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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

AMIS-UN transition

Statement by Council of Minister

(SMC – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) The Council of Ministers deliberated this morning on the situation in Darfur based on the reports presented by ministers of foreign affairs, the interior and defence.

The report highlighted that there were plans launched a couple of years earlier for an escalation of the situation in order to justify international intervention aimed at monopolizing the political and natural resources in Darfur region.

On the other hand the council has discussed the situation of AU mission and efforts exerted by the government to support the mission and facilitate its function. The council also has evaluated the other efforts on diplomatic and political aspects to contain crisis in Darfur. These efforts have ultimately resulted in signing ceasefire. As well the government has agreed that AU forces should monitor the agreement. However the Darfur movements have not honored the agreement intentionally to set atmosphere for foreign intervention.

The council has realized that AU is facing pressures to give up mission in Darfur. As consequence the council of ministers has decided the following.

- (1) Continuing intense efforts to realize political solution to conflict in Darfur acceptable for all parties.
- (2) Continuing diplomatic efforts in collaboration with friendly and sisterly countries and all regional and international forces to contain the situation and consolidate AU efforts.
- (3) Opposing foreign intervention and keeping Darfur dossier keeping the AU mission in charge.
- (4) The council however reiterated confidence on AU ability to continue its mission to keep security and stability in Darfur.
- (5) The council stresses the importance of unity of the internal front and working to make facts accessible to public regarding the situation in Darfur particularly the bad foreign intention against Sudan.
- (6) Confirming ability of the government of national unity to resolve the crisis in Darfur and the ability to protect the country.

Darfur will be foreign troops' graveyard - Bashir

(AFP/ST – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir warned Darfur would become a "graveyard" for any foreign military contingent entering the region against Khartoum's will, newspapers reported Sunday.

"We are strongly opposed to any foreign intervention in Sudan and Darfur will be a graveyard for any foreign troops venturing to enter," he was quoted as saying Saturday.

His comments came amid stepped-up efforts by the international community to send UN peacekeeping forces to war-torn Darfur in place of African Union troops, which have failed to quell the three-year-old bloodshed.

Bashir, who regularly accuses the United States and its allies of fomenting a conspiracy to plunder his country's resources, again accused the West of seeking to use the western region of Darfur as a launch pad to spread its interests in Sudan.

The United States, which currently chairs the UN Security Council, saw its hopes of clinching a resolution for a UN mandate in Darfur by the end of the month dashed but vowed to continue its efforts.

The transition is expected to be discussed during an AU Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa on March 3.

Bashir was also dismissive of the AU, which has hinted it would not oppose its own replacement by a UN contingent.

"The African Union forces can leave the country if they believe that they have failed to carry out their duties," Bashir said.

Bashir even found support for his resistance to a Western deployment among members of the opposition.

"We firmly reject any foreign intervention, particularly by the Americans, in Sudan," Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, a communist MP, said Sunday at a Parliament meeting.

AbdulWahid faction of the SLM supports foreign intervention in Darfur

(*AlRai AlAam* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) The AbdulWahid faction of the SLM has expressed support for the transition from the AMIS to a UN operation and has blamed the government of responsibility to the plight in the region.

AbdulWahid told *AlAyaam* that the faction he leads has formally told the AU of their support for a transition. He says the government is responsible for the deterioration of the security situation in the region for its refusal to disarm the *Janjaweed* and its continued attacks on civilians.

Highlighting the controversy in the government position to the issue of foreign troops in Darfur, AbdulWahid pointed out that there are foreign troops on the ground in southern Sudan, the Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains regions and why the fuss then about these forces being in Darfur.

"Why would the government accept their presence in some areas and reject it in others?" he wondered.

Sudan government requests postponement of AU Peace and Security Council meeting

(*AlRai AlAam* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) Informed sources report that the AU Peace and Security Council meeting due to take place in Addis Ababa next Friday may be postponed for a period not more than one week.

The postponement of the meeting which was supposed to discuss a possible AMIS-UN transition comes to allow for more consultations between member-states, sources add.

The same sources reveal that the AU Peace and Security Council is divided over the transition with some seeing the need for more funds to allow the AU to remain until the end of this year while others see a pullout as soon as possible as a result of the financial problems the organisation is facing.

Foreign minister Akol on a tour of African states

(*AlAyaam* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) Foreign minister Lam Akol will embark on a tour of African states ahead of the forthcoming meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council.

The tour is expected to highlight Sudan government's views that the AU remain in Darfur.

The tour takes the foreign minister to Senegal, Nigeria and Congo-Brazzaville where he will be consulting with officials over alternate options on the AMIS-UN transition issue.

Sudan is not under attack from the international community, says Presidential aide

(*AlSahafa* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum, Agencies**) Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail has renewed government rejection to foreign military intervention in Darfur.

He pointed out however that this does not mean that the Sudan is in a confrontation with the international community.

Says he, “talks still continue to find a solution to this problem” and expressed hopes that an appropriate solution will be reached in the next three months.

Speaking at a press conference in Beirut, Dr. Mustafa blamed continued foreign intervention in Darfur for “turning a socio-political problem into a security problem where foreign elements got involved and created out of the rebel movements a tool for intervention”.

South Darfur rejects foreign intervention in Darfur

(*AlRai AlAam* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) The citizens of South Darfur have categorically rejected foreign military intervention in Darfur.

In a statement handed to SRSG Jan Pronk, the people of South Darfur expressed their support for an AU role in the Darfur region.

On his part, the acting governor of South Darfur said that the people reject the idea of foreign intervention in Darfur and will work together to resolve their problems through tribal reconciliations.

Agreement reached between DAGSH and JEM to fight international forces

(*SMC* – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) *Duwas Kuwat el-Shar* (subduers of the forces of evil), a group formed recently following reports of a possible international intervention in Darfur, has announced a merger with the JEM..

In a statement sent through e-mail, this group says it has signed a deal with extremist groups within the JEM to fight off international the international forces which the US is a lead advocate for their deployment to Darfur.

The movement said that it would campaign among armed factions in Darfur to confront these forces in order to preserve local culture and tradition from western influence that such forces may impose on the region.

The group says they will oppose such an intervention even if the government gives these foreign forces the go-ahead.

CPA

Presidency vows to remove obstacles facing the Joint Defence Council

(AlRai AlAam – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) The Presidency of the Republic has vowed to eliminate the obstacles before the work of the Joint Defence Council.

The Presidency was briefed yesterday by Army Chief of Staff Abas Arabi who doubles up as the head of the Joint Defence Council and his deputy.

Arabi said that the Joint Defence Council has so far held two meetings to draft the rules for the work of the JIUs among other things.

Oyai Deng, the vice-chairman of the Joint Defence Council, said that work is going on smoothly between the partners but pointed out that the political and security aspects of the implementation of the CPA are going on well but there are some problems here and there. He said they highlighted these problems to the Presidency and the Presidency has resolved to assist in clearing out those obstacles.

Khartoum State legislature to meet on Wednesday

(AlAyaam – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) The Khartoum State Legislative Assembly is set to get into a heated debate as it convenes next Wednesday to discuss the drafting of a constitution for Khartoum State, among other things.

Reports say that Tilara Deng, the Minister at the Presidency of the Republic, was expected to have held talks yesterday with the Governor of Khartoum to iron out the differences on the committees.

GoNU

Sudan hands UN Darfur suspects list

(ST – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) Sudan on Sunday handed a UN envoy a list of security officials who have been tried over the Darfur conflict, as Khartoum works to convince the world it is equipped to handle such cases at home.

The UN official in charge of human rights in the Sudan, Sima Samar, was given the list by the head of the governmental Human Rights Advisory Council (HRAC) Abdelmonim Osman Taha, state media said.

The UN official "was on Sunday given by HRAC chairman the list of individuals of the regular services who have been tried for perpetrating crimes connected with the Darfur conflict," SUNA news agency reported.

There were no details on who the individuals were or what had been the nature of their trials.

Samer was also briefed on "positive" steps taken in the field of countering violence against women, including setting up a unit for fighting violence against women within the ministry of justice, SUNA said.

SUNA said Taha urged Samer to include "the positive steps she has seen" in the report she is to submit to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva next month.

SPLM rejects Criminal Procedures Act

(*AlAyaam* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) Ministers on the SPLM ticket have rejected the proposed amendments to the Criminal Procedures' Act of 1991 and have tabled alternatives before the Council of Ministers.

The amendments they propose rule out immunity for the police forces and bar them from the use of firearms against any suspect to a crime.

The amendments presented by the SPLM also underline the need for commitment by the Government of National Unity to the directives of the CPA and to encourage the transition to democracy. They point out that granting immunity to the police forces sends a wrong signal to the people of Sudan and the international community at large.

The drafts presented by the SPLM for discussion also call for a detailed description of the role of the police in the country and points out that the country currently lacks a conventional police force as is known in international circles.

The 6-page paper further pointed out that the police force as it is today constitutes a threat to civilians because it sometimes infringes on individual freedom of the citizen under the guise of combating social crimes.

The ministers further point out that they have very strong grounds for rejecting the draft amendments on the grounds that it violates the CPA and the National Interim Constitution of 2005.

Darfur/ Abuja talks

AbdulWahid calls for the Vice-presidency

(*AlAyaam* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) AbdulWahid Mohamed Nour says the SLM faction he leads will repeat its demands for the Vice-presidency of the Republic.

Speaking to *AlAyaam*, the SLM leader said that the SLM delegation will demand for a confederal system of government should the government refuse to grant them the Vice-presidency.

He also wants the government to recognise the 1956 boundaries of the Darfur region. These, he adds, are the inalienable demands of the people of Darfur.

He said the party to the Abuja talks are waiting for the AU to make known its final views on the issues of power, wealth and security arrangements.

Sudan-ICC

UN Panel of Experts in talks with government officials

(*Al-Sahafa* – 27th Feb. **Khartoum**) A UN Panel of Experts has secretly started talks with government officials in which they have requested to be allowed to speak to some officials they believe are listed in the list of suspects of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

State officials who *AlSahafa* interviewed on the issue have shown much reserve over what the mandate of the Panel of Experts covers. They only pointed out that the panel operates under a Security Council resolution.

Some officials claim that the ICC does not consider the efforts of the government of Sudan to contain the situation in Darfur.

ICC delegation to visit Sudan's Darfur

(*ST* – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) An ICC delegation will be visiting Sudan next week to assess the situation in lawless Darfur and investigate whether crimes against civilians may have been committed.

Till now, the ICC investigations, on killings, mass rapes and other atrocities in western Sudan, are conducted outside Sudan. The witnesses are interviewed abroad.

An ICC delegation paid an informal visit to Sudan's troubled Darfur region last year.

But Sudan's Justice Minister Mohamed al-Mardi told Reuters in an interview on 13 December 2005 that Moreno Ocampo's investigators would not have any access to Darfur, where ethnic cleansing has resulted in killings, rape and the uprooting of 2 million refugees.

"The ICC officials have no jurisdiction inside the Sudan or with regards to Sudanese citizens," he said in Khartoum. "They cannot investigate anything on Darfur."

Moreno Ocampo also told the council that the International Criminal Court and the African Union, which has troops in Darfur, had drawn up a cooperation agreement in May, which still was not signed. He refused to say why.

South:

Establishing US Base in South First Step of Oil Monopoly/ SSDF

(*SMC* – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) The South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) has warned that the GoSS must not allow the US to establish a military base in the region.

SSDF spokesman Mohamed Shol Al Ahmar argues that establishing a US base was the first step to monopolize oil fields in the south.

He pointed out that if the government of the south provides the base then that would be a great violation to peace agreement because, he said, the CPA doesn't include a provision to allowing any party to give military bases to foreign countries.

Human rights

HRR Meets Consultancy Council

(*SMC* – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) Human Rights Rapporteur (HRR) for Sudan Sima Samar has defended its previous report for it has contained some criticism because the information presented by officials was not enough during October last year.

Samar in her first press lease said her mission was limited to Khartoum and Juba and should not include Darfur.

Human Right Consultancy Council in Sudan (HRCC) Dr. Abdel Monim Osman said they have briefed the UN rapporteur on the latest development on human rights. Osman cited visit's of human right monitors to prisons in the country.

Osman says they briefed the rapporteur on trails in Darfur which have stated since February besides reconciliation agreement concluded in the area. He said the rapporteur will be briefed tomorrow by minister of justice on the new laws endorsed by parliament and the situation of Sudan from some international treaties.

Leaked names highlight Sudan's failure to protect - HRW

(*HRW/ST* – 26th Feb. **New York**) The names of high-level Sudanese officials identified for their involvement in gross human rights abuses on a leaked U.N. sanctions list underscore Sudan's manifest failure to protect civilians in Darfur, Human Rights Watch said today.

On Monday, the Security Council is scheduled to consider the report of its Panel of Experts on Darfur, including the report's confidential annex, which was leaked to the press in mid-February.

The report itself was made public on January 30. But, when the Panel submitted the report to the Sudan Sanctions Committee of the Security Council on December 9, it kept confidential the annex listing names of specific individuals recommended for U.N. travel bans and asset freezes on account of human rights and other violations of Security Council resolutions.

“The names on the U.N. sanctions list underscore how top Sudanese officials have been responsible for ongoing atrocities in Darfur,” said Peter Takirambudde, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “Since Khartoum will do nothing to protect them, civilians in Darfur urgently need a U.N. force with a strong mandate and the capacity for protection.”

Among the names listed in the confidential annex are Sudanese Defense Minister Major General Abdel Rahim Mohammed Hussein, and National Security Director Salah Abdalla (known as “Gosh”).

In a report released in December, Human Rights Watch outlined why the International Criminal Court should investigate both of these officials and others for their role in coordinating the atrocities in Darfur.

In addition, the annex listed several Sudanese military and police commanders, two Janjaweed militia leaders and five rebel commanders.

“The Security Council needs to impose sanctions on those responsible for human rights crimes in Darfur, and the international community should ensure that they are brought to justice,” Takirambudde said.

The Panel of Experts designated a total of 17 individuals for sanctions and five others to be considered for possible future designation.

Among the five listed for future action are two top commanders of the rebel Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) who may be considered for sanctions if their ongoing leadership struggles impede the peace process. They were also cited for various human rights abuses, including using child soldiers and summary executions of captured combatants.

The Panel of Experts noted multiple violations in each of the three factual areas it was asked to examine: the movement of arms into Darfur and offensive military overflights, impeding the peace process, and violating international humanitarian or human rights law.

Discussions at the Security Council on follow-up to the Panel’s recommendations for sanctions are apparently stagnating, however. Instead, negotiations at the Council have been focused on the mandate and timing of the new U.N. force to replace the African Union (A.U.) mission in Darfur, which has been responsible for both ceasefire monitoring and civilian protection.

The Sudanese government is faced with Security Council action on two fronts, U.N. peacekeeping forces as well as sanctions. It has publicly rejected proposals for a transition in Darfur from the 7,000 A.U. military monitors to U.N. peacekeepers. Sudanese authorities also disputed the findings of the Panel of Experts on Darfur in a rebuttal of more than 100 pages.

While action on sanctions has been delayed since December, discussions of a transition from the A.U. mission to a U.N. peacekeeping force surfaced in February. The A.U. is expected to give its official approval to a transition to a U.N. peacekeeping mission in March, paving the way for Security Council action.

The Sudanese government cannot fend off both moves, U.N. observers predict, and is likely to acquiesce to a U.N. mission. Greater personal stigma would come from the Security Council’s naming of individuals, however.

“Sudan’s allies on the Council need to encourage Khartoum to accept the inevitable transition to a robust U.N. peacekeeping force in Darfur,” Takirambudde said. “The Sudanese government’s protest that it does not want any non-African troops in Darfur is preposterous. The U.N. has already deployed thousands of Asian troops in southern Sudan, with no protest from Khartoum.”

Along with China and Russia, Qatar is currently one of Sudan’s strongest allies on the Security Council. Diplomatic sources told Human Rights Watch that Qatar’s representatives on the Security Council and its sanctions committee have repeatedly stalled progress in implementing targeted sanctions since the country took its seat in January. Qatar and others may engage in actions aimed at delaying the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force in Darfur.

The under-resourced African Union Mission in Sudan has faced substantial obstacles from Sudanese government officials, who most recently imposed a curfew on night time patrols and have prevented A.U. forces from entering a Darfur airport to monitor illegal arms flows.

According to the Panel's public report, the Sudanese government defied the explicit arms embargo provisions of resolution 1591. The Panel found that the government officials shipped arms, trucks, attack helicopters, and other military materiel into Darfur without seeking permission from the Sanctions Committee. Khartoum also used attack helicopters in support of offensive ground operations, which the Security Council resolution forbids.

The Panel's report also named the Darfur rebel movements, particularly the SLA, for violating the arms embargo and attacking civilians, including killing captured government combatants, who have protection under international law. The report detailed the summary execution of 20 captured government soldiers during the fighting in and around Sheiria, South Darfur, on September 19-22. The SLA commander considered responsible is named in the annex to the report, as are four other rebel commanders in different parts of Darfur.

Since December, Human Rights Watch researchers have documented escalating cross-border attacks by Sudanese and Chadian militiamen operating with Sudanese government support. The U.N. Panel noted that the borders between Sudan, Libya, and Chad are "very porous" and recommended strengthening the arms embargo by extending it to the entire territory of Sudan.

"The Security Council must not be passive in the face of growing regional instability," said Takirambudde. "If the Security Council does not want to be seen as a toothless institution, it must mandate a robust peacekeeping operation in Darfur."

Other developments

Archbishop of Canterbury visits Sudan, preaches tolerance

(*Reuters/ST* – 26th Feb. **Khartoum**) Rowan Williams, the spiritual leader of more than 70 million Anglicans worldwide, appealed for religious tolerance on Sunday after arriving in Sudan where a peace deal last year ended two decades of civil war.

"So many of these conflicts are about who is to be king," the Archbishop of Canterbury told a crowd of more than a thousand Sudanese Christians in Khartoum, where Islamic sharia law is in force.

"Together as groups, as tribes ... as religions, we know that God alone is king and we can therefore be at peace with each other," he said.

Williams will spend a week in Sudan to preach a message of coexistence after the 2005 peace deal that ended civil war in the country's south. He will travel to southern Sudan to open a Cathedral and visit United Nations feeding programmes.

Religious differences and the imposition of sharia law in 1983 were key issues in the north-south civil war — Africa's longest — which claimed more than 2 million lives, mostly from famine and disease.

But the peace deal saw the Islamist ruling party form a coalition government with its former foes, the mostly Christian and animist southern rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

While sharia law is still in effect, non-Muslims say they notice a more open attitude towards them in the national capital. However, a commission to protect the rights of non-Muslims in Khartoum, as written into the peace deal, has yet to be formed.

The south has also complained that it has yet to receive the full share of half of Sudan's oil revenues, saying there is no transparency in the oil ministry. The minister says production is around 330,000 barrels per day, but southerners feel it could be as high as 450,000 or half a million bpd.

"I shall want to know more about how you will come to have a full share in the good things of this country," Williams told the whooping Christians in his first public address.

After visiting one of the slum camps surrounding Khartoum, where millions of southerners fled during the war, he said he also wanted to work to ensure that when they decided to return home, there was food, water and roads for them to enjoy.

The archbishop's followers were ecstatic to meet him. A choir sang welcome Rowan Williams to African beats and young men put on a play about Christianity, a rare sight after the government restricted theatre during the 1990s.

"Now with peace we are much more accepted in society," said 19-year-old Christian Cecelia Samuel. "Things used to be different and we were repressed, but now we have our people in government and things are so much better."