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(By Public Information Office)

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Highlights

UN/ Agencies

Security Council condemns attack on African troops in Darfur

Source: Agence France-Presse English Wire Date: October 02, 2007

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 2, 2007 (AFP) - The UN Security Council on Tuesday condemned the weekend attack that killed 10 African Union peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region and warned that any attempt to undermine the peace process is "unacceptable."

After two days of debate, Ghana's UN Ambassador to the UN Leslie Christian, the council chair this month, read out a statement condemning an attack "reportedly committed by a rebel group" and demanded that "no effort be spared so that the perpetrators be identified and brought to justice."

"Any attempt to undermine the peace process is unacceptable," the statement by the 15-member council added.

Saturday's attack by an organized group of heavily armed men in 30 vehicles on an AU military base at Haskanita in south Darfur left 10 AU soldiers dead, including seven from Nigeria.

UNHCR faces financial problems hindering operations in South Sudan

(Alayam) -- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that there is a critical shortfall of USD 11.1 million for its refugee return and reintegration operations budget in Southern Sudan for 2007. According to UNHCR spokesperson Jennifer Pagonis the funding situation is so dire that transportation of refugees back home from camps in neighboring countries to Sudan, due to pick up pace again soon after the rainy season ends, may not be able to go ahead, defeating the purpose of our work in South Sudan and neighboring Blue Nile State. UNHCR's 2007 budget for the Southern Sudan operation is USD 56.1 million but only USD 45 million has been received. "We are urgently calling on donors to come forward with funds to help keep this operation going. Our aim this year was to facilitate the return and reintegration of 102,000 Sudanese refugees and some 25,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)," said Pagonis. Pagonis stressed that without further funds, this number will certainly be limited. So far this year, UNHCR has helped 42,000 refugees return, and along with other agencies assisted 12,000 IDPs to return home.

Security Council holds rebels responsible for attack on Haskanita

(AlSahafa)-- After two-day consultations the UN Security Council (UNSC) condemned the attack on Haskanita and held the Darfur rebel groups responsible for the attack. The Council did not name particular movement(s).

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Clashes in Nyala between two groups from regular forces and SLA Minawi

(Akhbar AlYom)—According to media reports 4 people (3 SLA and one Civilian) have been killed in clashes between a group from the regular forces and another from SLA. SLA, 4 killed (3 SLA and one civilian). 3 SAF personnel were injured during these clashes.

S. Kordofan government affirms controlling situation in South Kordofan

(AlAyam)-- The government of S. Kordofan has announced that it is imposing full control over the security situation in Lagawa Locality, which recently witnessed bloody confrontation between the Miseria and Nuba tribesmen.

NCP's leaderships meeting insisted on the two chieftains of the tribes to use their good offices to calm down the crisis between the two tribes. In the meantime, SPLM described its accusation of flaring up the crisis between the two tribes as "political sedition", while a SPLM leading figure attributed the eruption of the conflict between the tribes to the weakness of the native administration.

SPLA: We informed CPC on difficulties hindering our redeployment from South Kordofan

(AlAyam)-- The SPLA said Tuesday it had notified the Cease Fire Political Commission on the obstacles impeding the withdrawal of its troops from Aldibab and Abu Matarig camps setting the late next Dec. as the deadline of the arrival of the committee assigned with the deployment of its forces South of 1956 borders.

Al-Sadig al-Mahdi reveals at Akhbar AlYom Forum proposal on charter between government and opposition on "principles and constants"

(Akhbar AlYom)-- The President of the opposition Umma Party, al-Sadig al-Mahdi, said yesterday at the Akhbar AlYom Forum on Darfur that the opposition parties have presented to the ruling NCP a draft proposal including the basic principles and "constants" which could be signed by all political forces to serve as a charter for addressing all Sudanese issues.

Sudan releases Darfur war crime suspect wanted by ICC (Khartoum Monitor, Sudantribune.com)

October 1, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — The Sudanese government disclosed for the first time that a Darfur war crimes suspect wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) was released from detention.

Sudan's foreign minister Lam Akol revealed in press statements yesterday that Ali Mohamed Ali Abdel-Rahman, also known as Ali Kushayb was freed due to lack of evidence against him.

The Sudanese government was believed to have been holding Kushayb in custody since November for what they described as "suspicion of violating Sudanese laws" and that he was under investigation for criminal acts in Darfur.

The judges of the ICC issued their first arrest warrants for suspects accused of war crimes in Sudan's Darfur region in early May.

The warrants were issued for Ahmed Haroun, state minister for humanitarian affairs, and militia commander Ali Kushayb. Sudan has so far rejected handing over the two suspects.

The warrant for Haroun lists 42 counts including murder, torture and persecution, while the warrant for Kushayb lists 50 counts including murder and intentionally attacking civilians.

Akol reiterated that Sudan is not party to the ICC and as such has no obligation to cooperate with it.

The news of Kushayb's release is likely to anger ICC officials and human rights groups who allege that he led attacks against civilians. Kushayb has been nicknamed as the "Butcher of Darfur" by Darfur refugees.

"We have eyewitnesses who saw Kushayb on his horse giving instructions in each of the cases. I have eyewitnesses who saw Kushayb involved in the execution of prisoners, the rape of women," the ICC Chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said in statements earlier this year.

Last month Sudan appointed the second war crime suspect Ahmed Haroun as head of a committee investigating human rights complaints in Darfur, a move criticized by human right groups.

Sudan has not ratified the Rome Statue, but the UN Security Council triggered the provisions under the Statue that enables it to refer situations in non-State parties to the world court if it deems that it is a threat to international peace and security.

(ST)

Salva Kiir to elders: Rebels biggest threat to peace

(AlSahafa)-- The FVP and President of GOSS, Salva Kiir Mayardit, said the divided Darfur rebel groups are the biggest threat to the peace process. According to Kiir peace cannot be achieved without the rebel groups agreeing on a unified negotiation position and one delegation for the talks. Kiir accused the NCP of being behind the splits in the rebel groups.

(Al Rai AlAam, AlAyam, the Citizen)-First Vice-President Silva Kiir has blamed the NCP for creating the current splits among Darfur rebel movements, stressing the necessity of unifying the rebel's movement negotiating position.

Kiir, who met the visiting wise men team on Tuesday, said that without adopting a unified negotiating position by the movements during the coming round of talks between the government and the rebel movements late this month in Tripoli, a comprehensive peace would not be realized on the ground.

He urged the team to pressure on the government to speed up implementation of the pending issues in the CPA.

Kiir assured GOSS full support of the resolutions adopted by SC to protect the civilians and find out durable and lasting political solution to Darfur crisis, expressing GOSS readiness to train the Darfur rebel movements on the basis of negotiations.

Kiir said the Sudan People's Liberation Movement supports the resolution 1769 of the UN Security Council to deploy 26,000 hybrid forces to Darfur. "This is the only effective way that you can protect the civil population in Darfur"

Tutu, Head of the team said the initiative to visit Sudan was announced during former South African President Nelson Mandela's 89th birthday.

Tutu said their visit was aimed at pushing forward the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and finding a peaceful solution to the Darfur conflict.

Tutu said the NCP told the delegation that 80 percent of the CPA has been implemented. The Archbishop said the NCP blamed a lack of capacity as the major setback to the CPA implementation.

The NCP further told the delegation that the SPLA had not redeployed forces to the South. But President Kiir said the forces have been withdrawn from Eastern Sudan, except for 130 men due to logistical problems.

GOSS Affairs Minister Luca Biong told (Al Rai Alam daily) that Kiir called on the neighboring countries to bolster the Libyan peaceful initiative as the sole and last solution to Darfur issue.

Addressing a press conference at the south Sudan presidency, Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said his delegation is interested in the fate of the voiceless and the marginalized. He said the delegation's main agenda is the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). He said his delegation wants to amplify the voice of the voiceless and told the media that there is accusation and counter accusation by the National Congress Party and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement over the delay in the implementation of CPA. He said the Khartoum government accuses the SPLM of dragging its feet in the demarcation of the border. However, President Salva Kiir Mayaradit said it is Khartoum which lacks the will to implement the CPA.

Al-Sadig al-Mahdi reveals at Akhbar AlYom Forum proposal on charter between government and opposition on “principles and constants” (Akhbar AlYom)

The President of the opposition Umma Party, al-Sadig al-Mahdi, said yesterday at the Akhbar AlYom Forum on Darfur that the opposition parties have presented to the ruling NCP a draft proposal including the basic principles and “constants” which could be signed by all political forces to serve as a charter for addressing all Sudanese issues.

SAF to hold commanders of Southern Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) responsible for transforming to political party

(AlIntibaha)-- SAF Headquarters is planning to investigate with the Southern Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) personnel who announced that the SSDF has been transformed into a political party. The Sudan Peace forces criticized the CPA partners and asked them to implement the Protocol on Security arrangements by absorbing the SSDF in SAF or SPLA. According to sources if Maj Gen Gabriel or any other military leader joins the newly established THE Democratic Forum for South Sudan, then SAF Headquarters will make investigation.

Amidst missing CPA deadlines, SPLM heads to drawing board

(The Citizen)—The SPLM Political Bureau meets Thursday, to review and assess the implementation of the CPA. Deputy Secretary General of the SPLM (Southern

Sector) Dr. Ann Itto said Tuesday, that the ruling National Congress apparently lack political will to implement key aspects of the agreement.

CPA partners committee to visit Abyei today

(AlRai AlAam-- The CPA Partners (NCP and SPLM) are expected to resume the meetings of the higher political committee next week which are chaired by VP Ali Osman M Taha and GOSS Deputy President Riak Machar. According to SPLM Minister of Cabinet Affairs the meetings of the political committee will follow a visit by a technical committee from the two parties to Abyei. The technical committee will visit Abyei area for one week as of tomorrow.

Mediation between Miseriya and Nuba in South Kordofan fails

(AlSudani)-- The mediation efforts aiming at containing tensions between the Miseriya and Nuba tribes in South Kordofan have failed. The leaders of the two tribes refused to meet with each other. Speaking to Miraya FM the Commissioner of Lagawa, Mekki Kafi Mekki, warned of new clashes if concerned political authorities do not take appropriate action.

Presidential decree establishing national committee to prepare for international conference on rehabilitation of Darfur

(AlWihda)--President al Bashir has issued a presidential decree establishing a national committee to prepare for the international conference on Darfur reconstruction and development. The committee is chaired by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ali Karti.

Khartoum to host Arab Conference on support of Darfur- 30-31 October

(AlKhartoum)-- The preparatory committee for the Arab Conference which will be held in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on the humanitarian situation in Darfur (30-31 October) has achieved considerable progress. According to the network of the Darfur organizations an invitation has been extended to the Arab League member states who accepted to be represented at the level of the foreign ministers. The president of the Darfur Organizations network, Hassan bargo, said they present to donors projects that cost US\$ 345 million.

Sudan pledges \$300 mln Darfur compensation - Carter

3 October 2007, By Opheera McDoom, KEBKABIYA, Sudan (Reuters) - Sudan's president has promised to pay \$300 million in compensation to the country's war-torn Darfur region, tripling a previous pledge, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said on Wednesday.

Carter told Reuters President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan had made the pledge during talks with him and other members of a visiting group of elder statesmen, including South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in Khartoum on Monday.

"We had a constructive meeting with President Bashir," Carter told Reuters as he set off on a tour of the northern Darfur town of Kebkabiya with the elders party.

"He promised us there would be \$300 million in all coming to the Darfur region in compensation, \$100 million coming from the government, and \$200 million to be a loan from the Chinese."

Sudan promised to pay \$30 million in compensation to Darfur under the terms of a 2006 peace agreement signed with only one rebel group. Other rebel groups who refused to sign angrily rejected the offer as too low and remained unhappy when it was later raised to \$100 million.

Carter said Bashir had promised to allow international observers into Sudan to make sure national elections scheduled for 2009 were "honest and fair".

He said the Sudanese president had promised to let Carter's own organisation take part in the monitoring. "I hope there will be others," the former U.S. president said, adding that his Carter Center had monitored 58 national polls around the world.

Bashir also told Carter that a national census, due to start in Sudan in February, had been delayed.

International experts say some 200,000 people have died in Darfur since mainly non-Arab rebels took up arms against the government in 2003. The United States says Arab militia mobilised by Sudan have committed genocide, a term European and African governments have avoided.

GoSS

SPLM politburo meets tomorrow in Juba

(AlSahafa)-- The SPLM Politburo is scheduled to hold an emergency meeting in Juba tomorrow (4 October 07). The SPLM Deputy Secretary General, Yasir Arman, said the meeting will discuss elections law and other important issues on the agenda.

Ugandan rebels plan first visit to Kampala

Wednesday 3 October 2007.

October 2, 007 (JUBA, Sudan) — Delegates from Uganda's rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) plan to meet government officials in Kampala this week, senior officials said on Tuesday, in a potential boost to the country's peace process.

The visit to the Ugandan capital would be the first by LRA representatives since the start of the group's two-decade insurgency that has killed tens of thousands of people.

"On Thursday the LRA delegation will travel to Kampala," said south Sudan President Salva Kiir in Juba.

"Even the Ugandans could not believe that these people can set foot there," he told a group of elder statesmen — including South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter — on a visit to Sudan to help mediate various issues.

Officials said the LRA leaders, wanted by an international war crimes court, would however remain in the bush.

Under peace talks taking place in neighbouring south Sudan, the government is next due to discuss with LRA delegates how to deal with crimes committed during the conflict.

More than a year of the stop-start talks in Juba, capital of south Sudan, has raised hopes of an end to one of Africa's longest running conflicts.

Despite mutual accusations of violence and repeated walkouts by the LRA, a truce signed in August 2006 has largely held, and Kiir said a peace deal could be struck in the coming months.

"By the end of the year we may find a ... solution to this conflict," he said.

INDICTMENTS

Kiir said such a deal may help solve the dilemma over International Criminal Court indictments against LRA chief Joseph Kony and three other commanders for crimes such as killing civilians and abducting children to use as fighters and sex slaves.

Many Ugandans want Kony and his henchmen to face local courts and traditional reconciliation rituals instead, but the ICC insists it will not drop the case.

Uganda's chief government negotiator and Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda confirmed the LRA delegation's visit.

"The LRA delegates were invited by the government of Uganda and when they come they will be guests of the state," he told Reuters.

But he declined to say whether the LRA delegation would meet President Yoweri Museveni.

The one-day trip to Kampala is part of the LRA delegation's week-long tour of Uganda to discuss how peace should be implemented, and to gather people from war-affected areas in the LRA assembly point on the Sudan-Congo border.

(Reuters)

Darfur

AU decides to amend its troops' mandate in Darfur, denies threat of AU troops withdrawal from Darfur (AlRai AlAam, Sudantribune.com)

Wednesday 3 October 2007.

October 2, 2007 (ADDIS ABABA) — The African Union denied on Tuesday that troop contributing nations had threatened to pull their forces from a mission to Darfur after a rebel attack on an AU peacekeeping base.

The AU says 10 soldiers were killed and 10 others wounded after the weekend raid — the worst assault on AU forces since 2004 when the 7,000-strong mission was deployed to western Sudan.

AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Said Djinnit said a joint United Nations-AU team would begin an inquiry into the attack, adding that the AU agreed its mandate in Darfur should be reviewed to allow its forces to respond if they are attacked.

"Member states are deeply angered about the killing and wounding of AMIS troops in Darfur. We will not rest until they (the perpetrators) are found out and brought to swift justice," Djinnit told reporters.

"The ambassadors who represented troop contributing countries in the Council meeting, have expressed their commitment and determination to remain in Darfur until peace was restored," he added.

Nigerian Ambassador to the AU and Ethiopia Obioma Oprah said Nigerian soldiers would remain in Darfur.

"Nigeria is not a coward country. We will not runaway when such things happens. Nigeria is determined to remain in Darfur," he said.

"We are committed to do our best to bring peace to Darfur."

James Klilangawe, Malawi envoy to the AU, who chaired the Peace and Security Council meeting on Tuesday said, the AU agreed that defence chiefs of troop contributing countries would meet either in Addis Ababa or Sudan to discuss the mission.

"They will discuss what mistakes were made and what areas would be improved," he said.

African security body urges swift deployment of Darfur force (ST)
Wednesday 3 October 2007.

October 2, 2007 (ADDIS ABABA) — African Peace and Security body has called today for the swift deployment of the hybrid peacekeeping force to strengthen the volatile security in Sudan's Darfur region.

In a meeting held today, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union urged the AU Commission, in close collaboration with the United Nations, to expedite the deployment of the AU-UN Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), with enhanced capacity and strength in order to stabilize the security situation on the ground in Darfur.

The council also expressed "its outrage and condemned, in the strongest terms, this heinous and cowardly act perpetrated by unidentified elements who are bent on undermining the peace process and further complicate the situation in Darfur." Said a press statement.

The council encouraged the Commission to undertake, jointly with the United Nations, a thorough investigation of these incidents, with a view to identifying the culprits. Such an investigation should also cover earlier incidents of attacks against AMIS.

Council requested that the result of such an investigation be brought to its attention to enable it take all necessary measures, including sanctions against the leaders of the groups that perpetrated the attack. In the meantime, the Au security body further took note of indications provided by AMIS regarding the group which carried out the attacks.

It also stressed the urgent need to bring the culprits to international justice. Council also stressed the need for necessary lessons to be drawn from these incidents, including the strengthening of the peace keeping operation in Darfur, with a robust posture.

(ST)

Initiative from Minawi's group to protect AU forces

(Allintibaha)--Assistant to the President Mini Minawi said the Government, Darfur Interim Authority and SLM will coordinate with the AU and local authorities to identify those who attacked the AU troops in Haskanita. Minawi informed that he will make an initiative for containing the tensions between different parties in Darfur including protecting the AU forces.

Darfur organizations' network to participate in Tripoli talks

(Allintibaha)-- The Chairman of the Network of the Darfur Organizations (NGOs), Hassan Bargo, said the network will participate in the Tripoli talks.

US Congress boosts penalties for violating Sudan sanctions

Wednesday 3 October 2007.

October 2, 2007 (WASHINGTON) — Companies that violate prohibitions on business with countries such as Iran and Sudan will face increased penalties under legislation passed by Congress Tuesday and sent to the president for his signature.

Under the bill, civil fines for ignoring economic and financial sanctions imposed on countries or terrorist organizations designated by the president as security threats would go from the current \$50,000 to \$250,000 or twice the amount of the transaction.

Criminal penalties for willful violations of sanctions could be as much as \$1 million with jail terms up to 20 years.

"Let Congress' support of this bill serve notice to the patrons of terrorism and supporters of genocide: we will bring you to justice and choke off your financing, from Khartoum to Tehran," said Sen. Chris Dodd, sponsor of the bill. The House passed it by voice vote Tuesday. The Senate passed the legislation in June.

(AP)

Seven missing Nigerian soldiers in Darfur found

Wednesday 3 October 2007.

October 2, 2007 (ABUJA) — Seven of the 10 Nigerian soldiers who went missing on Saturday following an attack on their camp by rebels in Darfur, suddenly have been found alive.

Seven other Nigerian soldiers died in the attack. President Umaru Yar'Adua has directed the Chief of defence Staff (CDS) General Owoye Azazi and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Lt-General Luka Yusuf to proceed to Darfur on fact finding. He also condemned the attack and did the Senate and the United States of America (USA).

The Senate demanded an explanation from the Sudanese authorities on the attack which claimed the lives of 33 other members of the African Union peacekeepers, while the US called for a probe of the incident. The CDS and the COAS are expected to bring back home the remains of the dead soldiers for burial.

The seven missing soldiers were found hale and hearty in the vicinity of Haskanita by Nigerian soldiers of the AU who were deployed to for them.

(Vanguard)

Kufuor leaves for Addis-Ababa

Accra, Oct. 3, GNA - President John Agyekum Kufuor will leave Accra today for a three-day visit to Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, during which he will hold high level consultations with the African Union (AU) Commission on some urgent matters including recent attacks suffered by African peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region.

Rebels in the troubled Darfur region have reportedly attacked members of the AU peacekeeping force, killing at least 10 troops and seizing 40 others.

A statement signed by Mr Andrew Awuni, Press Secretary to the President and Presidential Spokesman, said while in Addis Ababa, President Kufuor would hold discussions with Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi and also meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is leading a German parliamentary group on a visit to the AU Headquarters. At the last summit of industrialised nations held in Heiligendamm, Chancellor Merkel, currently the G-8 President, pledged her commitment to debt

relief programmes and raising development aid funds for Africa.

The President is expected back home on October 5, the statement said.

Chad pledges full cooperation for new UN peacekeeping presence

UN News, 2 October 2007 – The Foreign Minister of Chad today welcomed the recent creation of a United Nations-mandated, multidimensional presence in the country, pledging full support for its work on behalf of the thousands of people who have been uprooted by insecurity in the region, including the conflict-torn Darfur region of Sudan.

Ahmad Allam-Mi told the General Assembly's annual high-level debate that the mission, to be known as MINURCAT, will help lighten the heavy burden that until now has been borne by Chadian gendarmes working to help alleviate the plight of refugees, displaced persons and others victimized by the conflict.

He paid tribute to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and friendly countries which have been supporting Chadian forces who have been acting with courage in the face of a "sensitive and dangerous" mission.

"The new operation can count on the support and cooperation of the Chadian authorities," he pledged. "We dare to hope that it will create conditions that will foster stability and reconstruction in the eastern region of our country that have been devastated by incursions of the Sudanese Janjaweed and other armed men coming from Darfur."

In defense of the African Union action in Darfur

Wednesday 3 October 2007.

By Abdul Mohammed

Last Saturday in Haskanita we saw yet another graphic example of how the African Union (AU) is bearing the brunt of the International Communities efforts in Darfur. In the worst incident of its kind since it deployed to Sudan in July 2004 ten African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) peacekeepers were killed and many others were wounded or have gone missing in a grievous act that has cast a shadow over preparations for the peace negotiations in Libya. Neutral AMIS soldiers and policemen have again paid the ultimate price for the sake of peace in Darfur. But working in Darfur, we are still shocked by the attitude of people and pundits towards the AU. It is routinely demeaned and written off by commentators who should know better.

Like its big sister the United Nations, the AU Peace and Security Council is a repository for the insoluble. If a government is able to solve its own problems it does so, but if it can't it calls in the AU. As a consequence the AU is left with a caseload that includes Ivory Coast, Somalia and above all, Darfur. The press and politicians alike have been quick to catalogue the errors and missed opportunities they ascribe to AMIS and the AU mediation effort that produced a peace agreement for Darfur but failed to bring complete peace; but the AU is an easy target as it doesn't employ spin doctors to answer back. The unwritten job description of its Chairperson and its

Commissioner for Peace and Security is to take the jibes and carry on with the job, confident that if the work is well done Africa is better for it.

Some of the criticisms ring true, as the AU is indeed an overstretched institution, struggling to build its capacity at the same time as it grapples with some of the continent's most complicated problems. The most senior staff in the organization frankly admit that the AU has often failed or remained inert when it should have acted, and that its internal procedures are often agonizingly inadequate for the challenges it faces in Darfur.

But the biggest disservice to the AU is the condescension of those who give lip service to supporting the organization but in the same breath label it as second best.

The AU responded to Darfur with its heart and not its head. The Darfur crisis was almost the first issue to come in front of the newly-set up Peace and Security Council. In accordance with the dictum, African responsibility for African problems, the AU assisted with mediating a ceasefire in N'djamena, Chad, in April 2004 and then volunteered to send ceasefire monitors and a protection force. This was a bold and courageous decision. The N'djamena ceasefire agreement is a faulty document—it exists in two contradictory versions, one possessed by the government and the other by the rebels and doesn't map the positions of the forces—and the mandate given to AMIS is absurdly restricted.

The AU responded with alacrity to Darfur because it knew what was at stake. The future of Africa hinges on finding a resolution to Sudan's crisis. Sudan is Africa's largest country, where most of the continent's problems converge. The Sudanese crisis has the potential to unravel Africa.

Africa didn't have financial resources but it contributed what it could—people. AMIS's first year was a success. Levels of violence dropped sharply, humanitarian operations improved and Darfuri people's confidence that their problem could be solved surged. It was ad hoc and the AU Force Commander routinely went beyond his strict mandate, but it worked.

Who else would have readily taken on mediating a conflict with so many fractured warring parties, none of whom had shown any real goodwill towards the others with most still wanting a military solution in preference to a negotiated peace. But the AU took on the job. In a shorter period of time than for any comparable war, the AU got the parties around a table, talking about a Declaration of Principles for how to resolve the conflict—and then (in July 2005) signing it.

Instead of building on this success, the world's leaders and opinion makers insidiously implied that the AU was only a second best option—they called for a UN peacekeeping operation to replace AMIS. Without saying it, they were condemning AMIS as not up to the job. The campaign to bring the UN to Darfur has been conducted at the expense of the AU. Without a strong mandate and with very modest infrastructure, the AMIS troops had worked Darfur on their wits, showing a personal commitment far in excess of what we normally see in international peacekeeping operations—only to be told time and again that they weren't good enough. Darfurians were quick to seize on this vote of no confidence and to treat the African troops with low regard. Little did the Darfurians know that the U.S.-British proposal was not to send NATO Special Forces but instead for African troops to be placed under joint AU/UN command. The reality has never been about where the soldiers came from but

about numbers, resources and mandate, but the damage was done—AMIS morale plummeted.

What happened next was alarming. The AMIS force was not built up, but run down. It wasn't funded. Sometimes the troops weren't even paid. Some of the troop-contributing countries rotated out their contingents and didn't replace them—strength is now under the 7,000 mandated. Instead of the AU giving AMIS a new mandate, it spent its time and energy discussing how to wind down and hand over. In effect, AMIS was put under sanctions. Instead of the AU and UN working together as sibling multilateral organizations, they were mired in a fruitless and complicated discussion on a handover. For its own reasons, the Sudan government supported AMIS continuing—simply because it didn't want the UN—and pundits began to sneer that the AU was siding with Khartoum.

The same happened with the Abuja peace talks that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement. The mediation may have made errors, but the international community—led by the U.S.—was deeply involved and instrumental at all stages, including producing the final document and playing a decisive role during the last stages of the talks. Yet the failure of the DPA to bring peace to Darfur is pinned solely at the door of the AU. Because Khartoum signed while two of the three rebel groups didn't, many commentators infer that the peace deal was slanted to Khartoum.

The slow drip of condescension and allegation is undermining the AU in tangible ways. It has reduced AMIS to a shadow of its former self and has hobbled the AU in its efforts to deal with the continuing crisis in Darfur. This is not just a crisis for Darfur and Sudan, but a profound and damaging legacy for Africa. Damaging the AU serves only one purpose: giving an alibi for those who wish to pursue war and destruction in Africa or forget the continent altogether.

Darfur is an exceptional crisis demanding an exceptional response. The UN and AU must work together, playing to their respective strengths. The dictum on which the AU is based that Africa should deal with its own problems, must not be buried in the sands of Darfur. The principle of multilateralism must also emerge from Darfur enhanced. Khartoum has the capability to drag both the UN and AU down into the mire that it has created in Darfur—it should rise to the occasion and create the favourable environment in which the AU and UN through the United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) can succeed.

The AU is not above criticism. It needs to respond to some very real critiques of its performance on Darfur. But when the history of Darfur is written it will, like King Lear, win the verdict of “more sinned against than sinning.” The AU is a strategic institution for Africa, which embodies the continent's quest for unity. The people of Darfur don't want the AU to emerge from the crisis defeated. Darfurians are angry at their predicament and at the AU for failing to solve their problems – but as this weekends terrible events have shown once again, African soldiers have laid down their lives for their fellow Africans. It's time to stop sniping and support the AU, both for what it has done for Darfur with limited resources, and for what it must be able to do for Africa.

** The author is the Charmin of preparatory committee of Darfour Darfour Dialogue and Consultation. he can be reached at awasa101@yahoo.com*

Darfur attack shows need for robust force -UN

By Stephanie Nebehay

GENEVA, Oct 2 (Reuters) - The deadly attack on an African peacekeeping base in Darfur shows the importance of deploying a robust African Union-United Nations force armed to protect itself and civilians, the top U.N. aid official said on Tuesday.

John Holmes, U.N. under-secretary-general for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said it was crucial for Darfur peace talks to proceed this month in Libya.

Investigations continue into the raid on Haskanita base in which 20 African Union (AU) soldiers were killed or hurt at the weekend, although a "rogue part of the JEM" could be to blame, he said, referring to the rebel Justice Equality Movement.

"We shouldn't be deflected by this from what we are trying to do, either on putting a peacekeeping force, a strengthened hybrid force in place, or from pressing ahead with the talks process," the former British diplomat said in an interview.

"This reinforces the need for it, rather than the other way around," he told Reuters in Geneva.

He spoke before returning to New York, where on Monday the Security Council put off for a day an official statement condemning the attack because of a dispute over naming the culprits behind the worst assault on AU forces since 2004.

"We're still trying to establish exactly what happened and why. It doesn't help in the run-up to the talks which are the absolutely crucial element in all of this," Holmes said.

Talks mediated by the United Nations and African Union are planned in Libya on Oct. 27.

MORE ROBUST MANDATE

An AU-U.N. force of up to 26,000 troops and police is due to deploy in Darfur next year to help the under-funded and ill-equipped 7,000-strong AU force in the vast western region.

"It will be much bigger with a more robust mandate, better equipped with an ability to operate at night," Holmes said.

"They have to be prepared at the very least to defend themselves from attack but also to do more to protect civilians, that is an important element of the mandate," he added.

Sudan releases Darfur war crime suspect wanted by ICC

Tuesday 2 October 2007.

By: Wasil Ali

October 1, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — The Sudanese government disclosed for the first time that a Darfur war crimes suspect wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) was released from detention.

Sudan's foreign minister Lam Akol revealed in press statements yesterday that Ali Mohamed Ali Abdel-Rahman, also known as Ali Kushayb was freed due to lack of evidence against him.

The Sudanese government was believed to have been holding Kushayb in custody since November for what they described as "suspicion of violating Sudanese laws" and that he was under investigation for criminal acts in Darfur.

The judges of the ICC issued their first arrest warrants for suspects accused of war crimes in Sudan's Darfur region in early May.

The warrants were issued for Ahmed Haroun, state minister for humanitarian affairs, and militia commander Ali Kushayb. Sudan has so far rejected handing over the two suspects.

The warrant for Haroun lists 42 counts including murder, torture and persecution, while the warrant for Kushayb lists 50 counts including murder and intentionally attacking civilians.

Akol reiterated that Sudan is not party to the ICC and as such has no obligation to cooperate with it.

The news of Kushayb's release is likely to anger ICC officials and human rights groups who allege that he led attacks against civilians. Kushayb has been nicknamed as the "Butcher of Darfur" by Darfur refugees.

"We have eyewitnesses who saw Kushayb on his horse giving instructions in each of the cases. I have eyewitnesses who saw Kushayb involved in the execution of prisoners, the rape of women," the ICC Chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said in statements earlier this year.

Last month Sudan appointed the second war crime suspect Ahmed Haroun as head of a committee investigating human rights complaints in Darfur, a move criticized by human right groups.

Sudan has not ratified the Rome Statue, but the UN Security Council triggered the provisions under the Statue that enables it to refer situations in non-State parties to the world court if it deems that it is a threat to international peace and security.

(ST)

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the attack against AU Mission in Sudan

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**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

P/07/82

Brussels, 2 October 2007

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The European Union expresses its strong condemnation of the heinous attack on the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) camp in Haskanita in Darfur and the killing and abduction of AMIS soldiers. It offers its sincere condolences to the families of soldiers killed.

The EU reiterates that it considers any attack against AMIS as a deliberate violation of existing ceasefire agreements and UN Security Council Resolutions. It calls on the Cease Fire Commission to fully investigate the attack and to hold those responsible to account.

This unprecedented attack on AU peacekeepers underlines the need for all parties in the Darfur peace process to commit themselves to an immediate cessation of hostilities, and join the efforts led by the AU and the UN to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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Jimmy Carter blocked from meeting Darfur tribal chief

Wed 3 Oct 2007, 7:44 GMT

KEBKABIYA, Sudan (Reuters) - Former President Jimmy Carter had a heated exchange with Sudanese security who prevented him from visiting a Darfur tribal leader in Kebkabiya town, North Darfur on Wednesday.

The exchange occurred as Carter toured Darfur with a group of elder statesmen including South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Kebkabiya security chief Omar Sheikh told Carter in a raised voice he could not meet the tribal leader because it was not on his programme.

Carter angrily replied: "I don't think you have the authority to do so. We are going to go anyway. I'll tell President (Omar Hassan al-) Bashir."

Carter and rights campaigner Graca Machel were due to meet leaders of the displaced population in Kebkabiya on Wednesday but only three came to meet them.

Carter then asked to visit a nearby school for displaced people where he could meet their leaders. Carter and the delegation walked in the hot sun to the nearby school built by displaced Sudanese for their children.

Sudanese security said for safety reasons they could not allow such a big diversion from the scheduled programme.

"I accepted their visit to the school but I can't go further than that. We cannot be that flexible," said a spokesman.