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Special Media Monitoring Report on the activities of the Joint Technical Assessment Missions and related issues
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(By UNMIS Public Information Office)

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Highlights:

Darfur needs UN force despite Sudan's Bashir opposition - Annan

(ST – 22nd June. Geneva) Sudan's troubled region of Darfur needs a UN peacekeeping force, despite President Omar al-Basher's repeated opposition to deployment of Western forces, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Thursday.

Annan said that such a force would be essential to uphold the "tenuous and incomplete" peace accord between Khartoum and rebel groups.

"I still think a United Nations peacekeeping force will be needed to help the parties implement the peace agreement and help provide security for the internally displaced," Annan told journalists in Geneva.

He also said more pressure needed to be placed on rebel holdouts who have rejected peace moves.

The United Nations wants to replace an embattled and under-equipped contingent of African Union troops in the western region of Darfur with its own Blue Helmets from other member states.

Khartoum has not completely ruled out a UN takeover but has repeatedly voiced its opposition to any deployment without its prior consent and accused Western powers of challenging Sudan's sovereignty.

"I swear that there will not be any international military intervention in Darfur as long as I am in power," Bashir was quoted as telling a meeting of his ruling National Congress late Monday.

"Sudan, which was the first country south of the Sahara to gain independence, cannot now be the first country to be re-colonised," he said.

Annan said that efforts were continuing to get Khartoum to change tack.

"I hope ultimately that we'll be able to convince them to accept a UN force," he said.

"No one, and least of all the UN, is interested in imposing anything like a colonial rule on one of its member states."

Annan noted that a UN force was already deployed in southern Sudan, where a separate peace deal in January 2005 ended two decades of civil war.

"We are on the ground. We have 10,000 UN troops in southern Sudan, so they know how we operate and this is why it's even more incomprehensible the resistance we are getting from them."

"Obviously we will build on what the African Union has created and retain some of the African Union forces," he said.

If Sudan finally gives in, it could take months to deploy a UN force in Darfur. The existing African Union force will need more international financial support in the meantime to continue its mandate, Annan said.

Further, Annan said he hoped an aid conference in Brussels next month would produce more support for the African Union's force, but that longer term "I still think a United Nations peacekeeping force will be needed."

Joint Assessment Team tables its recommendations to the Sudan government

(*AlAyaam* -22nd June. **Khartoum**) Despite admitting that there is some improvement in the security situation in Darfur, the joint Technical Assessment Team of the United Nations and the AU expressed concern over continued attacks on civilians in the region.

Following a meeting between the TAM and a government team which included the ministers of foreign affairs and the interior and SAF representatives at the foreign ministry yesterday, foreign ministry spokesperson Jamal Mohamed Ibrahim said that the TAM has presented its findings to the government and has highlighted the need to protect civilians in light of the security concerns.

The TAM also underlined the need to bring holdout groups on board, the need to disseminate the DPA in detail and to support the au to enable it carry out its duties.

The TAM also expressed hopes that the donors' meeting in Brussels will bring in more support to the AU forces in Darfur.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the government side put forth a number of observations concerning the ceasefire arrangements as stipulated in the DPA and called upon the AU to put in place stringent measures against the holdout groups.

Also raised by the government side was the call for development in Darfur the settlement of IDPs

The spokesperson said that the TAM will also hold talks with advisors to President Bashir and may hold talks with the President himself and Vice-President Salva Kiir.

U.N. Leader Downplays Sudan Rejection

(*AP* – 21st June. **Khartoum**) The head of U.N. peacekeeping downplayed the Sudanese president's rejection of a U.N. mission for Darfur Wednesday, saying it was not the end of the story.

President Omar al-Bashir on Tuesday accused Jewish groups of pressing for the U.N. mission, and vowed never to let U.N. peacekeepers into Sudan's western region of Darfur.

"Obviously, we would like to hear a different opinion," U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Gehenno told The Associated Press shortly after meeting al-Bashir. "We want to believe that this is not the end of the road."

Gehenno was ending a two-week visit to Darfur and Khartoum with some 40 U.N. and African Union experts to plan for a large U.N. force to take over peacekeeping in Darfur from the AU's poorly equipped 7,000 troops who have been unable to halt more than three years of violence.

Nearly 200,000 people have been killed in Darfur and more than 2 million displaced since members of ethnic African tribes rose in revolt against the Arab-led Khartoum government in early 2003.

Sudan's government is accused of responding by unleashing Arab militias known as the janjaweed who have been blamed for the worst atrocities. Khartoum denies any involvement, but has committed to disarm the janjaweed under the peace deal.

Gehenno said he had assured the Sudanese president that the UN had no "hidden agenda."

"There are many misunderstandings about the U.N.'s goals in Darfur that we are trying to solve with the Sudanese government," said Gehenno.

The U.S. and Europeans have been pushing for a large U.N. force to replace the African Union's poorly equipped 7,000 troops, who have been unable to halt the near daily killing, raping and looting of refugees in the remote region of western Sudan where more than 200,000 have died in the last three years.

Gehenno said the priority would be to strengthen the 7,000-strong AU force. He confirmed that the U.N. still hoped to send its own peacekeeping mission by early 2007.

The chief peacekeeper also insisted that U.N. peacekeepers would "only go to Darfur in full cooperation from the Sudanese government."

There has been "a slight improvement" in the situation since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement last month between the region's main rebel group and the government, Gehenno said.

But he said the situation was precarious and infighting among rebel factions had cut off over 100,000 people from humanitarian assistance.

Presidential adviser Majzoub Khalifa said the government believes letting in the U.N. could destabilize Sudan.

"We do not want Darfur to become a new Iraq," he said, claiming tribal leaders in Darfur had warned authorities they would form insurgency groups against U.N. peacekeepers.

President Bush, who has called for the United Nations to take over peacekeeping in Darfur, reiterated Wednesday that he viewed the government-backed attacks on civilians there as genocide.

"I care deeply about those who have been afflicted by these renegade bands of people who are raping and murdering," he said at a summit with European leaders in Vienna.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Adam Ereli pressed for Sudan to accept the U.N. force. "As long as violence continues in Darfur, the Sudanese Government is going to be held responsible, regardless of the circumstances," the spokesman said.

Deploying U.N. troops is crucial to salvaging the brittle peace deal signed by the Sudanese government and the main Darfur rebel movement, which has warned the agreement will collapse without the peacekeeping force.

Sudan's president said Monday he would personally lead "the resistance" if foreign troops come to Darfur.

"If we return to the last demonstrations in the United States, and the groups that organized the demonstrations, we find that they are all Jewish organizations," al-Bashir said Tuesday, referring to rallies held in New York and Philadelphia earlier this year.

The U.N. peacekeeping chief said a new cycle of violence threatened Darfur and that solving the crisis was "an emergency."

The suffering "can leave no one indifferent," Gehanno said. "History will judge us harshly if we do not prevent it," he said.

Chad urges UN Security Council to meet on Sudan aggression

(AP/ST – 21st June. **United Nations**) Chad on Tuesday accused Sudan of cross-border attacks and urged the Security Council to meet over its neighbor's alleged "aggression and destabilization."

The attacks constitute "irrefutable proof" of Sudan's efforts to threaten Chad "and even the sub-region," Chad's U.N. Ambassador Mahamat Ali Adoum said in a letter to the council president.

The Chadian government has repeatedly brought the issue of Sudan's destabilization to the African Union and the international community but hasn't received "the appropriate response," Adoum said.

Chad therefore "urgently requests the Security Council ... to consider this situation in order to halt this macabre venture by the Sudan."

The letter was written days after a high-level U.N. Security Council mission visited the two countries and saw how the three-year conflict in Sudan's vast western Darfur region had spilled across the border into Chad and threatened to destabilize the sub-region.

"We regard Chad's concerns as serious and intend to discuss the issue within the council," U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said in a statement.

The situation in Chad may be considered during an open meeting on June 29 on the council's recent visit to Sudan and Chad, a council diplomat said.

According to Adoum, Chad's President Idriss Deby told the council that Sudan's destabilization of Chad's institutions "has never stopped."

Deby and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir signed an agreement in Tripoli, Libya, on Feb. 8, pledging to normalize diplomatic relations and work to prevent the presence of rebel groups on each other's territory.

But more than four months later relations have worsened. The two countries accuse each other of fomenting instability, and Chad blamed Sudan for backing an unsuccessful rebel attack on its capital, N'Djamena on April 13. Khartoum denied any involvement.

"Despite the extremely important efforts made by the Chadian government and by the head of state himself in order to help resolve the Darfur conflict, Chad has nevertheless continued to be the target of armed bands and mercenaries in the pay of the government of Khartoum," Adoum said.

SRSG Pronk says United Nations will not deploy without government consent

(*Akhbar Alyaum, AlRai AlAam* – 22nd June. **Khartoum**) SRSG Jan Pronk says the United Nations will not deploy forces to Darfur or effect an AMIS-UN transition without government consent.

In a first reaction by the United Nations to President Bashir's recent statements in which he strongly expressed rejection to a United Nations deployment to Darfur, the SRSG, in a press statement, the SRSG reminded of the assurances of the Security Council delegation that recently concluded a visit here and the assurances of the USG for Peacekeeping Operations that the United Nations will not come into Darfur without the consent of the government of the sovereign and independent state of Sudan.

He pointed out that the TAM will report to the Security Council an the African Union Peace & Security Council on its findings and the outcome of its consultations with Khartoum on the support needed for the AMIS and plans for its possible transition to a United Nations operation.

The statement also says that the joint Technical Assessment Mission is continuing talks with civil society institutions and relevant government officials on a possible United Nations role in Darfur.

Meanwhile President Bashir received yesterday a report of the assessment carried out by the TAM led by the Commissioner for the African Union Peace & Security Council and United Nations Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

United Nations welcomes launch of the Darfur JAM

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 22nd June. **Khartoum**) The United Nations has welcomed the launch of the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission in The Hague.

The United Nations delegation led by DSRSG Manuel Aranda da Silva underlined the need for early planning for recovery development programs for Darfur and for an urgent implementation of these projects.

The delegation said that the United Nations will play a major role to support the signatories to the DPA.

US presses Sudan to accept UN peacekeepers

(*Reuters/ST* – 21st June. **Washington**) The United States pressed Sudan's government on Wednesday to accept U.N. peacekeepers in the volatile Darfur region where experts say momentum for peace is fast slipping away while Khartoum balks at a U.N. force.

Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir said this week it was out of the question for U.N. troops to be deployed to Darfur because they would come with colonial and imperial ambitions.

U.S. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said it was in Sudan's own interests to accept a U.N. force to back up about 7,000 under-equipped African Union troops struggling to keep the peace in Darfur, an area the size of France.

"As long as violence continues in Darfur, the Sudanese government is going to be held responsible, regardless of the circumstances," Ereli told reporters.

"So the Sudanese government has a strong interest in a more effective security force in Darfur not only to be on the right side of the issue and to be seen as doing the right thing, but also to provide for better security for its own citizens."

Ereli said the United States was working closely with the European Union and others to press Sudan to "recognise the reality" it needed a U.N. force in Darfur, where tens of thousands have been killed and 2 million have fled their homes in three years of conflict.

Sudan experts are critical of the United States, the EU and the African Union for not doing enough to put pressure on Khartoum.

They argue that momentum built up after the signing of a peace agreement last month between Darfur's main rebel group and Sudan's government is fast dissipating because of Khartoum's reluctance to accept a U.N. force.

Princeton Lyman, of the Council on Foreign Relations, said the Darfur agreement was fragile and the prospect of a U.N. force not being allowed in would encourage more violence.

"This is a very serious situation and it requires actions sooner rather than later. The first step ought to be to call a meeting of the U.N. Security Council," he said.

Lyman urged the United States and others, including Arab nations, to be tougher on Sudan and impose sanctions on Khartoum outside of the U.N. Security Council if they refused to cooperate.

"For example, companies could be forbidden from doing any business in Sudan," he said.

A report this week by the International Crisis Group, a think tank, said the Darfur deal had serious flaws and only an urgent, robust U.N. peacekeeping mission could save it.

The United States has labelled the violence in Darfur genocide and religious and human rights groups have piled pressure on the Bush administration to act.

The New York-based Elie Wiesel Foundation and more than 60 Nobel Prize winners announced on Wednesday the formation of a Commission of Nobel Laureates to monitor Darfur and recommend urgent actions to governments and international agencies.

"We express compassion with the victims and our anger at world leaders who are timorous, complacent and unwilling to take risks," said Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and recipient of the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize.

UN troops are equipped to restore peace in Darfur - SLM-Minawi

(AP/ST – 21st June. **The Hague**) U.N. troops are the best equipped to restore and maintain peace in Darfur, a rebel representative said Wednesday at the start of a two-day conference on rebuilding the shattered Sudanese region.

"As far as security is concerned, I think they are the most capable forces," Mohamed al-Tigani Eltayeb, of the Sudan Liberation Movement, told The Associated Press.

"U.N. forces are already in Sudan everywhere," he added, during a break in talks on reconstruction efforts in Darfur being hosted by the Dutch government in The Hague. "What is the reason for not having them in Darfur?"

His comments underscored marked differences that still exist between both sides, which are attempting to implement a peace plan signed May 5 in Abuja, Nigeria.

On Tuesday, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir reasserted that he will never allow U.N. peacekeepers into Darfur, and said he would lead the "resistance" against any foreign force.

The U.N. wants to send a beefed-up peacekeeping force to replace 7,000 African Union troops that have largely been unable to halt fighting in Darfur, where nearly 200,000 people have been killed and more than 2 million displaced since rebel groups made up of ethnic Africans rose up against the Arab-led Khartoum government in early 2003.

The government is accused of responding by unleashing Arab militias known as the janjaweed who have been accused of some of the worst atrocities _ but it denies any involvement.

Despite that denial, Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Agnes van Ardenne called on Khartoum to help end the violence.

"Of course the government of unity is responsible for the disarming of the janjaweed and the militias," she said.

Van Ardenne also called on global leaders to bolster support for the African Union peacekeeping force known as AMIS.

"It is clear to all of us that AMIS needs strengthening if it is to meet that enormous challenge for the restAof thisAyear, and if it is to form the core of an even larger U.N. Force after that," she said. "Until a U.N.-mission takes over, the international community will have to continue and even step up its support for AMIS."

The Sudan Liberation Movement and the government are taking part in the conference along with representatives from international groups including the World Bank, African Development Bank and United Nations.

Sudanese Finance Secretary Lhual Deng said both sides need to work toward cementing the peace.

"Our people in Darfur are expecting a lot and we don't need to disappoint them," he said. "We on the government side ... are determined to see to it that we do not disappoint them."

Van Ardenne agreed, saying people forced to flee the fighting deserve peace and stability.

"These women and children have suffered too much and too long," she said.