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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS :

The Transition Debate

Sudan government to meet to implement phase I of UN-AU peacekeeping mission

(AP – 23 Dec. Khrt.) Sudanese officials will meet Tuesday to implement the first phase of a limited U.N. role for the African Union peacekeeping force in the Darfur region, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Saturday.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who leaves office Sunday, said after Friday's agreement on the hybrid U.N.-AU force that he was taking "nothing for granted," given previous backtracking by the Sudanese government on deals for getting relief to the war-torn area.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Sadeq al-Magli said the government "agreed to meet on Tuesday for the immediate implementation of what has been agreed upon." He did not elaborate.

The state-run Sudan News Agency said the first phase included sending 105 military, 33 police officers and 45 civilian experts along with logistical support and communication equipment. It said those personnel would be under the command of the African Union mission.

Sudan has maintained that U.N. military and police sent to Darfur will serve only as experts and consultants and not as troops on the ground.

Al-Magli, however, said Sudan accepted the final phase but insisted the number of troops will be negotiated by the force commander and delegates from the U.N., African Union and Sudan.

Annan Hopeful of Sudanese Green Light to Deployment of Hybrid UN Force

(via Newsedge – 23 Dec. New York) SG Kofi Annan said today he was hopeful Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir would indicate as early as tomorrow that he has agreed to a full ceasefire in the war-torn Darfur region and to the eventual deployment of a hybrid force of United Nations and African Union (AU) peacekeepers.

In his farewell speech to the Security Council before he leaves office at the end of the month, Mr. Annan said he "fervently hope[s] that we are now at last close to rescuing the people of Darfur from their agony."

Earlier this week he dispatched a senior envoy, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, to Khartoum for talks with Mr. el-Bashir and other senior Sudanese Government ministers to clarify details of two recent agreements on how to end the widespread suffering in Darfur.

Mr. Annan told the Council that the reports he has received from Mr. Ould-Abdallah "encourage me to think we may tomorrow receive a green light from President Bashir for a full ceasefire, a renewed effort to bring all parties into the political process, and deployment of the proposed hybrid African Union-United Nations force to protect the population."

But the Secretary-General cautioned that it was important to wait to see the letter from Mr. el-Bashir that Mr. Ould-Abdallah will bring with him when he returns to New York.

"After so many disappointments I take nothing for granted. What I do know is that the Council will work, ably helped by my successor [Ban Ki-moon], on these and many other crises."

Mr. Ould-Abdallah and Mr. el-Bashir also discussed the outcome of a subsequent AU Peace and Security Council meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, which endorsed the conclusions reached in Addis Ababa.

Government says ready for a ceasefire with DPA non-signatories

(AlSahafa) The head of the Directorate for Peace at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says that UN envoy Ould Abdullah leaves Khartoum for New York later today with a message from President Bashir to the Secretary-General of the UN.

Ambassador el-Sadiq el-Magli said that Ould Abdullah was encouraging in his remarks on the contents of the letter that comes after positive talks with a number of senior government representatives including President Bashir. The ambassador added that the letter was a positive response to Mr. Annan's message and confirmed to what extent the Sudan government is committed to the peace process.

El-Magli further said that President Bashir said in his letter to Annan that the Sudan government is fully prepared to a ceasefire and end hostilities whenever the NRF shows readiness to do the same.

He pointed out that the signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (government, SLM-Minnawi and SLM-AbdulWahid) remained fully committed to the ceasefire agreement signed in N'Djamena and only the NRF continues to fight against government and SLA-Minnawi.

Sudan's Ambassador to Washington meanwhile told the BBC that the duties of an international force deployed to Darfur will only be confined to support to the African Union.

AlSudani daily has learnt from informed sources that government has accepted blue helmets for UN advisors who will be deployed alongside the AMIS but says that the African Union should be in charge of command. Sources also say that the government

has accepted that the UN financial and administrative system be the dominant system for such a mission.

On a “hybrid” force, the source added that government understanding of this is that the UN would participate with experts and not “boots on the ground”.

GoNU

Authorities tighten security in the capital

(*Allintibaha*) Security authorities are on high alert in Khartoum following information of a possible act of sabotage targeting some areas in Khartoum.

Some sources have however downplayed these threats and say that these are rumours meant to shaken confidence on the security organs.

Southern Sudan

Fifth session of peace talks between Uganda, LRA rebels ends in Juba

(*BBC Monitoring* – 23 Dec. **Sudanese Radio**) The fifth session of the negotiations between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army [LRA] rebels has ended in the southern town of Juba.

Vice President of the South Sudan government and chief mediator of the negotiations Dr Riek Machar addressed the closing session praising the efforts of the two sides in discussing the main issues.

For their part, the two negotiating sides expressed their appreciation for the southern Sudan government and its active role in the peace talks, and stressed their will to move forward in the negotiations in order to find a final solution to the conflict in northern Uganda and end the suffering of the Ugandan people.

Darfur

Seven killed as Darfur rebels, government clash

(*Reuters* – 24 Dec. **Khrt.**) Fighting between Darfur rebels and government forces near the northern town of Kutum has killed seven people and insurgents said on Sunday they shot down two army helicopters in the area plagued by violence.

"The government troops and Janjaweed militia attacked our positions and then attacked a village, killing five men and ... two women," Darfur rebel commander Jar el-Neby told Reuters via satellite telephone.

He said the government and their allied militia, known locally as Janjaweed, attacked rebel positions near Kutum three days ago and the village of el-Goba, about 16 km (10 miles) east of Kutum town on Friday.

In a separate statement sent to Reuters on Sunday, Darfur rebel official Esam el-Din Hajj said the insurgents had shot down two army helicopters during the clashes.

An army spokesman confirmed heavy clashes with the rebel National Redemption Front (NRF), but denied the attack on the village or that any helicopters or planes had been shot down.

"We did not use any helicopters or planes during the clashes so of course they could not shoot them down," the spokesman said.

"Four soldiers were killed and around 20-25 injured," he said, adding the rebels had attacked an army position in Shag al-Nakharah near Kutum.

Abdul Wahid wants immediate UN force to stop genocide in Darfur

(The Citizen) Speaking over phone from Paris yesterday, Sudan Liberation Movement leader Abdul Wahid Mohammed Nur called for an immediate deployment of UN peacekeepers in Darfur to stop the killing.

He said that wasting time on the debate over the composition of the force left many innocent people to die at the hands of terrorists.

He said the government of Sudan has a moral obligation to the nation and the world to clearly and decisively call for the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Sudan, otherwise the peace processes would continue to weaken.

National Redemption Front attack Shangili Toubaya Market N. Darfur

(Alwan) An armed group of the NRF raided yesterday the market in Shangili Toubaya in N. Darfur.

The force took off with loot estimated at about SD.5,000 000.

Meanwhile and in el-Fasher, 2 policemen were killed and 4 people injured by a group of unidentified men yesterday, reports *AlSahafa*.

The armed men had attacked a police vehicle on its way to distribute food and water at police posts in el-Fasher and escaped driving the police car.