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(By Public Information Office)

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UN/ Agencies

[UN agency steps up pace of refugee returns to southern Sudan](#)

14 March 2008 – The United Nations refugee agency is accelerating its programme for the voluntary repatriation of tens of thousands of people to southern Sudan from neighbouring countries.

The organized return of some 15,700 Sudanese refugees has taken place so far this year, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Ron Redmond told reporters in Geneva today, noting the figure is three times more than for the comparative period last year.

The weekly return rate is also increasing – up from about 600 at the immediate beginning of this year to around 3,000 at the start of this month.

Mr. Redmond said the trend is likely to continue over the coming months now that UNHCR and its aid partners have established 16 land and air routes for people to repatriate to southern Sudan, mainly from Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia.

About two-thirds of this year's influx has come from Uganda, and many others are believed to have spontaneously returned since late last year without UNHCR assistance. That leaves about 101,000 Sudanese still living in settlements and camps in Uganda.

UNHCR is aiming to organize the voluntary repatriation of as many as 80,000 southern Sudanese this year, with the arrivals coming from Uganda (an estimated 45,000), Kenya (17,000), Ethiopia (16,000) and Egypt (2,000).

The agency has been progressively expanding its repatriation programmes since the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement in January 2005 ending the long-running north-south civil war in Sudan.

[Secretary-General Ban welcomes new agreement between Chad and Sudan](#)

14 March 2008 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today commended Chad and Sudan for reaching an agreement regarding reconciliation and the normalization of relations between the neighbouring African nations.

Mr. Ban, who as an observer witnessed the signing of the deal at the Presidential Palace in Dakar, Senegal, “is encouraged by their stated determination and commitment to normalize their bilateral relations,” according to a statement issued by his spokesperson.

He urged both sides to “remain steadfast in their resolve to restore peace and stability along their shared border, as this would contribute to wider stability in the region as a whole.”

The agreement – signed by Chadian President Idriss Déby and Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir – took place during a mini-summit convened by Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade.

On Wednesday evening and yesterday afternoon, the Secretary-General took part in closed-door discussions with the two delegations and the facilitators: President Wade, President Omar Bongo of Gabon and African Union Commission Chair Alpha Oumar Konaré.

Also participating in the summit as observers were the President of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and representatives of the European Union (EU), the United States and France.

During the talks, Mr. Ban urged the sides to come to an agreement on implementing previous accords reached in Tripoli, Cannes and Riyadh, and to create means to follow-up on stopping the violence, his spokesperson told reporters in New York today.

In his statement today, he said the UN will continue to support ongoing regional peace efforts, and he noted that he looks forward to working closely with all parties to “ensure the full and speedy implementation of the Dakar Agreement.”

The Secretary-General is back at UN Headquarters in New York after attending the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Dakar, and while in Senegal, he also held bilateral meetings yesterday with the President of the Palestinian Authority, the Indonesian President, the Egyptian Foreign Minister and the King of Morocco.

[UN accused of helping Sudan to arrest Ethiopian refugees](#)

(ST) March 16, 2008 (BERLIN) — An Ethiopian rights group based in Berlin, Germany has accused the United Nations refugee body (UNHCR) of delivering Ethiopian refugees in Khartoum to the Sudanese authorities.

Different rights advocacy groups denounced in the past months the narrow collaboration between the Sudanese and Ethiopian authorities against the political opponents to Addis Ababa government.

"Ato Dereje Ayele, a refugee who refused to open his door, was taken out by the UNHCR officials called in by other refugees but was handed over to the Sudanese police by the UNHCR officials," said Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners (SOCEPP) on Saturday. It is not known where he has been taken, SOCEPP added.

The same fate has fallen on Weizero Almaz Mitiku and At Genanaw Mengistu. The acting chairman of the Refugees' Association, Wondimagegn, is still being held in an unknown prison, the group claimed.

There is a serious and legitimate fear that the detained refugees and others may all be deported back to Ethiopia to be victims of repression there.

The Sudanese authorities have stepped up their harassment of Ethiopian refugees, especially in Khartoum. Recently, police have raided at night the houses of refugees and taken away a number of them.

On 27 September 2007, the Sudanese authorities forcibly returned 15 recognized refugees to Ethiopia. They were handed into the custody of Ethiopian security personnel at the Ethiopia-Sudan border. Amnesty International said last year.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

President Bashir: Oil and uranium exploration is the cause of Darfur crisis

(Al-Sahafa) The President of the Republic, Omer Bashir, said new oil and uranium explorations in Sudan was the main cause of the crisis in Darfur and accused the west of seeking to control Sudanese oil as part of drive to control the world.

With regard to relations with Chad the President said, “Our problem with President Deby is that he is brought up and educated in Sudan and has also started his campaign to take power in Chad from Sudan with direct support from us. But after coming to power in Chad he sought to rely on a single tribe which is now monopolizing power in Chad and is seeking to control Darfur region”.

President Bashir made the statements in an interview to a UAE newspaper published yesterday. “Darfur crisis is fabricated,” the President added.

Ethiopian marauding militias burn down villages of Sudanese farmers east of Atbarawi

(Akhbar Al-Yom) a group of Ethiopian marauding militias have burned down residences of Sudanese farmers in the areas handed over by Ethiopia last year.

Informed sources said SAF in Gedaref State were rushed to the area but the Ethiopian militias were not in sight. The State authorities have informed the Ethiopian authorities about the incident and they were hunting for the culprit.

The source said the matter had been referred to the Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs for consideration.

FVP calls on NCP to accept democratic transformation

(Al-Sahafa) The First Vice President (FVP) and the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, Lt. Gen. Salva Kiir, has called for full implementation of the CPA particularly Abyei protocol, democratic transformation, rule of the law in the country and the adoption of an acceptable Elections Act.

He pledged to continue efforts to achieve peace in Darfur, acknowledged the existence of human rights abuses in the South on the part of some undisciplined SPLA soldiers, and promised to bring them to justice.

Kiir, who was addressing the 4th meeting of the SPLM Interim National Council in Juba yesterday, has called upon NCP to accept democratic transformation.

“Our partner is accusing us of not accepting democratic transformation in the South by claiming that some northerners are being abducted in Juba and other Southern cities. We should tackle these issues raised by the NCP so that we have a convincing argument when such charges are raised,” he told the meeting.

[Civilians vacate the area as SAF advances 8 km south of Meiram](#)

(Al-Watan) At the time when SPLA advanced into the north of Abyei and established its control over Al-Naam, Um-Bilayel and Jengai areas, the chairman of the Committee for Resolution of Dispute between Messeriya and Dinka, Bustana Mohamed Salem, told Al-Watan newspaper that the town of Meiram had been vacated by civilians as SAF advanced 8 km south of Meiram.

He said the authorities took this precautionary step after news of SPLA preparing to attack and occupy Meiram..

He said SAF garrison had been beefed up for fear of move on the part of SPLA adding that SPLA set up its camp 30 km away from Meiram and reinforced it with modern and sophisticated military equipment.

GoSS

[GoSS accuses GoNU of failure to implement IDPs return programmes](#)

(Al-Khartoum) GoSS has taken it upon itself to transport 140000 IDPs from the northern States to Southern States. About 2056 IDPs were transported yesterday to the Upper Nile State.

The Government of Southern Sudan declared that GoNU failed to provided the required funds for IDPs transportation.

Political advisor to the Upper Nile State Government, James D. Chol, said the step came within the context of clinching peace through development. He said the first batch 2056 would be transported from Khartoum State and the White Nile State and the total cost for the transportation of this group was estimated at 1000,000 pounds adding that GoSS provided them with food that would last for six months besides health and education services.

[South Sudan Government surrenders additional powers to States](#)

(Sudan Vision) The Government of Southern Sudan on Thursday conceded to devolve some more powers to state governments in the region. SPLA troops line up during a rally in Rumbek on January 10, 2005 Among several resolutions and recommendations adopted and read out during the closing ceremony of a four-day 5th Governors Forum in Juba,

The ten Southern Sudan state governments should now administer their respective state police forces which include the Police, Wildlife, Prisons, Fire Brigade and Games as well as manage their budgets.

These forces, though deployed in the states, were previously administered from the Ministry of Internal Affairs' general headquarters in Juba.

According to the resolutions, their budgets will also be directly transferred to the states annually from the GoSS Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning.

The GoSS will however be still responsible for establishing standards for training and supply of equipment for such forces.

The Forum also resolved that all GoSS ministries that have annual conditional grants meant for projects to be implemented in the states should also surrender such budgets to the states' relevant ministries.

These GoSS Ministries include Health, Agriculture and Forestry, Education, Science and Technology as well as Cooperatives and Rural Development.

The Forum also resolved to give a number of powers in taxation system to the states; a reverse of GoSS' previous decision to unify the system.

In their presentations at the Forum on Tuesday in the presence of the Government of Southern Sudan's Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, state governors accused the GoSS of trying to centralize the governance system by controlling at the center powers that should have been devolved to the states.

The Government of Southern Sudan has been retaining such powers since 2005, arguing that the state governments in the region did not yet have the capacity required to manage such responsibilities.

The First Vice President of the Sudan and President of the Government of Southern Sudan, General Salva Kiir Mayardit, in his closing speech at the end of the Forum told the Governors not to depend solely on the oil revenue but to organize tax system in the states and promote other income generating projects.

He told the Forum that he would work towards furthering the decentralization of the governance system in Southern Sudan, adding that the states should also further devolve more powers to the local government at the County level.

Kiir said his government would implement all the resolutions and recommendations of the Forum.

Salva Kiir says there is a need to foster security in South Sudan

(ST) March 14, 2008 (JUBA) – Salva Kiir Mayadrit has pledged to boost decentralization as tool of management of the territorial administration in southern Sudan. He further insisted on the need to foster security measures including the disarmament.

The Fifth Governors' Forum and Third Speaker's Forum of Southern Sudan undertook a joint session here Thursday February 13 in the presence of the Sudanese First Vice-President and the President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), Salva Kiir Mayardit.

In his closing remarks, President Kiir has emphasized the need to maintain security through collection of unauthorized arms in the possession of the civilian population and acceleration of the ongoing peace process between the government of Uganda and the insurgent Lord Resistance Army (LRA).

He renewed commitment “to strengthen and implement the decentralized system in southern Sudan in line with the provisions of the comprehensive peace agreement.”

President Kiir also called for the need to downsize the number of redundant employees in both the civil and military institutions to improve performance and allocate more funds for development.

He urged Governors to be “agents of peace and reconciliation in their respective states.” He underscored the need to improve and diversify tax collection in order to avoid dependence on oil revenues.

He also stressed the importance of the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of the Fifth Governor's Forum and Third Speaker's Forum in order for the citizens of Southern Sudan to experience peace dividends and improvement in their quality of life.

Kiir commended the role of the UN and development partners in promoting democratic transformation in Sudan. “Your participation in the reconstruction of southern Sudan is very much appreciated and we are very happy to see you working with us in this field.”

The joint session was organized by the Ministry of Presidential Affairs and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in the Government of Southern Sudan.

The Governors' Forum and Speakers' Forum are supported by UNDP with the support of the government of the UK and the government of the Netherlands.

The joint session that brought together the leaders of both the executive and the legislative branches in Southern Sudan was aimed to increase communication, foster dialogue, and harmonize policies between the legislative and the executive at all levels.

Addressing the opening session, UNDP Southern Sudan Head of Office, Jafet Enriquez, described the event as “a unique experience” and reiterated UNDP's commitment in providing support to GOSS, the legislative bodies, the Judiciary, the civil society, the emerging private sector and other development actors as well as in bringing democracy and sustainable human development to Southern Sudan.

Present at the closing session were also the Vice President of Government of Southern Sudan, General, Riek Machar Teny and the Speaker of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA), James Wani Igga, as well as GOSS ministers.

Commander: JIUs face problems with indigenous in the South

(Sudan Tribune) Commanders of the JIUs and the representatives from donor countries held meeting in Juba last Wednesday to see for themselves the progress made in the implementation of the CPA.

JIUs commander Maj. Gen. Thomas Cerrilo highlighted the establishment of JIUs and how they took over the military barracks from Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in South Sudan.

In the meeting held at the JIUs Headquarters in Juba, Maj. Gen. Cerrilo said, JIUs were working in difficult situations, because of the lack of trained personnel in the field of administration, besides, the water crisis, which created conflict between JIUs battalions and inhabitants of Kapoeta that left seven SPLA soldiers dead.

“JIUs should be supported in terms of water and electricity,” he said stressing zero implementation of demilitarizing the oil-rich areas as stipulated in the CPA.

In a donors visit to Bentiu, JIUs battalion headquarters, MG Cerrilo cited shortage in transport and logistics, vehicles for officers, communications equipment for special guards and health centres pointing out that JIUs in Juba had only one car, and “we also need borehole, latrines and electric power in the compounds” said the Maj. General.

Darfur

Sudan asks Indonesia to double its small contribution in Darfur force

(ST) March 15, 2008 (DAKAR) – Sudan asked Indonesia to double its small contribution in the predominantly African hybrid peacekeeping force.

Indonesia will deploy in Darfur 140 civilian police to a 26000 joint U.N.-African Union peacekeeping force, which, if fully deployed, would be the world’s largest operation of its kind — to help end five years of rape and slaughter in the vast Sudanese desert region.

"Sudan wants Indonesia to play more roles in peacekeeping efforts in Darfur," Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said at the closing of the 11th Summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Dakar.

Yudhoyono was speaking to the press at the end of his meeting with the Sudanese president Omer al-Bashir on the sideline of the Islamic summit.

He said that the Indonesian government was happy to play its roles in a peacekeeping effort as long as its forces were under the United Nations peacekeeping force.

The president also said that Indonesia fully believed that the Sudanese government was able to resolve the outbreak of conflicts in Darfur.

Indonesia hoped that the overall solutions taken to create peace would really bring betterment to the Sudanese people.

Sudan had resisted a push for U.N. peacekeepers to replace the overwhelmed African Union force now in Darfur, where 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been displaced.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, sent about 1,000 troops to a U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon last year to enforce a cease-fire between Israel and the armed group Hezbollah.

Miscellaneous

Umma Party threatens to boycott Sudan's elections

(ST) March 15, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The opposition Umma party of former Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi threatened to boycott the general elections next year if the troubled region of Darfur is excluded from it.

The Sudanese political forces are strongly divided over the run of the first free general elections in the country since 1986 before the end of Darfur crisis. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the elections should be run during the next year.

Vice-Chairman of the Umma Party, Adam Musa Madbo said in a public rally in Kamrab area, Sinnar state on Friday that "Umma Party will not participate if Darfur is excluded from the elections."

Madbo stressed the need to hold elections in Darfur. He further described the National Congress Party as not serious about holding elections adding it does not honour deals

Earlier in March the Umma Party said it had agreed with the NCP over general political cadre on the the elections, Darfur and the democratic transformation in the country.

The two parties are expected to hold a meeting on Sunday March 16.

The Umma party which has no representatives in the parliament or some ministers in the national cabinet as the other opposition NDA forces, reiterated its rejection to rally the NCP insisting that the dialogue with the ruling party is aiming only at achieving national consensus.

The Darfur region is considered as one of the main electoral bastions of the Umma Party in the country.