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UNMIS

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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

UN/ AMIS-UN transition

SRSG Pronk holds talks with Sadiq el-Mahdi

(*AlWihda* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) SRSG Pronk held discussions yesterday with Sadiq el-Mahdi at the latter's residence in Omdurman.

The meeting was in the context of regular consultative meetings.

Among issues discussed in the meeting were the peace process in Sudan, the ongoing talks in Abuja and the need for a comprehensive conference with the participation of all political forces as a mechanism to elevate the CPA from its bilateral base to a national one.

Also discussed were the developments in Chad and its implications on the Sudan and especially with relation to the Darfur conflict and what role the UN can play to realise a just peace, assist in the transition to democracy and development in Sudan.

UNMIS describes Sudan government decisions on Chad as wise

(*Alan* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) UNMIS has commended the Sudan government's position and the decisions it has taken over the recent events in Chad and described these decisions as "wise".

Khalid al-Hitti, UNMIS' acting Spokesperson, lauded the Sudan foreign ministry's statements and the statements of other officials underlining the need to restore relations between the two countries and told the Sudan Media Centre (SMC) that the UN hopes Chad will reciprocate so that the two sides will wisely transcend the crisis.

Al-Hitti also praised the Chadian president's decision not to expel Sudanese refugees from Chad.

The acting Spokesperson described Deby's statements as rational and said he hoped these statements would help open up channels of dialogue between the two sides and help them transcend the tensions.

Darfur conflict 'ripe for resolution': African Union chief mediator

(*AFP/ST* – 18th Apr. **United Nations**) The festering conflict in Sudan's Darfur region is "ripe for resolution" as Khartoum shows flexibility on key issues, the African Union's chief mediator said here Tuesday.

Briefing the UN Security Council on the AU-brokered peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria, Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania said, "The conflict in Darfur, which has witnessed so much suffering and bloodshed, seems at last to be ripe for resolution."

He told the 15-member body that Khartoum was showing some flexibility on the key issues of power and wealth sharing as well as security arrangements.

Noting that the Darfur insurgents needed "to move in the same direction," Salim, who is mediating the Abuja talks, added: We are hopeful that the differences can be narrowed."

A key factor was the presence in Abuja of Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Taha at the head of a high-powered delegation as well as of all the Darfur rebel leaders.

"For the first time there are intensive bilateral and direct discussions between the parties, as well as meetings facilitated by the (AU) mediation," he added.

The talks, now in their seventh round, had until now made little progress but both the United Nations and the African Union are putting pressure on the parties to strike a deal and conclude the talks by the end of this month, diplomats say.

Salim meanwhile pleaded with council members to ensure that once a comprehensive ceasefire accord is signed, they will extend "maximum support to the cash-strapped AU peacekeeping force in Darfur (AMIS) to enable it to cope with additional responsibilities".

"There is no point in calling for the speedy conclusion of an agreement, if nothing will be done to appropriately prepare AMIS for its expanded mandate," he added.

UN officials are preparing to send peacekeepers to Darfur by the end of the year or at the beginning of 2007 to take over from the AMIS force, which have failed to restore peace in the vast western Sudanese region.

But Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir is strongly opposed to the UN mission.

Peace agreement for Darfur within reach, un security council told

(*ST* – 18th Apr. **New York**) Though the parties to the conflict in Darfur, Sudan – which has already cost nearly 200,000 lives, mainly civilians – have not yet compromised on key issues, a peace agreement is within reach by the 30 April deadline set by the African Union (AU), the chief mediator from that organization told the United Nations Security Council today, urging support for the AU mission in the country.

“We are working full steam to meet this deadline,” Salim Ahmed Salim, the AU special envoy and chief mediator for the inter-Sudanese talks in Abuja, Nigeria, said in his first Council <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/sc8694.doc.htm>>briefing since January, when he said talks between the Government and rebel movements were proceeding at an “agonizing slow pace.”

“As we enter the home stretch of this marathon negotiating session,” he cautioned, however, “the anxieties of the Parties are understandably intensifying.” Concessions still need to be made on the sharing of wealth and power, security arrangements and other issues, he said.

The security arrangements will make or break the negotiations, he said, underscoring the complexity of both an immediate ceasefire and long-term final status arrangements. “Darfur is home to a myriad of armed and dangerous militia, included the Janjaweed, the armed movements that are fragmenting, bandits of sorts, foreign combatants and tribal forces,” he observed.

The mediation team, he said, had made proposals on the disengagement of forces, disarmament of the Janjaweed, the control and neutralization of militias, protection of

displaced persons, security of nomadic migration corridors and the demilitarization of humanitarian supply routes.

The proposed “Enhanced Ceasefire Agreement” stipulates that the neutralization of the Janjaweed and “undisciplined militia” is a prerequisite for any peace agreement, he said.

As this, and all such steps, will have to be monitored by the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), he stressed that it was crucial to follow up any peace agreement, once signed, with maximum support to those forces, which are not even adequate to fulfill their current mandate.

“My plea to you in this esteemed Council is that you do not wait for the transition to take place from AMIS to a UN Force before strengthening the implementation mechanism of any agreement to be reached in Abuja,” he said.

US may risk China, Russia vetoes on Sudan sanctions

(*AP/ST* – 18th Apr. **United Nations**) The US is prepared to risk Chinese and Russian vetoes on a Security Council resolution that would impose sanctions on four Sudanese accused of rights violations in Darfur, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said Tuesday.

Bolton said, however, that he first wants to discuss the issue with other diplomats and hear a briefing, scheduled for the afternoon, from the African Union’s mediator on Darfur.

On Monday, Russia and China had blocked U.K. efforts to impose the penalties through a Security Council committee that handles Sudan sanctions. The U.S. resolution would circumvent that committee and force the two to choose whether to cast vetoes, which carry political risks.

"What I'd like is unanimity, obviously, not a veto, so I'm prepared to have consultations and discussions. And that's appropriate," Bolton told reporters. "But I'm also prepared to proceed. We think the moment is right to implement these sanctions."

The names of the four haven't been made public, but council diplomats said they include one member of the Sudanese government, two rebel figures, and a member of the government-backed Janjaweed militia. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity.

A U.N. panel that investigated the Darfur conflict recommended last year that 51 people be prosecuted for war crimes, including senior government officials. But council members haven't been able to agree on any names to put on a U.N. sanctions list.

The U.K. list that Russia and China blocked was the first attempt, and it drew support from other council members, including Argentina, Denmark, France, Japan, Peru and Slovakia.

Russia to send in 4 helicopters and 117 military personnel to join UNMIS

(*AlSahafa/Agencies* – 19th Apr. **Moscow**) Russia's defence minister said last Monday that his country will soon be sending in an aviation unit of 117 troops to join UNMIS.

He said that Russia will be sending in 4 Mi-8 military transport helicopters as part of the country's contribution to the UN peacekeeping effort in Sudan.

President Bashir reiterates: “No to foreign occupation”

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) Addressing a conference of the Federation of Sudan Workers' Trade Unions yesterday, President Bashir said the Sudan government rejects foreign intervention in Darfur and would never allow the country to 'be occupied by foreigners'.

He expressed resolve to settle the problems of Darfur and eastern Sudan.

The President said on the other hand that the government is keen to review wages and pointed out that wages have been increased 23 times since 1990.

CPA

President Bashir to hold talks with VP Kiir over implementation of CPA

(*AlAyaam* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) The head of the SPLM caucus at the National Assembly reveals that preparations are underway for a meeting between the President of the Republic (and head of the National Congress Party) and Vice-President Salva Kiir (SPLM leader) to discuss the implementation of the CPA and their partnership at the GoNU.

The two sides, says Yassir Erman, have slated the first week of May for a meeting between key party figures over controversial issues of bilateral interest between them.

A high rank source within the SPLM intimates that the impending meeting will discuss issues that have jeopardise their partnership in power such as the issues of Abyei, the national capital, implementation of the CPA and what the constitution stipulates in this regard.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad

AU Mediator meets with the Sudanese Vice-President

(*ST* – 18th Apr. **Abuja**) The Second Vice-President Ali Ousman Taha, yesterday evening, briefed the Head of the African Union Mediation Team, Sam B. Ibok, on the progress so far made in his series of consultations with the Darfur rebel groups.

There were also exchanges on matters relating to the ongoing negotiations on an enhanced Ceasefire Agreement and final Security Arrangements, developments in Chad and on how best to sustain the current momentum for a speedy conclusion of the Talks.

The AU has set a deadline of April 30 for the Abuja talks to yield an agreement.

According to the AU spokesperson Nouredine Mezni, Vice-President Taha pledged his continued support to the AU Mediation, adding that he remained committed to help expedite the negotiations.

The Sudanese Vice-President only recently had two consultation sessions with the AU Special Envoy and Chief Mediator, Salim Ahmed Salim.

Also yesterday, Taha received in audience Minister Ablassé Ouedraogo and Ambassador Boubou Niang, who have been coordinating the Wealth Sharing negotiations in Abuja. There was an exchange of ideas on how to overcome the outstanding issues in the draft Wealth Sharing Protocol.

Darfur needs up to 60,000 troops - AU

(*Xinhua/ST* – 18th Apr. **Abuja**) Commander of the African Union (AU) Force in Darfur Maj. Gen. Collins Ihikere said here Tuesday that the 7,000 troops in the troubled area were not sufficient and up to 60,000 troops more were needed.

"If you compare the strength of troops in a place like Liberia which is smaller than Darfur and we go by that kind of ratio, we might be looking at maybe 50,000 to 60,000 troops in Darfur," he said.

At a news briefing in the Nigerian capital Abuja, Ihikere said Sudan deserved such attention because it was a big territory and had the largest land mass in Africa.

He, however, rejected suggestions that the current figure was just like a drop in the ocean. "It (figure) is more than a drop. Really more than a drop," he said.

He said the AU Mission in Darfur was an observer mission whose primary motive was to maintain ceasefire agreements.

The mission, he added, was charged with protecting internally displaced persons and also to protect Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international agencies that might be in danger.

"So you see, we are not keeping the peace as in the concept of peacekeeping between warring parties," he said.

Ihikere also spoke on the enhanced peace agreement, explaining that it was expected to strengthen the peace agreements in the Chadian capital N'djamena.

Specifically, he said, the aim was to check the incessant violations that had frustrated efforts toward a stable Darfur and ending the crises there.

Chad's Deby accuses African Union of indifference

(*ST* – 18th Apr. **N'Djamena**) After Sudan, the Chadian president is now criticizing the African Union. Presiding over a news conference in N'Djamena this morning, Idriss Deby Itno denounced the indifference of the pan-African organization.

He said it African Union was burying its head in the sand, Radio France Internationale reported

"It is unfortunate that the African Union is burying its head in the sand and that it is sitting on the fence. In this period of hardship, Africa should be in the hands of Africans when we are faced with emerging challenges." Chadian president said.

"We need to prove that we can take our continent out of serious incidents led by adventurers and mercenaries" he further said.

Since 2004, "I have tried to draw the attention of my colleagues, African heads of state and all the structures of African Union of the threat hanging over Chad. No one understood us".

The African Union Peace and Security Council did not strongly condemn Sudan during its 15 April meeting. "This is unfortunate. The African Union does not support stability in Africa".

"The African Union has to strongly condemn the Khartoum government", Deby concluded.

Sudan openly supports Chad rebels - observers

(*ST* – 18th Apr. N'Djamena) Chadian rebels who advanced on the capital in a fleet of brand new Toyotas had clear support from Sudan which wants to replace President Idriss Deby Itno with a pro-Sudanese leader, diplomats and human rights groups here said on Tuesday.

International observers alleged logistical and political support by Sudan for the rebels of the Chadian United Front for Change (FUC), a day after the United States branded such support "unacceptable".

"The FUC rebels are Chadians, but they are clearly supported by Sudan," said Olivier Bercault, regional specialist for the global rights group Human Rights Watch.

"An armed movement from the east of Chad cannot arrive in N'djamena in a few days without logistical support from Khartoum," he said, referring to the FUC forces that travelled some 800km to fight forces loyal to Déby around the capital last week.

The rebels were equipped with "dozens of new Toyotas", he added.

Chad's government accused Sudan of backing the coup attempt, though the FUC has denied receiving support from Sudan. On Monday Chad further accused Sudan of forming a new rebel army to attack the country.

A French diplomatic source said Khartoum supports FUC leader Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim with a view to toppling Deby, who is accused of supporting a rebellion in Sudan's Darfur region against the Khartoum government.

After repelling last week's coup attempt, Chadian authorities displayed what they said were captured Sudanese mercenary fighters as well as arms and other materials it said were evidence of Sudanese involvement. International observers say Nour's forces receive support from Darfur, which borders eastern Chad. One such source said Chadian rebels had bases in El-Geneina, the capital of the Sudanese state of West Darfur.

"They benefit from the open support of auxiliary militias from Khartoum. Logistical support, in arms and provisions," the observer said.

Shortly after the founding of the FUC, one of the group's chiefs, Abdelwahit About, told Radio France Internationale that the FUC had "close and friendly" ties with Khartoum.

Talks on founding the FUC were held in El-Geneina in December, according to sources close to the rebels.

But the allegations of Sudan's involvement were supported on Tuesday, even by the opposition to the government in Chad.

"Sudan aids the FUC materially. It's plain to see," said Ngarleji Yorongar, a fierce opponent of Deby. The leadership of "Mahamat Nour is a creation of the Sudanese, and today he is sufficiently armed and supported to take power in N'djamena".

Sources formerly close to Nour also say he fought alongside the Sudanese army against rebels in Darfur.

The US suggested on Monday that Sudan may have been involved in the failed rebel offensive in Chad, and said it warned Khartoum such action was "unacceptable". Washington stopped short of officially endorsing Chad's allegations that the Sudanese had armed the rebels.

But a senior state department official, who asked not to be named, told reporters: "I'm not going to wave you off that there was some involvement" by the regime of President Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum.

Chad said on Sunday its delegation had withdrawn from the African Union-brokered peace talks on Sudan's troubled Darfur region because of "Sudanese aggression".

Humanitarian groups have warned that the fate of 200 000 refugees from Darfur is hanging in the balance because of the escalating crisis between Chad and Sudan.

Despite the allegations against Sudan, Deby on Monday withdrew a threat to expel the refugees who are sheltering in eastern Chad.

Chad says Sudan attacks to export fundamentalism

(Reuters/ST – 18th Apr. N'Djamena) Chad President Idriss Deby said on Tuesday Sudan had attacked his country in a drive to export Khartoum's fundamentalist system to sub-Saharan Africa.

Rebels fighting to end Deby's rule over the landlocked central African oil producer attacked the capital last week and have vowed to disrupt a presidential poll on May 3 in which Deby is standing for a third term after nearly 16 years in power.

"If there is no election on May 3 ... there will be a constitutional void and one cannot rule out a generalised civil war promoted by the Khartoum regime (Sudan)," Deby told Reuters in an interview.

Deby accuses Sudan of promoting and arming rebels who raced in pick-up trucks from the east to raid N'Djamena on Thursday but were driven off in fighting that killed and wounded several hundred people.

"Sudan has attacked Chad up to the very gates of N'Djamena. What do you call that if it isn't war," Deby said. "If we're attacked tomorrow, we'll respond. We don't want war, but we'll defend ourselves."

Deby said Sudan's Arab government was trying to export its "fundamentalist system" to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

"Chad is a bridge. If that bridge gives way to Khartoum then the whole of sub-Saharan Africa runs the risk of being destabilised," he said.

"It'll be worse than Ivory Coast or the Balkans," he said referring to other territories split by war.

Sudan denies helping the rebels, whom Chad says use the conflict-torn Sudanese Darfur region as a base. But most observers say Khartoum backs the rebel United Front for Democratic Change.

Chad has presented prisoners and military equipment captured in Thursday's fighting which it says proves Sudan's involvement. A joint United Nations/African Union team would be allowed to inspect them in the coming days, Deby said.

He repeated his call for the international community to guarantee security in Darfur, where fighting between pro-Khartoum Arab militias and non-Arab tribes has killed tens of thousands and displaced around 2 million people since 2003.

"We ask not just for U.N. intervention, but military intervention by the international community," he said.

Darfur rebel JEM briefly occupy Sudan embassy in Chad

(Reuters/ST, AlAyaam, AlRai AlAam – 19th Apr. N'Djamena) A group of Sudanese rebels opposed to the Khartoum government briefly occupied Sudan's embassy in Chad on Tuesday but were ejected by Chadian security forces, the foreign ministry said.

The rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), one of the insurgent groups fighting in Sudan's Darfur region, entered the building after Chad broke its diplomatic relations with Sudan and ordered its diplomats out.

"A group of Sudanese rebels from the JEM occupied the embassy this morning and the security forces evicted them," Chad's Foreign Minister Ahmat Allam-Mi told Reuters.

"Now there is a procedure for expelling them from the country either to Darfur or to Abuja (where Darfur peace talks are being held)," Allam-Mi said. "They have abused our hospitality. It was an unacceptable act."

JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim earlier said he had taken control of the embassy.

"We are speaking from within the embassy of Sudan," he told Reuters in Cairo by telephone. "It's under my full control."

Abdoul Rahman Zuma, a member of Sudanese government delegation in Abuja, said the rebels had attacked the embassy and that they had stolen equipment including mobile phones.

"They assaulted the building and attacked the chargé d'Affaires ... Then the Libyan authorities came to the embassy and took control. They've raised the Libyan flag on the embassy because they are representing Sudanese interests," he said.

Another group, he adds, went to the residence of the Military Attaché and totally destroyed it.

Libya had been trying to defuse tensions between its two southern neighbours. Deby on Tuesday accused Sudan of attacking his country as part of a campaign to export its fundamentalist system to sub-Saharan Africa.

State minister for Sudan's foreign ministry, el-Sammani el-Waseela, said measures are in place to guarantee the safety of the members of the Sudanese diplomatic mission in N'Djamena and their safe return alongside the other members of the Sudanese community in N'Djamena.

Southern Sudan/GoSS

Sudan Radio, TV and SUNA reporters expelled from southern Sudan

(*Alltibat* – 19th Apr. **Juba**) The GoSS has expelled representatives of state-owned Sudan Radio and Television and the Sudan News Agency and have closed their offices in all southern Sudanese states, informed sources report.

The sources say the representatives of these state-owned institutions have faced great difficulties in carrying out their duties in southern Sudan and were told by GoSS officials to go back to Khartoum and that they will be called to southern Sudan “when we [*i.e. the GoSS*] needs them.

Eastern Sudan

New rebel group formed in eastern Sudan

(*AlHayat* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) An armed group in eastern Sudan has announced the birth of its armed movement that goes by the name of *Fursan el-Sharq* (Warriors of the East).

The armed group has threatened to turn the area into another Darfur should the government fail in finding urgent and just solutions to the problems.

The group, in a statement issued recently, did not say who its key leaders are.

Government to seek InterPol assistance on perpetrators of Kassala attack

(*AlRai AlAam* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) Justice minister Mohamed Ali el-Mardi says Sudan may seek InterPol assistance to bring to justice the perpetrators of the recent rebel attack near Kassala in eastern Sudan should the situation warrant such action.

Speaking before the States’ Assembly yesterday, the justice minister says his ministry has issued a certificate of compliance with the Interim Constitution for the constitutions of all northern Sudanese states with the exception of Khartoum and South Kordofan states which are yet to present their drafts for endorsement.

He said a number of other states around the country have not yet presented their draft constitutions to the ministry and attributed this to lack of qualified people in those states.

Talks on eastern Sudan to start in Asmara on 1st May

(*AlAyaam* – 19th Apr. **Khartoum**) SPLM figure Yassir Erman says the talks on eastern Sudan are set to start on the 1st of May this year in Asmara.

The eastern front says however that it will only sit at the negotiations table if international guarantees exist for these talks.

Other Developments

Lord's Resistance Army agrees to dialogue with the Uganda government

(*The Citizen* – 19th Apr. **Juba**) Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit has disclosed that the Lord's Resistance Army has agreed to negotiate with the Uganda government through an SPLM mediation.

Kiir says the SPLM has nominated some of its members to mediate and these have stepped up their activities once they felt the commitment of the Uganda government and the Lord's Resistance Army to a political settlement of the crisis.

Uganda to conduct internal probe on profile of Garang pilots *

(*Daily Monitor/ST, the local press* – 19th Apr. **Kampala**) The Ugandan team, that investigated Sudanese First Vice president helicopter crash will conduct “internal inquiries” into why the flight crew did not act more in line with procedure after it was concluded that the crash was caused by a flight captain’s error.

The Daily Monitor, reported that Ugandan Works, Housing and Communications Minister John Nasasira, during the official release of the overall findings of the joint Uganda-Sudan Commission, told journalists yesterday that while the crash was caused by “a combination of factors” that added up to a pilot’s fault, the Ugandan investigators would conduct what was described as a “psychological autopsy”.

Though the commissioners could not tell the press conference what direction those investigations would take, Nasasira, while responding to a reporter’s question, hinted that the continuing probe may investigate the psychological profiles and behavioural patterns of the flight crew.

It was also not yet clear whether the continuing investigation might differ from the conclusions of the report.

President Yoweri Museveni’s personal pilot, Col. Peter Nyakairu, who was known to be a highly trained and experienced pilot, manned the executive Mi 172 helicopter, in which Garang and 12 others were killed on July 30, 2005.

Now the Ugandan investigators say they are interested in establishing why, among other things, “the flight captain opted to continue visual flight into deteriorating weather conditions and yet he was trained to fly in bad weather using instruments”.

They also intend to uncover why he flew at an altitude of 5,500ft above sea level yet the Zuria mountain ranges, clearly marked on his flight map, are at a higher altitude of over 6,000 ft.

Nyakairu was aided by the co-pilot, Col. Paul Kiyimba; the officer in charge of the helicopter, Lt. John Munanura; and the flight engineer, Maj. Patrick Kiggundu.

All 13 persons on board, including seven Ugandans, perished when the Russian-made VIP Series helicopter, heading to New Site in Southern Sudan, crashed in bad weather in the Zuria Mountains.

The Ugandan team, which was constituted shortly after the crash, comprised ministers John Nasasira, Beatrice Wabudeya, Ruhakana Rugunda, and former army commander James Kazini.

Though a similar team was constituted in Sudan, the two commissions met on August 18 2005, and agreed to have a joint probe into the “probable cause” of the crash.

Nasasira said while Sudan endorsed the technical committee’s report without comment, Uganda agreed to it but made “some comments” on certain issues.

He did not divulge details about those comments. It also emerged that contrary to some reports, the helicopter went down while still in Ugandan air space, about 11 miles away from its intended destination.

The commissioners failed to explain why, after reaching Soroti, the flight crew had not been able to communicate with Flight Control at Entebbe.

Museveni has consistently suggested that since a very experienced pilot was flying a sophisticated helicopter, the hypothesis that the crash was caused by an accident, was flawed.

** Text of the Sudan-Uganda statement on the probe is attached separately in this MMR*

Zambia to import oil from Sudan

(*Xinhua/ST* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan is finalizing plans to facilitate Zambia’s importation of crude oil from the oil- producing country, according to the Times of Zambia newspaper on Monday.

Charge d’Affaires of the Sudanese Embassy in Zambia Abdelhalim Omer Nour was quoted as saying at the weekend that Sudan will soon open doors for Zambia to import its petroleum and is currently working on constituting a committee that will deal with the logistics regarding how Zambia will start to import oil from Sudan.

Nour said that it will be cheaper for Zambia to import oil from Sudan since both countries belong to one regional economic group, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

The trade policies under COMESA will regulate oil transactions to enhance fair conditions for both parties, he said.

He said that trade between the two countries is not very active and there is need for the two sides to enhance their trade relations.

The Sudanese diplomat said there are a lot of products including copper, fresh flowers and cotton among other things that Sudan could import from Zambia.

Sudan detects its first cases of bird flu

(*Xinhua/ST* – 18th Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan has found its first cases of bird flu in poultry in the capital Khartoum and nearby Jazeera state, an official of the Ministry of Animal Resources announced on Tuesday.

"Laboratorial tests have confirmed the existence of bird flu cases in Khartoum and Jazeera," Ahmed Mustafa, undersecretary of the ministry, told reporters.

"Until now the health authorities have culled more than 100,000 chickens at 15 farms in Khartoum," Mustafa said.

He said that his ministry had adopted a series of measures to prevent spread of the deadly pandemic, including ban on import of poultry and its products from the countries infected with bird flu.

Examinations would also be carried out in every farm and family which raises poultry in order to ensure that no sick chickens would appear in the markets, the official added.

Both Khartoum and Jazeera are known for large-scale agricultural and animal farm in the largest African country.