

Transcript of press conference by Hervé Ladsous, Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations

Damascus, 26 July 2012

Hervé Ladsous: Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

Let me first apologize for having kept you waiting. I do realize it is time to break your fast in Ramadan and I'm sorry to keep you waiting.

What I wanted to tell you at the end of two days of many meetings both with officials from the Government and personalities from the opposition, various leaders; what I wanted to tell you is that the United Nations, UNSMIS in particular and under the leadership of Lieutenant General Gaye and the people he brought with him, is committed to implement the mandate of the Security Council.

As you know, it is a short mandate. It is a mandate which will have to be re-examined just after mid-August and it is not for me to prejudge the decision of the Security Council.

But let me tell you as of today and contrary to what some of you have been thinking and writing the UN is in no way packing and going.

As of today what we have done and that has been decided for some time after the decision to suspend the activities of the Military Monitors of UNSMIS and in view of all the constraints especially security constraints. We found ourselves with too many people with not enough to do. What we have done, therefore, was to send back home temporarily about one half of the observers and that process was finished yesterday with the last two observers of that batch returning home. But returning home temporarily because should the circumstances change and that is our sincere hope then all these people will be recalled to duty.

I think the goals of the United Nations remain twofold:

First, to contribute to a cessation of violence and that indeed has been my call to all my interlocutors that everything should be done to reduce and put an end to the violence and that includes, of course, the use of heavy weapons by official forces. That is a constant message and that will remain a major objective.

At the same time, everything should contribute to the political process. And there is one political process for the time being, that is the six point plan of the Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. And as you know and has been said time and again there is no plan B. There is no alternative to that.

So, one has to continue working towards that and that would also be one of the missions' of UNSMIS to contribute in many ways and at many levels to facilitate

the resumption of dialogue, especially in specific local circumstances. Maybe a bottom up approach can help. It is a matter of circumstances and listening to all and finding the opportunities to contribute. That is our goal and that is what the General and his team will be working on and that is what we will, at Headquarters in New York, will be trying to help achieve.

I have to say that what one hears and what one sees, the very high levels of violence, here in Damascus, in Aleppo, in Deir E-Zour and in Homs that is indeed something of great concern. Let me say again we will try our best to contribute towards finding the solutions but the solutions, especially the political solution, must exist in a framework and in a process that will be Syrian owned and Syrian led.

Thank you very much, now we will take a few questions.

Spokesperson: Yeah, we will take three questions.

Q: (in French) there is news about deploying 40,000 blue helmets in country and what meetings did you have during your visit?

A: The first question was about a rumor apparently of some 40,000 blue hamlets possibly been considered. I can only say that I am not aware at my level, as far I am concerned, of such a proposal. In any case, any decision on such an eventuality will be for the Security Council, first and foremost to decide.

As to my activities of the last two days, I said that I have been meeting with various personalities in government and the civil society and also with our people because they have been working under incredibly difficult and complicated circumstances and we need to listen to them to commend also their contribution. One should not forget that UNSMIS, in the first part of its mission, did achieve some results. Let us never forget that. Never forget that in the second phase however, the condition became so complicated, so difficult, so heavy in terms of security that we had no choose but to suspend these activities.

Q: Mr. Ladsous, there has been some rumours that the salaries of the UN observers have been decreased. Why is that? Does it have to do with the fact that the mission is not going to continue? The second question, you always say that UNSMIS is committed to the Syrian people and the Syrian crisis, also the Syrian Government said it is committed to the Six Point Plan, what is the problem? Why is it so difficult to find a solution for this crisis?

A: Well, let me take the second question first. I think you have been witnesses to what was happening. Indeed, there has been an increase, a very substantial and a very fast in the level of the recourse towards armed violence. This is the realty and this is the spiral that we have to try and stop, a spiral in which every day we see Syrians killing Syrians. This is the concern.

On the first question, let me just say that there has been no decrease. There is no political signal in the level of what is actually a daily allowance for daily

subsistence for the military observers. We are bound by rules which are set by the membership of the United Nations, the General Assembly. We did all we could within that framework and don't forget that military observers are also paid. This is only for a subsistence allowance.

Q: Are you expecting that the levels of violence will decrease and my second question is are you in contact with the opposition?

A: I did say that I had contacts with the civil society and with opposition representatives. As to the violence, what can one say, certainly that this is what I hope for. Unfortunately, as of today, I cannot say that we see many indications that a decrease in violence will happen overnight. I say again, Syrians killing Syrians is something that should not continue.

Thank you very much.