issue of impunity of course relates completely to this. And we do our part, you know, MONUSCO, in fighting against impunity, by identifying the people who are responsible for acts of rape or sexual violence. Some of which, by the way, are military, some of which belong simply to those armed groups or are civilians.

Regarding the army, clearly, a long effort, a long-winded effort is still going on with the hierarchy of the FARDC, to develop military justice. Not only civilian justice but military justice. And that, I think is achieving some success. We are not there yet, but I think the effort is considerable, and works, its started working, I would say.

Question (Matthew Lee, *Inner City Press*): I want to ask you something that we have gone around a number of times in this room about, but as the Head of DPKO I wanted to ask you. It has to do with, with UNMISS in South Sudan and the response to what you have said, you mentioned, the violence in Jonglei at the cusp of the year.

It seems like, I have spoken, you know, the issue was not having military helicopters. It is one of the issues that arose. It has been acknowledged, in fact, by many in the UN that there was an inability to take lethal assets to defend people. That was a statement by Susanna Malcorra.

So what I wanted to know is very simple, is when was DPKO and the UN informed that the Russian helicopters wouldn't fly and when did this begging...I know I asked you yesterday and the problem is you didn't answer the question. Hilde Johnston on that very screen said that yes they were told in mid-November that Russian helicopters wouldn't fly but then subsequently they were told that they would fly, and that's why they didn't begin alternative, alternative, you know alternative 'copters. So I wanted to know, did you have any reason to believe, since mid-November until the violence took place in the cusp of the year that the Russians would fly, and if not, why wasn't more done? When did Ban Ki-Moon begin the begging that he described in his R2P speech?

USG Ladsous: Let me say again, in late November we were informed by the Russian authorities that the helicopters were grounded, that they could not fly until further notice. They didn't say they were pulling them out, they never said that they would never fly again, they said they were grounded. It is only much later when we had



actually the problem that in January, that is to say, that we found out that they were going to be pulled out. But in the meantime we were not allowed to contract with other suppliers of helicopters because we are subject to ceilings. So that, I hope, that takes care of the issue.

Let me say on the Jonglei issue, because there has been a lot of erroneous information in the media. It has been reported that there were 3,000 victims in the Jonglei crisis, this is clearly not the case. We are investigating, we are looking minutely and in very great detail at what took place. Certainly the victims were in the hundreds. But certainly, equally, they were not in the three thousands. Hundreds is far too many, that is very clear. It is now of course even clearer that should there be other inter-tribal conflict, we have to continue taking it up as early, as early as possible.

I think we did the job in Jonglei because had we not insisted in convincing the Government of South Sudan that this was not a local skirmish, that this was a large scale issue of a national scale and that they concluded eventually was indeed the case. Had we not done that I think the victims could well have been in the thousands, if not many more.

So this is something that we have to keep in mind in those very complex situations, the early warning is of course something we have to do consistently, as indeed we have to be in a position to do our utmost to deploy very quickly the number required of peacekeepers, of policemen. I would simply note that although with considerable difficulties, because of these helicopter problems, we deployed in Jonglei 50 per cent of the combat potential of UNMISS which is no mean achievement.

I would simply mention that overall, in the whole peacekeeping operations, we presently have a deficit of 44 military helicopters. We are working towards mitigating that, and in the case of MONUSCO we are in the process of getting more machines, more will be on their way, we discussed that in the Security Council yesterday. But there will still remain an overall deficit we have to address, but that we can only do with the support of Member States and it's not easy. Let me take the opportunity to thank those countries that do supply us with the machines we need so severely in some cases.

Question (Evelyn Leopold, *The Huffington Post*): I want to turn to the Sudans again. There's South Kordofan, there's Blue Nile, there's Abyei, there's Darfur and everything you mentioned in the agreement between the north and South Sudan. This



seems to have implications for the region and cross border wars [inaudible] a reason to look at it in bigger way, is there any kind of overall strategy, or is every conflict looked at by a different set of people?

USG Ladsous: I think that it is true that especially lately the basic issue is indeed the north-south relationship. Darfur as you know, well there has been some progress, maybe not enough. But the Doha process is going on. I think it is today, this morning, that the Darfur Regional Authority was officially installed, so there is some progress. There is no progress, on the other hand, in South ... Kordofan and Blue Nile state, there are more than 400,000 refugees or displaced persons for all we know, and I say for all we know because as you know the Government of Sudan has not allowed international humanitarian personnel to actually be in the region and actually ascertain the facts. By the way my colleague Valerie Amos is working actively on this.

But it is true that the very, very large issue, because it would have an impact if it became even more serious, is that of the north-south relationship. That is a matter of priority and we have to address it. I think Member States are also aware of this. And it is of course even more incumbent on us to more than ever support the African Union you know, and President Thabo Mbeki in his efforts to try and engineer solutions.

Question (Evelyn Leopold, *The Huffington Post*): [inaudible] Any of these groups, the UN Peacekeeping Department, Security Council, African Union, is there any one looking at the entire country, all the international representations and attempts for peace, is there any overall strategy or is it this one is important this month?

USG Ladsous: Well the overall strategy is to take the most pressing issues as they come, while continuing to address the perhaps less acute, but nevertheless terribly important issues such as the building of the state in the south. We brought that state onto the baptism font less than a year ago, we owe it to them, and to the international community, to make them, and to make both Sudans actually after the separation, viable states. Maybe not terribly in love with each other, to keep in this image of divorce or matrimony, but able to live together and work out the sensible arrangements to do what it is what it is that they want to do. And never forgetting the humanitarian situation which is a very serious one.

Question (journalist not identified): On UNFICYP, is any contingency planning to meet the needs of a settlement? And if there is also any restructuring planning in the case that there is not a settlement?



Spokesperson Nesirky: Where sorry?

Journalist not identified: On UNFICYP.

Journalist not identified: UNFICYP.

USG Ladsous: UNFICYP. Well as you know, the latest Green Trees meeting arranged did not engineer or bring about the important developments that some were hoping for. I think UNFICYP clearly is one of those peacekeeping operations where a job is done, a job is being done in terms of preventing flaring up of violence, of incidents, and this takes place on a daily basis. So, this is a matter of keeping violence at the lowest possible level whilst political processes, are underway, but it's a long term effort I would agree.

Spokesperson Nesirky: Okay Tim and then back to Matthew.

Question (Timothy Witcher, Agence France Presse): [inaudible] Mr Mulet suggested recently that maybe countries who provided the soldiers accused of abuse, they could be excluded from peacekeeping operations, is that is that what you meant when you said the hierarchy?

USG Ladsous: I don't think it is a matter of excluding countries overall. It is a matter of concluding that in a case of a particular county, of a particular peacekeeping operation, one contingent may not be up to the standards that we would expect of a peacekeeping contributing state. But as I said, this is nothing to be decided here and now, it is something we are working on, and of course that will need consultation. But I would hope that we can progress quickly. But there will be no overall ostracism, of course not, no no. It is a matter of local context.

Spokesperson Nesirky: Matthew and then Chris.

Question (Matthew Lee, Inner City Press): Speaking of, I wanted to ask you this, the senior advisory group on peacekeeping operations that's being established. And with some controversy one of the nominees representing the Asia Group, is an individual General Shavendra Silva, who's named in the Secretary-General's own panel of experts report on Sri Lanka, as having headed a battalion that shelled hospitals according to the report, and killed surrendering soldiers. So I wonder, I understand



that a lot of arguments that it's only up to the Asia group, that there's no... the Secretary can't do anything. I understand that Ms. Malcorra did actually meet with some Member States and give some guidance on who should be put forward. And I wanted to know, you, as the head of DPKO, how do you feel? Do you think it enhances DPKO's credibility to have an accused, an alleged war criminal, as an individual, not as the country, but as the person, advising you on peacekeeping operations?

USG Ladsous: I would say only this, that this was a decision by the Asia Group, a decision to appoint this particular person, which became known to all, including to us, on the very day the group started working, met for the first time. So this is all I can say, we had nothing to do in the selection of the individual, and the matter is being considered further.

Question (Matthew Lee, *Inner City Press*): Is it good for DPKO?

USG Ladsous: Hmmm?

Question (Matthew Lee, *Inner City Press*): Is it good for DPKO, I guess I'm just wanting to know what your sense of it as the head of DPKO?

USG Ladsous: Neither DPKO nor the Secretariat had anything to do with the choice of a particular individual.

Spokesperson Nesirky: Yes.

Question (Kristin Saloomey, *Al Jazeera*): Just a follow up on the Haiti situation in a procedural way. My understanding is that the claim, dispute, claims dispute unit. My understanding is that basically all peacekeeping missions have in their Status of Forces Agreement, a call for a claims dispute unit, and yet we have found no evidence that one has ever been set up. Why is that and what is the mechanism that individuals should be using to address their grievances to a peacekeeping mission and is that something that is being looked at in the broader picture as well.

USG Ladsous: Let me say again, and I cannot say more, you will understand that, the claims are being examined, that is where we are.

Question (Kristin Saloomey, *Al Jazeera*): But I'm talking about a procedural issue and a process. Why, why have these things never been set up?



USG Ladsous: And I'm telling you examining the claims is indeed an element of the process.

Spokesperson Nesirky: Ok, last question, Tim.

Question (Timothy Witcher, Agence France Presse): There's been a lot of pressure from the countries that pay for peacekeeping to cut costs. I think this is going to be part of the Special Advisory Group debate as well. How do you anticipate the peacekeeping force developing, will it be reduced this year?

USG Ladsous: Well I think it's fairly safe to say that this year, 2012, will be a year of stabilization and possibly some reduction. I think to give very round figures, we were last year around eight billion dollars for the overall peacekeeping budget. I think this year we will be more in the region of seven billion. Why? Because there are a number of missions you know, who have gone through critical stage and probably we will be able to start looking at their downsizing somewhat. Haiti, for instance, we are presently returning to pre-earthquake surge levels. Liberia, after the election process, which I think went fairly well, we might be looking at reduction. Timor, East Timor, certainly it is already fairly generally accepted that the mission UNMIT will close down at the end of the year. It is not impossible that other missions will be somewhat downsized in the course of the year. We have a number of reviews, review exercises underway for instance one in Darfur starting this week, others elsewhere. When you add up all these prospects, I think yes, the answer to your question would be yes, globally. But of course all this will be subject to decisions by the Security Council in due course.

Question (Timothy Witcher, Agence France Presse): [inaudible] Just a quick follow up, you're going to take about a billion dollars off the budget?

USG Ladsous: Sorry?

Question (Timothy Witcher, Agence France Presse): You will take about a billion, you'll come down from eight to seven?

USG Ladsous: Something like that more or less, yes.

Question (Timothy Witcher, Agence France Presse): Thank you.



Spokesperson Nesirky: Ok. Thank you very much Mr. Ladsous,

USG Ladsous: Thank you very much.

ENDS

**Note: the full press conference may be viewed online at
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2012/02/daily-press-briefing-253.html>**