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(By Public Information Office)

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UN: Coverage On The Press Conference

UN Pronk expresses concern over attack against SSDF convoy

(*ST* – 15th Mar. **Khartoum**) Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to the Sudan, Jan Pronk, has expressed concern over the recent attack to which was subjected a convoy of Southern Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) loyal to Paulino Matip.

In a press conference held in Khartoum on 12 March, Paulino Matip accused the Sudanese army of attacking a convoy of SSDF militia in Abyei area. He said the group who carried out the attack received arms and munitions from an intelligence unit of the Sudanese army.

Speaking at the weekly briefing of the UN Mission in Sudan, on Wednesday, Pronk said he was concerned because there would be more convoys going to the South to join the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and that they might come under similar attacks.

He said some troops have willingly decided along with their leader Matip to join the Movement and that therefore they should be obstructed. Pronk has however declined to name any party as being responsible for the attack.

Pronk has meanwhile said a meeting was held two days ago in Khartoum between the governor of Khartoum and the ambassadors of the donor countries as well as the United Nations on the situation of displaced persons around Khartoum saying the authorities in Khartoum have made a commitment not to forcefully remove them and that also they made a pledge not to repeat what had happened in Soba less than a year ago.

Security situation in Darfur is 'grim': UN's Pronk

(*AFP/ST* – 15th Mar. **Khartoum**) The special UN envoy in Sudan Wednesday described the security situation in west Sudan's Darfur region as "grim" and warned it would deteriorate further if no peace agreement were reached.

"The security situation is grim as fighting is going on on a daily basis," Jan Pronk told reporters in his weekly press briefing at the Khartoum headquarters of the UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

"Villages in South Darfur are being attacked by militiamen on camel-back, killing about 400 persons since last February," said the UN envoy, warning of what he termed "tribal cleansing, with people chasing others in different parts of Darfur."

Instead of blaming the government or the rebel movements, Pronk said this "cleansing" was being conducted by militiamen he did not identify "for private, political or economic reasons to take over lands of other tribes.

"The security situation will remain grim and will deteriorate further if peace is not reached in Darfur," he said.

Pronk lamented that no progress has been made at negotiations in Abuja. When asked to comment on a recent meeting in Tripoli of Vice President Ali Osman Taha with Darfur rebel leaders, Pronk said Abuja "will continue to be the only venue of the (inter-Sudanese) negotiations."

Asked about recent statements by Sudanese officials that they will take steps to speed up the peace process, Pronk said: "I have heard this but I have not seen on the ground such steps which have to be translated into decisions in the negotiations. I hope such steps will be made in the right direction and in the right place (Abuja)."

He declined to comment on other statements by the government that it would not permit international forces in Darfur, saying: "It is the UN Security Council that will decide on this matter and will do so in its meeting on Sudan next Tuesday in which I will be present."

Pronk says ethnic cleansing taking place in Gereida and Sheiriya

(*AlAyaam* – 16th Mar. **Khartoum**) SRSRSG Jan Pronk has described the situation in Gereida and Sheiriya as an ethnic cleansing carried out by about 500 armed men and in which more than 400 civilians have been killed since late last November.

He said this cleansing could not be controlled but can be curbed. The SRSRSG said that the cleansing is sparked by economic reasons related to control over natural resources.

He further pointed out that the Zaghawa in the Sheiriya area have been chased out of their homes in a clear violation of the interim constitution that gives every Sudanese the right to choose where to live.

The chasing out of the Zaghawa, he added, was as a result of acute polarization and added that threats continue against them.

Pronk stressed the need to improve the humanitarian situation through a comprehensive ceasefire agreement safeguarded by a robust peace force acceptable to all parties. He said attacks on civilians still continue especially in the Jebel Marra area.

On Abuja, Mr. Pronk said that what is happening in Abuja is far from what is needed. "What is needed is peace in Darfur and enough protection for civilians through a robust force on the basis of a ceasefire agreement".

He said the AU is doing all it could but is frustrated because its commanders do not have the capacity to protect the civilians.

On the AU-Un transition, the SRSRSG pointed out that dialogue is ongoing on the issue within the Security Council and that they will do what the Security Council decides.

He said many questions have been raised over the coming of international forces to Darfur and whether these forces will come after a peace agreement is reached or not. He said this force should be with a strong mandate to protect the civilians after peace is achieved in the region and on the consent of the parties.

The SRSRSG expressed concerns over the harassments local relief workers are subjected and pointed out that SUDO which has had its activities suspended was doing an excellent job. He

confirmed his support for local organisations and called upon the authorities to grant these organizations space to continue their activities.

UN

UN force in South Sudan still running late

(Reuters/ST – 15th Mar. **United Nations**) U.N. deployment of a peacekeeping force of nearly 10,000 troops in southern Sudan is still running behind schedule but should be largely completed by the end of March, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

The report comes as the United Nations prepares to send troops to Sudan's western Darfur region later this year.

U.N. officials warn that their ability to deploy peacekeepers in Darfur, as in the south, will depend on governments' willingness to assemble the needed troops and equipment at a time supplies of both are extremely tight.

Sudan's government says it does not want U.N. troops in Darfur until a peace agreement is reached there, as well.

The U.N. force in southern Sudan now includes 7,697 U.N. soldiers, or 78 percent of an expected contingent of 9,880 peacekeepers from 66 countries, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in a progress report to the U.N. Security Council.

While deployment is expected to be "largely completed" within two weeks, some critical units are yet to be in place, including Russian and Pakistani aviation units, three land mine clearance units, most of a promised Kenyan contingent and support units from China, Annan said.

Heightened security concerns on the ground south of Juba and limited numbers of available vehicles and barges are contributing to the delays, he said.

CPA

Defence minister says army has the right to move in Hamesh Khoreib

(AlRai AlAam – 16th Mar. **Khartoum**) Commenting on recent SPLA fears of a SAF build-up near Hamesh Khoreib, defence minister Gen. AbdelRaheem Mohamed said that the SAF had total freedom to move to Hamesh Khoreib or any other place. He pointed out that the CPA does not restrict the movement of the SAF in northern Sudan and that those movements are being carried out in perfect coordination with the leadership of the JIUs and the SPLA.

On redeployment, the minister said that the SAF redeployment from southern Sudan is being carried out in according to schedule and added the operations may even be a little ahead of schedule.

On accusations from some quarters within the SPLM that the government is still supporting the LRA, the minister pointed out that the LRA is a rogue force that has even attacked government forces. He said no member of the SAF has any connection to the LRA and challenged those who say they do to come up with evidence.

On the souring of relations between the government and the SSDF, the minister said that there is nothing of the sort and that the government will continue to have cordial relations with the SSDF.

On a proposed restructuring of the SAF, the minister said this had no political connotations and only aimed at enhancing the SAF.

JDB says SAF sending new troops near Hamesh Khoreib

(*AlRai AlAam* – 16th Mar. **Khartoum**) The spokesperson for the Joint Defence board Mjr. Gen. Biong Ajiang says the SAF has sent a new force that has stationed itself about 5 kilometers from the SPLA position in Hamesh Khoreib.

He said that this new development is proof that the SAF intends to move into Hamesh Khoreib before the SPLA completely pulls out.

He also said that UNMIS held talks last week in Yei with SPLA officials and made a number of enquiries on SPLA plans to redeploy from eastern Sudan, its position on the LRA and on the recent attacks near Abyei. He said that the UN said it will have a role to play after the investigations on Abyei.

Ajiang further added that the SPLA informed the UNMIS military that the LRA is still receiving support from the SAF. He said also that the Joint Defence Board has agreed to hold an emergency meeting next week on the request of the SPLA Chief-of-Staff to discuss violations of the ceasefire in southern Sudan among other things.

Khartoum State police sets plans to disarm factions in Khartoum

(*AlRai AlAam* – 16th Mar. **Khartoum**) Khartoum State police said its dragnet in the Fitihab area of Omdurman is just the beginning of operations aimed at wiping out sultans' courts and disarming the factions in Khartoum State.

This, says the head of the CID, comes in implementation of the security plan launched by the local police aimed at uprooting all causes of insecurity in the state.

Southern Sudan

South Sudan's Machar promises to resolve local conflicts

(*SRS/ST* – 15th Mar. **Nairobi**) Vice-President of the Government of Southern Sudan Riek Machar, has reiterated the government's commitment to resolve local conflicts in southern Sudan.

Machar told community leaders in Fangak area of Jonglei State on Tuesday last week that his government was working to prevent conflicts such as the recent one in Yuai area of Jonglei.

He also promised to solve other problems of the people of Fangak in order to raise their living standards.

The vice-president was last week accompanied by the director of police and security, Daniel Awet Akon, the Jonglei governor, Philip Thon Leek, and the UN special envoy to Sudan, Jan Pronk, during his visit to Fangak.

Meanwhile, Governor Philip Thon Leek told the people of Fangak that the government was also working to improve education and health services in the area.

Darfur, Chad/ Abuja Talks

Darfur commanders meet in el-Fasher

(*AlRai AlAam* – 16th Mar. **Khartoum, el-Fasher**) In a bid to check growing instability in the Darfur region, not less than 66 field commanders representing the SLM and the JEM concluded a conference at the AU offices in el-Fasher.

The conference was held with government knowledge but was shrouded in secrecy.

The commanders called upon the international community to provide logistic assistance to the AU to enable it carry out its duties in Darfur and promised full cooperation with the AU towards that end.

The two-day conference recommended that an ultimatum be set for the talks in Abuja and that the joint ceasefire committee be activated and asked to convene within two weeks to put an immediate end to violations. The conference also underlined the need to respect the agreements reached and that top representatives of the respective parties to the Abuja talks be dispatched to Abuja to give impetus to the talks.

Libya to host summit on Darfur conflict

(*Reuters* – 15th Mar. **Tripoli**) Libya will host a summit with Egypt in coming days to try to find a regional solution to the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, an official source in Tripoli said on Wednesday.

The move comes amid intense pressure on the African Union to turn over peacekeeping in the western Sudanese province to the U.N., despite opposition from Khartoum which is demanding that a peace deal is first reached between the government and rebels.

"There are now consultations and efforts are being exerted with all the Sudanese parties to solve the problem of Darfur," the Libyan source said.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will attend the summit due to take place in Tripoli in coming days, the source said, without giving an exact date.

United Nations and United States officials accuse Sudan of arming Arab militia who have raped, pillaged, killed and driven into squalid camps some two million people in the western Darfur region. Sudan denies the charges.

A ceasefire between the militias and Darfur rebels has been in place since April 2004 but it is frequently violated by all sides, according to the African Union (AU), which is monitoring the situation with 7,000 ill-equipped troops.

Last week the AU extended its mission in Darfur until September 30 to buy time and break the impasse.

"Libya hopes to find a solution within six months within the African context," the source added.

Gaddafi, keen to act as a regional peace-broker, organised a summit last month between the leaders of Sudan and neighbouring Chad, who have accused each other of backing insurgents fighting the governments in N'Djamena and Khartoum.

Libyan officials said the two sides — whose leaders both have good relations with Gaddafi — pledged as a result to end media campaigns against one another and seek to normalise diplomatic ties.

Chad says it foiled plot to kill President Deby

(Reuters/ST – 15th Mar. N'djamena) Chad said on Wednesday it had foiled a coup attempt by a group of soldiers who had been plotting to shoot down President Idriss Deby's plane.

Information Minister Hourmadji Moussa Doumgor said two high-ranking plotters, a colonel and a commander, had been captured while others were fleeing toward the east of the country with government forces in hot pursuit.

Deby, himself a former army commander who seized power in the arid, landlocked oil producer in a 1990 revolt, has recently faced a spate of military desertions and attacks from the east by groups of anti-government rebels.

He has repeatedly accused neighbor Sudan of backing efforts to overthrow him, a charge denied by Khartoum. Conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region has spilled over into Chad.

Doumgor said the coup plotters had planned to try to shoot down Deby's plane as he returned from a summit of central African leaders held in Bata, Equatorial Guinea this week.

Diplomats said the president, apparently tipped off about the plot, had left the summit early on Tuesday.

"Our defense and security forces moved first to stop the advance of these elements yesterday ... and foil them," Doumgor said in a statement.

France, Chad's former colonial ruler, and the African Union condemned the attempted coup.

It occurred weeks before May 3 presidential elections in which the 53-year-old Deby is widely expected to extend his 16 years in power.

"Basically, the calendar is really driving events ... the armed groups bent on toppling him don't want him to get to the elections," Suliman Baldo, Africa Program Director of the International Crisis Group think-tank, told Reuters.

Doumgor said the masterminds of the coup were former high-ranking civilian and military supporters of Deby who were living in the United States, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Sudan.

These included brothers Tom and Timam Erdimi, former aides of Deby and members of his ruling Zaghawa clan who were sidelined by the president after a failed army mutiny in 2004. They said in December they were joining anti-Deby rebels.

Doumgor also accused Seby Aguid, a former general who deserted with other military officers in February.

Deby's grip on power has been eroded by desertions by members of his Zaghawa ethnic group, some of whom blame him for not doing enough to help fellow Zaghawa kinsmen in Darfur who have been attacked by Sudanese government-backed Arab militias.

But Baldo said the alliance of rebel groups opposing the Chadian president was split by infighting and power struggles.

"Deby could still hang on," he said.

Baldo said France, among other foreign governments, was concerned that if Deby was suddenly deposed, this could lead to upheaval in Chad, compounding the existing conflict in Darfur.

French Foreign Ministry spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei said: "We are following the situation with the greatest vigilance, given that Chad is going through a difficult situation because of the Darfur crisis."

Earlier, a Chadian rebel group fighting to overthrow Deby said it had tried to launch a coup against him from within the armed forces but that the plot had been betrayed.

"We tried to smoke out the president from N'Djamena but our plan was declared by some secret agents and then our people had to cancel the plan and get out of the town," Yaya Dillo Djerou, leader of the Chadian rebel group SCUD, told Reuters.

Dillo said he was speaking from eastern Chad, where SCUD and other groups of Chadian rebels and army deserters have announced the formation of an anti-Deby coalition.

Other Developments

Sudan closes offices of rights group in Darfur

(Reuters/ST – 15th Mar. **el-Geneina**) The Sudanese human rights organisation SUDO said on Wednesday the West Darfur authorities had closed down three of its offices because it did not like its work overcoming divisions in the troubled region.

SUDO, one of the few rights groups based in the country, is often targeted by the government. International non-governmental organisations (NGOs) complain of harassment by authorities who they say create obstacles to their activities.

"They don't want our work on peace building and human rights because we are uniting the people and they want to divide them," said Mudawi Ibrahim, head of SUDO.

The government humanitarian affairs commissioner in West Darfur, al-Tijani Tajeddin, said SUDO had not submitted its mandate to him.

"Once they have submitted their mandate they can reopen," he told Reuters in el-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state.

Mudawi said SUDO had given the authorities a mandate but would resubmit it as asked. SUDO's head of office in el-Geneina, Jaafar Khalifa, said he would hand it in on Thursday and see if they were allowed to reopen.

Offices in el-Geneina, Zalengei and Garsila had been closed. SUDO was working on water, education, health, sanitation and protection issues in West Darfur, one of the worst-affected parts of Darfur.

The U.N. has declared large parts of West Darfur high risk and armed banditry and militia attacks are frequent in the area bordering Chad.