

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
12 March 1998**

Item 3.2: Sudan

Paper prepared by OCHA
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Please note that the following text is an information note on the developments to date in Sudan. Given some of the problems identified in the paper, consultations will take place in Geneva starting on Monday 9 March. The outcomes of these consultations will be communicated to you prior to the IASC-WG meeting on 12 March. This will enable the Working Group to take action on any recommendations arising from the consultations.

A. *Recent Developments and United Nations Response*

1. Throughout most of February, UN agencies associated with Operation Lifeline Sudan were confronted with two major issues: 1) the effects of a Government of Sudan (GOS) ban imposed 3 February on all OLS flights into the Bahr El-Ghazal region; 2) a verbal declaration by the GOS of its intention to declare *persona non-grata* the OLS Southern Sector Coordinator, Mr. Carl Tinstman. Based on reports by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, Mr. Christoph Jaeger, the GOS position regarding Mr. Tinstman has been withdrawn. This has also been confirmed to OCHA by the Sudanese Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN.

2. Concerning the impasse on OLS relief flights, the UN was active in attempting to find a solution to the crisis, though the process was complicated by the sudden accidental death of the First Vice-President and the changes in Government brought on as a result of the recent National Congress in Khartoum. On 6 February, OLS submitted to the GOS an alternative flight plan which focused on the immediate relief requirements for an estimated 103,000 to 111,000 internally displaced persons within a total affected population in the region of approximately 350,000 persons. In the context of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, OCHA had discussed with the Department of Political Affairs the question of raising the UN's humanitarian concerns at the highest levels, such as with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Ministers this week as well as with the League of Arab States. On 13 February, the Executive Directors of UNICEF and the World Food Programme, as well as Under-Secretary-General Vieira de Mello, communicated their concerns in letters addressed separately to officials at the highest levels of the Sudanese Government.

3. While the GOS had indicated in a public statement issued in Khartoum on 10 February that the ban would be lifted shortly, by 18 February there had been little tangible progress aside from GOS approval for OLS Northern Sector teams to conduct security and programme needs assessment missions beginning on 20 February in Wau. On 19 February, the Secretary-General dispatched to Khartoum his Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs for the Sudan, Ambassador Robert van Schaik, with a personal message to the Sudanese Head-of-State. Also on 19 February, in New York, OCHA briefed UN Member States comprising the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group on efforts undertaken by the United Nations system. The conclusion drawn from this discussion was that, in addition to the need for continued efforts by UN agencies and the

Special Envoy, Government representatives should consult with their respective capitals on possible further measures to be taken in the direction of the Sudanese Government.

4. On 24 February, the Special Envoy reported that the Government of the Sudan had granted Operation Lifeline Sudan access for an indeterminate period of time to four rebel-held and two GOS-controlled locations from among the eleven sites submitted earlier during the month for their approval (7 rebel-held; 4 GOS-controlled). Flights to these areas were to commence on 26 February. The four rebel-held locations, and their respective target populations, are: Akuem (17,600); Ajiep (21,000); Adet (13,000); Pakor (14,000). In addition, the World Food Programme will continue delivering food aid to affected locations via overland truck convoys. WFP reports, however, that this strategy can only meet the immediate needs of about one-quarter of the total affected population in the area of 350,000 persons and is sustainable for six to eight weeks.

5. On 1 March, the Government approved the OLS March flight schedule. This comprises all locations previously cleared for February plus the six locations in Bahr El-Ghazal negotiated by Ambassador Van Schaik. OLS Khartoum submitted on 2 March an alternative flight schedule for 20 locations in Bahr El-Ghazal outside of the immediate war zone. The State Minister for Social Planning informed OLS Khartoum that four or five of these locations could receive eventual Government clearance.

B. *Implications for OLS*

6. This latest curtailment by the Sudanese Government of the international humanitarian mission in the Sudan raises very serious questions pertaining to the conditions under which OLS can function in reaching civilian populations trapped in zones of renewed or continuing conflict.

7. Without GOS flight clearance authorizations, the UN would be faced with a dilemma as to how to resume humanitarian assistance activities. Flying UN aircraft in the face of a Government ban would be contrary to existing UN security procedures. Alternatively, OLS cargo could conceivably be transported on non-OLS aircraft. In this scenario the UN would seek to sustain the OLS framework as the basis for further cooperation while qualifying the action taken as an *ad hoc*, non-prejudicial measure justified on humanitarian grounds. Such action could only be initiated after consulting with the office of the Secretary-General.

8. The reaction of the Sudanese Government to what it would qualify as an illegal action could be quite vehement. In one possible scenario, the Government would impose an immediate, universal ban on all OLS flights originating from Lokichokio, the OLS base in northern Kenya, while continuing to permit access to Government-held locations in the South from Khartoum. The international community would then be confronted with a decision as to whether, and on what grounds, it could proceed with an unauthorized operation into rebel-held locations throughout southern Sudan.

9. OCHA is now in the process of consulting with operational agencies on contingency action in the case of further restrictions by the GOS. These consultations will lead to a meeting of the IAC, tentatively scheduled for early April.