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UNMIS

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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

UN

Achouri describes LRA as a serious regional threat

(*AlAyaam* – 25th Jan. **Khartoum**) UNMIS Spokesperson Radhia Achouri says the LRA has turned into a major threat to the region and not only to southern Sudan.

Speaking to *AlAyaam*, Ms. Achouri said tha the LRA has engaged the peacekeeping forces in the DRC in direct confrontation near the borders with the Sudan. She also revealed that SRSJ Jan Pronk and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator Jan Egeland have requested the Security Council to expand the scope of cooperation between UNMIS and MONUC (the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC) and the other parties through an integrated strategy in order to put a final end to the LRA menace.

“Unfortunately, the Security Council has not yet responded and we are still waiting for its response,” she laments.

UN: CPA implementation worrying

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 25th Jan. **Khartoum**) The chief political affairs officer at the UNMIS, Jack Christofides, said in a workshop yesterday organised by the Sudan Catholic Bishops’ Conference that he was worried about some mistakes he sees being made in the implementation of the CPA. He cited the fact that the Abyei Boundary Commission is yet to be implemented and the Ceasefire Political Commission is yet to be formed as examples and pointed out that this means people have to be vigilant. He further pointed out that the problems of Darfur are yet to be resolved and do affect the implementation of the CPA and expressed hopes that the CPA be used as a guide for the Abuja talks and a model for the talks on the east. He pointed out that the international community spends about 1 billion dollars a day for Sudan.

He further pointed out that the anniversary of the signing of the CPA was not celebrated in Khartoum and that the president of the GoNU did not attend the celebrations organised in Juba by the GoSS.

He remarked that if the UN is invited to replace the AU in Darfur then they will not be keeping but imposing peace which he described as extremely difficult for the UN. A continued deterioration of the situation in Darfur will only make the people there the losers, he added.

He further pointed out that the Security Council sent the UN mission to Sudan to make unity attractive and added that the UN will be disappointed should the south chose secession after five years. He said however that they will not abandon southern Sudan.

On the LRA, the political officer said that they have a mandate to deal with this rebel movement.

AU Summit:

New AU chairman to hold news conference

(SUNA/BBC Monitoring – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) The president of the Republic of Congo, Denis Sassou-Nguessou, will hold a news conference this evening at 0500 [1400gmt] at the Friendship Hall, on his country being the choice for AU chairman in 2006.

Sudan's ready to work with new AU chairman to end Darfur conflict - Al-Bashir

(Sudan TV/BBC Monitoring – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) President Bashir commended the new Chairman of the AU on the assumption of the chair and declared full commitment to cooperate be it in the AU efforts to help resolve Sudan's internal problems in Darfur and other places or in helping resolve the disputes with Chad and Eritrea.

Sudan respects African consensus on AU presidency, says minister

(SUNA – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) The minister of cabinet affairs, Deng Alor, has said Sudan respects the African consensus. He said Sudan withdrew its nomination for the AU chairmanship as it felt that the African consensus was in favour of the other side.

In an interview with SUNA, he said Sudan was keen to assume the chairmanship of the sixth AU summit only that it lost its chance because of the AU stance regarding the Darfur problem.

He affirmed that Sudan was totally satisfied with this decision and all the other decisions of the summit in view of the fact that the AU reached a consensus that Sudan should step down.

He denied that Sudan stepped down because it was promised the AU presidency in 2007. He said Sudan respected the African consensus and wanted to avoid any controversy.

He said such an African stance was a clear message to Sudan to continue working towards resolving the Darfur problem, adding that the opportunity was still there for Sudan to chair the AU next year.

The minister said that the president of Congo won the chairmanship of the AU because he was supported by the majority of ECOWAS countries [Economic Community of West African States], southern Africa and some North African countries.

Sudan loses bid to lead African Union

(AP/ST – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) In a compromise that tested their commitment to human rights, African leaders persuaded Sudan to withdraw its bid to lead the 53-nation African Union and chose the Republic of Congo, whose leader has a less egregious record of abuses.

"It is a winner. Sudan is not losing," Ibrahim said afterward.

Delegates said African leaders congratulated themselves on the compromise, reached after 1 1/2 days of often-heated discussion, saying it preserved their unity and the credibility of an organization formed four years ago to promote human rights, development and democracy. It replaced the discredited Organization of African Union, which was seen as a club of tyrants.

Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso was installed as chairman and promised to make a priority "to restore peace, security and stability on the continent."

Most important was Sudan's Western Darfur province, he said. The United States has accused Sudan of genocide there in what the United Nations calls the world's worst ongoing humanitarian crisis. Some 180,000 people have been killed and 2 million forced from their homes in three years.

The conflict has spilled over into neighboring Chad, which along with Uganda and Eritrea accuses Khartoum of arming and supporting rebels fighting their governments. Sudan denies those charges.

It characterized the controversy over the chairmanship as a fight for influence fueled by the United States. Interior Minister Zubair Bashir Taha on Tuesday "denounced the continued plotting that is being woven against the Sudan."

Sudan's Justice Minister Mohamed Ali al Mardhi said both "Americans and the Europeans" put pressure on poorer African countries.

Sassou-Nguesso, asked about his own human rights record, said his country is now at peace, has had democratic elections, and has no political prisoners. A coup leader like el-Bashir, he ruled Congo from 1979 to 1992, then ousted a democratically elected leader in 1997, sparking civil war.

In Brazzaville, the Congolese capital that remains in ruins, many hailed his new role as acknowledgment the country was advancing beyond its violent recent past. Then, human rights groups accused Sassou-Nguesso's security forces of summary executions, disappearances, rapes and arbitrary arrests.

Political opponents said he was hardly a role model: "It's a shame to designate President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who isn't a brilliant example," said opposition leader Herve Ambroise Malonga.

Human rights groups, meanwhile, hailed the decision not to give Sudan the chairmanship this year, but questioned why it would be all right to do so in 2007.

Delegates said the 2007 chairmanship was granted to Sudan without conditions.

But Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaore, also a coup leader, indicated some reservations linger.

"We hope that between now and next year we will be able to help him assume his responsibilities in the resolution of crises, which will allow Sudan to take up the chairmanship," said Compaore, also a coup leader.

AU failure: Congo's Sassou is no better than Sudan's al-Bashir

(Reuters – 24th Jan. **Johannesburg**) By rejecting Sudan's bid to head the African Union, African presidents on Tuesday appeared to signal it was no longer business as usual for their peers tainted by poor human rights records.

But the choice of unstable Congo Republic and its President Denis Sassou Nguesso, a former coupmaker and warlord, to lead the 53-nation group baffled many analysts.

Faced with bitter internal conflict in Darfur and accusations of human rights abuse, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir bowed to pressure from civic groups and some African leaders to withdraw his candidature for the AU chair.

The seat went to Sassou, who becomes the spokesman for the world's poorest continent as it tries to charm rich Western nations and win foreign investment, aid and a fairer trade deal.

Many were shocked by the decision to hand the chair to Congo Republic, a country they said had no real track record of democracy since independence from France in 1960. Its president had little clout with influential African leaders such as outgoing AU chairman Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, they said.

"They are not an ideal candidate and the reasons you deny Sudan the chair apply also to Brazzaville," said Siphamandla Zondi, Africa director at the Institute for Global Dialogue, a Johannesburg think-tank.

"That's a surprise choice. Congo Republic doesn't have the requisite authority to chair the AU, to lead in resolving Africa's problems," Zondi said.

"Hey, hey, that is a new one. I hadn't thought of them," said Willie Breytenbach, professor of political science at South Africa's University of Stellenbosch.

Analysts argued that it was important to send a strong message to Sudan that unless it resolved its internal conflicts, improved its human rights record and promoted greater political freedom, it would not be Africa's face on the global stage.

Sassou's own democratic credentials are in doubt. He first became president of Congo Republic in 1979 after a military coup. He lost multiparty elections in 1992 but fought his way back to power after a brief civil war in 1997 in which Angolan troops and tanks helped his Cobra militia to victory.

Sassou legitimised his rule in a 2002 presidential poll he was guaranteed to win after his main challenger withdrew, citing an unfair electoral environment.

Analysts doubted that Sassou would be prepared to devote his time and Congo Republic's oil resources to a campaign to end the continent's many conflicts as Obasanjo had done.

Some analysts argued that the AU chair should give strategic direction to the organisation and push the continent's agenda on the global stage. Sassou lacked the stature and credibility to perform either role.

The choice of Congo also suggested that the AU's consensus decision-making made it difficult to reach ideal agreements on key issues. Analysts said the AU must urgently work out guidelines for selecting its future chairs.

But others said the burden of leading Africa could force Congo Republic to reflect on internal democratic reform, better protection of human rights, and the need to work for peace.

"Congo Republic has moved from civil war and is trying to stabilise. It is a much better choice than a country that has not been seen as the best example in democracy and human rights like Sudan," said Eddy Maloka, executive director of Pretoria-based Africa Institute of South Africa.

"If we were very strict on the issues of democratic governance, rule of law and human rights, we wouldn't find a candidate to chair the AU," Maloka told Reuters.

But Ugandan political analyst Andrew Mwenda said the poor record of current AU members on human rights and good governance showed little had changed from 1975, when the then Organisation of African Unity elected Uganda's dictator Idi Amin as chairman.

"The only issue AU leaders may have now with Sudan is that it has been getting some adverse publicity in the Western media over its killings in Darfur, but Congo is no better," Mwenda told Reuters. "The AU is still largely a collection of corrupt and incompetent governments."

Abuja talks

Rebel JEM says ready for talks after failure of Sudan's bid to chair AU

(Reuters – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) A main Darfur rebel group said on Tuesday it would continue peace talks with Sudan after Khartoum failed in its bid to become head of the African Union this year, but had reservations about its appointment for 2007.

"Of course we will continue on peace talks. We expect the problem of Darfur to be solved next year," Khalil Ibrahim of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) told Reuters.

A Sudanese government official told Reuters that the Sudan Liberation Army, the other main Darfur rebel group, was continuing talks in Abuja. The group could not immediately be reached for comment.

Critics said Sudan should not get the chair while it was under fire for rights abuses in its western region of Darfur, where 7,000 AU peacekeepers are trying to uphold a tentative ceasefire between the government and rebels.

Ibrahim said JEM would not accept Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir as AU chairman until a solution was found in Darfur.

"If the problem is still there we will not accept. We will never accept presidency of Sudan unless the problem is solved," he said.

Darfur

Sudan accuses rebels of killing 23 police, one civilian in North Darfur

(ST – 24th Jan. **el-Fasher**) The governor of North Darfur state said Sudan Liberation Army rebels attacked a government convoy and killed 23 policemen and one civilian, the official Sudanese news agency reported Tuesday.

It quoted Osman Mohamed Youcif Kibir, Northern Darfur State governor, of accusing the rebels of attacking in disregard of African Union-sponsored peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria.

SUNA said the attack occurred Monday as the convoy was moving from El-Fasher to Kebkabiya on official patrol duties.

While receiving the bodies of the victims and the injured at Al-Fashir airport this morning, Kibir said the armed rebels targeted this convoy because it was transporting provisions and special equipment for the police force working at Kabkabiya to protect the lives of citizens.

"We in the government are committed to all conventions and agreements and accords reached but we will not turn a blind eye or keep silent to any aggression," the agency said, quoting a statement by the El-Fasher government.

It threatened to respond "without mercy and ruthlessly" against those who violated agreements concluded. It did not elaborate, nor did it say whether the attacking rebel troops sustained any losses.

Earlier this month, a U.N.-appointed panel accused the Sudanese government and rebels of blocking peace in Darfur, and recommended that the Security Council impose sanctions on key figures from all groups.

The panel's final report also accused all parties to the conflict of committing widespread human rights violations, including torture. It said the government, the rebel Sudan Liberation Army and militia groups "have shown least regard for the welfare of civilians."

The U.N. panel accused all parties, especially the Sudanese government and the Sudan Liberation Army, of "consistent, willful and systematic violation" of an April 2004 cease-fire.

The government has also "abjectly failed to fulfill its commitments to identify, neutralize and disarm militia groups outside the formal state security forces under its influence, as demanded by the U.N. Security Council," it said.

Sudan capable of ending Darfur conflict, says minister

(*SUNA/BBC Monitoring* – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) Khartoum, 24 January: The minister of information and communication and government spokesman, Al-Zahawi Ibrahim Malik, has said Sudan is capable and confident of bringing about peace in Darfur.

Speaking to SUNA, he said Sudan was able, through its own efforts and cooperation from its brothers, to end the war in the south which had raged on for more than two decades. He said the experience gained as a result puts Sudan in good stead to resolve other crises, such as the problem in Darfur.

Al-Zahawi referred to the efforts the government was making under the auspices of the AU to find a peaceful settlement to the Darfur crisis and bring about stability and development in the region.

Israeli role in Darfur

(*Agencies* – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) Prominent leader of Sudanese liberation movement (SLM) Abdal Wahid Mohammed Nour's wing accused Chad by involving in unifying the factions of Manni Arkowi and Khalil Ibrahim in one movement under the name of the Revolutionary Forces for West Sudan, Dr Siddig Al Toam a member of SLM command Authority, said that his movement rejects such coalition, which he described it as a racist one, pointing out that such coalition targets eruption of tribal conflict in Darfur, he said in special statement to the Sudanese Media center that the previous manager of the Israeli foreign Ministry, the deputy

chief of the Israeli Intelligence David Kimsha who currently assumes the post of the Israeli Charge d'Affaires to Chad, has played a key role in unifying the rebels factions through senior Chadian diplomat.

According to SMC sources the Israeli diplomat pledged to provide all aspects of support to the Darfur rebels factions.

The sources stressed that in the wake of signing the coordination agreement between the rebels factions, the Chadian government offered license to the Israeli Ambassador to N'djamena for establishing the Israeli Mollo Com for Mobile, the matter that led to exclusion of the Egyptian liberties Company, chaired by The Arab millionaire Mohammed Al Fayid.

As insecurity increases, refugees continue to flee Darfur to Chad

(*ST* – 24th Jan. Geneva) Nearly 800 Sudanese refugees have arrived in eastern Chad since January 1, fleeing continuing insecurity in the neighbouring West Darfur region of Sudan.

According to the UNHCR, the new arrivals are now receiving help in Gaga camp, east of Abeche, the main town in eastern Chad. Some of the refugees come from several villages straddling the Chad — Sudan border, while others have fled camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) in West Darfur.

These IDP camps include Mornei, Masteri and Ardamata. Small groups of 10 to 20 refugees continue to arrive in Gaga camp daily, and say more people are ready to leave Darfur in the coming days because of the insecurity.

The newly arrived Sudanese refugees all cite the current deterioration of security in Darfur — including attacks by the janjaweed and a recent rise of tensions between Chad and Sudan — as the main reasons for fleeing. Security has worsened in West Darfur in recent months, resulting in a reduction in the number of aid workers operating in the area.

The refugees, many of whom arrive with very few belongings, receive tents, food, blankets, cooking kits, mats and other items. Refugees also undergo a medical screening, especially the children.

Many of the new arrivals say they travelled at night, riding donkeys. Others travelled by truck from El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, to villages near Gaga camp at a cost of US\$30 to \$40 per person. Others walked for days to reach the camp.

Gaga is the newest of 12 UNHCR camps in eastern Chad and currently has about 6,600 refugees. In all, there are more than 200,000 refugees from Darfur in camps in eastern Chad.

UNHCR has temporarily reduced its staff presence in two of our five regional offices in eastern Chad (Guereda and Iriba) as a precautionary measure following an attack by a group of unidentified armed men on the town of Guereda on Friday 20 January, and the abduction of five government officials.

Sudan-Chad relations

Chad welcomes Libyan initiative over row with Sudan

(*ST* – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) The Chadian Foreign Minister, Ahmat Allam-Mi , has declared his country's welcome of the Libyan mediation to settle the Sudan-Chad tension, according to the Sudan News Agency.

The Chadian minister, on the sidelines of a AU summit here said that he expected Libya to play a positive role for the solution of the tension in the relations between Sudan and Chad, especially that Libya is politically and geographically near to both Sudan and Chad.

On Thursday 19 January 2006, the Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi proposed, the deployment along the volatile Sudan Chad borders of three thousand soldiers from the current African Union force in Darfur to close these borders in the face of the rebels from both sides.

Chad accused Sudan of sheltering and backing Chadian rebels who last month attacked a town on its eastern border with Sudan. Their relationship has since deteriorated after Chad declared a "state of belligerence" with Khartoum.

The dispute has cast a shadow over Sudan's hosting of the AU summit, which Chad says should be held elsewhere.

Sudan last week called on Chad to agree to a Libyan proposal to set up joint patrols in border regions as a way to resolve the ongoing border disputes.

Sudan-US relations

Sudan blames US for African Union chairmanship loss

(*ST/AP* – 24th Jan. **Khartoum**) Interior Minister Zubair Bashir Taha has told the official Sudan News Agency that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer "came with specific plans and on the margin of the summit she conducted consultation ..."

Frazer could not be reached for comment after the summit ended late Tuesday night. But State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in Washington: "We believe that the decision that the A.U. leadership arrived at is positive."

The U.S. administration had opposed the Sudanese candidacy because the A.U. has a mission in the country with a mandate in part to protect people in Darfur and stabilize the region.

Taha said Sudan "denounced the continued plotting that is being woven against the Sudan so as to impede it from bringing to light its huge potentials."

The U.S. accuses Sudan's government of backing militia fighters who have committed acts of genocide in Darfur, where 180,000 people have been killed in three years. Washington has kept the East African nation on a list of countries accused of sponsoring state terrorism.

Sudan's justice minister, Mohamed Ali al Mardhi, also criticized Washington Tuesday, saying "Americans and the Europeans" put pressure on African countries with weaker economies.

Other developments

Armed Sudanese herders invade Ugandan park

(*ST* – 20th Jan. **Kampala**) Two thousand heavily armed Sudanese tribesmen have driven 65,000 heads of livestock across the border into a wildlife reserve in Uganda in search of water and pasture for their herds, in a bid to survive the searing drought gripping east Africa, Ugandan officials said Friday.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) said the Toposa herders from southern Sudan had begun arriving in the northeastern Kidepo Valley National Park with their cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys several weeks ago. They were refusing to leave, raising deep concerns about protected animals in the sanctuary, notably cheetahs.

"Their weapons are superior and more modern than those of our game wardens," UWA spokeswoman Lillian Nsubuga said "We are greatly concerned about our park."

She said wardens estimated that the Toposa had occupied more than 15 square kilometers (six square miles) of the park, where they were grazing 40,000 cows, 10,000 goats, 10,000 sheep and 5,000 donkeys. They were staying put despite an apparent agreement to leave.

"We are in a dilemma. They agreed to leave but they are not moving," Nsubuga said. She said there were fears the livestock would not only degrade the wildlife habitat in the park but could also expose non-domesticated fauna to dangerous diseases.

UWA officials declined to disclose the number of wardens in the park but said they would definitely be outnumbered by the Toposa contingent, now camped there with automatic weapons.

The 1,440-square-kilometer (556-square-mile) Kidepo park is tucked into the corner of Uganda's border with Sudan and Kenya and is known for its stunning beauty, fertile land and rich variety of wildlife. The latter includes cheetahs, rare wild dogs and ostriches.

The arrival of the Toposa in the park coincides with dire warnings that up to 11 million people across east Africa are at risk of famine from the drought, which has also raised fears about the region's famed wildlife.

In neighboring Kenya, wildlife officials have already sounded the alarm about the drought's effect on elephants and hippos. Elephants have been increasingly leaving sanctuaries in search of food, coming into greater conflict with humans and river-dwelling hippos have been dying in large numbers as due to low water levels.

Amnesty International condemns harassment of human rights activists in Sudan

(*IRIN/BBC Monitoring* – 24th Jan. **Nairobi**) Amnesty International (AI) has expressed serious concern about the safety of human rights defenders in Sudan following the harassment of 40 delegates at an NGO forum in Khartoum, the capital.

In a statement, AI said that security personnel had brought the conference to a halt late on Sunday [22 January] afternoon, calling the meeting "unauthorized".

They demanded the names of all participants, took photographs and recorded video footage of the meeting. Some participants were pushed and threatened, AI said.

The security personnel also attempted to divide the participants into international and national groups and to separate women from men. AI said they refused to be separated, fearing for the safety of Sudanese nationals.

The participants were released after having been held for three hours.

"This meeting was a transparent meeting - previously known to the authorities - of those working towards peace and justice in the region," said Kolawole Olaniyan, director of AI's Africa programme, on Monday [23 January].

"Detaining and harassing human rights defenders is a clear violation of Sudan's obligations under international and regional standards, including the Constitutive Act of the AU [African Union]," he added.

The NGO forum brought together national and international NGOs and representatives of the United Nations and the European Commission. It was scheduled parallel to the African Union (AU) summit, which is taking place in Khartoum on Monday [23 January] and Tuesday [24 January].

"The government's actions have undermined the credibility and authority of the AU at a time when it is meeting in the Sudanese capital," Olaniyan noted.

"Last night's events signal a worrying increase in the crackdown against human rights workers on the part of the Sudanese government, and we fear there is more to come," he warned.

The AU summit is scheduled to name a new president on Tuesday. Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir is the main candidate for the post.

However, human rights organizations warned that his election would damage the organisation's credibility as senior Sudanese officials, including the president, have been implicated in war crimes in Darfur.

The AU plays a critical role in the war-torn western Sudanese region both by mediating between the parties in the conflict and by deploying peacekeeping forces.

Bishops' conference demands secession made attractive

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 25th Jan. **Khartoum**) The head of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference and Archbishop of Juba, H.G. Paulino Lukudu, said yesterday in a workshop that secession and not only unity should also be made attractive so that people should chose to either be attracted by unity or secession.

He said that as religious leaders, they are trying to bring Sudan into that sense of sincerity where unity will become a 'real unity'. He said he will not believe in the yes of no bote but will only believe in that period of time when northerners and southerners live apart for a long time.

He told UN officials who facilitated the workshop that there is a history of slavery in the country and that the stigma still continues to date. He said it was Church leaders who came up with the idea of a referendum on unity or secession.

Earlier, Jack Christofides of UNMIS who facilitated the workshop answered a question saying that the Security Council had mandated them to make unity attractive.