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(By Public Information Office)

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UN/ Agencies

UN must send more troops to Darfur fast - commander (ST)

February 16, 2008 (EL-GENEINA) — The United Nations must deploy more troops quickly in west Sudan's war-torn Darfur region, even without their full equipment, or risk losing Darfuris' trust, a senior U.N. commander said on Saturday.

The most important first step for the U.N.-funded peacekeeping mission is to give displaced Darfuris confidence that the troops will protect them, said Balla Keita, the U.N.-AU commander of West Darfur, the most volatile part of the region.

"If everybody is waiting to be fully equipped according to U.N. standards it's going to take too long," Keita, a Senegalese, told Reuters.

"The countries in the U.N. need to be more flexible on standards and just focus on sending troops to reinforce what is on the ground so we can ... deliver something that the Darfuri people can see," he added.

Senegal, which has pledged a further battalion to the Darfur force, needs Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) from South Africa which will take six months to arrive, he said.

The shortage of troops in el-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, means the soldiers work every day often on both day and night patrols, he said.

(Reuters)

UN refugee agency alarmed after armed group prevents relocation of Darfurians (UN)

15 February 2008 – Unidentified gunmen today blocked attempts by the United Nations refugee agency to move 179 Darfurian families away from the volatile border region and into formal camps in eastern Chad, sparking concern among humanitarian officials.

The men gave no reason for blocking the relocation when staff with UN High Commissioner for Refugees and its aid partners attempted on Tuesday to begin boarding the refugees on trucks bound for Kounoungou, one of 12 camps the agency operates in the region, **UNHCR** spokesperson Jennifer Pagonis told reporters.

“This is deeply concerning and we are making every effort with the Chadian authorities to get these refugees moved quickly,” she said. “The situation is so serious that our representative in Chad is now at the border trying to find a solution to this problem.”

As many as 8,000 people – mainly women and children – have crossed into the Birak and Koruk areas of Chad following deadly militia attacks on three towns in West Darfur last week, and nearly all are currently living in makeshift conditions near the border.

Ms. Pagonis warned that the refugees are “extremely exposed and vulnerable. The area is highly insecure, with roaming armed groups posing a real threat to the refugees and aid workers.”

Notorious militia groups allied to the Sudanese Government and known as Janjaweed have been attacking villagers across Darfur since 2003 when rebels took up arms against the Government in the arid region. In the fighting since then more than 200,000 people have been killed and at least 2.2 million others displaced.

UNHCR said it has several trucks ready to begin the relocation process but is now awaiting approval from central authorities in Chad.

Ms. Pagonis said the agency faces “tough logistical challenges” in moving the refugees away from the border. In the meantime, basic items such as sleeping mats, blankets, jerry cans and soap will be distributed, along with tents and food.

Meanwhile, UNHCR is also preparing to start the first transfer of Chadian refugees from a site just over the border in neighbouring Cameroon to a better equipped site about 30 kilometres away in Maltam.

The refugees, who fled recent fighting in the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, have been living temporarily at a transit centre in Kousseri, close to the border. As many as 7,000 to 10,000 are living in the open there, while thousands of others have found shelter in schools and churches in Kousseri.

About 1,000 refugees are expected to be transferred tomorrow to Maltam, which can host up to 50,000 people at full capacity. UNHCR and its partners have begun building schools, health centres and latrines at the site and also started erecting tents.

Kibir (Governor of North Darfur): UNAMID will not succeed in Darfur (Khartoum Monitor)

Governor of Northern Darfur, Osman Mohamed Yousif Kibir, said the UNAMID will not achieve success in the region despite its abilities exceeding those of the AU force. The geographical environment is one of the factors that will hinder their success. In a press statement yesterday, Kibir said the security situation two years ago differs from now. Before, there were often 16 incidents occurring in a day, but now after three months this has reduced to one incident.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Institution of the Presidency resumes deliberations on Abyei (Sudan Vision)

By: Alsamani, At its meeting to be held today, to presided over by the President of the Republic and the two Vice Presidents, the Institution of the Presidency will seek to reach a solution that is satisfactory to all parties to put an end to tensions along contact areas.

Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Pagan Amum, described the recent developments in Abyei as regrettable, calling on the Miseria and Dinka to be keen on maintaining peace and to open up border areas to facilitate movement in their midst. He stressed that the Presidency of the Republic considers the Abyei file as one of its top priorities.

Amum further revealed that SPLM is working to open up roads before herders to move deeper into the South, denying that SPLM is considering establishment of a political secretariat in the region.

Akhbar AIYom Forum hosts Miseriya leaders over Abyei (Akhbar AIYom)

Akhbar AIYom's Forum hosted yesterday the Miseriya leaders in Khartoum and the al Muglad-based Amir Mukhtar Babo Nimir. Dinka Ngok Amir Kual Deng contributed over the phone to the debate over Abyei. Each party defended its position on the ABC report. However, the positive thing is that they agreed on the need for dialogue between the Miseriya and the Dinka to ensure peaceful coexistence between communities living in the area. They both accepted the idea of a

conference involving their neighboring tribes in north and south Sudan to settle the problems between the Miseriya and Dinka Ngok.

Miseriya declare Abyei independent State, appoint government (Rai AlShaab), AlAnsari our government to replace SPLM government headed by Edward Lino (Akhbar AlYom)

(Akhbar Alyoum)-Miseriya tribe influential leader Mohamed Omer Al-Ansari said Sunday that he had lined up the Cabinet of the government of his newly-formed State of Grand Bahr Al-Arab State with Abyie town as its capital.

Speaking with (Akhbar Alyoum Daily), Al-Ansari said his government, which he named as the Government of Peaceful Co-existence, was composed of five localities and includes besides the Wali, ministers, commissioners and advisors.

He added that he would assume the governorship, indicating that 16 other personalities would hold ministerial, commissioners and advisors portfolios.

Commenting on the move behind the establishment of the government, Al-Ansari said they were motivated by the same drives, which led Firs Vice-President Salva Kiir to decree the nomination of Abyie Administration under the Chairmanship of Edward Lino.

SPLA fires at vehicles carrying Miseriya, kills two women, injures four others in Kharassana area (AlWattan, AlIntibaha)

On Friday evening, the SPLA troops in al Kharassana area fired at a minibus carrying Miseriya, killed two women and caused serious injuries to four others. They four women have been taken to Hijleij hospital for medical treatment.

New rebel Nuba movement in South Kordofan targeting oilfields (AlRai AlAam)

A group of people from the Nuba Mountains, headed by Dr. Juma al Wakeel, yesterday said they have established a new armed group under the name of “The Central Movement for the Liberation of Sudan – Nuba Mountains Region”. Al Wakeel said to AlRai AlAam yesterday that the movement,s main targets are the oilfields and Government institutions. He the movement is based now at a triangle at Kordofan-Darfur borders. The movement calls for self-rule in the Nuba Mountains. We are against the CPA, said al Wakeel. Al Wakeel does not rule out coordination between his movement and Darfur rebels.

South Sudan customs to integrate federal authority (ST)

February 16, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan’s peace partners agreed to integrate south Sudan customs body to the federal customs authority in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Special Committee to organize non-oil revenue in southern Sudan, which one of the subcommittee of the NCP-SPLM Political executive Committee agreed to integrate customs department in southern Sudan to the federal customs authority.

In the past, the National Congress Party accused the SPLM of violating the CPA by collecting the customs taxes and not allowing the federal body from exercising its authority in the southern Sudan.

According to the agreement, southern Sudan government has to arrest collecting tax revenues

immediately and enable federal taxes to perform its role in the collection of taxes, federal stamps, business profits and Personal income. The party also agreed to finalize the inventory of vacant posts and filling it with people from the south, and to train the recruited cadres on the federal level.

Lual Lual Deng, Minister of State for finance said that the Committee agreed that the SPLM will be in charge with the protection of Customs personnel in the south.

At the time, the Committee also agreed that the Federal Minister of Finance will be responsible of customs exemptions.

The parties also agreed to realise study on customs tariff with the technical assistance of the World Bank.

He pointed out that customs revenue from the south will be deploying for development according to the presidential decree.

(ST)

Salva Kiir addresses inaugural session of meeting of organizing committee for second general conference of SPLM (SUNA)

Khartoum, Feb. 16 (SUNA) - First Vice President of the Republic Salva Kiir Mayardit has affirmed the importance of reaching agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress on a number of issues such as organization of political work and the elections act with agreement with the other political parties. Salva Kiir was addressing the inaugural session of the meeting of the organizing committee for the second general conference of the SPLM at the premises of the movement in Khartoum Saturday. He reaffirmed that there will be no return to war, pointing out that the SPLM wants a new Sudan that enjoys freedom and democracy without exclusion for anyone. Salva Kiir stressed in his address the importance of equality, democracy and political, cultural and social rights. He affirmed the endeavors of the SPLM and the National Congress and the other political forces for realizing peace. Salva Kiir stressed the importance of realizing peace in Darfur, calling for building confidence among all for realizing tolerance and development to reach unity. SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum, on his part, pointed out that the SPLM started changing into a political party after its signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, where it is spreading all over Sudan from east to west and from south to the north. He explained that members of the preparatory committee are from all states of Sudan, hoping that the committee would come out with good preparations for the conference. BT/BT

Workshop on role of press in upcoming census to be held (SUNA)

Khartoum, Feb 16 (SUNA)-A workshop on the role of press in the upcoming population census will be held on Monday at Sudan Journalists Union premises. Director General of Statistics Dr Yassin Abdeen, Ministry of Information and Communications Secretary General, Abdel-Dafie Al Khateeb, Head of Census information committee and Head of the Union Dr Mohi-Edeen Titawe will speak for the workshop. Mass media are kindly invited to attend the discussion. AH/ AH

Sudan's first vice-president urges political consensus on major issues (ST)

February 16, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — First Vice-President and Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) said it was crucial for the two peace partners to reach a political consensus with the rest of political forces in the country on the major political issues.

Speaking at the opening session of SPLM Convention organizing committee meeting on Sunday at the premises of the party in Khartoum, Salva Kiir Mayadrit stressed the importance of reaching an agreement between the SPLM and the National Congress Party (NCP) on a number of issues such as organization of political action and election law with the accord of other parties.

The SPLM Convention organizing committee started its six-day meeting (16 to 21 February) today at the headquarters of the party in Khartoum. Last month, Salva Kiir, designated a 36 member committee headed by James Wani Egga, the speaker of the southern Sudan parliament as chairman, and Abdelaziz El-Hilu as deputy chairman of the committee to prepare for the second conference of the party.

The Convention, which is planned to be held in May 2008, will be the first SPLM conference since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The organizing committee has to discuss decisive political and organisation issues like the SPLM transformation to a political party and ways to disconnect it from the SPLA, CPA implementation and Darfur crisis.

Indicating that no one wants to return to war, Salva Kiir said the SPLM wants to establish a New Sudan blessed with freedom and democracy without excluding anyone. He further asserted that Sudan will not unite as long as there were no equality or democracy and political, cultural and social rights.

He said after the transitional period, all the Sudanese must feel that they are equal and no discrimination between them so as to achieve unity stressing that the SPLM and the NCP are seeking to achieve peace in the country with the support of the other political forces.

Kiir added there will be no peace in Darfur unless there is real peace, and asked (we are preparing for the census in 2008 for next April, where the Darfur from this census?)

He further asserted on the need to build confidence among all to achieve harmony, tolerance and development to reach unity.

SPLM EVERYWHERE

Pagan Amum, the SPLM Secretary General said that the party began its transformation into a political party after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He disclosed that 7 million members have joined the party and the SPLM is spread all over the Sudan from the east, to the west and from south to the north.

He told the opening session of the organizing committee meeting that the members of the preparatory committee represent all states of the Sudan.

For his part, James Wani Egga the chairman of the organizing committee reiterated the SPLM commitment to the principle of self-determination with a choice of the people with unity or separation. He also said the SPLM attachment to its principles aiming at the liberation of all the Sudan.

Also spoke at the opening session, Ahmed Haroun (National Congress Party), Sadiq al-Mahdi (National Ummah Party), Taj Alsir Mohamed Saleh (Democratic Unionist Party), Mohammed Ibrahim Nugud (Communist Party) and Ibrahim Sanoussi (Popular Congress Party).

(ST)

Sudanese paper blocked over Chad columns (ST)

February 14, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese security agents prevented an opposition newspaper from being published on Thursday after it tried to print articles accusing the government of backing rebels in neighbouring Chad, journalists said.

Security officials arrived at the printing press publishing al-Rai al-Shaab in the early hours of Thursday morning, said Ashraf Mohamed, from the daily.

"They said we must cut two columns. Then they said the paper could not be printed," said Mohamed.

"It was because the columns were talking about the problems in Chad ... They said that the (Sudanese) government was participating in the trouble by supporting the rebels."

Sudan's media regulator, the National Press Council, declined to comment on the reported blockage of Al-Rai al-Shaab on Thursday and no one was immediately available for comment from Sudan's security services.

Al-Rai al-Shaab, which is linked to the opposition Popular Congress Party led by Hassan al-Turabi, did not appear on Khartoum newsstands on Thursday morning.

Sudan eased press censorship after a new constitution put in place at the end of Sudan's north-south civil war in 2005 guaranteed freedom of the press.

But there have been regular reports of newspapers coming under pressure over sensitive stories.

The Citizen newspaper, based in Sudan's southern capital Juba, said it had been temporarily shut down ten times, most recently over articles that the National Press Council said insulted Sudan's president.

Sudanese authorities confiscated 17,000 copies of al-Rai al-Shaab in August for violating a ban on reporting about a thwarted plot to attack Western embassies in Khartoum.

(Reuters)

Sudan First Vice-President, Eritra president agree to strengthen ties (ST)

February 15, 2008 (MASSAWA) – Sudanese First Vice-President and President of Southern Sudan Government paid a short visit to the neighbouring Eritrea where he discussed with the Eritrean President peace implementation and ways to promote bilateral ties.

Eritrea, an ally of the ex-Sudanese opposition forces and particularly to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) seemed angered to see its former Sudanese ally distanced it self

from Asmara and strengthen its ties with other countries even its foe Ethiopia.

Salva Kiir Mayadrit arrived yesterday to Asmara in his way back from Cairo to Khartoum. Kiir held talks with President Isaias Afwerki in Massawa on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and ways to improve ties between the Eritrean ruling party People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and the SPLM.

The parties reached an understanding to strengthen bilateral and mutual cooperation, in line with the historical and strategic relations between Eritrea and the South Sudan, at the government and political levels.

Speaking to the reporters following the meeting, Salva Kiir Myardit pointed out on his part that Eritrea's role is significant in promoting peace and stability in the Sudan, as well as in securing peace in the Horn region. He further stated "We are ready to work jointly with Eritrea to this end."

The Sudanese Ambassador to Eritrea, Salah Ahmed Al-Hassan, said in a press statement that Afwerki and Mayadrit agreed that Eritrea is to contribute to the development process in south Sudan, especially concerning implementation of infrastructural projects and women training plans. Ambassador Al-Hassan said that the two parties agreed on reactivation of the cooperation agreement which was signed between the SPLM and the Eritrean government recently.

Salva Kiir on Friday afternoon visited Massawa Port, during which he inspected its expansion, modernization and operational schemes. Besides, he visited the Pre-cast Housing and Bridges Construction Plant, during which he receive briefings by experts.

Meanwhile, PFDJ and SPLM delegations on Thursday 14 February evening discussed relations and cooperation between the two political forces.

"Both sides conducted extensive exchange of views regarding the Naivasha Agreement and its implementation, as well as the peace process in Darfur and the East Sudan Agreement. Furthermore, they agreed to continue such meetings," reported Shabait the official website of the Eritrean government.

Present at the meeting on the side of the SPLM delegation were Luka Biyong Deng, Minister for Presidential Affairs, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Regional Cooperation in the South Sudan government, and Yasir Arman Deputy Secretary General of the SPLM for northern sector.

(ST)

Ministerial reshuffle in NCP portfolios in GoNU (AISahafa)

1. Gen. Abdulrahman Saeed (National Democratic Alliance - NDA, not NCP), from Ministry of Sciences and Technology to Ministry of Federal Rule (Relations).
2. Dr. Ibrahim Ahmed Omer (Deputy President of NCP), previously NCP Secretary-General and Minister of Higher Education, Minister of Sciences and Technology.
3. Alzubeir Bashir Taha, from Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Agriculture

4. Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid (former Governor of Kassala State), Minister of Interior
5. Dr. Awad Ahmed al Jaz, moved from Ministry of Energy and Mining to Ministry of Finance
6. Alzubeir Ahmed Hassan, from Finance to Energy and Mining
7. Mohamed Ahmed Abu Kalabeesh, Minister of Animal Resources and Fisheries (previously Minister of State for Education)
8. Abdelbasit Sabdrat, Minister of Justice, moved from Ministry of Federal Rule

Ministers of State:

Alsimaih al Sidiq, Minister of State for Foreign Trade
Salman Suliman al Safi, Minister of State for Investment
Dr. Hassan Abu Asha, Minister of State for Health
Dr. Fathi Mohamed Khalifa, Minister of State for Education

GoSS

Sudan's Jonglei Engineers should team-up – SPLM (ST)

By Philip Thon Aleu, February 16, 2008 (BOR, Jonglei) — Civil engineers, carpenters, electrical workers, builders and drivers in Jonglei State are asked by South Sudan's ruling party Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to group in tens for easy access by government, individuals and companies.

The men and women gathered by the SPLM state Secretariat, headed by Nyok Kucha, to be encouraged to embark on income activities doubts government effort to eradicate poverty. They point fingers at the state authorities for favoring foreigners. The group also questioned the criteria used by the state government to grade casual jobs to foreigners.

"When you rent a home in East Africa, or a shop, it is compulsory that watchman, cook and cleaner come from them (East Africans). One wonders why our officials prefer foreigners in domestic works and call us lazy!" One of the casual laborers told governor Kuol while given chance to react to governor's blame that local people "are very lazy and do not use their brains properly."

Governor Kuol Manyang is the state SPLM chairman. He was invited to witness how many skilled laborers exist and to comprehend their request as well as delivering a fillip speech. The governor also revealed that more Oil companies are expected and will absorb casual workers who, he said, "are very difficult to get."

Speaking to Sudan Tribune, the SPLM state secretary, Nyok Kucha, however disagreed with laborers. "We are interested in exchange of ideas and there is no law that should stop foreigners from working in Jonglei," Kucha lamented.

He told Sudan Tribune, that the main aims of the gathering were "to identify unemployed skilled workers and be encouraged to organize under one umbrella." He appealed to Southern Sudan states to encourage low skilled workers and allow 'individual foreigner' group incorporated with local people. "There should be room for competition for better services, and that must favor our people to some degree of course!" Kucha stressed.

The local skilled laborers wanted the state government to significantly reduce the number of foreigners involved in building, carpentry, brick modeling and electrification works. Many of these opportunities are taken up by foreigners, they said.

(ST)

Sudan's Jonglei ministers warned to work hard to maintain positions (ST)

Philip Thon Aleu, February 14, 2008 (BOR, Jonglei) – At the eve of possible reshuffling, in the state Legislative Assembly, Governor Kuol Manyang told ministers to work extra hard to maintain position.

Briefing the state Legislative Assembly about his strategies to end insecurity, corruption, build roads to connect state counties and cautioning the servicepersons against low services delivery, yesterday Wednesday February 13, the governor wants ministers to leave their ears open for anything.

"I never came to reshuffle the cabinet ministers, but ensure that you are not affected," he said. Manyang then added that; all the state ministers, commissioners of various counties and Members of the Legislative Assembly, should adapt accurate mode of work.

"To avoid this circumstance," he said, "you need to be a better servant." The ministers accorded his speech with a lot of applause, an indication of loyalty, thus commitment. Hard working ministers will gain higher position.

The governor said gap between the unemployed and the employed is very wide. He attributed this trend to corruption but never specified any case of the state fund mismanagement. "Some people earn hundred times than others and this is very harmful to development," said Mr. Manyang adding that money grape through corruptive means should be forgotten.

(ST)

Sudan's Salva Kiir says SPLM is unionist party (ST)

February 15, 2008 (CAIRO) — Sudanese First Vice-President has stated that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement is a unionist party and all the Sudanese have to work for it.

During a talk show in the Egyptian Channel 1 TV, the Sudanese First Vice President, Salva Kiir Mayadrit said that the SPLM's agenda is unity and all of us have to accept

and work for unity". Further he stressed that no one foreign country encouraged the division of Sudan.

Mayadrit asserted that the USA has never worked on dividing Sudan. "Rather, it [USA] has been always working for the unity of Sudan," he said. "Whatever the relations we have with the Americans, the UK or any other country, they do not go for secession."

(ST)

China sells arms to Sudan (ST)

February 15, 2008 (HONG KONG) — China has exported more advanced weapon systems to Sudan.

TV video footage of a military parade during the 52nd anniversary of Sudanese independence last year shows that the country already had new-generation Chinese T96 and upgraded T59D main battle tanks and T92 wheeled infantry fighting vehicles fitted with Russian 2A72 30-mm cannon guns.

China acquired the technology from Russia to produce 2A72 30-mm cannon guns, which is believed to have been used to upgrade the Chinese PLA ground forces' T86 infantry fighting vehicles, or IFVs. Installing 2A72 guns on T92 wheeled IFVs for export to Sudan is a recent development. So far the T-92 wheeled IFVs have been known to be provided only to the Chinese No.38 Group Army.

This appears to be the first time China has exported T92 wheeled IFVs and T96 MBTs to an African nation. The technological standard of this equipment is far superior to ground force equipment China has previously exported to Africa.

Sudan has also expressed interest in purchasing 12 Chinese FC1 fighters, and the two sides are now negotiating technical details of the deal. In 1996 Sudan purchased six F7M fighters from China, and another two Y8 transport aircraft are also in service. Western military observers believe that those Chinese weapons were paid for with Sudanese oil.

The Sudan military parade in 2007 had a strong Chinese color, as most of the armored weapons were from China. The same parade revealed that the Sudan air force had Chinese-made K8 military trainers. Three K8 trainers and three MiG-29s flew over the capital during the parade. Images from the parade have revealed to the world that the Sudanese army resembles a second Chinese Liberation Army.

(UPI)

Kenya seizes weapons to South Sudan army (ST)

February 14, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Kenya has seized weapons to the southern Sudan army routed through the port of Mombasa saying that it constitutes a clear violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), a press report said.

The Kenyan government on Thursday has seized at the port of Mombasa 50 tanks for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) saying it is a member of the CPA Assessment and Evaluation Commission and one of the sponsors of the Sudan's peace deal.

According to the Khartoum based Al-Ray Al-Aam, Nairobi had said that SPLA military capabilities build-up is contrary to the signed peace agreement.

The seized containers are the first batch of weapons contracted by the SPLA from former Soviet Union states, rocket launchers, artillery and aircraft had not yet arrived, the Kenyan sources disclosed.

The independent daily pointed out that there were a number of containers of spare parts for military vehicles and weapons in Mombasa port.

(ST)

South Sudan deploys troops on Uganda border to stem LRA attacks (ST)

February 14, 2008 (JUBA) — South Sudan's former rebels have sent troop reinforcements to a remote area on the border with Uganda where attacks initially blamed on Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army have broken out.

"The mobile brigade is there," Sudan's People Liberation Army chief of staff Major General Hoth Mai said in an interview. "They have been there the last two days. We are waiting for feedback."

Mai could not say how many troops from the 6,000-strong brigade had been dispatched to the border area.

The Sudanese officer suspected that LRA remnants - not the main group - were responsible.

"We have found out that a lot of indigenous people here were recruited into the LRA during the civil war. They are the ones doing this," said Mai.

(AFP)

South Africa to support civil service in South Sudan (ST)

February 15, 2008 (JUBA) — The South African Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Southern Sudan Civil Service Commission (SSCSC) signed on February 14, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which the South African commission will support the human resource and institutional development of the Southern Sudanese institution

The South Africa body will provide technical assistance to the SSCSC for developing its regulations, codes, systems, processes, procedures and work agenda in line with the constitutional mandate of the SSCSC.

The MoU was signed for South Africa by the PSC Chairperson, Professor Stansilaus S. Sangweni and for South Sudan by the SSCSC Chairperson Deng Chuol Malang.

The MoU is part of the Capacity Building in Human Resource Development (CABIHRD) project of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) being supported by the World Bank Administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) The World Bank CABIHRD Task Team Leader Vivek Srivastava says as South Africa is seen as a model of good governance in Africa.

The MOU will help realize the GoSS declared policy of accountability and good public sector management. He noted that the collaboration between Southern Sudan and South Africa is quite relevant because the ruling parties (the ANC and the SPLM) share a long relationship.

(ST)

Darfur

China makes constant efforts to resolve crisis in Darfur - envoy (ST)

Februray 16, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The Chinese government has made unremitting efforts to help resolve the crisis in Sudan's western region of Darfur, said Chinese Ambassador to Sudan Li Chengwen in an interview with Xinhua reporter based here on Saturday.

Li's statement came as a response to Hollywood movie director Steven Spielberg's action of withdrawal from 2008 Beijing Olympics, linking the Games to the nation's involvement in Sudan.

China is very concerned about the crisis in Darfur, and we have been making unremitting efforts to help resolve the crisis, Li said.

Firstly, China has been working closely with the United Nations to resolve the Darfur crisis through political means, said the ambassador.

China helped push forward the Sudanese government, the AU and the UN reaching consensus on the resolution on the hybrid force to Darfur, which did not come easily and our efforts have been applauded by the international community, Li said.

China also made proposals on the peaceful settlement of the Darfur issue, which were approved by various parties concerned.

What's more, last year when Sudan and the UN differed over the deployment of hybrid peacekeeping forces, China appointed Liu Guijin, a veteran diplomat as a special envoy on the issue, who traveled to Khartoum three times to persuade the Sudanese government to accept the UN resolution.

Liu also attended two peace talks on Darfur, and shuttled between the United States, major African countries, the UN, the AU, the Arab Union and the European Union, to facilitate the communication and coordination between various parties on the issue.

The Chinese government has also maintained sound communication with the Sudanese government, held discussions with it on the basis of respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

China sees to it that the concerns of the Sudanese government are heard, while conveying to the government the international community's concern over Darfur.

Secondly, China has actively participated in the hybrid peacekeeping efforts in Darfur upheld by the UN and the AU, and is the first non-African country to send peacekeeping troops to the Darfur region.

China has promised to send a 315-strong engineering unit to Darfur. A 140-member advance troop arrived in Darfur last November, the first UN peacekeeping force there in the region, and more will be gradually deployed.

The Chinese engineering troops have been actively engaged in the construction and other works in the UN peacekeeping camps, their outstanding contribution there won them hearty praises from the locals, and UN officials there said Chinese peacekeeping forces are making miracles happen there.

Thirdly, in order to improve the humanitarian situation in Darfur, China has provided material assistance worth 80 million RMB (about 11 million U.S. dollars) to Darfur, 1.8 million U.S. dollars aid to African Union, and 500,000 U.S. dollars donation to the U.N. fund for solving Darfur issue, and Chinese firms have also offered help.

Fourthly, China also has encouraged entrepreneurs to help the development in the Darfur region.

In recent years, Chinese companies have helped dig 46 wells, build 20 small-scale power plants in Darfur and water supply projects in southern and northern Darfur states. Chinese companies also provided computer equipment and facilitated technical training in the region.

Therefore, as is obvious to anyone in the international community that is not biased against China, China has been playing its due part in helping resolve the Darfur issue, and that stance of China definitely deserves objective and just treatment, Li said.

(Xinhua)

China says unacceptable to link Beijing Olympics to Darfur (ST)

February 14, 2008 (BEIJING) — China expressed regret Thursday over US filmmaker Steven Spielberg's decision to cut ties with the Beijing Olympics, saying it was unacceptable to link politics to the sporting extravaganza.

Responding to what has become a public relations disaster ahead of the Games, authorities also defended China's involvement with Sudan, which led to Spielberg pulling out as an artistic adviser over the Darfur crisis.

"We feel regret about his remarks," foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said, after Spielberg called on Tuesday for China to do more to urge the Sudanese government to resolve the problems in Darfur.

"Some people are attempting to link the Darfur issue with Chinese government policies in Sudan, even with the organisation of the Olympics," he said without mentioning the US producer by name.

"If they don't know the Chinese policy, I can understand. But if they have got some objectives, especially political objectives, we cannot accept that."

"The Chinese government has made unremitting efforts to resolve the Darfur issue," said Zhu Jing, a spokeswoman from the Olympic organising committee.

"Linking the Darfur issue to the Olympic Games will not help to resolve this issue and is not in line with the Olympic spirit that separates sports from politics."

(AFP)

Bush reiterates his decision not to send troops to Darfur (ST)

February 14, 2008 (WASHINGTON) — US President George W. Bush has defended his decision not to send troops to the Sudanese region of Darfur, despite what he calls a genocide taking place there.

He called it a "seminal decision" not to intervene with force, taken partly out of the desire not to send US troops into another Muslim country.

However Bush, who was speaking to BBC World News America before flying to Africa, said he was frustrated by the pace of international action on Darfur.

The US president was scheduled to meet with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon about efforts to boost peacekeeping forces in Darfur.

The United Nations and African Union have so far deployed only about 9,000 of an authorized 26,000 troops and police.

He also discussed controversy over China's Olympics - saying he would attend the event as scheduled.

After Hollywood director Steven Spielberg withdrew his assistance to the Olympics in protest at China's policy towards Darfur, Mr Bush said he would not be taking a similar stance.

"I view the Olympics as a sporting event," he told the BBC's Matt Frei. I've got a firm, heartfelt commitment to the continent of Africa

But he added that he would meet Chinese President Hu Jintao and "remind him that he can do more to relieve the suffering in Darfur".

Below is the portion of the interview transcript relating to Darfur

(ST)

Darfur town emptied after attack, militia roam (ST)

February 14, 2008 (SULEIA) — Crammed into school buildings in the centre of Suleia, just 200 out of the West Darfur town's original 25,000 population were left after an attack by militia and the Sudanese army.

Thursday was the first time anyone from outside had been able to reach the town and the people remaining were mostly elderly women, those with babies or old men.

They were not able to run as far as others to escape the bombing and the militia who looted and burned and killed.

Suleia was targeted as part of an army offensive on three towns to retake them from the Darfur rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) almost a week earlier.

Among the survivors, Hawa Suleiman had no breast milk to feed her five-month-old baby after she spent a week under a tree with no food following the attack.

"The Janjaweed came and took everything, our food, our furniture," said the 35-year-old mother, who did not know where any of her other six children or her husband was.

Her face, cut with traditional tribal markings, was worn with worry as she struggled to quieten her crying, hungry child. She said she came back on Thursday because she heard aid workers had brought food.

A joint U.N.-humanitarian convoy brought food to the area for the first time since mid-December. Some 160,000 people had been cut off from aid since then, said U.N. official Amy Martin.

"We have not bathed for a week," said 75-year-old Mohamed Eissa Abdallah, bent over double with age and leaning on a wooden staff. His face and clothes were caked with dust and mud.

"I buried my brother with my own hands," he said.

Many of the survivors said at least one member of their family had been killed.

A Sudanese staff of the International Committee for the Red Cross was killed in the attack on Suleia. Washington calls the Darfur violence genocide, a term Khartoum rejects, blaming Western media for exaggerating the conflict.

The offensive was the largest in many months and aid agencies say it affected 50,000-60,000 people, less than initial rebel estimates of up to 200,000. Up to 12,000 refugees fled into neighbouring eastern Chad, the U.N. refugee agency said.

Residents say 114 people were killed in total by the attacks, but the army insists some were rebels wearing civilian clothes.

(Reuters)

Sudanese army rejects UK officer in Darfur force (ST)

February 14, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan's army rejected the appointment of a British officer to an international peacekeeping force in Darfur on Thursday in a move that could strain relations with the U.N. and the UK, a major donor.

A spokesman said Sudan's Armed Forces would not accept Brigadier Patrick Davidson-Houston as chief of staff to the force commander of the U.N./African Union mission in Darfur.

"The force is African, so how can the chief of staff be British? None of the forces are British," he told Reuters.

A spokesman from the international force, UNAMID, said officials were still hoping to get the appointment accepted.

"At the moment we are aware that concerns have been raised by the government," he said. "We are working to resolve these."

Omar Daair, spokesman for the British Embassy in Khartoum, said the officer had already been in the post for a number of months and had been selected for the job "openly and fairly".

"His employment and continued employment is a matter for UNAMID," he added. Brigadier Davidson-Houston, who served as the commander of British Forces in Sierra Leone from 2002-3, was unavailable for comment.

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Sudan's armed forces spokesman said the full reasons for the rejection had been spelled out by Sudan's Major General Majdhub Rahama at a conference on Wednesday.

Sudanese daily Al-Sahafah on Thursday reported Rahama as saying a British chief of staff would provide an unwelcome "link" between UNAMID and European peacekeepers due to start work in neighbouring Chad.

Another reason was that the UK had no peacekeepers on the ground in Darfur, the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat reported. Khartoum has been increasingly sensitive about the involvement of non-African troops in the 26,000-strong peacekeeping force.

(Reuters)

Sudan deplores Spielberg's Olympic pullout over Darfur (ST)

February 14, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan's Olympic Committee expressed regret Thursday after Hollywood director Steven Spielberg pulled out as adviser to the Beijing Olympics over China's record in Darfur.

"We have always been against politics creeping into sport and we have never mixed the two," committee head and retired general Salah Mohammed Saleh told AFP.

"Nothing harms the sporting spirit more than politics," he said in response to Spielberg's decision, saying the Sudanese Olympic Committee stands "above any political interference".

"This is the only activity in Sudan completely free of any political interference and the only activity that unites all Sudanese," he added.

"We are not paying much attention to Spielberg. We have strategic relations with Chinese sports bodies and our athletes are going ahead with preparations for the Olympic Games," Saleh said.

Sudanese women declaration on Darfur (attached)