



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

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Media Monitoring Report, 29 April 2007

(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS :

UN/ Agencies/ Partners

UN refugee chief says conflict in Darfur "complex"

(AlMashaheer via BBC Monitoring) The UN high commissioner for refugees, Mr Antonio Guterres, on Thursday [26 April] called for a political solution to the conflict in Darfur. Guterres who is in his second visit to the region announced at a press conference in Khartoum that "Without a solid peace agreement, it will be very difficult to solve the problem in all its dimensions.

Guterres who also visited eastern Sudan where more than 136,000 Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees live described the conflict in Darfur as "complex". Guterres added that the situation has political, tribal and ethnic dimensions and that "the equilibrium in Darfur between the different groups that existed for centuries must be restored."

Guterres was responding to a question on the recent agreement between the government and the UN on plan to increase support for the African Union force in Darfur. Guterres said the agreement is a major step forward and hope these negotiations will be followed by another success, paving the way for the third phase of the plan, which envisions a hybrid UN-AU force of 20,000 to be deployed in Darfur.

UNHCR chief vows to improve conditions in East Sudan camps

(AP, 26 Apr. Kilo 26, Sudan) The U.N. refugee agency chief said Thursday he was appalled by the living conditions refugees have endured for decades in eastern Sudan camps and vowed his agency would remedy the situation within the coming year.

Antonio Guterres was on a one-day visit to the forgotten zone of eastern Sudan along the border with Eritrea and Ethiopia, where UNHCR caters for most of the 133,000 refugees chased to this region by decades of violence.

The UNHCR chief said he was working to reduce his agency's operating costs so that more funds could be directed to neglected areas like eastern Sudan.

South Sudan donates \$55m to UN rebuilding projects

(ST, 28 Apr. Juba) The UN World Food Programme's innovative rebuilding projects in Southern Sudan – which are helping to restore food independence for people in the region – have received a generous US\$55 million pledge from the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), the WFP said in a press statement.

In a meeting between WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran and southern Sudan's Minister of Roads and Transport, Rebecca Garang Nyandeng, the minister announced that the GoSS will donate US\$41 million to WFP's Road Building and Demining Programme plus an additional US\$14 million towards refurbishing several airstrips in southern Sudan.

Sudan releases Darfur-bound aid

(Sudan TV via BBC Monitoring,) The WFP has welcomed the steps taken by authorities on its food shipment of 100,000 tons of sorghum. It said in a press statement that the transportation of the food from Port Sudan has started and that it was on its way to be delivered to the beneficiaries.

The WFP office in Khartoum expressed appreciation for Sudan's constructive dealings in this regards and expressed understanding for the measures adopted by the Government in this connection.

The Standards and Specifications Authority said that the decision to release the WFP maize shipment came after examination proved that the shipment was fit for human consumption. The authority's director stressed the authority's concern for the safety of the citizens.

Sudanese minister, UN envoy discuss Darfur

(Sudan Radio via BBC Monitoring, 25 Apr.) Minister of State at the Foreign Ministry Al-Sammani al-Wasilah has discussed with the resident UN representative [coordinator] in Sudan Manuel da Silva the activities undertaken by the UN in Darfur through its various organizations and how to channel these activities in the best interest of the people of Darfur.

The meeting also discussed efforts to incorporate Abuja holdouts into the Darfur peace process.

[National radio also played a soundbit, according to BBC Monitoring, of the latest press conference by United Nations Mission in Sudan Spokesperson in which she assured reporters that United Nations Mission in Sudan will continue its activities in Sudan. The statement was in answer to a question on whether or not UNMIS will continue activities against the background of whether it should be given a 3 or 6 months mandate renewal by the Security Council].

Sudanese official urges relief groups to separate aid from politics

(Sudan TV via BBC Monitoring, 25 Apr.) Speaking over Sudan TV on 25 April, the Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid, Hasabu Abd-al-Rahman, has called upon Sudan's partners and foreign organizations active in the humanitarian domain in Darfur to commit themselves to the principles of humanitarian work and to the State's general directives in this regards.

Hasabu praised the performance of a number of national and foreign organizations in Darfur. He stressed the improvement in humanitarian conditions in Darfur's three provinces.

In a later development, *Akhir Lahza* daily [sourced via BBC Monitoring, 26 Apr.] reports that the Humanitarian Aid Commission has criticized breached committed by foreign politicians who enter Darfur without the knowledge of the state governments and pointed to the British ambassador Ian Cliff who had entered Southern Darfur State without its government's permission.

UN urges Egypt to reopen probe on Sudanese refugees killing

(AFP, 27 Apr.) A United Nations human rights panel on Friday called on Egypt to reopen an investigation into the deaths of 27 Sudanese refugees who were killed when police stormed their camp in Cairo in 2005.

The UN committee on the protection of the rights of migrant workers said in a report in Cairo that the Egyptian inquiry had been closed without clarifying the circumstances leading to the deaths.

"It also expresses its concern at reports that eyewitnesses were not heard in the course of the investigation," the UN body said after a meeting here examining Egypt's treatment of migrants.

"The Committee recommends that the investigation into the events of 30 December 2005 be reopened in order to clarify the circumstances leading to the deaths of the Sudanese migrants," it added.

The Transition Debate

UN, Sudan agree on urgency of decision over Darfur force

(AP, 26 Apr. UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Thursday that he and Sudan's president have agreed on the need for a quick decision to deploy a new United Nations-African Union joint peacekeeping force in the Darfur region.

Ban told The Associated Press in an interview that he spoke to President Omar al-Bashir by phone this week about getting U.N. troops and equipment into Darfur to beef up the 7,000-strong AU force.

The secretary-general cautioned that there was no agreement yet from the Sudanese to deploy the hybrid force but stressed that an agreement is needed not only on the military track but on the political track.

Egypt offers troops for Darfur peacekeeping mission

(Reuters, 28 Apr. Cairo) Egypt has informed the United Nations of its readiness to contribute several hundred troops as part of a U.N. support package to bolster a struggling African Union peacekeeping force in Sudan's war torn Darfur region.

Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in a statement received on Saturday that Egypt had offered to contribute over 500 infantry, as well as between 200 and 300 signal and transport corps, 100 observers and 30 officers.

The statement added that Egypt was willing to consider contributing additional troops.

CPA

Parties to the CPA fail to resolve Abyei

(AlSudani) The National Congress Party and the SPLM have failed to resolve the issue of Abyei following two meetings of their leadership committee.

In the meeting jointly chaired by President Bashir and Vice-President Kiir yesterday, the two sides agreed on the priorities for legislature in the legislative review process. They also agreed that the border demarcation committee review activities.

SPLM Secretary-General, Pagan Amoum, told the press following the meeting that the meeting managed to overcome a number of issues such as the issue of the Petroleum Commission and the Other Armed Groups. On the OAGs' he said, the two sides agreed on a timeline to demobilise these forces. He did not give details. The two sides, he added, also agreed to implement the Security Arrangements and to complete redeployment of the forces by 9 July this year.

Amoum expressed hopes that the two sides will be able to reach agreement over the Abyei issue and to implement the Protocol on Abyei before the next meeting of the leadership council that takes place from 27 to 29 May this year.

Government of National Unity

Sudanese leader receives investigation report into recent Khartoum incidents

(SUNA via BBC Monitoring, 28 Apr.) The president of the republic, FM Umar al-Bashir, today received the report of the committee investigating the Al-Muhandisin incidents which occurred in the capital in the last week of March.

During his meeting at the Guest House with the members of the investigation committee, which was led by Dr Haydar Ahmad Dafallah, the president said that he would study the report as well as its recommendations and take the necessary steps. He praised the efforts of the committee.

Parliament calls for preservation of the rights of the Muslim minority in southern Sudan

(AlIntibaha) The National Assembly has called on the GoSS to form a special committee for the welfare and protection of the Muslim minority in all states of southern Sudan.

Experts participating at a symposium organised by the parliamentary committee on peace and reconciliation in collaboration with the UNDP also called for the non-politicization of religion.

Konare to arrive in Khartoum

(AlRai AlAam) African Union Commissioner Alpha Oumar Konare jets in today on a special Sudanese flight to attend a meeting between the African Union and the Sudan government.

Konare comes on the invitation of President Bashir, sources say. The sources say the agenda for the meeting is not known but believe it could be in relation to the developments in Darfur.

National de-mining body to destroy 4,000 landmines in Khartoum North tomorrow

(AlAyaam) Authorities will be destroying 4,000 landmines from the army depots. This will take place tomorrow at the remote area of el-Sileit in Khartoum north.

The director of the National Center to Ban Landmines in Sudan says that the step is in line with the Ottawa agreement on the non-proliferation of landmines of which the Sudan is a signatory.

Southern Sudan

World Bank warns South Sudan over debt

(ST, 26 Apr. Khartoum) The World Bank head in South Sudan, Surendra Agarwal, has advised the GoSS to be "cautious about how they take on debts, and the conditions on those debts".

The World Bank official was reacting to unconfirmed reports of major new borrowing to cover holes in the 2007 budget revealed Friday 20 April.

The Acting Minister of Finance, Gabriel Changson Chang has disclosed unconfirmed reports from the World Bank that GoSS is planning to borrow up to \$550m. It is thought that the lenders could include China and United Arab Emirates, as well as the possible World Bank lending already reported by Changson Chang.

The Minister refused to confirm or deny the new reports.

Ugandan rebels threaten to walk out of peace talks

(The Daily Monitor, via BBC Monitoring, 28 Apr.) One day after the peace negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army and the government resumed, the rebels yesterday threatened a walk out alleging the UPDF [Uganda People's Defence Forces] shelled their positions.

The rebels yesterday refused to meet the government negotiating team led by Ruhakana Rugunda.

At 1.15p.m, the LRA team headed to chief mediator Riek Machar and presented a protest letter, saying the UPDF yesterday morning attacked two LRA positions in Magwi county in south Sudan. But the government delegation spokesman, Barigye-Bahoku, said the UPDF has no force in Magwi.

"May be these (LRA) are looking for excuses. But then why would they look for one?" he asked. "We have been waiting for them since morning. At the close of the day (Thursday) we agreed to meet first and work out a programme of action, even if the attacks happened they should have told us. So as far as we are concerned we are still waiting for them."

In the LRA protest letter to Dr Machar by LRA delegation chairman Martin Ojul, the rebels said the UPDF attacked their positions yesterday at Got Rwot near Parajok, from 8.30 a.m. and Obbo Hills, all in Magwi county. The letter was copied to the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on the areas affected by the LRA insurgency Joaquim Chissano and the African Union Observer Mission at the talks.

The LRA had declined to say whether they will continue with the talks or not, insisting that attacks must stop.

Permanent observer mission to build confidence in Uganda peace talks

(The Daily Monitor, via BBC Monitoring, 28 Apr.) Half of the military observers monitoring the cessation of hostilities agreement between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army rebels are to take permanent residence in the jungle in Ri-kwangba on the Sudan-Democratic Republic of Congo border.

According to chief mediator and South Sudan Vice-President Riek Machar the deployment of a permanent observer mission in Ri-kwangba, the LRA assembly point, is a confidence building measure to facilitate peace negotiations in Juba.

Dr Machar said Zambia is the last entrant into the cessation of hostilities observer mission after South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique, DRC and Kenya.

First vice-president addresses workshop on election law

(*Sudan Radio via BBC Monitoring, 26 Apr.*) First Vice-President and President of Southern Sudan government Lt-Gen Salva Kiir Mayardit addressed on 26 April a workshop on election law held by the National Constitutional Review Commission in Juba.

The launch of NCRC activities in the south is especially important and has generated a great deal of interest on the part of the southern government.

Sudan's Eastern Equatoria operates without constitution - minister

(*ST, 27 Apr. Juba*) Eastern Equatoria State operates without any legal Constitution, Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional development of Government of Southern Sudan, Justice. Michael Makwir has declared.

Speaking at press conference over southern Sudan television in Juba, the minister said Eastern Equatoria State has a major problem of governance and lack of constitution which the speaker refuses to let the governor sign because of their personal difference. The interest and concern for people in the state must be above individual's interests, remarks Makwir.

He stated that is assuming to have a constitution because the Government of National Unity minister of Constitutional Affairs, Mohamed al-Mardi, wrongly issued compatibility certificate to the delegation of Eastern Equatoria state, after forcing them to amend the draft in Khartoum without referring it back to state assembly for genuine amendment.

Justice Makwi noted that Eastern Equatoria state has a draft constitution of year 2006, but it needs to be amended by the state assembly in order to reflect year 2007 but it was never presented to the governor for endorsement.

Rumbek graduates 104 wildlife forces

(*ST, 28 Apr. Rumbek*) Rumbek has graduated 104 wildlife soldiers who were under training for (6) six months. They are now to be distributed in to the National parks and reserves to be effective and to stop poaching and enforce wildlife laws.

Lakes State celebrated on Thursday April 26, the graduation of 104 Wildlife soldiers. The ceremony was attended by Southern Sudan government Minister of Environment Wildlife and Tourism James Loro, under secretary of Wildlife Mr. Alfred Akooi, Brig. Bol Akot, Commissioner of Rumbek Central County Abraham Makoi Bol Kodi, and others officials.

Fire breaks out at South Sudan census office in Juba

(*SudanTribune.com, 26 Apr.*) Fire broke out yesterday morning around 8:00 AM at the office of the Chairman of Southern Sudan Census, Statistics and Evaluation Commission in Juba, causing huge damage to the building and equipments, estimated at hundred of thousands of US Dollars.

The inside of the prefabricated building was engulfed in flames and thick smoke was seen coming out of the main entrance and windows just less than an hour before senior staff including the office secretary were due to arrive for work.

No one was hurt in the incident and initial police investigations have ruled out foul play with an electric short circuit being suggested as the likely cause.

Darfur/ Darfur Peace Agreement

46% of residents of W. Darfur in IDP camps

(*AlSudani*) The Governor of W. Darfur says his state has failed to meet the requirements for development. He attributes this to the lack of local resources and dependence on the funds sent from the federal government.

The governor who was addressing a meeting between the TDRA and the state government also pointed out the 46% of the residents of W. Darfur live in IDP camps

Opposition to launch campaign to pressure government on Darfur

(*AlSahafa*) The opposition National Forces Alliance spearheaded by the National Umma and Popular Congress Parties have declared intentions to launch an extensive international and regional campaign early next month to muster pressure against the government to accept the demands of the people of Darfur and resolve the problems there.

Darfur transitional body asks Bashir to join talks with holdout rebels

(*AlWatan via BBC Monitoring, 28 Apr.*) The temporary HQ of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority [TDRA] was opened yesterday in Al-Fashir. N. Darfur. The ceremony was attended by the chairman of the TDRA, Mani Arkoi Minawi, and [presidential advisor] Majdhub al-Khalifah in addition to the governors of the three Darfur states and heads of the four commissions.

Meanwhile, the chairman of the resettlement and reconstruction commission, Eng Ibrahim Madhibu, pointed out that the meeting discussed the authority's general guidelines, the agenda for upcoming meetings and work priorities. He added that the authority intends to submit a request to the President of the Republic requesting his participation in the upcoming negotiations with the Abuja non-signatories.

On the other hand, *AlAyaam* (*sourced from BBC Monitoring, 28 Apr.*) reports that the leader of the opposition SLM, AbdeulWahid Mohamed Nur, has down played the significance of the opening of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority describing it as a body created for 'positions and individuals' and with nothing to do with peace or Darfur.

Nur explained that the situation on the ground had deteriorated since the signing of the Abuja Agreement and that attacks against civilians had intensified, "therefore this authority makes no contribution because peace means the government stopping its attacks against civilians," Nur

explained. Nur further revealed that international efforts to bring war criminals in Darfur to justice were ongoing and stressed his movement's insistence that all criminals be tried at The Hague and said "this is a red line that cannot be overstepped."

Delegates arrive in Tripoli for Darfur conference

(*Libyan TV, Sudan TV via BBC Monitoring of 28 Apr.*) Delegations due to take part in the international conference on the situation in Darfur and the efforts to achieve peace in the province began arriving yesterday [in Tripoli].

The conference, hosted by the Great Jamahiriya, will begin today Saturday with the participation of representatives of the Sudan government, the African Union and UN as well as the non-signatory armed factions.

The Sudan delegation will be led by foreign minister Lam Akol.

Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi meanwhile on Saturday accused rebels in Darfur of seeking to internationalize the conflict. He also has urged the international community to stay out of the Darfur crisis.

"There are rebel groups in Darfur which are trying to involve the world in this issue," Agencies quote him as saying at an international conference on Darfur held in Sirte, 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of the Libyan capital.

Speaking at an international conference on Darfur held in Sirte, east of Tripoli, the Libyan leader said, "It is not in the interests of the international community to intervene in an affair in which one of the parties does not want a solution,".

He also said there were "other issues more grave than Darfur" and regretted they did not attract similar attention, without naming them.

Darfur NRF says not concerned by presence of rebel leader in Libya

(*ST, 28 Apr. N'Djamena*) A Darfur rebel coalition said not concerned by the presence of its leaders in Libya to attend an international meeting on Darfur crisis.

"The National Redemption Front (NRF) advises that it has not mandated Ibrahim Diraige for its representation at the Libyan Darfur Talks planned for April 28th 07" said a press release issued by the rebel group.

Darfur rebel group denounces arrest campaign by Chad

(*SMC via BBC Monitoring, 27 Apr.*) The National Redemption Front [NRF] has complained about the Chadian government's increased arrests of the Front's supporters in Chad.

Commander of the NRF forces in the eastern sector Dr Al-Sanusi Abd-al-Mutalib said that the Chadian authorities continued a campaign of mass arrests targeting the Front's supporters since the middle of April without notification of the NRF leadership

He rules out speculation that the spate of arrests had anything to do with the recent developments that saw Chadian authorities accuse three senior leaders of the NRF of leaking military intelligence to the Chadian opposition forces.

German parliament condemns Darfur crimes

(DDP, via BBC Monitoring, 27 Apr.) The Bundestag [lower chamber of the German Parliament] accuses the Sudanese Government of committing "most-serious crimes against humanity" in the Darfur conflict. Currently, the "world's greatest humanitarian catastrophe" is taking place in the West Sudanese province, says a joint motion by the grand coalition and the FDP [Free Democratic Party of Germany] and the Greens Group, which the Parliament passed on Friday [27 April].

Among other things, it calls on the Federal Government to support a possible expansion of UN sanctions or the imposition of EU sanctions against members of the Sudanese leadership.

Other Developments

International court gives Sudan till Monday to hand over suspects

(AlHayat, London) The ICC has asked the Sudanese government to clarify its position before the end of the current month on whether it would allow Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs Ahmad Harun and a commander in the Popular Defence Forces, Ali Kushayb, to appear before it on the accusations it has issued against them on committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. It said it would otherwise issue arrest warrants against them.

AlSahafa daily meanwhile reports that the Minister of Justice told the press yesterday that the ICC prosecutor knows full well that the Sudan will not change in its position rejecting to hand over Sudanese to be tried at the ICC.

