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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Highlights

Kiir and Taha agree to resume dialogue

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit and VP Ali Osman Taha have agreed to resume dialogue between the two partners on pending CPA issues once President Al-Bashir returns from Addis on Tuesday, **local dailies** report.

According to **Al-Sahafa**, while Taha described the reports about discontinuation of NCP-SPLM dialogue as mere misunderstanding, GoSS Presidential Affairs Minister Luka Biong said the SPLM would not bargain on its presidential candidate Yasir Arman. Biong said the most important outcome of Kiir-Taha meeting was that both partners reiterated their commitment to resume dialogue to resolve pending CPA including the census results, southern Kordofan and the demarcation of the border. SPLM SG said Taha presented ideas which would be discussed by the SPLM Political Bureau meeting today in Juba.

Al-Ahdath reports SPLM spokesperson Yen Mathew as saying that FVP Kiir met with some senior SPLM members including SG Pagan Amum, presidential candidate Yasir Arman and SPLA Affairs Minister Nhial Deng Nhial for consultation on the movement's readiness for the upcoming elections. Kiir reportedly affirmed at the meeting that SPLM would not replace its candidates. "NCP demand for withdrawal of SPLM presidential candidate Yasir Arman is impossible to meet," SPLM SG Pagam Amum said, according to **Ajras Al-Hurriah**. "The movement's decision in the competition for the presidency is irreversible. The SPLM candidate has a full opportunity under the CPA and unity of Sudan through referendum on self-determination," says SPLM prominent leader, according to **The Citizen**.

Al-Ayyam reports the NCP has asked the SPLM to withdraw its presidential candidate Yasir Arman in exchange for the implementation of pending CPA issues including demarcation of the border before elections.

NCP hopes SPLM Arman's political career comes to an end

Sudan Tribune website 31/1/10 – A senior NCP official appeared to signal a growing concern over the candidacy of SPLM Deputy SG Yasir Arman who is running for presidential elections.

In an interview with the **London-based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat**, State Minister for Foreign affairs Ali Karti said that SPLM's pick of Arman is a mere expression of gratitude by the ex-Southern rebel group towards the Northern figure.

"We hope that he is burned [politically] and is out of the way" he added.

The NCP official said that his party's decision not to challenge Salva Kiir over South Sudan presidency is out of their belief that they should not "open a door of competition" in South Sudan and also denied that his party is secretly supporting Lam Akol who has defected from the SPLM to found his own party and maintains close links with the ruling party.

Karti said in the interview that his party does not feel threatened by any of the ten candidates which include the former Prime Minister Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi whose rule was toppled by Bashir in 1989 but suggested that some external forces may throw their weight behind some of the candidates.

"The scenarios of recent and old history indicate how hostile international powers may provide some candidates that have no chances of winning with media and financial resources," he said.

Karti said that internal and external forces are "jealous" of his party because they have managed to resist external pressure and hegemony.

Government rejects UNSG's call on Africans to support the ICC

Al-Sahafa reports UNSG Ban Ki-moon has stressed the need for the organization to deal decisively in case of insecurity and called on the African states to support the ICC. However, Sudan Ambassador to UN Abdul Mahmoud Abdul Haleem has reacted angrily to the SG's call, saying Ki-moon should point at the real criminals instead of soliciting Africa's support for the ICC. "Ki-moon has become an ICC activist. Instead of focusing on threats to security, peace and stability in Africa, he seeks alleged justice at a suspicious Court," he said. The SG said following an AU session in Addis Ababa yesterday that his stance on the ICC is firm, and stressed the need for peace and justice, saying there would be no stability without peace and there will be no peace without justice. **Al-Ahdath** reports that the ICC has sparked new differences between the UN and Sudan Government, citing the UN SG's call for support for the ICC and Sudan's reaction.

AEC calls on CPA partners to agree on post-referendum arrangements

Local dailies report that the AEC annual report, released yesterday, urged the CPA partners to agree on post-referendum arrangements, saying the time remains is very short. The report also stressed the need to expedite the establishment of a referendum commission to set up necessary mechanisms.

Gratton's statements on Doha talks negative – Government

Al-Raed reports Sudan Government has criticized statements by US envoy Scott Gratton which downplayed ongoing efforts to achieve a peaceful solution for the Darfur issue at Doha talks. Diplomatic sources said Gratton's statement does not advance the peace process in Darfur, saying the Government is determined to ask Gratton to account for his statements once he is in Khartoum.

UN Chief to name Eritrean diplomat as new special envoy to Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 31/1/10 — UNSG Ban Ki-moon on Sunday said he would name Haile Menkerios, a former Eritrean diplomat as his special envoy to Sudan making him the third head of the UN Mission in Sudan.

"I have the intention to appoint Haile Menkerios as head of UNMIS as of the end of February with a view to facilitate the political process," disclosed Ban Ki-Moon during remarks delivered at special meeting on Sudan at the sidelines of the AU summit in Addis Ababa.

Menkerios, is currently the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

UN chief warns on Sudan secession push

FT.com 31/1/10 - Ban Ki-Moon, UN secretary-general, has pledged to "work hard" to avoid the secession of south Sudan in a referendum next year, a position that risks setting the international community against proponents of independence in the region.

"Whatever the result of the referendum, we have to think how to manage the outcome. It is very important for Sudan but also for the region," Mr. Ban said at an African Union summit in Addis Ababa. "We'll work hard to avoid a possible secession."

Mr. Ban's comments appeared to signal the start of an international effort to prevent the break-up of Sudan over fears that independence could stir secessionist sentiments across Africa and reignite civil war in the country itself.

The UN chief's views were echoed by Jean Ping, the AU chairman, who expressed fears at the weekend that Sudan was "sitting on a powder keg". A senior diplomat said concern was growing that independence could establish a precedent for a "divorce" that would resonate in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and elsewhere.

Luka Biong Deng, minister of presidential affairs in south Sudan's regional government, did not welcome Mr. Ban's intervention.

"The most important thing is that the UN has the responsibility to implement the peace agreement," he told the Financial Times.

"It is not the responsibility of the UN to help the people of the south to take either decision [in the referendum].

"A unity that is voluntary is sustainable, but a unity that is forced on people is the unity that has led to continuous civil war."

"The UN has a big responsibility with the AU to maintain peace in Sudan and make unity attractive," Mr. Ban said in an interview with AFP and RFI radio.

Elections Special:

“I am opposition candidate, I welcome south secession” – Al-Mahdi

Ex-Prime Minister and Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi has said that he is the candidate of the opposition forces and that he and his party decided to contest elections in order to improve Sudan's relations with the international community, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. Al-Mahdi has also welcomed secession of the south saying, "let it be a peaceful secession. It is now inevitable," he said.

Parliament worried over possible disruption of elections

Chairperson of the National Assembly's Legislation and Justice Committee Ms Badriya Suleiman has welcomed UK's intent to monitor Sudan's elections but raised fears over possible disruption of elections by armed groups in conflict areas, **Al-Intibaha** reports. She has called on electoral monitors to observe neutrality and impartiality and to immediately report incidents during the electoral process. Ms Badriya made the remarks at meeting with visiting delegation of lawyers and politicians from UK.

Presidential candidates at press forum tomorrow

Al-Akhbar reports that the "Political and Press Forum" will tomorrow host all the presidential candidates to speak on "how to make elections free and fair". Reportedly, all the presidential candidates have been invited to attend. The forum is organized monthly by Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi at his residence.

Scenarios-Sudan's first democratic presidential vote in 24 years

Reuters 1/2/10 - Sudan's first democratic presidential election in 24 years, set to start on April 11, is promising to be a heated contest with secret deals and alliances playing out behind

closed doors.

President Omar al-Bashir, desperate to legitimize himself after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for his arrest for war crimes last year, has pursued alliances with the three other leading parties.

The ICC is due to rule on Feb. 3 on whether Bashir is also being charged with genocide in Darfur.

If the court adds genocide to the charges against Bashir, his supporters will use state media to portray him as a strong man standing against Western intervention, which may well increase his popularity within some parts of the northern population.

If the court rules out genocide charges, Bashir will be vindicated in the eyes of many. Either way the ruling could boost Bashir's popularity in the short term. In the long term, some in Sudan will see a president indicted for genocide as dooming the country to international isolation. Given the emotion surrounding the subject, this viewpoint may not sink in time to affect the election result.

The SPLM could be Bashir's biggest presidential threat with their candidate Yasir Arman, a Muslim northerner who would attract votes in the north and south.

The SPLM -- eager to ensure that a 2011 referendum on southern secession is held -- have not ruled out an alliance with the NCP, but given years of distrust it would be an unpopular option among their southern constituents.

The Umma would be unlikely to agree to an alliance unless Mahdi took the presidency, which Bashir would not accept, analysts said.

The most likely NCP ally would be the DUP, whose followers believe their leader Mohamed Osman al-Merghani is descended from the Prophet Mohammed. The DUP has so far distanced itself from the rest of the opposition.

The party is a mass movement which, even without a strong political platform, would win votes because of its deep religious roots.

The opposition has left the door open to a last-minute boycott over accusations of fraud, vote-buying and intimidation coupled with growing dissatisfaction with the National Elections Commission's ability to deal with complaints.

This would be more likely for the parliamentary than the presidential vote. But for now, most parties seem to be ploughing on with their campaigns regardless of the mounting problems, determined to challenge the ruling NCP.

The Carter Centre was the only international body ready in time to monitor the key voter registration period, the nominations and the lead up to the ballot.

Others including the European Union are considering signing up as observers. But given they have already missed so much of the electoral process; some Sudanese say they should assess whether monitoring at this late stage would only lend credibility to a fundamentally flawed process.

Presidential candidate to protest disqualification

The Democratic Socialist Union Party said it was considering the launch of a peaceful march to handover a petition of protest to the NEC and the UN over the NEC's decision to disqualify the party candidate, Fatima AbdelMahmoud, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* reports.

A senior party official said that the party had presented the credentials of its candidate without endorsements from the state high electoral committees but had received assurances from Mukhtar Al-Assam, a member of the national electoral high committee that the committee would address that issue.