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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

Sudan hails UN endorsement of judiciary to monitor elections

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 21/11/09 - Sudan has welcomed statements attributed to a UN official in which he expressed satisfaction with the ability of the country to conduct the elections scheduled for April 2010. Rasool Wahidi a legal adviser in the UN elections unit said that the Sudanese election law "is one of the best" for a country to run the process adding that the judiciary is capable of monitoring it.

Fathi Sheila, the NCP's Information Secretary, said his party values the statements by the UN describing it as "positive" and "contributing to the support of the next elections".

He added that the Sudanese judiciary is well known for its independence and integrity "since tens of years ago".

The NCP official urged the international community to support the elections and "ignore the sceptical voices" in the process and called for encouraging political parties to participate.

NCP denies talks with SPLM deadlocked

NCP Information Secretary Fathi Shella denied that dialogue with the SPLM over pending issues reached a deadlock, saying consultations were continuing and that the joint mechanism between the two partners is the body authorized to decide success or failure of the dialogue, **Al-Sahafa** reports.

However, SPLM Deputy Secretary-General Yassir Arman maintains that the parties are deadlocked over the pending issues because the NCP has reneged on the PCA Award on Abyei, **Al-Ahdath** reports. He said the passing of the budget by the Parliament in the absence of the SPLM was a violation of the CPA and the Constitution.

According to **Sudan Tribune website** 21/11/09, SPLM SG Pagan Amum Okiech has today reiterated his party's determination to break the deadlock over referendum law with the dominant NCP.

The First Vice President and chairman of the southern Sudan ruling party Salva Kiir Mayardit disclosed this week in Paris that negotiations with NCP are on the range of 55%-60%, adding that SPLM would accept a 55% voter turnout in the 2011 referendum.

The SPLM Secretary-General said members of the SPLM in the joint NCP-SPLM political executive committee are determined to reach a lasting settlement with their peace partner before the end of this year.

Asked about the reasons behind the slow progress of talks on the referendum bill, Pagan said that the talks were taking time because members keep returning to their parties for consultation over sticky issues.

Opposition mulls elections boycott

Reliable sources informed **Al-Sahafa** that the opposition political parties were weighing the possibility of boycotting upcoming elections, citing suspicion over work of the NEC and the irregularities that accompanied the voter registration exercise. Farouq Abu Essa who heads the alliance of opposition parties told the paper that a special committee from the parties would meet today to assess the registration process and to prepare for a meeting of the party leaders who would discuss the whole process and take a decision accordingly.

Meanwhile, **Al-Intibaha** reports that NCP Political Secretary Ibrahim Ghandour has slammed the

political parties that hint on a boycott of the polls. He says they are unable to compete with his party. Ghandour has also ruled out an alliance between the NCP and other political parties to contest elections, saying his party would go for it alone.

Voter register exercise “progressing as planned” – NEC

Nec Secretary-General Jalal Mohamed Ahmed Al-Amin has announced that the voter registration exercise is progressing nationwide as planned, *Al-Watan* reports. He told journalists yesterday that they were following up the exercise through the high elections committees at the states.

However, *Al-Intibaha* reports that the SPLA has continued to violate the voter registration exercise. Quoting sources, the paper said that the SPLA has forced civilians at a registration centre in Gissan Locality (Blue Nile state) to register and vote for SPLM, warning them of serious consequences should they fail to do so.

Al-Akhbar also reports that NCP leader Agnes Lukudu has revealed that the SPLA has detained 24 NCP members in Yei, including the NCP leader, and that the party's office was closed. She told the paper yesterday that the NCP would note down all the irregularities and submit them to the NEC.

In a related development, *Khartoum Monitor* reports that SPLM officials toured voter registration centres around Khartoum State. The SPLM officials included Ministers and State Ministers in the GoNU, Khartoum State and MPs were deployed to the seven localities of Khartoum State where there are about 50 voter registration centres. The visit also aimed at solving some issues facing voters who do not possess identification documents that qualify them to register for elections.

The team said the main problem in the centres was that there were people who lived in squatter areas who do not possess identification documents and they were not allowed to register but the problem was solved and they were allowed to register. They reportedly noticed violations and cited as an example the confiscation of registration slips of two southern Sudanese in Soba. They also noted that NCP agents were the dominant elements in almost all the centres. The team also said that in one of the centres in Gebra, South of Khartoum, the committee made it difficult for IDPs to be registered. A team member said the violations would be noted and submitted to the NEC.

Meanwhile, the *Citizen* reports that the air is tense with accusations as the last days of voter registration draw near. SPLM monitors in the registration centres criticized the registration committee's chairmen for targeting Southern Sudanese and preventing them from registration. The opposition coalition will hold a press conference today on what they described as the “unsuccessful project of the registration process”.

Deng Yai, one of the SPLM representatives in the registration centres, told the *Citizen* yesterday that a large number of southerners were prevented from registering by the staff of the NCP at the registration centres on the grounds that southerners do not have residence certificates as a large number of them live in houses under construction. He revealed fraud in registration process by the NCP, pointing out that the NCP has erected tents at all the registration centres, asking citizens to register again under the pretext of completing registration procedures. He urged the NEC to intervene to solve the problem.

SPLM Deputy SG Yassir Arman speaking to the *Citizen* has refused the “mobile registration centre”, saying it is unknown for political parties. He called on those involved in the registration process to refer to the NEC to decide more centres to avoid the lack of fairness in the registration process, adding that FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit is expected to tour registration centres in Khartoum.

In a related development, the **Citizen** reports that the chairman of the Council of Chiefs of Southern Sudan, Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile, Deng Macham Anguei, as saying that voter registration is not proceeding well and that both the GoNU and UN failed to repatriate refugees to their areas. Anguei made the remarks in statement to **Radio Miraya**.

Meanwhile, Nassir County commissioner, Upper Nile State, Major General Gathoth Gatkuoth, called for extension of voter registration process saying his county is experiencing food short which diverts local population from giving full attention to registration.

Kathoth stressed that attention of local population, particularly those in the east of his county, which has been greatly affected by famine need urgent humanitarian assistances,

He described the food shortage in the county as hazardous adding that around five hundred thousand citizens in the east of the county suffer was suffering.

For successful conduct of voter registration process in the area, "I called on National Elections Commission to extend the voter registration period until the 20th of next December to ensure a greater participation of citizens," he said.

"This is because State government is currently trying to instantly send in relieving assistance to help citizens settle," he added.

Kiir briefs Al-Bashir on outcome of his EU tour

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit yesterday has called on President Al-Bashir to brief him on the outcome of his European tour, **Al-Sahafa** reports. According to Biong, Kiir's discussions in European focused on the issue of unity and separation of southern Sudan adding that Kiir had confirmed that there was still time to make unity attractive. Biong said while EU announced support for unity of Sudan, it also pledged to respect the southern Sudanese choice. He said the EU agreed to support upcoming elections with 13 million Euros and to send observers to monitor elections.

Meanwhile, GoSS Presidency Minister Luka Biong announced that SLM leader Abdul Wahid Nur has agreed to visit Juba within a month for consultation with the GoSS on a range of issues including SPLM's initiative to unify Darfur movements for talks. According to **Al-Intibaha**, Kiir met with Nur in Paris.

Sudan Tribune website 21/11/09 reported that FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit reaffirmed Saturday that Sudan's general election would be held in April 2010.

Kiir made his remarks following a meeting with the Sudanese President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir to brief him on the outcome of his European tour that included Netherlands, the headquarters of the European Union in Brussels and France.

"The elections will be held as scheduled in April next year, but regarding the referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan and its governing law, the matter is still under consultation between the two government partners, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)," said Kiir.

The electoral process is facing many difficulties related to the voter registration, the funding of the elections, the difference between the two peace partners over the results of census that are used to determine the electoral constituencies for the legislative elections.

Also donor countries question the significance of such electoral process if the southern Sudan remains resolved to opt for independence less than a year after the onerous and expensive general elections.

Some European countries and USA proposed to hold the election for the Sudanese and southern Sudan government presidencies and to postpone the legislative poll after the outcome of the referendum for southern Sudan.

However delay implies the agreement by the two partners to amend the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which initially conceived the referendum as a mean to reaffirm the adhesion of southerners to the Sudan.

The electoral process is organized by a law passed by the Sudanese parliament last July. The whole country will participate in the election of the President of the Republic; the ten Southern Sudan states will elect the President of Juba semi-autonomous government while every state will elect its Governor.

For the legislative election the law adopted a mixed electoral system. 60 per cent of the 450 MPs will be chosen through the majority elect in their geographical constituencies. It also guarantees 25% of the parliamentary seats to women who will be elected through the proportional representation with other 15% of the MPs.

Last month the opposition parties and the SPLM agreed following a political conference held in Juba to boycott the election if the Sudanese parliament does not pass before November 30, a number of laws aiming at creating an appropriate environment for the multi-party elections.

The declaration spoke precisely about the National Security Law, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, the Trade Unions Act, the law of immunities, the law of personal status, press and publications law, the laws of public order.

The conference asked to allow the national electoral board to control the media during the election period in order to ensure equal time to all the political forces.

However, the Sudanese parliament went into recess on November 18 till December 7th without adopting the draft laws in a session boycotted by the SPLM while the opposition parties said they would announce their final decision at the end of the month.

Observers agree that the NCP would be opposed to any delay in the electoral process as the opposition forces are not ready due to disorganization and lack of money after long twenty years of rule by the National Congress Party.

During a briefing he made in Paris, Salva Kiir said the two partners would reach an agreement on the referendum issue but did not spoke about the elections.

SPLM-DC refutes reports it has a nominee for GoSS presidential candidacy

The SPLM-DC has refuted reports that it has nominated party leader Lam Akol as its flag-bearer for the GoSS presidential race, reports *Al-Sahafa*.

In a statement yesterday, SPLM-DC dubbed these reports “false” and pointed out that the issue will be addressed at the next meeting of the Secretariat for the Southern Sudanese Political Parties’ Forum.

Authorities arrest suspects in connection to GoSS minister ambush

The GoSS has announced the arrest of suspects in connection to the recent ambush of GoSS Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Samson Kwajje, while on his way back to Juba from a voter education drive in Lainya, *Al-Ayyam* reports. GoSS Interior Minister Gier Chouang said that the suspects have been caught.

Bashir-Sarkozy summit in Egypt next year: report

Sudan Tribune website 21/11/09 – The Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir and

French president Nicolas Sarkozy will hold a joint summit next year on the sidelines of the France-Africa conference in Egypt, a pro-government newspaper reported.

The newspaper for the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) Al-Raed quoting "informed sources" said that the meeting will be sponsored by the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

The French government has been pressing Cairo to exclude Bashir who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his role in the war crimes allegedly committed in Sudan's western region of Darfur.

However, last month the 'La Lettre du Continent' newsletter based in Paris, reported that Egypt is unhappy on the request causing a delay in sending out the invitation.

The French interior minister Brice Hortefeux discussed the matter with Mubarak during their talks in Cairo last month.

Hortefeux said that France "submitted suggestions on practical organization [of the conference] that would secure a good environment. We discussed several options with Mubarak".

The European Union (EU) charter prohibits contacts with individuals indicted by the Hague tribunal.

But **Al-Raed** said in its report that Paris informed Cairo that it "welcomes the participation of Bashir in the summit and will extend an invitation to him the coming period".

The last meeting between the two men took place last year on the sidelines of the UN conference on Financing for Development in Doha. Khartoum has been lobbying Paris in its bid to defer the indictment of Al-Bashir by the ICC.

"I told him that the Darfur tragedy has now gone on for too long, that he must take initiatives and change things" the French president told reporters after his meeting.

However a few months later Sarkozy had tough words for Bashir saying that he was running out of time before the warrant was issued.

"Either he changes his attitude and the international community can talk to him, or he does not change his attitude and then he will face his responsibilities, notably before the International Criminal Court," Sarkozy said.

"If the Sudanese president does not change his policy, no one will talk to him any more," he said.

Civil society urges ceasefire and peace in Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 20/11/09 — Darfur civil society called on the Sudanese government and rebel groups to stop the fighting and to seek seriously a lasting peace agreement to end the six year conflict in the restive province in western Sudan.

The Joint mediation held a four day consultative meeting in the Qatari capital from 17 to 20 November in order to identify the means for supporting the peace process. Over one hundred group from the tribal, traditional, youth, women and displaced took part of the consultation.

The Darfur rebels denounced the dominance of pro-National Congress Party groups and asked the mediation to consider this factor when it comes to assess the outcome of the meeting.

"The final statement issued by the consultative meeting of the Darfurian civil society called on both the Government and the Movements to immediately ceasefire, cease hostilities and to cooperate earnestly with the international community and the mediators to reach a just peace," said a statement released by the Mediation Friday.

The civil society reaffirmed that Doha will remain the sole venue for negotiations on Darfur peace, said the statement.

The mediation hopes the mobilization of the civil society would contribute to create favorable climate for the Doha process as its concerns are expressed in the action conducted to achieve peace.

Djibrill Bassolé said on Wednesday civil society consultations would continue in Darfur to ensure that the voice of wider segments of the Darfurian communities would be heard.

The civil society consultations shall continue in the form of sequential consultative meetings planned to take place in order to ensure that the voice of wider segments of the Darfurian communities, with regards to the peace process, would be heard.

SLM's Abdulwahid accepts FVP Kiir's invitation to visit Juba

GoSS' Cabinet Minister Luka Biong has revealed that SLM leader Abdulwahid Nur has accepted an invitation from FVP Salva Kiir to visit Juba next month to discuss issues pertaining to Darfur – especially an SPLM-driven initiative aimed at unifying the negotiating positions of the armed groups, *Al-Sahafa* reports.

Soccer row drags on as Algeria summons Egypt envoy

Reuters 20/11/09 - Algeria's foreign minister summoned Egypt's ambassador on Friday to reject accusations that his government failed to protect Egyptians from violent Algerian soccer fans during a tense World Cup play-off, state media said.

Tension around crucial qualifying matches in Egypt on Saturday and in Sudan on Wednesday boiled over into minor confrontations between fans and a war of words in Egyptian and Algerian media that has strained ties between the two countries.

On Thursday, Egypt's state-run EGYNews website said Cairo was recalling its ambassador for consultations over violence against Egyptians after Wednesday's match.

Algeria's Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci told Egypt's envoy of his government's "incomprehension and great preoccupation" over the "escalation of the media campaign" in Egypt, official Algerian news agency APS said.

"Mr. Medelci expressed hope that an instant end will be put to this campaign which does not serve the interests of the two countries and the two peoples," APS cited the ministry as saying.

It said Algeria had taken all necessary measures to calm the violence by fans and had reinforced security to protect Egyptian citizens and their property in Algeria.

Sudanese furious over Egyptian accusations following soccer match

Sudan Tribune website 19/11/09 – The Sudanese government and citizens alike reacted angrily to a media campaign from their northern neighbor accusing them of failing to secure Egyptian soccer fans from assaults by Algerians after the World Cup qualifying match in the capital that took place yesterday.

Algeria won 1-0 to qualify for the World Cup in South Africa next year, their first appearance at the finals since 1986.

The Sudanese foreign ministry today summoned the Egyptian ambassador in Khartoum Afifi Abdel-Wahab to protest the messages conveyed on Egyptian TV channels considered to be "unacceptable" and "abusive" against Sudan.

Sudan's state minister for foreign affairs Ali Karti informed the Egyptian envoy that his

government “categorically rejects this approach” adding that Sudan should be appreciated for organizing the event.

Sudan downplays calls for arresting Bashir in Denmark

Sudan Tribune website 21/11/09 – The Sudanese government downplayed calls made by Amnesty International to arrest president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir should he arrive in Denmark for the UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen next month.

Denmark sent an invitation to Bashir noting that despite an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for him, the climate conference is a UN event making it obligated to invite all heads of government without exception.

Thomas Winkler, head of the Danish Foreign Ministry’s legal department, said that his government intends “to comply the [UN] Security Council’s resolution regarding Darfur”.

Denmark is a state party to the founding treaty of the ICC and is obliged to arrest Bashir if he visits. But Kamal Obeid the Sudanese ruling National Congress Party (NCP) information Secretary said that the invitation was addressed to the government and not to Bashir personally adding that no decision has been made on the level of participation.

He also said that Amnesty International calls “is a repetition of the group’s hostile stance towards Sudan”.

Amnesty International urged the Danish government to make it clear that Bashir will be arrested if he travels to Copenhagen.

Imam of mosque found hanged in Omdurman

Local dailies report that Sheikh Ali Ahmed Arraki, imam of a mosque in Umbada, Omdurman, was found hanged in his room in the mosque compound. Khartoum police authorities have began investigations into the mysterious.

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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