



Secretary-General SG/SM/10280

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY UN SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN

AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 21 DECEMBER 2005

...

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, you started out by saying that it had been a difficult year for the world. But it is also been, I believe, a difficult year for you personally, especially with all the oil-for-food and Volcker reports. I wonder if you could comment on your own feelings at the end of what, I believe, must be a very difficult year for you, and what you are hoping that your legacy to this Organization is going to be? And in your opening remarks, you talked about the key priorities for you here at the United Nations. But what do you see as the big, global issues that are going to be confronting the world next year?

The Secretary-General: ...

...

On the global issues, I think the issue of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction is going to be a major issue for us. I also see the situation in the Middle East. Here, I'm talking about the broader Middle East. I'm looking at Iraq. I'm looking at the situation in Lebanon and Syria. And I'm looking at the Palestinian-Israeli situation. So, the Middle East will be a major issue for us. I dare say that we should also keep a very close eye on Sudan/Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

...

Question: It is no secret, Sir, that you met with Serge Brammertz here at the United Nations on Thursday of last week. We spoke to the spokesman of the International Criminal Court, who confirmed that he got an offer and that he is very keen to take over the position. I am not asking you to pre-empt your announcement, but the fact that a six-month period has been determined in advance, like last time – seven-month period by Mehlis... The people in the Middle East do not think that befitting the Lebanese problem: that a person comes for six months; has a learning curve; by the time he gets really involved in the intricate question of the problem, he is gone, and we are looking for somebody else. Mehlis himself said it might take months, even years, if there is no cooperation forthcoming. Are you happy with six months' period stint for these very high-level investigators at this committee? And my second question: the Lebanese people support an international court. And I am sure we would like to hear from Kofi Annan if he himself supports establishing a court with an international nature.

The Secretary-General: First of all, let me say that Brammertz is one of the candidates I am looking at. There are, of course, quite a few issues to work out. The highly qualified prosecutors that one would need for this kind of job are usually employed or in some situation that you have to negotiate to get them released. The Council's mandate is for six months. In fact, originally when the Commission was established and Mehlis was appointed, we thought it could be done in six months. Now it has been extended for another six months. I am looking at candidates and I will take all these factors into consideration and appoint the best available candidate. My mandate is for six months. I cannot appoint anyone for more than six months. So the appointment will be for six months, as mandated by the Security Council. Obviously, if there is a need for extension, it will be another story that we will have to deal with.

On the question of a court with an international character, the Council has asked me to consult with the Lebanese Government, with the prosecutor and my own legal office to make a report to the Council. And I intend to submit a report to the Council on the issue of the court and on the issue of assistance to the Lebanese for the investigation of all assassinations dating back to October 2004. So I will be submitting reports covering these two issues.

...

Question: As this is the ninth year into your two terms as Secretary-General of this Organization, at this stage, how are you feeling physically and psychologically? And unrelated to that, what is your position regarding the suggestion that the Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia be added to the Quartet?

The Secretary-General: Physically and psychologically, I am fine. I am in great shape, raring to go next year. Thank you very much.

On the second question: Egypt and Saudi Arabia and Jordan have played an important role in the situation in the Middle East. In fact, on the reform of Palestinian security, Egypt has been extremely helpful, working with the Europeans and the Americans to reform the Palestinian security authority. The Quartet, in the past, has broadened its meeting. We had a meeting once where we brought in the three countries Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. And at our last meeting, in September, this issue came up: that we should in the near future allow room for a larger discussion, bringing in the partners in the region. I don't think there's an intention to expand the Quartet as such. But the Quartet can meet in an expanded format with the three countries that you mentioned, and I think that is not excluded, that it will take place in the course of this year.

...

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record