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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Sudan talks get under way in Ethiopia

AFP 6/11/10 - Officials from both sides of Sudan and the international community began talks in the Ethiopian capital on Saturday aimed at agreeing a frontier ahead of a referendum on independence for the south.

Ramtane Lamamra, the African Union's top peace and security official, said in an address to the opening of the meeting that time was fast running out for the organisers of the referendum.

"There are just 66 days to go before the referendum in southern Sudan, and nine days before the registration of the voters will begin. There is no time to waste," he said.

The meeting was also scheduled to discuss the security situation in the western province of Darfur.

"The government must commit to significant concession in the negotiation, and in the meantime implement measures inside Darfur including addressing the problem of informal militias, arbitrary arrests, excessive powers afforded under the emergency law," said Alain Le Roy, the United Nation's top peacekeeping official.

Neither Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir nor Salva Kiir, the southern leader, were attending the meeting, which included former South African president Thabo Mbeki, the head of the UN mission in Sudan Haile Menkurios and the UN special representative on Darfur, Ibrahim Gambari.

Saudi FM says Sudan referendum could lead to more violence

AFP 6/11/10 - The top Saudi diplomat said on Saturday that Sudan's coming referendum on the south's independence could reignite violence in the country rather than bring peace.

Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said the original reason for the January referendum was to bring peace between the north and south in the wake of a two-decade-old civil war.

"The solution needed is to stop the fighting between the north and the south," he told reporters.

"If the referendum leads to a renewal of fighting, that is what we fear," he said.

He stressed the referendum, scheduled for January 9, must be fair and free, but reiterated Riyadh's worry that the largest Arab country by territory will be split in half.

He said the Sudan referendum marks "a critical juncture in its history, threatening its territorial division."

Turabi calls for formation of an interim government in the North

Al-Tayar 7/11/10 – Popular Congress Party (PCP) leader Hassan Al-Turabi has called for

formation of an interim Government after the secession of the South to prepare for general elections. Al-Turabi has also ruled out the possibility of the two parties reaching an agreement on Abyei ahead of referendum.

SPLM questions Washington's neutrality on Abyei issue

Al-Sahafa 7/11/10 – The SPLM has expressed fears that Washington might jeopardize the CPA partners' trust that it would assist them to resolve pending issues particularly Abyei.

Federal Cabinet Affairs Minister Luka Biong has reiterated the Dinka's right to decide their destiny and expressed pessimism over US's chances of success to achieve a breakthrough on Abyei issue during the current talks in Addis Ababa.

Biong has accused the NCP of plotting to postpone the referendum, citing the pressure being put on the head of the SSRC to force him to resign.

Disputed Sudan town faces new fears as it rises from ashes

AFP 7/11/10- The Sudanese town of Abyei on the fault-line between north and south is slowly reemerging from the ashes of its destruction two years ago but aid groups are bracing for more violence as a vote on its future looms.

As referendum looms in January that will decide whether Abyei and the oil resources of its surrounding district remain part of north Sudan or join an autonomous or independent south, there are fears of a return to fighting.

In the village of Agok, south of the town, aid groups including the Irish charity GOAL and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) have drawn up a contingency plan to ensure the necessary supplies are in place to look after civilians in the event of fresh clashes.

"Our intent is to be ready in case of mass casualties," Patricia Carrick, who runs the MSF clinic in Agok, told AFP.

Abyei's chief administrator, Deng Arop Kuol, expressed strong opposition to the idea of the vote not going ahead as stipulated in a landmark 2005 peace deal between north and south that ended Africa's longest-running civil war.

"This kind of thing we cannot do compromise," Kuol said. "It is an international human right inalienable, nobody will take it away from us and we feel we will exercise it in any point.

"For sure people are concerned, because the time of registration is approaching and up to now a solution has not been found in the case of Abyei. But you know people do not give up until the last moment."

Tensions have been rising as the clock ticks down to the Misseriya's annual migration which should see them arrive in Abyei in late December, just a week or two before the scheduled date for the referendum.

But Kuol denied the real problem was with the nomads, insisting the Khartoum government was simply exploiting them for its own ends.

"There is nothing between the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka," he said.

"The Ngok Dinka have not said to the Misseriya don't come for grazing rights.

"The real concern is with the government. The government would like to have the land for the oil and they are using the Misseriya."

The head of the United Nations humanitarian office, Valerie Amos, visited Abyei and Agok on Saturday for talks with Kuol and with aid officials.

"People in need of humanitarian assistance must be assisted irrespective of which side of the border they find themselves," she said.

The United Nations is concerned that any return to fighting in Abyei might spill over to other northern areas which saw fighting during the 1983-2005 civil war, like the Nuba mountains of neighbouring Southern Kordofan.

"If there is violence in Abyei, it might lead to a knock-on effect involving Southern Kordofan," a UN official said.

Abyei belongs to the South and secession is inevitable – SPLM

Al-Rai Al-Aam 7/11/10 – The SPLM has said that the majority southerners are expected to favour secession during the upcoming vote on self-determination of the South.

SPLM leading figure, John Makuac told a symposium yesterday in Khartoum that referendum would take place even if the border is not demarcated; adding Abyei is a southern territory by 200% and belongs to Dinka Ngok.

Meanwhile, NCP official Mohamed Mandour Al-Mahdi has criticized positions of Sudan's major parties on national issues, saying these parties are standing by to hold the NCP responsible for the country's partition.

Thousands of southerners in the North on their way home

The Citizen 7/11/10 – Thousands of southern Sudanese have decided a voluntary return to the South ahead of the referendum barely more than 50 days away in which Africa's largest country is widely expected to split into two states indefinitely.

An average of 20 fully loaded vehicles is estimated to be leaving northern cities for southern Sudan daily...

States with huge movement of southerners include Western Bahr el Ghazal, northern Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile and Unity.

Khartoum receives written pledge from Obama to lift sanctions

Al-Sudani 7/11/10 – High-level Government sources have revealed that visiting US Senator John Kerry has presented a written commitment from US President Barak Obama that his

Administration would begin lifting sanctions from Sudan immediately after the referendum is conducted.

However, the sources said the Government stressed to Kerry the need for the US Administration to begin lifting sanctions ahead of the referendum to confirm the seriousness of its the commitment.

US Senator John Kerry makes a quick return trip to Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 5/11/10 - The U.S. senator and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee made a previously unannounced visit to Khartoum, his second one to the country in a little over a week.

Sudan official news agency (SUNA) quoted the foreign ministry spokesperson Muawiya Osman Khalid as saying that Kerry's visit aims at continuing his talks on a number of issues particularly sticky issues such as the deadlock over Abyei and borders as well as implementing the outstanding items in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

The U.S. lawmaker said during his trip in the last week of October that he received written assurances from the Sudanese government that it would respect the January 9, 2011 date for the referendum in the South of the country despite mounting challenges to meet the deadline.

A well-placed source in Khartoum told Sudan Tribune that Western diplomats in the capital believe that Kerry likely came back with a detailed proposal for normalizing ties should Sudan heeds to U.S. demands. The offer would also include U.S. support for deferring the arrest warrant against Sudanese president Omer Al-Bashir through the UN Security Council for one year that can be renewed indefinitely.

US proposals for settling differences on post-referendum arrangement

The Citizen 7/11/10 – The US Administration presented a package of proposals to effect a breakthrough for solving the points of difference on post-referendum arrangements' issues on the one hand and putting an end to the Darfur conflict on the other hand. Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator John Kerry, held intensive talks in Khartoum.

Presidential Advisor Ghazai Salahuddin who is in charge of the Darfur dossier said the US Administration presented a package of proposals, saying he had not viewed them, but he told the journalists that the proposals might be forwarded to VP Ali Oman Taha.

Meeting referendum deadline is risky – SSRC

Al-Sudani 7/11/10 – Head of the SSRC Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil said meeting the referendum deadline would be risky , difficult and complex, stressing the importance of allowing sufficient time so that the process is free of mistakes. Khalil made the remarks at meeting with US Senator John Kerry.

NCP shows no interest in post-independent South - Machar

Sudan Tribune website 5/11/10 – the NCP has shown no interest in maintaining its party's presence in the South should the region become independent, says the Vice President of Southern Sudan, Riek Machar.

Machar, who is also the deputy chairman of the southern ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), made the comments during his meeting with former NCP leaders from the South, led by Thomas Bai Malek, who recently defected to the SPLM in Lakes state. The SPLM would be interested to see the SPLM northern sector maintained as a political party in the North even if the referendum in January results in the independence of the South, Machar said.

The South's Vice President said he would have expected the NCP to think along the same lines and show interest in the south after independence, but he said this has not been the case. The current behavior of the NCP, he said, suggests that it has no vision as a political party for its southern leaders and members in the South after referendum in which an independence vote is widely expected. Machar added that the NCP also seemed to have been reluctant to accept the presence of the SPLM in the North if the South becomes independent. He stressed the importance of conducting peaceful referenda for Southern Sudan and Abyei as well as the popular consultations for Nuba Mountains on Southern Kordofan state and Southern Blue Nile. The Vice President said the two regions, North and South, would continue to need each other even if the South secedes, saying it was important to work towards creating good relations for the future. The NCP leaders, who have joined the SPLM have said they did so because of a lack of vision inside the NCP and because it has moved away from the peaceful and full implementation of the CPA.

South Sudan rejects Egyptian proposal to delay referendum

Sudan Tribune website 5/11/10 - The government of the semi autonomous region of south Sudan (GoSS) on Friday rejected an Egyptian proposal calling for a delay to the conduct of the upcoming self determination referendum in south Sudan.

Speaking to Sudan Tribune in the regional capital of Juba on Thursday, Marial Benjamin Bil, minister of information and broadcasting services said the vote on self determination would go ahead as planned because both parties had agreed to it.

“The two parties have already agreed to conduct [the] referendum on time. It has been discussed and announced several times. The last presidency meeting also reiterated the conduct of referendum on time. So, there is no delay here,” said the minister.

Bil said that the referendum date had been agreed as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended two decades of war.

“The 2005 peace signed between the two parties and which was signed by Egyptian government as an eye witness to the agreement, allows conduct of the referendum on 9th of January 2011”, said Bill.

There is nothing, he said, that would prevent the conduct of the referendum.

“The environment would be conducive. The government of south Sudan is committed and confident that the environment would be conducive for the conduct of the referendum because the exercise will be conducted with participation of the international observers, civil society organizations and forces of United Nations,” he said.

The minister also dismissed claims by the NCP that completing the demarcation of the north-

south border was a prerequisite for the conduct of referendum.

Southern Sudan vote holds unprecedented risks - UN

AP 5/11/10 - The UN top humanitarian official said that Southern Sudan's January independence referendum presents unprecedented risks and could create new humanitarian needs if violence flares.

The January vote could see the south break away from the Khartoum-based north.

Valerie Amos said Friday that Southern Sudan is at a critical juncture and that the coming months would define the fate of millions of Sudanese. Amos is responsible for overseeing all emergencies that require U.N. assistance.

Another U.N. official, George Charpentier, said more than \$60 million has been committed by international donors for contingency planning. Plans include propositioning food and emergency supplies in case of violence.

UN rejects south Sudan calls for peacekeepers

Reuters 6/11/10 - The United Nations on Saturday rejected calls by south Sudan to send peacekeepers and set up a buffer zone along the country's tense north-south border ahead of a southern vote on independence next year.

"There will not be UN peacekeepers on the buffer zone, it's unrealistic," Alain le Roy, UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told journalists shortly after concluding a meeting with representatives from the African Union and several other countries in the Ethiopian capital.

"The common borderline is too wide and (it) is not realistic to deploy troops," he added.

Diplomats from the UN and the AU have announced that there will be months of "intensive" talks starting with a five-day meeting in Khartoum that begins Sunday aimed at reaching a consensus over the contested oil region of Abyei...

Feared rebel group sows terror in south Sudan breadbasket

AFP 7/11/10- With its fertile soils and lush vegetation, Western Equatoria ought to be the breadbasket of south Sudan but deadly attacks by Lord's Resistance Army rebels have left many villagers too scared to farm.

Notorious for kidnapping boys to serve as child soldiers and girls to act as sex slaves, the LRA has carried out 22 attacks in Western Equatoria state this year, driving nearly 45,000 people from their homes, the UN says.

Of those, some 13,000 have sought refuge in camps around Ezo, a remote border village where they are now dependent on international aid.

Displaced farmers attempt to grow what they can in small plots between the makeshift tents but there is only room for a few potatoes and a little manioc.

"There is no space here to farm properly," said Archangel Sindan Tyaza, the deputy chairman of Ezo's displaced persons' committee.

"And if you leave the camp, the LRA are going to kill you."

Camp resident Isaac Dominic, who fled his home village of Maduro after an LRA attack, agreed.

"We used to go out into the fields to tend our crops but now because of the LRA nobody ventures out," he said.

The result of the chronic insecurity in the fields of Western Equatoria has been felt not just in the state but across the whole of south Sudan.

This year the World Food Programme has provided aid to about 4.3 million south Sudanese -- around half the region's population.

"Had there been production in Western Equatoria, we would not have to do that at the scale we did," said the UN humanitarian coordinator for south Sudan, Lise Grande.

"Western Equatoria was the breadbasket of southern Sudan. So if you don't have production there, it not only affects the villagers, but the whole of southern Sudan.

"Southern Sudan chronically has a food deficit. This year in particular it's been simply enormous."

Grande said distributing food aid on such a scale raised concerns of its own as deliveries to particular camps often drew attacks from the rebels who proceeded to ransack the food.

"What's been happening is that when food is distributed to people who have been displaced or the refugees that have come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, almost unbearably there is an LRA attack right on the heels of that," she said.

"The LRA knows where the food has been distributed and they attack."

The head of the United Nations humanitarian office, Valerie Amos, who visited Ezo as part of a Sudan tour this week, issued a statement on Sunday calling for better protection for the region's residents.

"The protection of civilians must be at the heart of the planning process of the recently announced joint government initiative for an anti-LRA force," she said.

The governor of West Equatoria, Joseph Bakasoro, announced in late September that the autonomous southern regional government would start arming self-defence groups known as "Arrow Boys" to guard rural communities against LRA attack.

He said the southern parliament had allocated five million Sudanese pounds (two million dollars) to supply them with guns, communication systems and training, as the mainstream armed forces were stretched too thin across the vast jungle region to provide effective protection.

But Amos called for careful supervision of the militia fighters. "All components of the force, in particular armed community defence groups, should be subject to close government oversight, in collaboration with expert protection partners," she said.

Disputed Sudan town faces new fears as it rises from ashes

AFP 7/11/10- The Sudanese town of Abyei on the faultline between north and south is slowly reemerging from the ashes of its destruction two years ago but aid groups are bracing for more violence as a vote on its future looms.

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"If there is violence in Abyei, it might lead to a knock-on effect involving Southern Kordofan," a UN official said.

Presidential aides Nafie Ali Nafie's interview

Akhir Lahza 7/11/10 - In an interview to Al-Quds newspaper in Tunis, Presidential Aide Nafie Ali Nafie ruled out a renewed war over referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan.

Asked about the call by the UN for creation of a buffer zone between the North and the South he said, "UN has no right to deploy troops in any independent country in the world. Did the UN succeed in keeping security, peace and stability in Congo and elsewhere? We are backed by our friends in the Security Council - China, Russia, Indonesia, African countries and others. Only few countries are not supporting us. All attempts to change the government in Sudan have failed after our friends have understood the real ends of the superpowers".

Other Highlights

3 Latvian helicopter crew kidnapped in Darfur - UN

AP 5/11/10 - The UN food agency said three Latvian helicopter crew working for the global body have been kidnapped in western Sudan.

A spokeswoman for the World Food Program said the three men were seized Thursday in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur province.

Emilia Casella told The Associated Press on Friday that the crew was contracted to the U.N. Humanitarian Air Service which delivers aid to poverty-stricken Darfur.

She declined to say whether the global body has received any demands for the men's release or knows who their captors are.

Darfur rebel movements move to Abyei to confront the government

Al-Intibaha 7/11/10 – SPLM has engaged in intensive consultations with the JEM and SLA-MM on the need to agree on arranging the armed movements after the upcoming referendum if secession is confirmed.

Informed sources revealed that JEM leading figure Adam Bakheit held meetings over the past two days with SPLA military and political leaders in Yei where it was stressed that a nascent south state should be a safe haven for the rebel movements. Bakheit's meetings also focused on the need to expand JEM training camps in Bahr el Ghazal and Unity states and the possibility of providing supplies to the movement at the stage of basic training prior to their advanced training.

President Al-Bashir visits Qatar

Al-Akhabar 7/11/10 – President Al-Bashir arrived yesterday in Qatar on 2-day visit for consultations with the Qatari emir.

It was reported that President Al-Bashir would meet with PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi but the latter departed Doha before Al-Bashir's arrival.

According to *Al-Tayar* 7/11/10, Al-Turabi downplayed the possibility of a reconciliation between his party and the ruling NCP.

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