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United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

Fleeing conflict in Abyei

Special Focus: New Nation

Bridging the gap

Gearing up for independence

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FRONT COVER: IDPs who had fled Abyei waiting for food aid in Turalei, Warrap State. Photo: UNMIS/Hailemichael Gebrekrstos.

BACK COVER: Men working on waterfront in Port Sudan, Red Sea State. Photo: UNMIS/Eszter Farkas.

Diary

16 May: Head of the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur Ibrahim Gambari expressed deep concern over the previous day's air strikes on the villages of Labado and Esheraya, South Darfur, and called on belligerents to respect humanitarian law and rights of

innocent people.

20 May: Secretary-General (SG) Ban Ki-moon and UNMIS strongly condemned the 19 May "criminal attack" on UN peacekeepers who were escorting a Joint Integrated Unit of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) out of the Abyei area.

21 May: Sudanese government troops seized Abyei town following an attack on a JIU convoy on 19 May. President Omar Al-Bashir dissolved the Abyei Area Administration and dismissed chief area administrator Deng Arop Kuol, and a week later appointed SAF Brig. Gen. Azdeen Osman interim chief administrator.

22 May: SG Ban Ki-moon strongly condemned the escalation of violence in Abyei and expressed deep concern for the safety of civilians. Deploing the shelling of the UNMIS compound that wounded two peacekeepers, he called on both parties to immediately cease their military operations. Members of the Security Council called on the Sudanese government during their four-day visit to the country to withdraw its military from Abyei.

25 May: During a two-day visit to the Abyei area, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Georg Charpentier called for the protection of civilians forced to flee the Abyei area (whose number had surpassed 105,000 as *In Sudan* went to print), assurance of their safe passage and right to return. Two days later, the UN Country Team in Sudan deplored the looting of emergency relief supplies in Abyei.

31 May: Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy and head of UNMIS Haile Menkerios briefed the Security Council about the need to avoid a hostile divorce between the north and south as the latter approached independence on 9 July. They also discussed the fate of UNMIS, whose mandate was set to expire simultaneously with the south's independence declaration.

3 June: The Security Council demanded that the Government of Sudan withdraw immediately from Abyei, and strongly condemned it for continuing to maintain control over the town.

4 June: SG Ban welcomed progress made during the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference in Doha to resolve the Darfur conflict and called on the parties to make compromises to reach lasting peace. The over 500 delegates participating in the conference adopted a framework document as a basis for the conflict's peaceful settlement.

5 June: Fighting broke out in the Southern Kordofan State capital of Kadugli when gunmen looted a police station and stole arms. Hours later, a firefght broke out in Um Durrein, and the next day there were serious clashes between Sudan People's Liberation Army and SAF forces in Kadugli, causing residents to flee the area. To provide security and temporary shelter for the thousands of displaced, UNMIS set up a protection area adjacent to its Kadugli headquarters.

6 June: UN Military Advisor Lt. Gen. Babacar Gaye visited the troubled region of Abyei as well as Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. After meeting with UNMIS Force Commander Maj. Gen. Moses Obi and troops on the ground, Lt. Gen. Gaye found that Zambian peacekeepers in Abyei should have been more visible to deter violence against civilians and the destruction of property.

6 June: UNMIS expressed deep concern about the security situation in Abyei and Southern Kordofan and called on the parties to prevent escalation of violence. The mission also urged the SAF to stop ongoing looting in Abyei, release civilians in their custody, grant unconditional humanitarian access to all parts of the area, and stop artillery fire in the vicinity of the UN compound that would pose a security threat.

8 June: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Georg Charpentier called for an immediate halt to fighting in Southern Kordofan State so that affected civilians could receive much-needed assistance.

10 June: The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said it had received "extremely worrying" reports of civilian casualties and massive displacement of people amid deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Southern Kordofan State. Spokesperson Rupert Colville called on parties to the conflict to immediately stop the indiscriminate shelling and provide safe corridors for the passage of civilians.



Gearing up for independence

Renovating Juba International Airport, paving roads and clearing slums are just a few ongoing preparations for the historic day on 9 July when Southern Sudan declares its long-awaited independence.

To plan independence celebrations in the capital Juba and coordinate plans with the 10 states, Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) President Salva Kiir Mayardit formed a High-Level Committee chaired by Vice-President Riek Machar Teny via a decree last February.

The committee's mandated duties include choosing a venue for the declaration of independence, preparing a budget for the event and sending out invitations to dignitaries around the world.

Western Bahr El-Ghazal State Governor Riziq Zakaria Hassan, who is a member of the regional committee, said meetings had been held at the GoSS level and sub-committees formed in states and counties.

In January of this year, the people of Southern Sudan voted overwhelmingly for independence during an internationally monitored week-long referendum.

Officials from the Bahr El-Ghazal area State High Committees for the Celebration of Independence Day reported that plans were progressing well in Warrap as well as Northern and Western Bahr El-Ghazal states.

Western Bahr El-Ghazal had formed seven sub-committees, Governor Hassan said, and earmarked 2.2 million Sudanese Pounds (\$700,000) for celebrations on 9 July.

"July 9 is a great day for us," said Warrap State Governor Nyandeng Malek. "The way we are going to celebrate is a concern for everybody throughout the region."

Governor Malek said her administration considered 9 July the most historic day in Southern Sudan's struggle for freedom and justice. Officials had formed a committee to organize celebrations in the state at the household, *boma* (town area), *payam* (township), county and state levels.

Unlike Western Bahr El-Ghazal, the state administration in Warrap is depending on the generosity of residents to fund celebrations.

"In the *boma*, we are telling the commissioners we can provide sodas, sweets and other things, so contribute the bulls," she said. "Let the women cook, people dance and eat your bulls. That is how we are going to celebrate."

Governor Malek added that celebrations would be decentralized. "Each level will play its own role. *Bomas* will have their own, *payams* will have their own, counties and up to state level," she said. "Here at (the) state (capital Kuajok) we will have our own celebration at Freedom Square and we will decorate it and our flag will be raised."

In Northern Bahr El-Ghazal, state officials, chiefs, religious leaders and prominent figures are working together to organize the celebrations.

"We have formed a state high committee for the celebration of the day at each level of the state and things are going smoothly and according to our plans," said State Secretary General Garang Kuot.

A brighter future

Western Bahr El-Ghazal State Governor Hassan said 9 July meant the rebirth of the entire southern region after 22 years of struggle, and noted that it was endowed with vast natural resources. "Once we get our independence, I think South Sudan will develop very swiftly. I am quite optimistic."

The lives of people in Warrap would improve, Governor Malek said, stating that she saw a brighter and better future for her state.

"The part that we are ending on 9 July is a part of (the) struggle for freedom, justice and equality," said the Warrap governor. "Now we will continue our struggle against poverty, hunger and diseases."

South Sudan would be a great nation that would play an effective and important role in the Horn of Africa, she stressed.

Officials urged residents to celebrate peacefully and avoid any violent acts on the day.

"The only thing we do not want to see during that day is any sort of problem," said Governor Malek. "I appeal to people not to drink (too) much (and) create problems."

"We hope that each individual will commemorate and celebrate the day as their own day," said Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State Secretary General Kuot.

Story and photo:
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos

CAPTION: Warrap State Governor Nyandeng Malek at her Kuajok office.

Investing in Southern

Attracting investors to Southern Sudan remains challenging, as the region still lacks financial institutions, appropriate laws, infrastructure and regular taxation practices.

Although six years of peace have brought in some trade and investment laws, irregularities still exist, according to Kenyi Spencer, private sector development consultant for the World Bank.

The region had never been in the position as it was today to draw up such laws, he said. The only one existing when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 was a 1933 bill set to govern petty trade for buying and selling goods.

"As a result many people lack knowledge and skills on how to (operate) small or large businesses, and ... have no access to capital to carry out large businesses, such as production," Mr. Spencer said.

He added that the World Bank, which was working with the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), donors and the International Finance Cooperation to improve investor services, had supported the GoSS in setting up policies or laws, but implementation was challenging.

"About 12 laws were enacted and eight others are still to come, though some of them won't be used at the moment," Mr. Spencer said. "But we believe that putting them in place is very important (because the) time will come for them to be used."

Simon Akuei Deng, secretary general for the Southern Sudan Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, noted that enforcing taxation laws was still problematic because of existing government structures under the CPA.

Under that arrangement, all levels of government – GoSS, state and local – are granted tax-collecting rights across the country, burdening local and foreign investors with multiple taxes.

Mr. Deng added that irregularities in tax management were also due to lack of capacity among government agencies, although he believed that laws correcting this would be set in place after independence.

"Eliminating those indiscretions and harmonizing the function of all institutions at federal and state levels will be the solution in future," the secretary general said.

In the meantime, uncontrolled taxes have contributed to inflated prices for

goods and services rendered by investors or businessmen, which have plagued consumers.

Foreign goods are currently flooding into the country due to a lack of local production, which makes enforcement of legislation even more difficult.

But with the region soon to become Africa's youngest nation, various laws are being speedily drafted to fill the decades-old gap and bolster economic growth. Among them is the Standard Act, which aims to protect consumers.

Enhancing the business environment

To examine business progress and constraints, the GoSS in collaboration with its partners launched the "Doing business in Juba" programme on 17 May to measure regulation and enforcement.

The project is investigating regulations that enhance as well as hinder business activity and investment, according to Akuei Deng, under-secretary in the GoSS Ministry of Investment.

"As a government, this gives us ways ... to improve what is required and provide a conducive environment for the business community and investors who will be interested ... in Southern Sudan," said the official.

As an example, he pointed to the Investment Promotion Act of 2009, which has a provision exempting agricultural imports – tools, equipment, machinery and tractors, pharmaceuticals, animal feed and seed – to boost food and cash crops production.

"All these were exempted from any duties and taxes for a period that shall be determined," the undersecretary said. "The aim of this (exemption) is to promote investment in those areas, rather than depending on oil resources as (for) government income."

Melody Atil, a financial and private sector specialist in Southern Sudan, concurred that the government must minimize risk and encourage foreign investors.

"It is important for the government and donors to set in place structures to solve market inefficiencies such that it will be both easy and advantageous for foreign investors to engage with the local economy," said Ms. Atil, who is also a founder and managing director of the Peace Dividend Project.

Southern Sudan currently ranked very low on an index measuring the ease

of doing business, she noted, with an average rank of 159 out of 183 countries worldwide. As a result, World Bank indicators drew attention to key priorities, identifying the government as the agent to implement policies and provide an encouraging environment for investment.

Economic growth also depended on human resource development and technical transfer of knowledge so that the same job could be done in future, Ms. Atil said. "It is important that foreign investors engage in local content and employ local labor and source from local firms."

She also stressed the need to provide

"Economic growth also depended on human resource development and technical transfer of knowledge so that the same job could be done in future."

jobs and income-generating opportunities in the short term, which was as crucial as streamlining Southern Sudan's business environment for future growth.

To expand access to finance for the last two years, the Peace Dividend Project had begun promoting a range of productive sectors contributing to the local economy, value, and job creation for southerners, said Ms. Atil.

"We are aspiring for a diversified middle class, moving away from the current growing economic inequality between different factions of the population," she said.

Mr. Spencer noted that about 45,000 people had access to funding for small businesses through the microfinance window from trust funds established to alleviate poverty and improve living conditions.

"But in future we shall have to use the existing laws to control the cash flow because not all these people will become necessarily businessmen or women," he added.

Dependent on foreign goods

Although Southern Sudan contains the bulk of the country's oil reserves and prime agricultural land, the devastating civil war

Sudan's economy

made it dependent on foreign goods and services rather than a producer. Economic aspirations were restrained at the expense of bearing fruit.

But with support from financial institutions, the World Bank and other organizations, the region is finally on the road to economic growth, although it may face obstacles along the way. One of the biggest could be its landlocked status, which will create difficulties for South Sudan to compete in exporting goods.

"Only goods that have a high value per kilo will likely be internationally competitive," Ms. Atil observed.

Sustainable economic growth from higher productivity and incomes will only occur with the transition from crisis and relief to sustainable economic viability. Among its other unfortunate effects, the war created an aid-dependent population who now must fend for themselves.

Regrettably, some youth have resorted to cattle raiding from neighbours in meeting their needs. Unemployment among youth as well as university graduates has been increasing, as there are currently few jobs for them.

In the end, the potential for developing sustainable economic expansion depends on the vision of its leaders as well as the

efforts of its people.

Mr. Spencer expressed hope that the region would become as productive a state as others in the region in about five to 10 years. But he stressed that citizens must play their part by engaging in business activities.

Story and photos:
Ojja Bosco

CAPTIONS:

Top: Launch of "Doing business in Juba" programme.

Bottom: Roundtable discussion at "Doing business in Juba" launch.



Bridging the gap

Finding alternatives to the oil revenue

North Sudan has been reviewing options to supplement the massive loss of oil revenue it will experience after the imminent secession of Southern Sudan.

Although livestock, sesame, cotton and gum Arabic are among Sudan's main exports, petrol still dominates the balance. It accounted for some 92 percent of exports and 54 percent of government revenue in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The latest IMF report, covering 2009 and 2010, also notes that "in the wake of the South's independence, Sudan is expected to lose its 50 percent share of the South's oil production which will have an immediate impact on the fiscal and external balances".

In line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), north and south have been sharing revenues of the country's crude oil under a 50-50 formula. As most of the oil -- some 73 per cent -- is produced in Southern Sudan, 1 per cent in the disputed Abyei area and only 26 per cent in the north, Khartoum will lose a significant amount of oil revenue, according to Minister of Finance and National Economy Ali Mahmoud.

"If the south separates, we are going to lose about 36 per cent of the oil (half of 73 per cent) produced in the south," Mr. Mahmoud said during an interview at his Khartoum office, "which will have a direct effect on our financial position".

"At the same time, we are going to lose foreign exchange and that will affect the balance of payments (net earnings on exports minus payments for imports)," eventually resulting in inflation and depreciation of the Sudanese pound, he added.

To lessen negative effects, various measures have been considered, including cutting government expenditure -- possibly by amalgamating ministries -- and increasing revenue by reviewing tax and custom exemptions, Mr. Mahmoud said.

Over the past few months, the country has experienced price hikes, partly due to the removal of household gas and petrol subsidies. In May, as widely reported by local media, a kilogram of sugar sold for 4.5 Sudanese pounds (SDG, about

\$1.7), up from 2 SDG (\$0.7), a sack of wheat flour cost 115 SDG (\$42), up from 83 SDG (\$30) and a Sudanese pound bought only four pieces of local flat bread, while it used to fetch five.

The ministry has drafted a three-year emergency plan to run from 2011 to 2013, Mr. Mahmoud said, which would fall in line with the second five-year strategic plan currently drafted by the Higher Council for Strategic Planning, an institute reporting to the office of Sudanese Second Vice-President Ali Osman Taha.

As Sudan's first five-year plan was coming to an end this year, the Higher Council held a meeting in early May with key ministries, advisors, trade unions and civil society representatives in preparation for the next one, part of Sudan's 25-year plan launched in 2006.

According to Taj Elsir Mahgoub, Chairman of the Higher Council for Strategic Planning, consultations focused on how to curb government expenditure

and boost alternative sources of income.

"We may not resort to more austerity measures," he said, adding that further price hikes might create a negative social environment. "We don't want to create tension."

"Mining is becoming an important source of income to the country and we are looking into other areas, which have not been dealt with ... for example, tourism could be one of the sources," Mr. Mahgoub said, adding that "(the 15 northern) states have got a lot of unused potential," which needs tapping to lessen reliance on the federal budget.

Both the finance minister and the council chairman agreed that Sudan's investment law should be revised to boost investment appetite and shift focus from services to investment in the production sector.

"We have noticed that most of the investors are interested in the service areas, so we want to divert them to the production sector, to go to agriculture and agro-based industries," Minister Mahmoud said.

Financial analysts, who preferred to remain anonymous, have also observed that the country's immense military spending ate up large amounts, compounding the financial situation. Currently, more than two-thirds of Sudan's budget went to defense spending, while investment in healthcare and education was lacking, they have said.

In Mr. Mahmoud's analysis, revenue received from the south's use of the north's oil pipelines, refineries and seaport would "bridge the gap in the fiscal budget" after July 2011, but the balance of payments problem would remain. This, in his view, could be mitigated by increased oil and gold production.

The country was also hoping to receive grants and loans, mainly from Gulf countries, and possibly release of its external debt, he added, which stood at \$38 billion as of 2010. According to the minister, debt relief had become a political question.

"If the south separates, we are going to lose about 36 per cent of the oil (half of 73 per cent) produced in the south."



Story and photo:
Eszter Farkas

Minister of Finance and National Economy Ali Mahmoud.

New state, new constitution

The five-month-long drafting of a transitional constitution for the future Republic of South Sudan has entered its concluding phase with its recent submission to the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly.

As *In Sudan* went to press, it remained unclear exactly when the regional parliament would end its ongoing deliberations over the political charter, which will require the signature of President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the regional Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) before it can take effect.

But both of those developments are widely expected to occur before the official proclamation of South Sudan's independence on 9 July 2011.

Technical constitutional review committee

Work on a transitional constitution began on 21 January this year with the formation of a technical review committee empowered by presidential decree to amend the 2005 Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (ICSS).

That document was created for the semi-autonomous region of Southern Sudan, which was founded within the context of a united Sudan at the end of the country's second civil war.

But in the wake of last January's overwhelming vote in the Southern Sudan referendum in favour of secession, the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and various opposition political parties broadly agreed on the need to adopt a transitional constitution based on the ICSS and tailored to the enhanced powers and responsibilities of a sovereign state.

From the outset, the drafting process has been limited to a technical review of the ICSS that would delete all references to a united Sudan and re-cast existing government structures in the south at a regional level as the institutions of

a sovereign nation-state. A sweeping overhaul of the existing constitution was never contemplated.

The expected promulgation of a transitional constitution next month will bring to an end the first phase of the constitutional review process, according to GoSS Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development John Luk Jok.

Speaking at a public lecture in the regional capital of Juba last March, Mr. Jok, who also serves as chairperson of the technical constitutional review committee, said the second phase of the process will begin after the 10 southern Sudanese states become an independent nation.

It shall end with the adoption of a permanent constitution for the fledgling country, he said.

In late April, the technical review committee presented its recommendations on the transitional constitution to the office of the Southern Sudanese presidency, along with its proposals for the making of a permanent political charter.

During his remarks on the opening day of the fifth Speakers' Forum in Southern Sudan earlier this month, GoSS President Kiir noted that the pending transitional constitution is only a provisional document and pledged to involve "all walks of life" in an inclusive process for drafting the nascent republic's permanent constitution.

Review obstacles

Controversy and confrontation between the SPLM and some leading opposition parties have surfaced on occasion during the transitional constitution drafting process.

Representatives of five opposition parties appointed to the review panel chaired by Mr. Jok walked out of the process in early March, after accusing committee members from the SPLM of having violated established rules of procedure for deliberations and decision-making within the body and its sub-

committees.

Some opposition parties took exception to SPLM proposals to give the president of an independent Republic of South Sudan the powers to unilaterally appoint and dismiss state governors and the new nation's vice-president.

Another source of discord has centred on the life span of the current Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly. Some opposition parties have called for fresh parliamentary elections as early as next year, but the SPLM wants the existing legislature to serve out its full five-year term that ends in 2015.

The widely reported inclusion of a provision in the transitional charter declaring the disputed Abyei border region to be part of a future Republic of South Sudan has also angered the National Congress Party of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir.

Ignorance and confusion about the role of the technical constitutional review committee have further muddled the picture, according to UNMIS Chief Human Rights Officer Benedict Sannoh.

Many Southern Sudanese citizens believe the panel has been working on a permanent constitution, he noted, and expectations about the scope and limits of the new nation's transitional magna carta need to be managed.

"The key," said Mr. Sannoh, "is to educate the people."

To that end, a series of public lectures sponsored by the University of Juba, the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission and the Justice Africa Southern Sudan Programme has been held in all 10 southern states to inform citizens about the review and drafting process.

Antonette Miday
Photos: Isaac Gideon

Public debate on South Sudan constitution.



Fleeing conflict in Abyei

Ayak Deng made her way to Abyei market early one May morning to buy the day's food for herself and her mother, who was at home looking after her young son.

Wandering around the stalls an hour later, Ms. Deng's life suddenly took a drastic turn as conflict erupted in the town and she was forced to flee.

Days later, the 20-year-old mother arrived in Turalei, Warrap State, separated from her mother and son.

"I was away from home to buy food stuff from Abyei market when the incident happened," the distraught mother said with tears in her eyes. "I (left) both my son and mother at home and I (haven't) heard about them since then. I am not sure whether they are alive or dead."

Ms. Deng joined tens of thousands of displaced people in Twic County, who had fled Abyei after the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) took control of the town on 21 May.

Lying on the north-south Sudanese border, Abyei was accorded "Special Administrative Status" under the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The area was scheduled to hold a referendum in January 2010 on whether to join the north or south, but this has so far failed to occur, as neither party can agree on qualified voters, a referendum commission and other elements.

Regional and international mediation has been unable to resolve the quandary, as have any attempts to reach a political settlement. Meanwhile, both sides have reportedly been building up their military strength in the area.

As of 7 June, some 100,000 people had fled from the Abyei area, of which 67,000 had been registered, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Officials from the Government of Southern Sudan Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs have put the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) up to 150,000.

About 68 per cent of registered IDPs have sought safety in the Turalei and Mayan Abun areas of Warrap State, while the rest have gone to Agok further north, according to the UNHCR.

Twic County Commissioner Dominic Deng said the already dire humanitarian situation in the area was worsening and that people were continuing to flock into Turalei. "At this time, thousands of people, including women and children ... are

sheltering under trees without food and basic necessities."

Commissioner Deng added that emergency food assistance from international aid agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP), was insufficient for the large influx of refugees and that shelter was also lacking.

Warrap State Governor Nyandeng Malek echoed the commissioner's statement. "At this stage, the humanitarian situation in our state is very ... bad after Abyei was invaded ... which displaced the entire population ... into Warrap State."

Speaking to *In Sudan* from her Kuajok office, she added, "In places like Turalei, markets are completely closed down. The restaurants are closed ... there is nothing there."

Stating that the conflict had affected both displaced and host communities, she said places like Twic and Goegrial West counties were the most affected, needing urgent humanitarian help.

"Currently, there is no market to supplement whatever gaps exist in terms of food security, as all roads connecting the state with the north are closed down," Governor Malek said.

Compounding matters, the SAF had closed all roads leading into her state weeks before they occupied Abyei, she said, severely affecting the entire region.

"We in greater Bahr El-Ghazal, especially Northern Bahr El-Ghazal, Western Bahr El-Ghazal and Warrap states -- almost 99 per cent of our goods come from northern Sudan," the governor said. "So, when the roads were closed it really affected these three states."

While praising humanitarian work by agencies in the area, she added that shelter was still an urgent problem.

"We as a government ... don't have the capacity to give shelter to the IDPs," said Governor Malek. "The shelter we are providing is ... through our community. We have already appealed to the host community (that) whenever they have a space in their houses, at least to welcome and shelter the displaced people when it is raining."

Separated families

Like Ayak Deng, many displaced were traumatized by family separation due to the sudden conflict.

Achie Gock was separated during the scramble to flee from two of his three

wives and eight of his 15 children.

"I lost my wives and children while we fled Abyei and I (have had no) information about their whereabouts since," said the 67-year-old man. "The conflict happened ... and we were in total shock."

Thousands of IDPs around Turalei depended on daily food from humanitarian organizations to survive, said WFP head in Abyei Margareta Coco, speaking from her temporary base in Wunrock. "We are trying to make sure that all people get immediate food assistance from WFP."

As of 8 June, the agency had provided 1,238 metric tons of food to 83,316 displaced people from Abyei in Warrap, the Abyei area, Western Bahr El-Ghazal, Northern Bahr El-Ghazal and Unity states.

The majority of IDPs in Turalei, however, complained that they had yet to receive food, noting that local people were also receiving assistance and urging UN agencies to distinguish between them and the displaced.

"It is very surprising to see local people from the area receiving food aid in the name of displaced people from Abyei, while we are sitting without food here," said Abyei IDP Santino Ngor.

Ms. Coco confirmed that challenges existed in separating IDPs from locals, but said her office was coordinating with area officials to resolve the problem.

Despite humanitarian efforts, needs among the displaced population remained high and there were concerns of a further downturn as the rainy season progressed.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has noted that the sudden influx of people has put a heavy strain on existing commodities and basic services, affecting both displaced and host communities alike.

But one of the most pressing challenges was heavy rains, which had made emergency shelter for the displaced an urgent priority. The frequent downpours had also sparked concerns about health conditions, sanitation and the spread of diseases, particularly among vulnerable groups like children and the elderly.

According to OCHA, aid agencies had to deliver assistance and reinforce pre-position supplies before the rainy season rendered roads in upper Warrap impassable, forcing more expensive and volume-limited delivery by air.

In speeding up assistance, OCHA Humanitarian Officer Said Musa said his agency was coordinating all aid activities



with the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and other organizations operating in the area.

"We organize a humanitarian coordination meeting of all humanitarian agencies every evening in Wunrock to discuss challenges and gaps in the humanitarian intervention process and to come up with ways how to better coordinate our efforts," said Mr. Musa.

Calling for peaceful settlements

The international community, including the Security Council, has called on the

Sudanese government to halt its military operations and withdraw immediately from the Abyei area, stating that its presence there was a serious violation of previous agreements.

It has called on all parties to protect civilians in the affected area and take all necessary measures to ensure they were not targeted. Noting that looting was occurring in Abyei town, international actors have also called on the Sudanese government to intervene and stop such criminal acts.

Displaced people like Ayak Deng look forward to seeing all previous and current agreements implemented fully,

paving ways to end the chapter of war and displacement in Abyei once and for all, so that they can live a life without fear.

Story and photos:
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos

CAPTIONS:

Top: OCHA-organized humanitarian coordination meeting in Wunrock.

Bottom: WFP distributing food for Abyei IDPs in Turalei.



'A living testimony'

A landmine victim's story

As a soldier in the ranks of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) during the country's second civil war, Marko Lodiko Korok became quite adept at laying landmines in his native Jonglei State county of Pibor.

"I can still recall two military trucks of our enemies destroyed by antitank mines I planted in Pibor," said the 35-year-old father of two, standing beside a sofa in his home in the Central Equatoria State town of Yei. "I was so good at positioning landmines."

Little did Mr. Korok know at the time that one of those deadly mines would one day maim him.

The fourth child in a Murle family of seven children raised by small farmers, Mr. Korok joined the rebel army in 1987 partly for economic reasons, as the outbreak of war in southern Sudan had brought commerce and agriculture to an abrupt

"God made me survive death because he wanted me to be a living testimony to others."

standstill in his corner of Jonglei.

He was transferred to Yei a year after the war officially ended in January 2005. In 2007, Mr. Korok's unit was re-assigned to the Central Equatoria county of Kajo Keji to hunt down members of the Ugandan-led Lord's Resistance Army who were still operating in the area.

He and his fellow SPLA soldiers moved into an abandoned barracks of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in the Mundari district of Kajo Keji town. One evening, he was returning from a nearby stream where he had finished bathing when disaster struck.

"The path along which I was walking was clear, but scraps such as iron bars and nails of used ammunition were visible at a distance," said Mr. Korok, adding that it was hard at the time to determine the exact location of anti-personnel mines that had been planted in the vicinity of the former SAF barracks.

"Where you think it is safe is where it is unsafe with landmines," he noted. "The mines remained active underneath."

Upon hearing the explosion, his comrades-in-arms rushed to the scene of the detonated mine to find Mr. Korok half dead and lying in a pool of blood. The SPLA soldiers then brought their stricken colleague to Kajo Keji's Mundari Hospital.

A bachelor at the time, he spent over a year in the hospital recovering from his injuries.

"Life was so hard at the hospital because I was not married by then," said Mr. Korok, who had both of his legs amputated above the knees.

"If I had been married by that time, my wife would have given me proper care and attention, but my thanks go to well-wishers who provided for my daily bread in the hospital."

The SPLA transferred Mr. Korok back to Yei after he was discharged from the hospital in 2008. He married a year later and gets by on a monthly military pension of 400 Sudanese pounds (\$147).

An avid football fan, the retired soldier devotes some of his spare time to favourite hobbies such as playing cards and dominos or listening to music.

He urged his fellow Southern Sudanese to exercise great caution about concealed silent killers known as landmines that can remain active for more than 50 years after they have been laid.

"I am an expert in planting landmines but see what has happened to me now," said Mr. Korok, who has an iron support stand attached to his shorter right leg to give him balance. "I was once tall like you, standing on two legs but now I am standing on three legs."

"God made me survive death because he wanted me to be a living testimony to others," he said. "If I had died, my friends would not have learned from me."

Story and photo:
James Sokiri

CAPTION: Former soldier and landmine victim Marko Lodiko Korok.



Fighting fear and disease

Although Sudan's leading cancer affects the breast, women have little awareness of the disease and postpone check-ups until it is too late, medical practitioners say.

While exact figures are hard to establish, nearly one third or between 29 and 34 per cent of all female cancer in Sudan is breast, according to the Radio Isotope Centre Khartoum (RICK). RICK, established in 1964, is the older of two institutions offering radiotherapy treatment in all of Sudan, treating 8,000-10,000 new cases every year.

Some 80-85 per cent of breast cancer patients show up for care during the disease's latest stages, when it has spread to the armpits, liver, lungs or bones and chances of healing are meager, according to RICK oncology professor Dr. Kamal Hamed.

"This is attributed to many factors -- mainly poverty, illiteracy, lack of effective health education and screening, the large size of the country and the poor distribution of limited medical resources," he said.

Professionals at Khartoum's new private hospital, the Khartoum Breast Care Centre (KBCC), which offers diagnosis, surgical and chemotherapy treatment, noted a similar trend. According to Dr. Hania Fadl, the centre's founder and wife of Sudanese-British entrepreneur Mohamed Ibrahim, Sudanese women tend to avoid doctors and favour oblivion.

"Even educated, middle-class women don't want to come for mammography (an X-ray screening tool for breast cancer). They ... don't want to know," she said.

"I don't think in the last thirty-some years any real improvement in breast care awareness has happened (in Sudan)," said Dr. Hania, who left the country in the 1980s to study and work in diagnostic radiology in the United Kingdom. She established KBCC with financial support from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation after realizing the need for specialized facilities in Sudan.

"Women are afraid of the term breast cancer," KBCC Medical Director Dr. Ibrahim Balla said, adding that this creates a catch 22 situation for breast cancer prevention.

"As most Sudanese women get diagnosed with already advanced breast cancer when the prognosis of the disease is very unfavourable, women think breast cancer means death," which further prevents women from attending check-ups, he noted.

Some women also fear losing their

breast due to the illness, and part of their femininity.

"They are afraid they wouldn't be able to give birth after the operation," said breast cancer survivor and member of Woman's Initiative Group (WIG) Mahassin Osman, who had to undergo a mastectomy in 1993 at the age of 28.

After noticing a lump in her breast while she was lactating her third child, Ms. Osman saw a doctor, who misdiagnosed her and only seven months later referred her for surgery. First a part and later all of her left breast was removed. She then had to travel to Saudi Arabia for radio and chemotherapy treatment for six months, as there were no functioning machines in Sudan at that time.

Affected women often got abandoned by their husbands, who shortly after the surgery married another wife, Ms. Osman said, reinforcing women's bias against the disease. Cultural practices can also aggravate the illness. "One in five women, when they find a lump, go to a local healer," Dr. Hamed said, using herbs and delaying clinical diagnosis and treatment.

Dr. Fadl emphasized that awareness-raising and regular screening were most important in fighting the disease. KBCC had organized sessions for private company employees that urged women in their 40s and above to get biennial mammography tests, which can significantly reduce the morbidity rate.

Teaching breast self-examination with the help of WIG and enabling doctors across the country to detect the disease in the earliest stage were primary goals, Dr. Hamed said. He added that a training of trainers course would be essential to reach women in closed-off rural areas, where primary health care was basic.

"There is little funding for research, awareness-raising, maintenance of health facilities and diagnostic and treatment devices," said the RICK professor. In early June, his centre had only two functioning

radiotherapy machines out of five, and a three-month waiting list. Spare parts were rather costly and hard to obtain.

As long as communicable diseases like malaria and tuberculosis were taking large tolls in Sudan, however, authorities gave less emphasis and financial support to cancer awareness, said Dr. Hamed.

"We have to invest more in breast care awareness," noted Dr. Nadir Saad, Khartoum State Ministry of Health Director of the Non-communicable Diseases Control Programme. While the ministry had started an early detection training programme at 100 health centres, resources were limited for all non-communicable diseases.

Health practitioners unanimously agree on the need to train midwives and general practitioners to catch the disease in time, but much responsibility lies with the individual too.

"I advise all women to conduct self-examination at the end of each menstruation and see a doctor if they find anything abnormal. They shouldn't be afraid," said Ms. Osman, who gave birth to her fourth child five years after surgery. "I am an example ... I have completely recovered."

Story and photo: Eszter Farkas

New equipment at Khartoum Breast Care Centre.



Rafting on the White Nile

A dozen people traveling in two inflatable rafts recently made a five-day voyage down the White Nile River, beginning just north of the Eastern Equatoria State town of Nimule.

An exploratory mission to assess prospects for developing adventure tourism attractions along the river, the expedition was led by veteran adventure tourism guides Peter Meredith and Jane Dicey of the Uganda-based African Rivers company.

The guests included UNMIS Regional Coordinator for Southern Sudan David Gressly and Bedouin Hotel Managing Director Andrew Belcher. Among animals sighted during the trip were crocodiles, elephants and hippos.

A native of Kenya who founded the firm Southern Sudan Affiliated Services when he moved to Juba in 2006, Mr. Belcher was instrumental in organizing the trip that started near Fulla Falls.

The rafting party represented a wide cross-section of nationalities, including South Africa, Kenya, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Uganda and Liberia.

At journey's end in Juba, participants were enthusiastically welcomed ashore by Daniel Wani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism in the Government of Southern Sudan.

Photo: Tim McKulka



Photo: Tim McKulka



Photo: Isaac Gideon



Photo: Isaac Gideon



Photo: Tim McKulka

Reuniting families

The number of children on Southern Sudanese streets has been steadily rising, as cattle raids, intertribal fighting, hunger or abuse drive these young people from their homes.

In reversing this growing problem, the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) has been working with the global Child Protection Working Group since 2008 to trace these children and reunite them with their parents.

The government-owned Juba Orphanage in Central Equatoria State, which has been struggling to cope with rising numbers and demands it places on accommodation and food, is keen to reunite the children it can with their guardians.

The facility has accommodation for 25-30 children, but is currently housing 70 (24 girls and 46 boys), with newcomers constantly arriving, according to Orphanage Director Abdul Wajo.

So far, 30 children from the orphanage have been reunited with their families in Central Equatoria State, the director said.

But many more young people are still surviving on Juba streets. Figures are imprecise, but the GoSS Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare estimates that the number of children

living on Juba streets could be over 300.

The ministry's Director General, Regina Ossa Lullo, explained that the regional government had urged all southern states to expedite their work in protecting children and minimize what she described as an outbreak of children on streets across the region.

Since 2009, the GoSS has trained over 100 social workers who are expected to provide care and counselling to children as they await reunification.

Ms. Lullo added that state specific child protection working groups are tracing guardians of existing street children in all southern states.

"Tracing is the most difficult process but with support from the international and national partners we will overcome the challenges," Ms. Lullo added.

Lemi Justine is one of the tracing success stories. The 13-year-old boy lived at Juba Orphanage for six years before he was finally reunited with his mother, Catherine Dudu, who works as a stone crusher in Jebel, just outside Juba town.

Tracing is only the first step, however, and no guarantee of successful

reunification, especially if guardians are unable to provide basic care.

Young Justine, for example, has become a child labourer since returning to his mother. The basic school student is working as a stone crusher to pay for his upkeep and school fees.

"I used to study freely at the centre, they paid for everything, but now I and my mother have to crush stones to pay for my school fees," the boy said. "I have to do this hard work, so that I go to school."

Mr. Wajo said some guardians refused to take back their children, citing lack of shelter and basic needs like food, education and health, but accepted the responsibility after pressure from state governments.

Ms. Lullo said the GoSS was identifying empowerment tools for families to ensure they were self-reliant and capable of providing their children with basic needs.

"As a government, we are planning to provide a long-term mind shift to our people so that they can prevent poverty and hunger, which send these children off onto streets," Ms. Lullo said.

Ojja Bosco

CAPTIONS:

Left and right: Street children in Juba.

Middle : Lemi Justine crushing stones at Jebel Kujur, Juba.



Photo: Isaac Gideon



Photo: Ojja Bosco

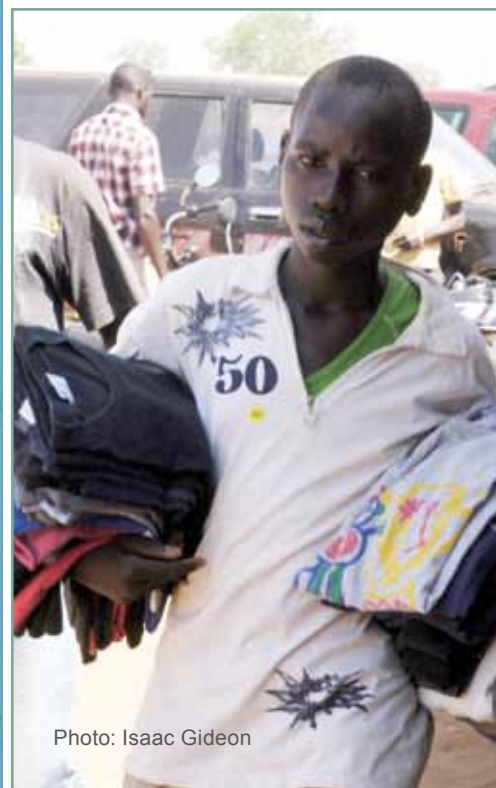


Photo: Isaac Gideon

Ban reviews border issues, proposes southern mission

While much has been achieved during the six years of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), key security aspects along the north-south common border have yet to be resolved, Secretary-General (SG) Ban Ki-moon recently states in a special report.

Remaining issues include "settlement of the Abyei question, popular consultations on the future status of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, and addressing the issue of former Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) troops from and in those two states," the report says.

Besides the parties' "desire to control and protect oil- and mineral-rich areas as well as strategic defensive locations", other contentious issues include "access to water, agricultural schemes, grazing land, historical tribal boundaries and political constituencies", according to the report.

Some of these should be tackled by popular consultations, a CPA-granted mechanism for Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, but the process has been delayed and likely "will go beyond the framework of the (CPA) and its timelines", the SG says.

Complying with the CPA, armed forces of the two parties to the accord – Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) – agreed to redeploy respectively to north and south of the current borderline. However, full redeployment might not be completed before the end of the interim period, the report says.

Addressing the volatile situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, the Secretary-General says concerned parties are awaiting assurances about their concerns.

"SPLA combatants in and from the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile are seeking guarantees that their grievances against Khartoum will be addressed in the post-Comprehensive Peace Agreement political and security environment of northern Sudan." The report adds that militarization of these areas is a key source of tension.

Coming to the issue of Abyei, the report states that the disputed area is the greatest challenge to CPA implementation. "These highly militarized areas represent a dangerous flashpoint where conflict between

the armed forces and the (SPLA) could escalate very quickly."

[Only a few days after the report was published, the SAF took control of Abyei town following repeated clashes in the area. During the first week of June, fighting broke out in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan, and spread to surrounding areas. As *In Sudan* went to print, the security situation remained unstable in both locations.]

The report points to other outstanding issues, including citizenship, external debt, use and ownership of oil infrastructure and management of revenues.

Mr. Ban also recommends that the Security Council consider establishing, under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, a new mission strongly focused on protection of civilians, while maintaining that this is the sovereign responsibility of the government.

The new mission (whose suggested name is UN Mission in South Sudan, UNMISS) would build capacities and support the government in human rights, gender mainstreaming and, upon request, assist with the country's first elections slated to happen within four years.

To fall in line with the elections cycle, the mission's deployment timelines are imagined to be on a four-year basis and reviewed annually.

UNMISS would assist the South Sudanese government in security sector reform, demobilizing the SPLA and strengthening the South Sudan Police Service.

"During a period when the security apparatus is set to undergo a difficult transformation, South Sudan will continue to face recurrent community based conflicts," the report says. "The Government of Southern Sudan will need to address the lack of accountability, weak administration of justice and law enforcement, and a deficient prison system."

The mission will also be tasked to support the government in building capacity to protect civilians, using political, human rights, humanitarian, police, justice, correction and military tools.

"Where these efforts fail, and where Government security actors are unable to protect civilians, it is recommended that the mission be authorized, under Chapter VII of the Charter, to use force as a last resort to protect civilians in imminent threat of physical danger within its area of deployment and capability," the report says.

The mission, with a proposed military strength of 7,000, would be decentralized. The Juba office would be a strategic headquarters, engaging the government at the national level on policy issues. The majority of staff would be deployed across the 10 states of South Sudan, including at the county level as required, says the proposal.

Displaced persons around UNMISS conepound, Kadugli, Southern Kordofan State. Photo: Tina Turyagyenda



Rich in promise

A look at Red Sea State

The beautiful, turquoise waters of the Red Sea had ebbed by early June, leaving a large muddy area between water and land, which few members of large Sudanese families arriving at Port Arus resort ventured close to.

"People here don't care about the sea," said the resort's dive master, who goes by the name of Jungle. "They just come here to eat and drink tea."

While the coral reefs of the Red Sea are famous for their unspoiled beauty and schools of playful dolphins can be viewed a 10-minute boat ride from the resort, about 30 kilometres north of Port Sudan, the number of divers remains limited.

Enthusiasts have increased recently, up from about 2,630 divers in 2010 to some 3,450 during the first half of this year, but numbers are still low, said Khalid Sadan, deputy manager for tourism administration at the state Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Wildlife.

In comparison, the east Egyptian coast is believed to receive at least one million divers annually.

But with its good roads and perfect mix of water and mountains, Red Sea State appears to have all the makings of a popular tourist destination.

"The *wali* (governor) said tourism is the state's opportunity," State Minister of Information Nour Osham said in his Port Sudan office, adding that there were plans to boost the sector.

When Mohamed Tahir Eila was appointed governor in 2005, he identified three main areas of long-term development, Mr. Osham said, including roads, electricity and water, which would also benefit tourism.

"Before, some 80 per cent of the state budget was spent on government expenditure and only 20 on development," the information minister said, "but now 70

per cent is spent on development."

Looking around the state capital of Port Sudan, one sees proof of infrastructural development. Most of the town's roads are paved and relatively clean, as the use of plastic bags has been banned in the state.

About 50 per cent of the town's population of half a million now had access to clean, piped water, thanks to a dam built at a water source found in the area's Arba'at mountains, the minister said.

Electricity had been channelled to the port town from the Marawi dam since 2009 and the main towns of the state's 10 localities had power through generators, added the minister.

A looming concern remained, however, that modernization of the port – also on the agenda – would cost the jobs of some 50,000 local labourers.

With the lack of jobs in agriculture and the service sector, this would compound the already high unemployment rate that many residents complain about.

Among the most highly populated states in Sudan, Red Sea has one of the lowest socio-economic indicators in the country, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

UNDP put the state's population at 725,000 in 2005, but the information minister said it had risen to 1.4 million by this year.

"Nearly half of the state's population lives in Port Sudan city, making the urban unemployment rate exceptionally high," the UNDP website states.

"People hope that after 9 July (when Southern Sudan is slated to officially secede), things will change and South Sudan will pay for using our refinery and port," state resident Ali Ismail said in one of Port Sudan's few cafés.

He added that many were hoping for more development, better education and health care, neglecting to acknowledge

that Sudan would face a major oil revenue loss with separation of the south.

A teacher by profession, Mr. Ismail made ends meet with freelance translation jobs from Arabic to English, as he had failed to find a position at a public school and considered private school salaries insufficient.

To get by, many unemployed Red Sea residents had opted for artisanal gold mining in the mountains or worked in the local transportation business, he added.

"They drive taxis, *tuktuks* (rickshaws) or buses, which they rent from the government," Mr. Ismail said. "Many of them have secondary education."

Officials recognize that the tourist industry could benefit the area. "Tourism is one factor of focus to generate more jobs," State Minister of Tourism, Environment and Wildlife Abdalla Kona said.

But he added that some policies would need revision to attract both investors and tourists. These included reduced tourism fees and increased freedoms, like being allowed to take photos (for which one presently needs a government permit).

Some also claim that tourism may fail to economically benefit the Beja, the state's aboriginal residents. They are a nomadic people, who traditionally herd camels and goats, Mr. Ismail said, and dislike change or accept it only very slowly.

When the British established Port Sudan in the early 1900s to accommodate increased port activity, which the old port of Sawakin was unable to cope with, they employed Sudanese from other regions, according to Mr. Ismail. The Beja still found it hard to land jobs in offices of banks, the army, police or state administration, he added.

Story and photos:
Eszter Farkas



CAPTIONS:

Top: Men working with fish in Port Sudan.

Right: Fresh fish at Port Sudan's new market.

Bottom: Shaded dining area of Port Arus resort on Red Sea.



Wave of violence

Conflict erupts in Southern Kordofan

Just a month after Southern Kordofan State's delayed elections took place, violence between forces allied with the parties to the 2005 peace agreement broke out and spread across its localities.

At dawn of 5 June, fighting broke out in Kadugli town when gunmen looted a police station and stole arms. Hours later, a firefight broke out some 40 kilometres southeast of the capital in Um Durrein.

The next day serious clashes began between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in Kadugli, causing residents to flee the area by the thousands.

"With fighting going on, all I could think of was saving my life and my child's. I don't know if (my husband) is alive or dead," said Zahia Mugadan, who walked more than 17 kilometres from Drjaltala village to a protected area established by UNMIS adjacent to its compound.

Women and babies cried as two jet fighters flew over the protected site in the morning of 8 June, disappearing into the mountains and then returning shortly after.

"We've never seen this before," said a displaced person, Khamis Aldugal. "Even in the war before, it was not like this," he added, shaking his head.

Despite some socio-economic progress achieved over the past few years, many analysts have considered Southern Kordofan a tinderbox with its divided political forces and large number of residents still carrying guns.

Although state elections were finally held in early May (due to contested 2008 census results for the state), the outcome was debated by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

"The elections should not be a make-or-break process," said Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haile Menkerios, while visiting the state before elections kicked off. "This is a state where supporters of both (parties) exist. It should not be a winner-takes-all election."

Polling kicked off on 2 May, and the situation remained calm as ballot counting was completed in constituencies and results were brought to the State High Committee (SHC) in Kadugli.

But tension then began to mount, with the SPLM contesting new methods of aggregation introduced by the SHC and staging several walk-outs that delayed announcement of the results, scheduled for 8 May. Kadugli town was suddenly awash with armed forces from both sides and businesses in the capital closed, afraid that fighting might start.

On 15 May, the National Elections Commission announced National Congress Party (NCP) candidate Ahmed Haroun as governor, with 33 legislative State National Assembly seats going to the NCP and 21 to the SPLM.

However, SPLM candidate Abdulaziz al-Hilu maintained that the election was rigged. He has been widely quoted in the media as saying that his party does not recognize the results or the authority that they ushered into power.

But Ahmed Haroun seemed determined to set up and run the new government without the SPLM. State council members, interpreting the constitution, said that if those elected to the state assembly (on the SPLM ticket) did not attend the first five sessions, their membership would be cancelled and a new election for these seats organized.

Political disagreement and recent violence seem to jeopardize the already delayed, last outstanding element of the CPA -- popular consultations.

The peace agreement granted popular consultations, a complex and according to some Sudan analysts, weak mechanism, to both Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states to review whether CPA provisions have been properly fulfilled.

Stalled in Blue Nile State, popular consultations failed to kick off in Southern Kordofan due to the lagging elections. Instead, people's worst fears came to pass when violence broke out in the state.

As *In Sudan* went to print, an estimated 53,000 people were displaced from the state and unknown numbers dead or missing. Aerial bombardments were taking place at various locations and fighting had spread to 11 of the state's 19 localities.

Humanitarian agencies strove to provide assistance, in spite of tough conditions, including closure of the Kadugli airport by SAF and lack of access to agency warehouses.

In a statement on 11 June, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned about the deterioration of the security situation and escalation of fighting in Southern Kordofan, and called "on all concerned to cease hostilities and provide their full cooperation to UNMIS and humanitarian agencies in addressing the needs of affected civilians".

Tina Turyagyenda

Displaced persons gathered around UNMIS compound in Kadugli. Photo: Paul Banks.



NEWS BRIEFS

Peacekeepers' day observed across Sudan



UNMIS observed International Day of UN Peacekeepers, globally marked on 29 May, over several days with medical camps, tree planting and a medal award ceremony in various Sudanese towns.

In the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal, peacekeepers' day was marked at the SOS Children's Village on 29 May, where 92 orphans received free medical examination and vaccinations as a collaborative effort by the State Ministry of Health, UNMIS and UNICEF.

The Khartoum and Abyei offices celebrated by reading the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message marking the day, and with a medal award ceremony.

Marking the day in Yambio on 30 May, Western Equatoria State, the UNMIS Bangladeshi contingent cleared land allocated by local authorities for the resettlement of 101 returnee households.

In Wau, Western Bahr El-Ghazal State, a procession of UNMIS staff and residents led by the local police band marched from Freedom Square to the town stadium on 30 May, and in the Jonglei capital of Bor, UNMIS planted 66 different species of trees.

In Eastern Equatoria State on 30 May, UNMIS planted trees at Torit Secondary School and held a free medical camp together with the State Ministry of Health.

In recent months, over 40 UN peacekeepers have lost their lives while serving in Afghanistan, Haiti, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Darfur.

Security Council: Forces must withdraw from Abyei

Members of the UN Security Council on 22 May called on the Sudanese government during a four-day visit to Sudan to halt its military operations and withdraw immediately from the Abyei area, which was seized on 21 May.

Council members also deplored the unilateral dissolution of the Abyei administration, calling for it to be reestablished by mutual agreement.

Although the council had been scheduled to speak with

Sudanese Vice-President Ali Osman Taha and Foreign Minister Ali Karti, the meetings were cancelled.

"This was an unfortunate and regrettable opportunity missed by the Government of Sudan to share with the Security Council its perspective on what is clearly a very worrying crisis that has evolved," said US Permanent Representative to the UN Susan Rice. She added that the council regretted that it had had no opportunity to hear the government's view on a successor mission to UNMIS after 9 July.

Constitution-making forum discusses key issues

Government and civil society members discussed key issues that Sudan's new constitution should embrace during a two-day forum in Khartoum that ended on 25 May.

The forum, organized by UNMIS and several UN agencies as well as the national Advisory Council for Human Rights, aimed at supporting the constitution-making process in Sudan by examining experiences of other countries and discussing key issues in the Sudanese context.

The Bill of Rights, included in Sudan's Interim Constitution of 2005, protection of minorities, fundamental rights of individuals, form of governance, distribution of wealth and peaceful transfer of power were some elements that needed attention, said Presidential Advisor Badria Suleiman.

The new constitution, to take effect presumably in the years following the interim period of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), should build on previous constitutions of Sudan and presidential decrees as well as the CPA, the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement and comparative experiences, noted Secretary General of the National Council for Training Omer Awadallah.

Mr. Awadallah emphasized that language, faith and culture should be considered in the constitution, embracing diversity. On the form of governance and possible decentralization, he said that a "balance between authority of each state and a central power should be maintained".

Lidder visits Jonglei State

Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan (DSRSG) Jasbir Lidder visited Jonglei State on 11 May, where he met senior state government representatives and discussed rising insecurity as well as the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

In recent months, Jonglei has experienced widespread insecurity caused by inter-community cattle rustling. According to the UN, more than 45 inter-communal attacks and cattle raids attributed to armed Murle tribesmen occurred during the first quarter of 2011.

DSRSG Lidder said the purpose of his visit was to review current challenges and how the UN, state and county authorities can improve their collaboration.

Governor Kuol Manyang said that cattle rustling, armed civilians, rebel militia groups, ill-equipped security forces and poor roads as well as communication infrastructure were among the biggest security challenges facing the state.

