

**THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
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CENTER**

**HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES:
DARFUR, CHAD,
AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

**WITH
UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL JOHN HOLMES
UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION
OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS**

**MODERATED BY
JESSICA T. MATHEWS,
PRESIDENT,
CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

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JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Jessica Mathews. I'm president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It's a great honor to have our speaker today, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for Humanitarian Affairs, and the emergency coordinator for Sudan, Darfur, Sir John Holmes.

Elie Wiesel said yesterday that Darfur is the world capital of human suffering, and I thought it was better put than anything I have – else I have heard on the subject. It is, I think both extraordinarily timely to have John Holmes with us today, but also somewhat heartening that this is the first week in which there has been perhaps, in a very long time, some real progress.

I won't – I think everybody in this room knows as well or better than I the dimensions of this catastrophe. Perhaps it's at least worth noting that this has been one of the new Secretary General's priorities in the four months he has been in office. John Holmes was appointed on Secretary General Ban's second day in office, and he has made this – both the Secretary General and the undersecretary have made this issue their priority.

Let me just say one quick word before I turn it over to our speaker. It's about his background. Sir John has been a career British civil Foreign Service person for 30 years. He has represented Britain in the world's key – in some of the world's key capitals, in Moscow and Paris, and Delhi. He has worked on the – on Lebanon and the Middle East peace process. He has worked on the EU. He has worked on the Northern Ireland issues on – as a Sherpa on the G-8. He is basically a university-educated on all of the key issues of the last decades. He was knighted for his role primarily in working on the Northern Ireland peace process and the Good Friday agreement, and he has been chief foreign affairs advisor 10 Downing Street for Tony Blair, and for a while, his predecessor as well.

So Secretary General Ban picked a man who brings to this job decades of broad and deep experience in everything that the best sort of diplomacy has to offer to it, and he will need every bit of that. So we are looking forward to hearing from you. And after the undersecretary speaks, we will open this to questions. Secretary General.

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL JOHN HOLMES: Thank you very much, Jessica, and thank you for drawing attention to just how long my – (inaudible) – has been. You can guess my age from that. But it is a great pleasure to be here, and thank you very much for the invitation.

As you say, I'm now in new role, and I should make clear that I have severed my links with the British Foreign Service. I'm now totally independent international civil servant working with the U.N., and it's an interesting contrast moving from working for John Major or Tony Blair to working for the secretary general and the United Nations. And it's a challenge of which I'm very excited, and perhaps daunted at the same time by the scale of some of the challenges that exist around the world. It's an area where I think the United Nations and humanitarian affairs I mean – it's an area where the United Nations has done a

lot in recent years and is continuing to do a lot. I think my own organization, the office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs is a relatively recent creation of the last 10 or 15 years, and has done a good job in empowering the – (inaudible) – of humanitarian relief in general.

But the thing I notice is that expectations are now an organization of the U.N. in general are great and still rising, and that is right in some ways, but that creates its own challenges. And I suspect in the next few years, we're going to have – (inaudible) – situation. I think the demands – humanitarians demands are likely to increase because natural disasters are likely to increase for climate change reasons, problems as well. And – (inaudible) – from the conflict situations of the kind where – (audio break) – getting more difficult in some ways. So there is a – (audio break) – many others of course. But I relish it and tackle it with a good deal of enthusiasm.

What I thought I would try to do this morning is to have a quick look at this particular volatile and destitute area of Africa, which is constituted by Sudan, Darfur, particularly Chad, Central African Republic, but also some Sudan I want to talk about a little bit, and maybe Northern Uganda, just to touch on that as well, because I think they're all linked, and I think there is a regional dynamic there which is very important which you must not ignore. But each country, each area is also different with its own individual challenges as well.

So if I, I mean, start with Darfur and then – (inaudible) – particularly about Darfur, Chad, and the Central African Republic because I have just been there and I came back a couple of weeks ago from the visit there. That was my first, first mission in my new role, so perhaps it made a particularly strong impression on me, but I think it's useful to talk about it more broadly and not just to focus on Darfur importantly that is.

I say, if I start with, Darfur – it was actually three years ago in April that my predecessor, Jan Egeland, first briefed the Security Council about the humanitarian problems in Darfur and the scale of the humanitarian problems in Darfur. And since then, we have developed the biggest humanitarian relief operation in the world. At that stage it was already beginning to take shape, but there was a couple of hundred people on the ground engaged in it trying to help, perhaps to caution a million (?) people.

We now have, as most of you will be aware, some 13 or 14,000 people on the ground, mostly Sudanese, but with a large number of international workers as well, dealing with the needs of over 4 million people, which is two-thirds of the population in Darfur, over 2 million of them in camps and 2 million of them outside camps but also in desperate need.

And the humanitarian operation has been in many a ways a success, if you can ever call a humanitarian operation a success in the sense that it has kept people alive, it has kept people – given the situation they are in – in conditions which are not at all bad in terms of food and water and sanitation and healthcare, and even, in some cases, rudimentary education, and certainly have saved hundreds of thousands of lives in the process.

So, as I say, I think it's a tribute to all of those who have worked incredibly hard in all of those organizations that put so much time and effort and money into it. Now, they have achieved this. It's also a humanitarian effort which is particularly fragile I think at the moment, as I was saying while I was there and since I have come back, in the sense that there are multiple challenges faces it. There are challenges of access to people in need. That access has been reducing steadily in recent months, and so there are at any one time at least 2 million people who we don't have access to and whose condition we are not aware of in detail.

This is particularly for simple security reasons, occasional unpredictable and generalized acts of violence. There is not currently, at least, a huge amount of direct fighting going on in Darfur but there are violent incidents almost every day in places. The casualties are normally civilians, as we all know. The victims are civilians that's why the number of displaced is still going up.

And this makes it very hard for the international relief workers to operate effectively. It's dangerous. It's difficult. It's unpredictable. And if you add to that the bureaucratic obstacles they've had in their way from the Sudanese authorities over time, it's gone up and down. In recent months that's been worse as well. All this creates an atmosphere in which it's become increasingly difficult and unrewarding to work. And where the operation, if we're not careful, if it gets worse, if that insecurity gets worse, if those bureaucratic obstacles are not tackled, the operation could begin to unravel and we will then have a real humanitarian catastrophe on our hands.

One of the things I did while I was in Khartoum, in particular, was to talk to the Sudanese government about the bureaucratic problems, in particular, and the kind of media campaign, which have been waged against some of the humanitarian relief organizations and relief workers. And to say that it really isn't acceptable that when the international community is there spending money and time and effort trying to save the lives of your own citizens, you're actually putting obstacles in their way rather than facilitating their work.

We signed an agreement to try and remove some of those obstacles. The question is not whether you can sign an agreement but whether that agreement is implemented, as we all know, and we'll be watching that extremely carefully. I said that the humanitarian operation had been successful, and as I say, in some ways it has been. But the problem remains unchanged and getting worse all the time because people have been in those camps now for three or four years. In some cases, those camps have been politicized, militarized.

The structure of Darfur – the traditional structures of Darfur are being destroyed all the time by the conflict that's going on. Some of the tribal conflicts that have generated by the conflict, particularly in the south of Darfur, are very savage and bloody now. They're not conflicts between the government and rebels; they're actually inter-tribal conflicts. And they're not African-Arab conflicts either; they're Arab-Arab in many cases.

All of this means is there's a kind of Pandora's Box that has been opened in this province, which is going to be extremely difficult to close again and it's an area of – I mean, it's a very complex conflict; it's a very complex situation. There are no good guys around here, really. So the question is obviously what we can do about this. And I think, as the

U.N., we've been trying to pursue three tracks here. The first, and I've already talked about it, is the humanitarian track to make sure that people stay alive, and that's what we'll continue to do, and putting a lot of effort into that huge operation.

There is a peacekeeping track and the continuing effort to get a strength in peacekeeping force in there. We already have a force. As you all know, the African Union Force, but that force has struggled because of its lack of resources and for other reasons. It needs reinforcing, which is why the idea of a three-phase package was agreed. The light-support package, so called, is already in place. Very largely, the heavy-support package, another 3,000 troops and enablers has now been agreed, finally, much too late. But that will have to be put in place but that will not be an overnight operation. It will take some time.

And then the full hybrid force, which has not yet been fully agreed, but that's the next step; that needs to be in place as soon as possible to try and offer some protection to the civilians in the camps and make sure the humanitarian effort can be maintained. And we can perhaps try to return to a more peaceful situation there.

But, of course, the peacekeeping operation itself, even when it's there in full, is not the solution to the problem. What is needed above all is a political settlement there. We had a peace agreement already. Frankly, it didn't work. In some ways it made the situation worse on the ground because of the violence, which arose from those who hadn't signed the agreement. We need to get the parties back around the table, the government and the rebel movements, who are very fragmented for all sorts of reasons, and we need to find that kind of refined Darfur peace agreement, if I can describe it in those terms.

So there is a political solution because there's always – the politics is the key to this. The government of Darfur has a particular responsibility, in the meantime, to protect the civilians, its own citizens, but the rebel movements have responsibilities too: to protect people in their areas and to refrain from attacks on civilians and to refrain from attacks on humanitarian workers. As I say, there are good guys in this.

But the political solution is key. The peacekeeping needs to be put in place. The humanitarian track has to be kept going. And meanwhile, I confess to a certain amount of unease in the sense about what is actually happening there with the international community keeping all these people alive while there was no political solution. Are we actually contributing to a situation where the politicians can go on arguing without worrying too much about the people?

Moving on to Chad, obviously next door, obviously the contagion effect to Darfur, Eastern Chad is very much there. There are Janjaweed attacks across the border. There are problems of Chadian rebels in Sudan; Sudanese rebels in Chad operating in both directions, as I think we're all aware.

And this is beginning to create a really serious humanitarian situation in Eastern Chad. There were already a very large number of Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad – I think 235,000 who have been there for two or three years, in camps, reasonably stable situation. UNHCR have done a fantastic job in looking after those people for the last two

or three years but you have now added to that a lot of internal displaced people from the tribal and other conflicts, which are going in the southeast in particular.

And we are having some difficulty in gearing up the humanitarian effort to deal with this new challenge in a particularly difficult area of operations – very remote, very dry, very little water, very poor infrastructure, very little government presence, very high levels of insecurity, fighting getting worse in some ways. Again, tribal fighting of a kind, which is hard to characterize and it's not simply an Arab-African again but there are elements of that too. So a difficult situation with the conditions of the people – some of the people we're talking about – worse off than those in Darfur for the moment and we need to gear up very rapidly to deal with that and that's what we're trying to do, particularly before the rainy season starts.

Now, again, there's a proposal – there should be a peacekeeping operation – U.N. peacekeeping operation in Eastern Chad and also in the Central African Republic. Again, we're having difficulties in persuading the Chadian government to accept that force. They're willing to have a police force but not a military force. And our response is that you can't have one without the other because you need the protection for the police and Janan (ph) presence. And that situation is in a stalemate for the moment and meanwhile the condition of the people is getting worse rapidly. Actually, as I say, I think it's a very worrying situation, which we can't afford to ignore in any sense.

The Central African Republic, very briefly, not a country many people know much about. And I confess, I knew hardly anything about it before I went as well – a very poor country, a large country with a very small population, hugely in need of development efforts. Again, but you have a situation of very significant displacement of people – 200,000 people who've left their homes because of violence by the rebels, by the government forces, such as they are.

A curious situation, not like the other situations – these are not people living in camps; they're living very close to their homes in the bush, only seven or eight kilometers from their homes, but their not willing to go home. Their homes have been burned in many cases – not all cases, but many. They're frightened; they don't have access to food and clean water or medical care. Their condition will worsen rapidly unless we do something about it on the humanitarian side, and we are very much trying to do that and trying to gear up there too in what is another difficult area. No shortage of water, by the way, but a very difficult area to operate otherwise.

But, again, the fundamental need is for political solutions to bring an end to these rebellions and to the fighting that's going on there. Again, there's not large-scale fighting; these are very small forces, in many ways. But the impact on the civilian populations can be absolutely devastating. The good news there is there was an agreement signed between the main rebel movement in the northeast and the government of the Central African Republic a few days ago. I hope that will bring violence and at least part of the problem to an end. There's another rebel movement in the northwest and which also needs to be – a similar process needs to be gone through.

But in the meantime, as I say, the contagion effect from Darfur is very much there in the northeast not least because, as I said, the CAR does not lack water, does not lack vegetation and grazing, and therefore one of the fundamental causes of the Darfur conflict being that battle for grazing land and water and between nomads and settled farmers. The CAR is a potentially attractive target so that is causing cross-border problems of all kinds.

Very briefly on Southern Sudan, which I also visited, there's a conflict, as you will all be aware, I think in southern Sudan of very, very many years – I mean, 50 or 21, depending on how you define it – but which came to an end. The peace agreement, a couple of years ago – it's a good news story. The needs of Southern Sudan are enormous. As the president of Southern Sudan put it to me, this is not question of reconstruction; it's a question of construction because there's nothing there.

So there's a huge development effort to be undertaken there. The immediate humanitarian emergencies is winding down a little bit so it's really a reconstruction or for a construction and development problem. But the important point, I think, is to make sure that the international community doesn't take its eye off the ball in Southern Sudan.

It's absolutely fundamental for Sudan, more fundamental in Darfur, in terms of the stability of the country. It needs resources; it needs attention, and its link to Darfur. Again, if Darfur continues to go wrong then Southern Sudan will wrong again. And if Southern Sudan – the peace agreement between the south and north breaks down, Darfur will be that much more difficult to solve. So the links are very clear, which is why the government of Southern Sudan is trying to get involved in mediation itself.

And very briefly, on Northern Uganda, because it's all part of the same area: Here we have a real chance of an end to another 20 years of conflict and barbarities in that part of the world if we can get an effective peace agreement between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army. Talks are underway. There are some optimistic signs but we're not there yet and it will be complicated. But until that definitive peace agreement is there and the LRA disappears, the 1.4 or 5 million people who are displaced in Northern Uganda, and who have been for a very long time, are not going to go home.

So there's an awful lot at stake here, both for Northern Uganda and for Southern Sudan, because if that fighting starts again, it will have very, very wide ranging consequences for both South Sudan and for the north of Uganda, which is why we have been supporting slightly, oddly, in some respects, these peace talks, the Juba Initiatives, and hope very much they will succeed.

Actually, I've gone over those extremely rapidly, but I hope doing enough to demonstrate that there is, as I said at the beginning, both a regional approach, regional links between all these conflicts – we need a regional approach ourselves – but also to demonstrate that there are individual problems in all of them, and they all need consistent attention from the international community, not just the ones in the media spotlight, but all of them, and hopefully without perhaps too much distortion from the media spotlight effect.

In all of them, I think we need to maintain this enormous humanitarian effort we are making, and the international community is playing an absolutely irreplaceable role there.

We need consistent and strong support from donors and from the agencies and from the big NGOs and small NGOs, international and national, who are working there.

And we need to keep up the pressure on the host countries to facilitate all these humanitarian operations and to work with them fully. As I said, it's hardly too much to ask when what we're doing is keeping people, their own citizens, alive. But the humanitarian effort, however successful it may be, is never a solution; it's only a sticking plaster, a Band-Aid, as you put it here, on an infected wound.

So that peacekeeping forces are not solutions either, as I suggested earlier, there has to be a peace to keep first if a peacekeeping force is going to work effectively. So we have to primacy on political solutions in all these places and we have to put the primacy on finding those political solutions through political dialogue wherever we can encourage that.

That's what the international community, I think apart from anything else, needs to do and needs to invest in it. It's a fantastic investment because if you can prevent conflict and solve political problems it's a lot cheaper than these international humanitarian efforts and peacekeeping forces, which are expensive items, to say the least.

So I think we need to do more; the U.N. needs to do more; the international community needs to do more in that kind of conflict prevention and mediation work, otherwise, I fear that next April I'll be addressing the Security Council again with an even bigger tale of woe and maybe the April after that. I really don't want to do that. So thank you very much.

MS. MATHEWS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. MATHEWS: We have microphones so please state your name and affiliation and we'll try to get as many questions as possible. Right behind you.

Q: Hi, thank you. Barbara Slavin from USA Today.

I wanted to ask you your opinion of the Plan B measures that were announced yesterday by President Bush. He's delayed putting them in them into effect to give a little bit more time for diplomacy but was it useful, do you think, that he announced the further measures that might be taken if Sudan does not cooperate with the U.N? Thanks.

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Will you forgive me if I don't answer your question directly? What I think is important – I mean these decisions are for governments to take and for the Security Council to take and not for me to take or even comment on. What I think is important in this situation is to put pressure on all the parties concerned, that is the Sudanese government and the rebel movements to stop messing around, stop delaying, allow the peacekeeping forces to deploy properly, and allow the political solutions to be found.

So all pressure, which can lead constructively in that direction is necessary and welcome. Exactly what form that pressure should take, as I say, is not for me to dictate or to say or to comment on; it would not be wise, perhaps, for me to do so, but we do need effective international pressure, and we need – I think what would be really helpful is to have a unified international drive to this so that it's not distracted by internal divisions. And I'm not going to single out any countries; you all know what I'm talking about, but I think it would be very helpful if we could have a little bit more of a unified position within the Security Council on some of these issues.

MS. MATHEWS: Right here.

Q: Lauren Ploch with the Congressional Research Service.

There have been suggestions by some that a no-fly zone should be enforced in Darfur. I think probably may increase after having seen the report that came out yesterday in The New York Times. What are the concerns of the humanitarian relief organizations delivering relief on ground about such a no-fly zone and what are their views?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Well, we haven't expressed a view as such, I think, about a no-fly zone. Again, that's the decision about whether they should be – one is for governments and for the Security Council to take. I mean, you can see that such a no-fly zone will be difficult to put in place and difficult to implement and difficult to police. There have to be questions to be asked about that.

From a humanitarian point of view, we would have difficulties if the result of such a no-fly zone was that there was no flying in Darfur because the humanitarian effort depends, to a large extent, on flying in both small planes and helicopters. The safety of the workers there depends on that; their ability to operate effectively and to move around depends on that. I mean, that would not obviously be the objective of a no-fly zone but it could be the result of a no-fly zone, so we would have some concerns; we would need to be absolutely sure that, you know, in trying to put in place a measure, which, you know, might be justified in other respects, we're not actually putting this complicated and fragile humanitarian effort at risk itself so there are concerns we would have if this became a more serious prospect.

Q: Are there concerns that the Sudanese Army – (off mike).

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Well, that's a possibility, but I mean, the immediate concern would be, you know, if you're imposing a no-fly zone, how far the Sudanese authority is going to allow anybody else to fly around. That's an obvious sort of concern we would have and how will we reinsure that we could continue to fly in those circumstances? That will be a problem.

MS. MATHEWS: In the back.

Q: Yes, Michelle Kelemen with National Public Radio.

I wanted to ask about this Plan B. President Bush put it off for a few weeks because he says Ban Ki-moon asked him for more time for diplomacy. What do you guys expect to

hear from Bashir in the next couple of weeks that's going to change your mind about what the Sudanese government is doing? And secondly, how worried are you about the use of these white helicopters and airplanes? Doesn't that put your people in danger?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: I mean, on the first point, I don't think two weeks is our timeframe. What we have said is that, you know, we want to continue to work to get the agreements of the Sudanese government, to get the full peacekeeping force in place. It's very hard to put peacekeeping forces into places without the consent of the government. You don't get any troop contributors, apart from anything else, if you don't have the consent of the government. And it's already hard enough to get troop contributors in that part of the world.

So we need to work to achieve that. As I say, we had a bit of minor breakthrough, if you like, earlier this week with the agreement on the heavy-support package. We now to get agreement very rapidly on the hybrid force, but it will take some time to put these things in place. They're not going to be there tomorrow or even in a few months. It's going to take quite a long time to get them in place fully.

So we need time to continue that discussion and we've had, as I say, a bit of a constructive moment, shall we say, earlier this week, but also, you know, there is an active political mediation effort going with Jan Eliasson working for the U.N. and Salim Ahmed Salim working for the African Union.

They have been talking to the Sudanese government intensely. They have been talking to all the rebel movements intensely. They have been talking to the Eritreans, talking the Libyans, talking to all the people who have got some influence in this to make sure we're all pointing in the same direction. That effort needs to start to show some progress soon and, again, I can't put a time frame on it; it's not sensible to try and do that. But I think, you know, we need to get people around the table again. It's not very possible to do that so far because the rebel movements are very un-united. You know, what are the discussions actually going to be about? What are we going to be able to arrive at?

I think we're making a degree of progress in that respect. I don't want to exaggerate how positive that is, but certainly Jan Eliasson believes that there is a certain amount of diplomatic negotiating space there to be exploited rapidly and that's what we're going to be trying to do. I mean, I'm not saying it's going to happen in two weeks; it isn't going to happen in two weeks, but without that solution, and without that mediation effort there, there is no going to be a political solution. Without that political solution you are not going to get the – you know, the rest of the problems sorted out that everybody wants to see sorted out quickly.

The helicopters, yes: I mean, you're quite right. We've been concerned about white aircraft and white helicopters for some time, and we've made that concern known to the Sudanese government but it's not possible to say that, you know, you don't have the right to have white helicopters. But we've made the point that this is confusing and potentially dangerous for us. The particular case of a plane apparently with a U.N. marking on it is particularly dangerous for our own operations and confusing, misleading, and you can be sure we're making that point in no uncertain terms to the Sudanese government.

MS. MATHEWS: Okay, we'll take one more on this side and then we'll move over.

Q: Victoria Rames, OTI.

I wanted to ask a question about your characterization of the current developments in the conflicts, in particular that the conflict is currently inter-tribal, that you had learned about Arab-Arab conflict. And I'm sure you're aware that the Sudanese government has, from the very beginning of the conflict, characterized it as inter-tribal rather than some political manipulation of ethnicity and tribes. So I was wondering, in your visit this time, was it clear whether or not this was some sort of political manipulation, Arab against Arab, or if it was merely inter-tribal, as the Sudanese government would have it?

MS. MATHEWS: Can you tell us what is OTI for the ignorant among us?

Q: No, no problem. Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID.

MS. MATHEWS: Thank you.

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: I didn't say that the conflict was just inter-tribal, and it certainly isn't inter-tribal. I think the problem is it is a complex conflict, which started off with a rebellion and then, you know, the fight against that rebellion was maintained by the use of proxy militias, which turned into a sort of Arab-African confrontation in some respects, but it's not as simple as that. As you know, there are Arabs in the rebels and Africans on the side of the government. So it's not, you know, as straightforward. It is a complex and complicated mix and I wouldn't claim to understand it. I suspect it's one of those situations a bit like they used to say about Northern Ireland: If you think you understand, you just don't know enough about it. So it is complicated.

What I was saying was there is a new element, which we've seen recently in Southern Darfur of really quite bloody conflicts between different tribes in that area, both of which happen to be Arab, I think, in this particular case. And these kinds of conflicts are not new in a sense, and they are the result of some of the sort of environment and other pressures I was talking about. But they've, in the past, been resolved reasonably successfully using traditional conflict-resolution methods and with the presence of a strong government presence to make sure that happens.

Those things are no longer present. You know, the traditional structures have been breaking down under the pressures of the conflict. The government is not able to take initiatives in that kind of way so those conflicts are getting worse and bloodier. But as I say, I'm not saying it's a purely inter-tribal conflict; it certainly isn't. It's certainly much more complicated than that.

MS. MATHEWS: Okay, in the back.

Q: Don Kraus with Citizens for Global Solutions and also co-chair of the Partnership for Effective Peacekeeping.

The agreement on the heavy-support package was welcome news for many. So far as you can, what were the parts that actually worked in terms of putting pressure on Khartoum to actually make that next incremental step happen? And also, looking at it from the perspective of many of us in the room who are involved with advocacy regarding Darfur and Chad, so that's helpful information, but also, what would you see as priorities that needed to be focused on in terms of the short term moving forward with this?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: I think it's very hard to be sure what exactly were the factors that lead to agreement. I think it was probably a combination of things. I think there was, you know, the generalized pressure from the international community and from the Security Council and the threat of additional measures if nothing happens. I think that's, you know, it has to be a factor in there. I think there was a lot of intense conversations between the African Union and the Sudanese government. I think the fact that Tabo (sp) and Becky (sp) had been in Khartoum recently, you know, passing the message and very much in coordination with the United Nations, with the secretary general. I think that was effective.

I think the fact that we were – you know, we showed a certain readiness to talk to the Sudanese government about what exactly this force should look like may have helped. You know, I think all those things resulted in an agreement, which was extremely welcome – not enough, by any stretch of the imagination, not fast enough but welcome nevertheless. But, you know, exactly what is going through the minds of President Bashir and his colleagues is not, you know, something I can read very easily. I think if we had a clearer picture of that we might be able to operate – (chuckles) – more affectively perhaps.

I mean, the short term, on the humanitarian side, I mean, if that's what you were referring to in particular, I think we – I am, at least, very focused on making sure this agreement we have reached with the Sudanese government does work so that the NGOs can operate more effectively and more freely.

It's not clear yet whether it is working, whether it's making any difference, but it's very important that it does to make sure the humanitarian effort doesn't unravel. It's very important to try to say to the Sudanese government, you know, please don't try to discriminate between good NGOs and bad NGOs. The good are the ones that give food and the bad ones are the ones that make a fuss about human rights. They're all part of the humanitarian effort. They're not political in that sense and, you know, you have to accept that as part of the package, and these are people trying to help.

MS. MATHEWS: We have got one here.

Q: Bill Loiry, Equity International.

What can the U.S. and international business communities do to help in Darfur and also help in the, specifically, in the development of southern Sudan?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: What can the business community do in Darfur? That's a very good question. I'm not sure I have a very ready answer to that. I mean there are initiatives about investment in Sudan in general when the messages can be

sent that way, but, I mean, that's not for me to say whether that's the right way forward. But that's, you know, that's something that people have suggested.

I think in Southern Sudan, you know, if there are ways in which the business community can find to invest in Southern Sudan, I think that would be a good investment. I mean, it's a good investment from a political, humanitarian point of view – development point of view. I can't say whether it's a good investment for any individual company; that depends on what's there

But there is an opportunity to invest and, you know, one of the things we must not forget is that Sudan is not a poor country now. It does have oil resources of a significant kind. And some of that oil revenue will be coming to the south as well. I think there's a billion dollars, you know, in the hands of the new government of Southern Sudan, in an area where there is very little.

We experienced that at first hand a little bit when we were in Juba because the people are trying to build things in Juba but there's no one to build anything. There were no contractors; you know, there's nothing there. So you're really starting from scratch. So, you know, I mean if I was a businessman, I think I might be investing in cement manufacturing in Southern Sudan, for example, but, you know. (Chuckles.) You know, it's that kind of situation.

So I think it's easy to see what you might be able to do in Southern Sudan than it is in terms of Darfur. You can always give money to us, by the way. (Laughter.) We'll use it well in a humanitarian cause but that may be not exactly what you mean. But I think, you know, when you have a peaceful solution that's when, you know, investment and development can stabilize a peace settlement in a way that nothing else can.

MS. MATHEWS: I expect there are any number of NGO leaders in the room who would love to talk partnership with you. (Laughter.) No, I mean it very seriously.

Q: Yes.

MS. MATHEWS: The gentleman here and then I'll come back to you.

Q: Yes, Joel Charny from Refugees International.

I'm wondering, either based on your experience as a diplomat or now more recently as the under-secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, how are we going to kind of break this dynamic of an ability to respond to – you know, when people are dying, we respond, and if they're not quite dying, we don't respond adequately. And I think that's partially the dynamic right now in Southern Sudan and certainly the dynamic in the CAR, where because it's not quite yet a crisis, we don't see investment that's adequate.

And, you know, I think you're in a leadership position where perhaps you can make a difference on this problem and I'm wondering if you have any thoughts yet on kind of the larger issue?

MS. MATHEWS: Before you answer, I'd like to complicate that first. I was very struck by your reference to the need to figure out a way or to avoid enabling politicians from arguing forever while the international community takes care of their people's humanitarian needs. It was an echo for me of the debates years ago in Bosnia about the well-fed dead.

And one of the great advantages of brining in somebody fresh to a portfolio that they haven't been working on for years is they see it with fresh eyes. So it's a different aspect of the same question. Have you thought or are you thinking about ways to break that link to make it either costly or more difficult or impossible for humanitarian contributions to prolong political crises?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Again, I'm not sure if I've got ready-made answers to those questions. If I had, I'd probably be president of the world. I think on the first point, I mean, you know, one of my roles – one of my advocacy roles is precisely to draw attention to underfunded and neglected crises, and to try and counteract the media spotlight effect. And as you'll be aware, we established a fund last year called the Central Emergency Response Fund, one of the aims in which is precisely to fund underfunded crises which are not in the media and where donors, for whatever reason, may be taking little or no interest.

And I think that is beginning to have an effect on crises, which have been neglected because we have freedom to direct money there, which we've been given by donors to do what we think best with it in a centralized way. And there's perhaps a wider message there for humanitarian funding in general, that if you can establish a more centralized kind of response, which is going to be done on the needs-driven basis and an equitable basis from someone who is trying to look at it objectively, in some ways that could work better than, you know, a multiplicity of donors who have all got their own interests and et cetera, et cetera.

Now, I mean, I'm not under any illusion that it's going to happen overnight because, you know, the donors all have their own reasons for giving money to particular cases, whether they be political or historical or others. And, you know, the agencies and NGOs, including maybe your own, wouldn't necessarily welcome money going to somebody else, wherever which you have little control.

But I think there is a case for looking in a more rational way at humanitarian financing and thinking about whether we're getting this right. I mean, it is a very fragmented – the humanitarian effort, you know, is amazingly effective in some ways but despite itself because it's very fragmented with competing agencies and NGOs who all have their mandates and their responsibilities and their clients and their need for money. You know, and that doesn't always result in a most rational effort required, which is why we existed in a way to try and counteract that.

But I think, you know, we can probably do more in that direction, and that's one of the things I, you know, am thinking about and will be thinking about for the longer term. But on your wider point – I mean, again, it's not a new dilemma, as you say. It was present in the Balkans and it's been present in other conflicts, too. There is no easy answer to it.

You know, the humanitarian imperative is an imperative and therefore we have to respond to it even if we are uneasy at times about the wider effects of what we're doing.

But paradoxically, as I was trying to suggest, you know, coming as a diplomat into humanitarian work, the thing that strikes me immediately is the need for political solutions and more diplomacy – (chuckles) – because, you know, that's the way out of it because it's such a waste of money to spend lots of money on keeping people alive when you could try and prevent that and could spend that money so much better on development.

I mean, there are efforts underway. I mean, my predecessor, Jan Egeland, is now in charge of new effort within the United Nations to set up a more coherent, consistent international mediation effort. You know, we're the pool of mediators and, you know, in attempt to intervene earlier in crises and to later. Intervening afterwards is always bad news and much more expensive as I was trying to suggest.

Now, you know, I don't have magic solutions but that's one way in which we can, you know, as a international community, try to put more effort in to that. I mean, people have been thinking about this bilaterally and I know from the British case, we've been thinking about this bilaterally about conflict prevention, about, you know, what tools do we have? How can we really make a difference? You know, what early warning systems do we have to identify these crises before they happen? You know, do we have an effective list of failing states or pre-conflict situations? How do you define them? What are the criteria? It's complicated stuff but I think, you know, that is a direction we do all to go in.

Q: Barry Schweid of AP. If I could – if you would – could you elaborate – I know your or your job is a humanitarian and not politics, but getting people around the table again. Elaborate, if you would, a little bit about that. Who do you want around the table? There was an inference here, but I'm not sure I have the right one, that the additional sanctions the president is threatening – maybe you think they ought to be withheld or just held over their heads until there is a political settlement and then withdrawn, and what do you expect to come out of this sitting around the table, so to speak. What should the world be looking for? The world has been vastly disinterested in Darfur, except possibly the United States and occasionally Britain. What do you expect to come out of this, this sitting around the table? Is it a real venture? Is there a diplomatic effort underway?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: There is a really diplomatic effort underway, as I say, with a sort of joint U.N.-AU, African Union, mediation effort, as I say, led by Jan Eliasson, who has got a lot of experience at this, and Salim Ahmed Salim who similarly has a huge amount of experience at this. They have talking to everybody concerned, as I think I was suggesting earlier. I mean, to the Sudanese government saying, you know, you really – there is no military solution to this crisis; therefore we have to go back to a peace settlement; therefore we have to go back to political dialogue; therefore, we have to find a political solution. Do you agree? Their answer is yes. I mean, do they mean it is another question, but their answer at least in principle is yes.

Talking to the rebel movements – do you accept that there is no military solution to this conflict? Do you accept that there is no military way out of this? The answer is yes. Do they all mean it – okay, you know, the same question you can ask. But still, that is what they

are saying. So he's also been talking to civil society in Darfur, which tends to be neglected and caught between the rebels and the government, saying, you know, what do you want to see, and they want to see a peace settlement; they want to see a political solution.

So, you know, you can see people appearing at least to point in the right direction. What do we actually need to happen? You need the – I mean, the rebel movement (?) is now unbelievably fragmented, which is a real problem. I mean, it was always fragmented, but, you know, you have three movements; now you have 10, 15, 20 – I mean, you know, you can't count because it's a total alphabet soup which changes every week. So if there is going to be an effective negotiation, the rebel movements, the non-signature rebel movements have got to come together.

Now, I think I'll – the conclusion of Jan Eliasson at least is that they are not going to unite in the short term; we can't wait for that. But maybe they can get themselves together insofar as they can formulate a common series of demands, which can be met.

And actually, you know, my impression is – but, again, who am I to say this – is that reaching a solution is not necessarily rocket science, if you understand what I mean by that. The Darfur peace agreement, you know, is not a bad piece of paper in some respects, but it's not enough; that is clear because people didn't sign up to it, and in the short term, it has made things worse. But, you know, there are elements you can build on in there about power sharing, about degrees of autonomy, about – there are money issues in there, compensation and so on – development money, which maybe could make the difference.

So it's not that the issues themselves are massively complicated. This is not the Middle East peace process you're talking about. So I think a political solution is possible with pressure, with all of the effort we can make, and with a really concerted push to get people around the table and not put them in five-star hotels where they are very comfortable, but some place where they are not really comfortable, and so, you know, you're not leaving here until there is a solution. This is a Dayton type kind of approach if you like.

Q: (Off mike.)

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Well, I mean, I think – you know, I'm sorry, I'm not going to go there because – (chuckles) – I'll get myself in trouble. I think – you know, as I said earlier, I think the fact of international pressure is vital to make some movement – quite what the sanctions should be, whether you should threaten them, whether you should imprison them, what they should be is not for me to say and not for me to decide on.

Q: Anita Shermer (ph) with Enough, which is a joint initiative of the International Crisis Group and the Center for American Progress. Just to shift countries a little bit and talk about Uganda: there you have a peace process which is back on track due largely to President Chiusano (ph) and his hard work. You have the phenomenon of the global night commuters decreased, but at the same time, you do have the increasing humanitarian situation where WFP announced last month that they didn't have the funds that they need and were going to have to cut rations by one-half; and you have the situation where the people were starting to leave the displaced camps but were unable – they didn't feel secure –

to go home. So there's this new kind of mid-way station being created. So if you can just answer that, I'd appreciate it.

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Well, I mean, essentially I agree with you. I think the peace effort is back on track but has not succeeded yet and the negotiations will be difficult and there's a complicated ICC angle to this – International Criminal Court of Justice to this, which is not going to be easy to resolve. But, you know, we very profoundly hope that there will be this peace agreement and the LRA will disappear as the profoundly disruptive and barbaric force that it's been in that area.

Because it's only then, as you say, that people will feel safe to go home. There's been a limited amount of return; there are some people who have, as you say, gone back half way and go back until their fields, but go back to their camps at night or on a regular basis. And this is a huge displacement problem; I mean one-and-a-half million people have been living there for a very long time and it really is time we sorted this out. And it won't be sorted out unless there's a peace agreement.

So I very much hope that President Chiusano – who, I agree, is doing a really good job at the moment with help from other African countries as sort of mutual observers – I very much hope he can succeed in the next few weeks to bring that off.

On the rations front: I mean, yes, there has been a problem which has suddenly (hit us ?) about lack of funding for the WFP operation there. We have just agreed to give \$7 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund – the fund that was talked about earlier – for immediate life-saving food supplies. And I hope that other donors will chip in sufficiently that, even if there's a bit of a short-term reduction, that basically the food pipeline for these people will not be broken and we will manage to keep them alive for the future until they can go home.

Q: (Off mike) – United Nations Association. Could you comment on particularly the refugees in Darfur, the effect of the ICC – International Criminal Court – investigation and prosecution, whether that's been helpful? You mentioned Uganda, its efforts in Uganda as well.

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: It's a difficult question. I honestly don't know whether it's been helpful or not. I mean, whether it's helpful or not is not really the question, in a sense, because the question is do the people concerned deserve to be named and indicted. And probably the answer to that is yes. So, you know, that's a sort of independent justice process which is making its way.

It certainly focuses minds, there's no doubt about that. But it probably creates positive and negative dynamics as well. It creates a fear in the minds of people that if there's a peacekeeping force, they're going to be hauled off to the Hague, you know, with the U.N. peacekeeping forces bursting into their office, which is not the case, by the way. But, you know, I think, as a general principle, the presence of such a justice system internationally has got to be a good thing.

And it is the case that until those indictments in the case of the Lord's Resistance Army were put on the table, things didn't make any progress. You know, I say there are positive and negative dynamics in this; but, in a sense, that doesn't matter. It's a justice system which will pursue its course.

There may be ways – if there are effective national justice ways of dealing with these problems, then that can perhaps be a way of averting the ICC taking its ultimate action. But that's for the ICC to decide, not anybody else. And we don't have any influence on that, nor would we seek any.

Q: Mark Goldberg from the American Prospect Magazine. Can you describe some of the bureaucratic obstacles that are preventing humanitarian access in Darfur? And be as specific as possible, perhaps.

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Yeah. They have been very simple things, by and large. It's a question of visas to get into the country and to leave the country and to move in and out of the country. And I'd say there have been agreements before, but those agreements have not been met. The latest agreement says that any demand for – I haven't got the figures exactly in my head – but any demand for a visa should be met within seven days – or it might be 14 days, I'm sorry I can't quite remember – no matter where the application is made.

It's a question of work permits and stay permits for those people working in Darfur: once they're in the country, it's very hard for them to work without those permits. And again, there are very specific arrangements, time limits, in the agreement for them to be given those stay and work permits.

The other big issue I feel like is customs clearance for humanitarian goods, food or medical and drugs or whatever. And there have been cases of inordinate delays at the customs. I mean, some of it's bureaucracy and incompetence; but you know, there are suspicions that sometimes it's more than that.

I mean, these are the sort of purely bureaucratic obstacles and we really need to make an effort to get rid of those and make sure they're not a factor. There are other more subtle pressures, as I was suggesting earlier, on particular organizations which have been singled out as political because they're vocal, shall we say. And we are making clear that is not acceptable either, that the NGOs should be – (unintelligible) – their activities should be taken at face value as what they are of humanitarian work and there should not be discrimination between them and media campaigns against them.

So that's the spirit of the agreement as well as the letter of the agreement. You know, we are looking very carefully at whether this agreement is implemented. We have put in place this time – because it hasn't worked in the past – a very specific follow-up mechanism which is a committee which is jointly chaired by the Sudanese government and the humanitarian coordinator – the UN humanitarian coordinator in Khartoum with the presence of donors and NGOs on it so we can specifically take up cases before they become stuck and become politicized and hopefully overcome these problems.

Whether we will, I don't know. But I think it's very important that we should. And we all need to keep an eye on it; the international community needs to keep an eye on it and make a noise if it's not happening.

MS. MATHEWS: I wonder if I could, briefly anyway, change the subject to Iraq and to ask whether we are facing a tremendous humanitarian crisis there and how you and your office, your team, are thinking about that and what your priorities are for international attention to it?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: Well, I think the answer to your first question is very simple: yes, we are facing a very large humanitarian crisis in and around Iraq. And that was a subject of a conference I was attending yesterday and the day before in Geneva and that was debated particularly to the refugees and displaced people. But there is a wider humanitarian problem even than that.

The facts and figures are relatively simple: there's more than two million Iraqis who have fled Iraq in the last couple of years and they're mostly in Jordan and Syria and they're posing enormous problems for the host countries there. Those problems are growing as they run out of assets and as local resentment grows for obvious reasons. So there's a really big problem there.

There are another two million – the estimates are difficult; it's difficult to be sure about the figures – but there are probably another two million internally displaced in Iraq for – let's not beat around the bush – ethnic cleansing type reasons, if you like, or religious cleansing, or whatever the right word is. And that number is increasing and those people are, in many cases, in grave difficulties.

But there's a humanitarian problem beyond that which is the government – some of the government structures are having difficulty operating normally in the terrible security conditions which exist in much of the country; the public distribution system for food and so on is not operating effectively in some areas. So we calculate there's another four million Iraqis who are getting into serious humanitarian need.

Now, the point of the meeting in Geneva was to draw attention to this humanitarian crisis and I think everybody agrees that it exists. There was nobody around the table and, you know, everybody was there – all the local countries but also the Americans and the British and others – agreeing that there is this very large dimension of humanitarian crisis which we have to tackle.

The refugee part of this is being tackled by UNHCR; that's their mandate. And they're in intensive discussion with the Syrians and the Jordanians about what they can do to help. And they've appealed for funding and that funding is beginning to arrive. And I think the money will be spent essentially – again, these people are not in camps; they're living in Amman and in Damascus and elsewhere and putting huge strain on local services. So I think a lot of the effort will go into bolstering and supporting the local education and health services to enable them to cope with this extra demand which is there from the Iraqis who are present.

I think one of the good things about the conference was that the Iraqi government themselves accepted that they had a responsibility for these people, too, outside the country. They offered \$25 million, which is a start; it's not enough, but it's a contribution to helping deal with them.

Now, the more difficult problem is what we do inside Iraq because operating inside Iraq, as you know, is extremely difficult. The security reasons, the security difficulties are obvious to everybody. They're not uniform around the country; there are bits of the country which are calmer and more stable than others and in the north we can probably operate more easily and in parts of the south. In general, it's a very difficult and dangerous operating environment.

It's not as if nothing's been happening in any case. I mean, there's a lot of very good work being done by the International Red Cross who have never left Iraq; by the International Red Crescent, who are very active; and through the Iraqi Red Crescent who are very active and doing excellent work in very difficult circumstances. There are many other international agencies and NGOs which have been operating remotely, as they say, because they don't have any of their international staff in the country because it's too dangerous, but they have national staff. World Food Program has been providing food in some areas, with some difficulty, but nevertheless doing it.

What we need to do is step up that effort and find ways of operating effectively inside Iraq, which are effective, as I say, but also safe. We have agreed between all the U.N. agencies and some of the main NGOs a strategic framework for this humanitarian assistance inside Iraq and we now need to turn that very quickly into an operational plan of how exactly we're going to do it.

We can have stockpiles of things inside and outside the country, near the areas of need so that even in times of difficult security at least the materials are not too far away. We can find ways of operating remotely. You know, that's what we're looking for: imaginative ways of enabling this to operate more than we can.

But I don't want to create exaggerated expectations. The U.N. and the U.N. agencies are not going to be (piling ?) back into Iraq. It's not possible to imagine that in present circumstances. So we're going to have to be careful and prudent and go step by step, but recognizing the real size of the need.

And one of the particular challenges we face is that Iraq is probably the country in the world where the U.N. reputation is lowest. So being from the U.N. in Iraq is a positive disadvantage, whereas in many countries it might be a positive advantage; in Iraq, it's a positive disadvantage because of the oil for food, because of past failure to protect the population, et cetera, et cetera.

So we have a real problem in trying to persuade people that if there are U.N. humanitarian agencies operating there in the future, they are doing so for purely humanitarian reasons, don't have any political agenda, and will do a decent job. So there's a massive – what's the word? – advocacy effort to be made there, communication effort,

which is not going to change attitudes overnight because those attitudes are very deeply rooted. And we have to be quite realistic about that.

MS. MATHEWS: Just a comment and then I'll take the last question. But put your numbers even without the four million who are coming into deeper humanitarian need, but simply those who have left, those who are displaced, plus those who have died or died prematurely, and turn that into a U.S. per capita figure, it's 50 million people. Plus another four million you mentioned in humanitarian need, that's almost another 50 million, because you multiply by 12. It's astonishing. We'll take the last question.

Q: I just wanted to turn to the past and ask you in terms of the tsunami, what, if anything, is still being done at the United Nations on that catastrophe which so many NGOs sitting in this room have spent a great deal of energy, resources, and devotion? Is there any continuing monitoring of the situation, of the aid flow, of how the resources have been used to enable people to rebuild their lives?

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES: I think the short answer to your question is yes. But I mean, I'm not an expert on the tsunami; it's long before my time. And I sort of pray every day that there won't be another one of those in my first few weeks. But I think there is a continuing reconstruction effort going on, particularly in – (unintelligible) – and that's not finished and money is still being spent there on that. And we are following that because there are U.N. trust funds involved in that as well, so we are following it.

I think more widely we are – I mean, as you'll be aware, there have been a lot of studies done of the response to the tsunami and lessons learned from the response to the tsunami and there are, I think, many, and we need to make sure we learn those lessons for the next time around. I mean, there's a slight danger of planning for the next tsunami in which we'll be kind of First World War generals planning for the last war, as it were. And we need to just be a little bit careful about that because tsunamis of that scale are not everyday events and most of the natural disasters we're going to have to respond to will not be perhaps that kind of crisis.

But nevertheless, we need to learn the lessons from it about how well we deal with it, how rapidly we deal with it. You know, how do we deal with a massive influx of agencies, and particularly NGOs, all turning up in the same place with the best of intentions, but not necessarily the best of preparations? You know, how do we deal with that? I think we would reckon – my organization – we did a reasonable job, but a very far from perfect job. So we could do a lot better next time as well, so we are certainly looking at that very closely ourselves.

MS. MATHEWS: I want to thank you for taking the time to share this first-hand view with us and covering so much ground as you have. I hope you'll join me, everyone here, in thanking Under-Secretary General Holmes. (Applause.)

(END)