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**(By Public Information Office)**

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## **HIGHLIGHTS:**

### **GoNU**

#### **President Bashir to participate in the Leon Sullivan Foundation conference in Abuja**

(*Sudan Vision* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) President Bashir is due to leave on Tuesday for Abuja to participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> Sullivan Summit which is organised by the American Leon Sullivan Foundation.

The Foundation is concerned with the development of trade and economic relations between the US and African states.

#### **Vice-President Kiir visits Washington today**

(*AlSahafa* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit starts today a visit to the US during which he will hold talks with President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on issues pertaining to the developments in Sudan.

Kiir will be accompanied by some key representatives of the GoNU and the GoSS in his Washington visit.

### **Southern Sudan**

#### **Uganda govt, rebels discuss ceasefire**

(*Sudan Tribune, AlAyaam* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Juba**) Peace talks between the Ugandan government and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels aimed at ending a 19-year-old insurgency have resumed after a brief standoff provoked by remarks critical of the Uganda government, officials said.

"We have resumed the meeting," Paddy Ankunda, the spokesman for the Ugandan team, told AFP Sunday.

Earlier, rebel delegate Major Dennis Okitori said both sides were planning to discuss a permanent ceasefire.

The talks stalled on Saturday when the government side threatened to walk out over a rebel verbal attack, just a day after the ceremonial opening of the historic negotiations here which are being mediated by the government of southern Sudan and seek to establish a permanent ceasefire.

Ugandan Interior Minister Ruhakana Rugunda said they had "compromised" over the statement issued on Friday when LRA spokesman Obonyo Olweny surprised many attending the opening ceremony by accusing Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni of corruption and warning the LRA had not agreed to the peace talks because it was "militarily weak."

"We compromised so we are moving on smoothly. We are going at the level of formulating positions as to what LRA should do in order for the talks to progress. We agreed on the rules and procedures to guide the talks," Ankunda said.

The LRA defended the remarks, saying they were "realistic" but the government issued a statement calling on the rebels to apologise for the "absolutely unacceptable" statements that were "full of falsehoods, distortions, and completely out of touch with reality."

The government said it had taken a "painful decision" and agreed to the peace talks and further given LRA leader Joseph Kony and four of his top commanders indicted by the International Criminal Court "total amnesty" in order to give them "soft landing."

"This course of action was taken as a way of giving the LRA a soft landing. It was not meant to give them an opportunity to cleanse themselves," Rugunda said in the statement.

"It is a pity that the LRA is now trying to misuse the forum and opportunity offered to tell lies to the people of Uganda, Southern Sudan and the international community," Rugunda said.

"The heinous crimes committed by the LRA can in no way put them in any position to speak in such a patronizing manner about northern and eastern Uganda as well as southern Sudan.

"Since they are the ones who have caused destruction and inflicted suffering, they have no moral authority to speak as such and should be humble enough to apologise," he added.

The Kampala delegation insisted that the army had defeated the rebels, forcing them to flee to the Democratic Republic of Congo in recent months.

"The presence of the LRA in the DRC clearly indicates that they are defeated. The 'rude surprise' to intensify military operations they have promised in their statement is nothing but wishful thinking, empty rhetoric and does not show seriousness from the alleged peace seekers," Rugunda added.

Rugunda took a fresh swipe at the Sudanese government for supporting the rebels.

"The Uganda Government has on numerous occasions stated the fact that the 20-year conflict in northern Uganda has not been between the government and LRA. It has been between the government of Uganda and the Khartoum government of the Sudan," he added.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed and some two million displaced in northern Uganda since the LRA took leadership of a regional rebellion among the Acholi ethnic minority in 1988, in a bid to oust Museveni.

The talks in the southern Sudan capital of Juba are seen by many as the best chance to end the war, which is regularly described by aid agencies as one of the world's worst and most forgotten humanitarian crises.

It is worth noting that representatives of the Italian and Dutch governments are at the talks as observers.

## **Darfur/ Darfur Peace Agreement**

## **SLM-Minnawi cite security concern for delay in arrival in Khartoum**

(*AlAyaam* - 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) Informed sources reveal that Arcua Mini Minnawi will travel to Nyala and Geneina before coming to Khartoum in the next two days to be sworn in as Assistant to the President of the Republic.

Meanwhile the leader of the SLM-Minnawi delegation to Khartoum admits there are security concerns delaying the arrival of their leader to Khartoum.

Meanwhile a government official who participated in the Abuja talks that culminated in the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement points out that the GoNU and the African Union are cooperating to guarantee protection for the IDPs in the camps of Darfur.

## **AbdulWahid says he is fighting for the Presidency**

(*AlSahafa* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Asmara**) In an exclusive interview [*details of which AlSahafa says it will publish tomorrow*] AbdulWahid Mohamed who heads the holdout SLM faction claims he has a large support base that can enable him to become the President of the Sudan – a position for which he indeed is fighting, he adds.

“I am not fighting for the Presidency from a selfish pedestal but in order to create a new Sudan in which any citizen will have the right to become President of the Republic through free competition”, he said.

He also said he has the ability to militarise the people of Darfur and change the situation on the ground and expressed the conviction that military force should only be employed to realise objectives and not only for boasting.

He pointed out that he was the most flexible of the negotiators at the Abuja talks but then realised that what the government wanted was not peace but for them to resign to its views.

“I am prepared to sign any peace deal that gives the people of Darfur their full rights”, he said.

On accusations that he sought higher government positions and compensations for the people of Darfur and that these are the root causes for his not signing the peace deal, AbdulWahid denied this and said that he does not wish to be an employee in the government payroll. On compensations, he said no single penny will pass through his hands but a committee should be formed to handle the issue.

Asked whether he had lost on the political and military front by not joining the National Redemption Front, the holdout SLM leader accused the NRF of trying to split his movement by its creation.

“Why create the NRF if the JEM was already in the scene advocating for the same cause?” he wondered.

AbdulWahid called for radical changes to the Darfur Peace Agreement and cited guarantees for security for the people of Darfur, disarmament of the Janjaweed and all government militia and at least 800 million dollars for the Compensations’ Fund.

He also said government should apologise to the people of Darfur for the crimes committed against them.

He denied contacts with the National Congress Party and said Dr. Majzoub el-Khalifa [*who led the Sudan government delegation to Abuja*] was the one who started this talk about contacts between his movement and the ruling NCP.

“The NCP should publish such correspondence it claims it had with us if what it says is true”, he challenged.

The SLM leader said he has great respect for Mini Minnawi who sided the Darfur Peace Agreement with the government and said Minnawi exercised his democratic rights to choose the path for his movement and bears responsibilities for those decisions.

“my personal conviction, regardless of the differences in our views and the recent criticism he has been subjected to from the people, is that he [*Minnawi*] is a nationalist and believes that the Darfur Peace Agreement in its current form will not be sustained”, added AbdulWahid.

### **Arab tribes of Darfur reject the “unorganised” disarmament**

(*AlAyaam* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) The Consultative Council of the Arab Tribes of Darfur says it strongly reject the disarmament operations currently taking place in the states of Darfur and have expressed doubts over the fairness of the practice.

The Council described the Darfur Peace Agreement as a “lame agreement’ and pointed out that the Security Arrangements stipulated in the agreement concentrates on the “disarmament of the Janjaweed” but does not define the term.

It also cited what it described as the unorganised manner the authorities in areas such as Kass are carrying out the disarmament program.

The Vice-Chairman of the Consultative Council, Hamid Mohamed Ali Toreen, said that some people around the Kass area are given money in return of claiming that they are Janjaweed and are then disarmed.

He said that the Northern DDR Commission has presented to them a plan for the operations and they will only accept disarmament according to those plans and will cooperate if the operation is carried out in compliance to international standards and based on justice, cooperation, flexibility and transparency”.

He also revealed that the Coordination Council is drafting a plan to cooperate with the DDR Commission to disarm without exception all the people in Darfur in possession of illegal arms and added that they back the peace process for Darfur.

Mr. Toreen outlined the reasons why the Arab tribes in the region are armed and pointed out that this is so because of the need to defend themselves and their property from the rampant banditry and targeting of Arab tribes.

He said they reject the issue of deploying international forces to Darfur and urge the foreign press to reflect the true story of the events.

On the other hand, the head of the Northern DDR Commission, Dr. Salaf-eldeen Saleh, said that the commission is on the preparations stage for the disarmament of the militias in Darfur.

He said that disarmament will be carried out after reintegration of combatants and will be carried out when peace and stability are restored in Darfur.

Following their meeting yesterday, the two sides issued a communiqué in which the Arab tribes agreed to comply by the disarmament plan of the DDR Commission on condition that the operation is carried out concurrently with the disarmament of the armed movements in the region.

### **Sudan govt, SLA, defend peace deal despite violence**

(*Reuters/ST* – 16<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) The Sudanese government and a Darfur rebel faction on Sunday defended a peace deal against charges of missed deadlines and new violence, saying it had the support of the people and had produced significant results.

Mohamed Yusuf Abdallah, deputy head of the government delegation to the Abuja peace talks, said the release of prisoners captured in fighting, as well as an amnesty, were major achievements in implementing the May 5 agreement signed in the Nigerian capital.

"I think the delay that we are talking about in some aspects is right, but the things that we could implement quickly we have," Abdallah said.

Only one of three Darfur rebel factions signed the deal — the faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) led by Minni Arcua Minnawi. Abdallah said the appointment of Minnawi to the post of first assistant to the president was a step forward.

An SLA representative said the deal had received widespread support.

"We had a great response from the people ... The people understand the importance of the agreement," SLA spokesman Abdul Kareem al Sheikh said.

But since the African Union-mediated peace deal tens of thousands of people have staged sometimes violent demonstrations against the pact, saying it does not meet their basic demands.

One of the deal's key brokers, U.N. envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk, has said violence has worsened since the agreement. Intra-rebel fighting has increased and tribal tensions have escalated, fuelling new attacks in Sudan's Darfur province.

The SLA-government news conference came two days before the European Union was scheduled to meet Sudanese officials in Brussels to discuss the status of the Darfur peace agreement and the transfer of the AU peacekeeping mission to U.N. troops.

Non-Arab rebels took up arms against the Arab-dominated government in 2003, accusing it of neglect and monopolising power.

Khartoum responded by arming mostly Arab militias, known as Janjaweed, who stand accused of a widespread campaign of looting and killing in non-Arab villages. Tens of thousands have died in the violence and 2.5 million people were forced into camps.

Responding to criticism that Khartoum had delayed implementation of the deal, including writing a crucial proposal on disarming the Janjaweed, a government representative said Khartoum had handed over a plan to the African Union.

He also blamed the AU, which has 7,000 peacekeepers on the ground in Darfur, for delays in implementation.

"We gave the plan to the AU and we have in fact started implementation," said Omar Adam Rahama, a member of the government's negotiation team in the Abuja peace deal.

"The AU forced us, kept us hostage to getting more signatories (to the peace deal). Now that everybody's convinced that those who did not sign are not going to sign ... we are set to implement the deal," he added.

Adding to the violence in Darfur, an SLA representative at the conference accused gunmen from neighbouring Chad of attacking the group two days ago. Chadian representatives could not immediately be reached for comment.

Khartoum has in the past accused Chadian President Idriss Deby of supporting Sudanese anti-government insurgents in Darfur. Deby has in turn accused Sudan of backing and arming Chadian rebels, who are fighting to oust him.

### **Arab League to decide next week on assistance to Darfur**

(*AlAyaam, AlRai AlAam* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) The League of Arab States says a conference will be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month in Cairo to determine the League's contribution to improve the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

The Representative of the Secretary-General of the Arab League to Sudan, Samir Hassan, told the press in Khartoum yesterday that preparations are underway with Khartoum for the conference in which all Arab humanitarian agencies will participate alongside a number of Arab businesspersons.

He said that the Arab League's contributions to the improvement of the situation in Darfur will be "proportionate to the situation the Arab World is facing in Darfur".

Meanwhile the Commissioner at the Humanitarian Aid Commission, AbdelRahman Hassabo, said that the conference will determine the emergency needs and lobby funds for Darfur.

Hassabo said that the situation is now calm in Darfur and announced that the Humanitarian Aid Commission has received from Russia 30 tonnes of rice and will be carrying out relief air flights to el-Fasher and Nyala targeting the affected populations in these areas.

### **Arab League official in charge of Darfur supports international troop deployment to Darfur**

(*AlRai AlAam* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) Informed sources say that the Arab League official responsible for the issue of Darfur has urged the JEM to stick by its position in support for a transition of the AMIS to a United Nations operation.

sources say that Zeid el-Subban held talks on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June at the Arab League headquarters recently a delegation of the JEM and told them that a United Nations military presence will help preserve Sudanese unity.

He the Arab League official was also quoted as saying that he intends to hold a meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month with non-Sudan government sides to the conflict.

It is not clear whether the official was expressing the official views of the Arab League.

### **Sudan should accept Muslim peacekeepers - Clinton**

(*Reuters/ST* – 16<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Addis Ababa**) Sudan should be pressured into accepting foreign peacekeepers from Muslim countries to help stem bloodshed in its troubled Darfur region, former U.S. President Bill Clinton said on Sunday.

Sudan has refused to accept a U.N. peacekeeping mission to replace the 7,000 under-funded African Union (AU) peacekeepers currently in Darfur. Sudan has likened the proposed U.N. mission to a Western invasion.

"Sudan should be pressured to accept international troops from Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh and others to help maintain peace and order in Darfur," Clinton told an audience at AU headquarters.

Clinton, on an African tour where he has been launching aid initiatives, was speaking after breaking ground at a new paediatric HIV/AIDS clinic in the Ethiopian capital.

The United States, the European Union and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan are due to meet in Brussels on Tuesday to urge Sudan to accept the U.N. force. They will also discuss how to fund the AU mission until it is replaced.

"The AU alone cannot solve the Darfur problem and find solutions to stop the killings. There are not enough troops with a clear mandate and legal power to stop thousands from dying and alleviate the hardship of the people in Darfur," Clinton said.

### **Eastern Sudan**

#### **Talks on eastern Sudan kick off in Asmara today**

(*AlSahafa, Khartoum Monitor* – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Khartoum**) Second round of talks between the government and the Eastern Front kick off in Asmara later today against the background of accusations by the Beja Congress, a faction of the Eastern Front, that the National Congress Party is fabricating statements in its name.

The head of the government delegation to the talk says some members of his team have been replaced by others but did not elaborate on who and why.

Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail said that this second round of talks with the Eastern Front may incorporate recommendations of a government-sponsored conference on eastern Sudan recently held in Khartoum and added that the government sees no need for a role by the international community on the issue of eastern Sudan.



But the delegation of the Eastern Front that arrived in Asmara yesterday said at a press conference there yesterday that they do not trust the Sudanese government and hence their insistence for international monitors.

Mohamed el-Moutasim who leads the delegation of the Eastern Front pointed out that the international community could play a key role in the post-agreement phase in eastern Sudan.

On the conference referred to by the Dr. Mustafa, el-Moutasim said it was a fund-raising conference to support the National Congress Party in marketing its plans in the name of the Government of National Unity.

He said that the Eastern Front does not recognise any of the recommendations from the said conference and will only consider those of the Tessenei Conference.