



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN
UNMIS

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(By Public Information Office)

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IN THE NEWS TODAY:

- **UN**
 - UN celebrates International Mine Awareness
 - UN demands urgent help to demine Sudan
 - Egeland says Bashir responsible for denying him permit to visit Khartoum
 - UN Council chides Sudan's decision to bar UN official
 - WHO representative says no danger in the polio vaccine
- **CPA**
 - Sudan confident of solving southern oil row - minister
- **GoNU**
 - Egyptian president on surprise short visit to Khartoum
 - SPLM and NDA caucuses at the National Assembly query Speaker on adjournment
- **Darfur/ Abuja talks**
 - African presidents to push for Darfur talks breakthrough
 - African Union to probe allegations of sexual abuses in Darfur
 - Egypt to ship in medicine, water to Darfur
- **Southern Sudan/GoSS**
 - Meeting of SPLM political bureau comes to a close
 - Vice-president Kiir says SPLA may be given go-ahead to quell unrest in Yirol
- **Eastern Sudan**
 - Beja Congress detainees go on hunger strike
- **Other Developments**
 - Probe blames pilot for Garang crash

HIGHLIGHTS:

UN

UN celebrates International Mine Awareness

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) UNMIS celebrated yesterday the first International Day of Mine Awareness and Support for Mine Action.

The celebrations held at the Sudanese Judges' Club in Khartoum was attended by international and national dignitaries, NGOs, UN agencies and national governmental and community-based organisations.

During the celebrations, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan delivered a message through Jim Pansegrouw in which he said that landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continue to kill and maim the people of Sudan and that they also continue to hamper the delivery of humanitarian aid, the return of refugees and IDPs and the implementation of humanitarian and development projects in this crucial post-war period and also the smooth implementation of the CPA.

Pansegrouw quoted Manuel Aranda da Silva, Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, as saying that there is more to be done in Sudan.

“Without the demining of return routes and communities, refugees and IDPs will not be able to go back home or resume their normal lives”, he emphasised.

Da Silva in his statement pointed out that there are more than 7,000 kilometres of roads still needing to be cleared and verified and that more people need to be informed of mine and ERW risk education and how to avoid them.

He also called for more support to assist capacity development of national mine action authorities so that they can address the problem in the future and said the UN continues to support the GoNU and the GoSS in their efforts to tackle the landmine and ERW problem and their commitment towards the Ottawa Treaty.

UN demands urgent help to demine Sudan

(*ST/AFP* – 4th Apr. **Cairo**) The United Nations called Tuesday for urgent action to support demining operations in southern Sudan, warning that the war-ravaged region could not rebuild amid the risk of landmines.

The UN's mine action office in Sudan, in a statement issued to mark the first International Day for Mine Awareness, stressed that thousands of landmines were obstructing the implementation of Sudan's peace deal.

"Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to kill and maim people of Sudan, they also continue to hamper delivery of humanitarian aid, return of refugees and internally displaced people," it said.

There is no accurate data available on the number of landmine victims in Sudan, but the United Nations reported that some 1,800 people have been killed or injured over the past five years.

It stressed that mine-clearing and public awareness had to be stepped up as "there is a high possibility of an increase in the number of victims caused by the movement of returnees."

Since the January 2005 north-south peace deal, some of the hundreds of thousands of southerners displaced by the two-decade civil war have started to return to their villages.

But humanitarian agencies operating in Sudan have warned that the journey home could be perilous and that roads and other infrastructure could not be built unless demining efforts were intensified.

"Without demining, reconstruction of roads, schools, hospitals and any other post-war recovery and development project cannot be implemented," said Manuel Aranda da Silva, the UN's deputy special representative to Sudan.

"I request donors to renew and even increase their support towards humanitarian mine action in Sudan, and to take into account the humanitarian and developmental impact of landmines and ERW at this crucial moment in Sudan."

According to UN estimates, between 15,000 and 20,000 people are killed by landmines and unexploded ordnance around the world each year. Some 20 percent of them are children.

Egeland says Bashir responsible for denying him permit to visit Khartoum

(*AlAyaam/Agencies* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) UN Humanitarian Coordinator Jan Egeland says President Bashir is responsible for denying him permission to visit some parts of Sudan.

He says he met foreign minister Dr. Lam Akol in Rumbek who told him that the Sudan government will not give permission for his aircraft to fly over Darfur.

The Humanitarian Coordinator said he will travel to Kenya to study what steps to take next and will present a formal protest on the issue in the name of the UN Secretary-General.

UN Council chides Sudan's decision to bar UN official

(*AP/ST* –4th Apr. **United Nations**) The U.N. Security Council expressed concern Tuesday at Sudan's decision to bar the U.N. humanitarian chief from visiting Darfur and called on all parties, including the government, to provide greater cooperation with the United Nations.

Earlier Tuesday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed "regret" at the government's refusal to allow Undersecretary-General Jan Egeland to visit the conflict-wracked western region. Annan will try to speak to Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir about the government's actions, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya, the council president for April, said members "share the concerns of the secretary-general" and want a briefing from Egeland when he returns to New York.

Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Hedi Annabi briefed the council Tuesday morning on the latest information about Egeland. Despite having a visa for Sudan, he wasn't only barred from traveling to Darfur and the capital, Khartoum, but prevented from flying over Sudanese airspace to visit refugees from Darfur in neighboring Chad.

"During this briefing, members called on all parties, including the government of Sudan, to provide more cooperation to the important missions of the United Nations," Wang said.

Fighting in Darfur over the last three years has left about 180,000 dead - most from disease and hunger - and displaced another 2 million from their homes. Egeland has called the situation in Darfur and Chad the worst humanitarian crisis in the world at the moment.

Dujarric said "the pressing and urgent humanitarian requirements of Darfur are a priority for the United Nations and coordination efforts to sustain this large program were at the center of Mr. Egeland's visit." The program costs about \$1.5 billion annually.

In addition to the humanitarian crisis, the Security Council is also trying to prepare for the transfer of peacekeeping duties in Darfur from a 7,000-strong African Union force to a better equipped and more mobile U.N. peacekeeping force.

The AU's Peace and Security Council decided in principle on March 10 to keep its force in Darfur until Sept. 30, when the handover to the U.N. is expected. But Sudan is vehemently opposed and has been lobbying African countries to oppose a U.N. takeover.

Wang said Security Council members "expressed their concerns about the humanitarian situation in Darfur, and also...expressed their strong support for the African Union mission in Darfur."

U.S. deputy ambassador Jackie Sanders said before Wang spoke that the U.S. wanted a strong statement on Egeland being barred from Darfur.

"We think that's more Sudan stonewalling," she said. "The government of Sudan needs to cooperate with the U.N. particularly on the deteriorating humanitarian situation."

The U.S. also wants the U.N. Secretariat to ask for visas for a U.N. assessment team to visit Sudan because until that team is on the ground, preparations for the transition from an AU to a U.N. force can't get started, Sanders said.

But she said Annabi was reluctant because of the anticipated negative reaction from the Sudanese government. "We said request the visas, let the government of Sudan respond, and we'll all decide how to respond to their response," Sanders said.

By contrast, Wang said the views of Sudan and African countries are important on the future of the peacekeeping operation in Darfur because "you need the consent and the cooperation of the government of Sudan."

The Chinese ambassador said the international community wants peace and an end to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, and the best way to achieve those goals is to try to get Sudan to cooperate and not to threaten or impose sanctions - which Beijing opposes as a matter of principle.

WHO representative says no danger in the polio vaccine

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) WHO Resident Representative, Salah el-Haithami, has described as baseless recent reports that the polio vaccines may be a danger to children.

He confirmed that the vaccines are safe and pointed out that such statements discredit Sudanese doctors and researchers who okayed the vaccines for use in Sudan.

CPA

Sudan confident of solving southern oil row - minister

(Reuters/ST – 4th Apr. Algiers) The former foes who make up Sudan's new government will make a "team effort" to solve an oil row that has caused jitters among potential investors, the minister of state for energy and mining said on Tuesday.

Angelina Teny told Reuters a historic 2005 accord ending a long north-south war should dispel any doubts about the former combatants' ability to negotiate complex problems, even though "things are not easy" in their novel partnership in government.

"I am confident that there are always solutions, because if you can reach a solution to a long and bitter war I am sure that a business dispute should not be more difficult than doing what we achieved as partners," she said in an interview.

"There are no reasons for anyone to think that investment is not a good thing at this time."

A year of peace promises to unlock vast oil reserves left untapped by more than two decades of conflict, but oil majors hungry for new sources of energy may not swoop in just yet.

Investors say uncertainty surrounding Sudan's burgeoning oil sector stems largely from a dispute between UK oil explorer White Nile and French major Total SA.

Shortly after the peace deal, the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement - now the southern government - granted White Nile rights to explore for oil on Block Ba.

But that 67,000 sq km tract is part of a block awarded to Total by Khartoum in a 1980 deal, renewed last year.

Complicating things is the fact that there is a new National Petroleum Commission, set up by the peace deal, to broker and approve all oil contracts.

Observers have said its jurisdiction over pre-existing contracts like Total's is unclear, noting that the Petroleum Reserve Act giving Khartoum the sole right to hand out concessions has yet to be amended.

But Teny, among several southerners given posts in the new Khartoum-based government in the wake of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), said that the accord in effect gave the commission the right to decide concessions, both old and new.

It would adjudicate matters such as the White-Nile/Total row on the basis of consensus between its members.

"It is a team effort," she said.

"The CPA says the Commission reaches decisions by consensus," she added, noting half the Commission was made of officials of the national unity government and half by those of the southern government.

"It is the body that would deal with policy matters, with regulation matters and with issues of contracts whether previous or existing or yet to be achieved," she said.

She said there was no time to lose as ordinary Sudanese demanded economic development. "We are under so much pressure to begin to produce results so we have no reason to be sitting over this (oil row) for longer than necessary," she said.

Sudan currently produces 500,000 barrels of crude oil a day, mainly from fields in the south with output projected to rise by 150,000 barrels per day this year.

Teny said the country's former Islamist rulers and the former southern rebels sometimes differed over how to implement the terms of the CPA, agreed at talks at Naivasha in Kenya.

"Things are not easy. It was not expected to be easy. Change is usually a very difficult thing to go through," she said.

"It is true that the implementation is going very, very slowly. There is a lot of resistance to a lot of the stuff that has been agreed in Naivasha. But we are working through them."

GoNU

Egyptian president on surprise short visit to Khartoum

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) Egyptian president Husni Mubarak was on a short visit in Khartoum yesterday where he held walks with President Bashir.

Speaking to the press yesterday, the Egyptian leader reiterated Cairo's rejection for the deployment of an international force to replace the AU force in Darfur.

"We have been and still are consulting with President Bashir and other leaders to see how we can resolve the issue," he said.

On his part, President Bashir said the peaceful solution should be the basis of a solution to the problems. He attributed the delay in reaching a peace deal with the rebels in Darfur to the widening rift between the factions of the rebel movements who each claim to be representing the people of Darfur. He said none of these movements has a clear political vision.

President Bashir further added that Vice-president Taha is on his way to Abuja to lead the government delegation and thus give impetus to the talks while Vice-president Kiir has been delegated to contact the movements to further bolster the process and help push against internationalisation of the issue.

Egypt's foreign minister later told the local press that the two leaders also discussed the recommendations of the Arab League summit held recently in Khartoum.

He also said the leaders have also agreed to convene a mini-summit with the participation also of the Libyan leader and others concerned with the issue of Darfur.

Egypt, he added, was ready to increase the number of its military or civpol officers in the AMIS.

SPLM and NDA caucuses at the National Assembly query Speaker on adjournment

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) The SPLM and NDA caucuses at the National Assembly yesterday protested the decision of the Speaker to adjourn yesterday's session.

The Speaker announced the adjournment of the session that was to discuss the President's speech issued earlier and cited lack of a quorum for the postponement.

Members of the SPLM and NDA caucuses demanded proper justification for the adjournment and accused NCP members for causing it on the grounds that they constitute a majority.

They say they intend to hold a bilateral meeting (SPLM, NDA) to discuss the adjournment which they say may have been calculated.

Darfur/ Abuja talks

African presidents to push for Darfur talks breakthrough

(*Reuters/ST* – 4th Apr. **Abuja**) African heads of state will push the warring parties from Sudan's Darfur region to clinch a peace agreement at a meeting on April 8 that all sides said on Tuesday could help break the deadlock.

The Sudan government delegation said Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha would also come to Abuja on Saturday in what observers said was perhaps a signal Khartoum would be willing to make new concessions.

"Vice-President Taha would not be coming if the talks hadn't reached a critical stage ... I expect dramatic developments in the next few days," said a government delegate.

The AU, which is mediating the peace talks and has 7,000 troops monitoring an often-violated ceasefire in Darfur, said the involvement of heads of state could help coax the government and two rebel movements into striking a deal.

"The presence of heads of state at peace negotiations in Africa is a big deal and it usually ends up breaking impasses," said Berhanu Dinka, who chairs negotiations on power-sharing, one of the three areas under discussion.

The peace talks, in their seventh round and well into their second year, have made slow progress but in Darfur violence has escalated and many parts of the vast desert region are no-go areas for aid workers.

The AU has set a deadline of April 30 for the Abuja talks to yield an agreement. As well as the deal itself, the possibility of sending U.N. troops into Darfur is at stake because Khartoum has said it will consider a transition from an AU to a U.N. force only after a deal is signed.

Delegates from two rebel groups said the diplomatic heavyweights would help give new momentum.

AU mediators said they were trying to resolve the last few sticking points in power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security but needed a political decision from the parties to make peace.

"We are in the last straight line before the finish ... We have high hopes of securing an agreement before the 30th," said Boubou Niang, who chairs the wealth-sharing negotiations.

"What we need now is for the two sides to take courageous political decisions and make concessions," he added.

African Union to probe allegations of sexual abuses in Darfur

(*ST* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) Reacting to reports about sexual abuse in Sudan's Darfur region committed by African peacekeeping force, the African Union said it will probe these allegations and independent panel is formed to this regard.

In a press statement, Head of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) , Baba Gana Kingibe has said the AU "determined to take all necessary measures to establish the facts of these allegations.

According to the British Channel 4, women and children in Geraida in Southern Darfur claim they have been raped by the very guards who are meant to be protecting them, said a video reportage aired on 2 April 2006.

Kingibe said he constituted a committee independent of AMIS to investigate, expeditiously and in a transparent manner, all the accusations contained in this broadcast".

This panel will also include members drawn from organizations outside the African Union and will be given a totally free hand and all necessary means to conduct its investigation.

The AU urged all concerned, especially Channel 4 and its reporters as well as the purported victims of the alleged crimes to cooperate with the committee. AU personnel are instructed to similarly cooperate fully with the committee, the AU statement said.

During the past couple of months "spate of orchestrated allegations of this nature began to be levelled against the Forces, especially in the Graidia and Marla areas" said the statement.

"All allegations that had been brought to the attention of the AMIS authorities were thoroughly investigated and found to be baseless".

Egypt to ship in medicine, water to Darfur

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) An Egyptian transport aircraft laden with about 10 tons of medicine and clean water is expected to land in el-Fasher later today, says a press release distributed by the Egyptian Embassy in Khartoum.

The press release points out that this is the 32nd such aircraft bound for Darfur.

Southern Sudan/GoSS

Meeting of SPLM political bureau comes to a close

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Rumbek**) The SPLM Political Bureau concluded its meeting in Rumbek yesterday with resolutions to be disclosed at a later date.

Among issues resolved were a comprehensive restructuring of the movement and its military wing. Sources also said that the meeting also nominated the official spokesperson for the SPLM.

Also discussed were the current security situation in the south, the Nuba Mountains, the Blue Nile areas and the capital, Khartoum. The meeting also endorsed strategies for interaction with the NCP and the NDA and the other political forces. The SPLM meeting also endorsed the views on Darfur and eastern Sudan.

Vice-president Kiir says SPLA may be given go-ahead to quell unrest in Yirol

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) SPLM leader Silva Kiir was in Yirol yesterday where he addressed a mass rally.

Speaking to the people, the SPLM leader said the SPLA may be ordered to come in to help stop tribal clashes in the area. He assured the people that the SPLA has enough firepower to enable it put a stop to those clashes.

Eastern Sudan

Beja Congress detainees go on hunger strike

(*AlAyaam* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Beja Congress says authorities continue to arrest and harass its members in Kassala and that its official spokesperson in Kassala has been arrested.

A request by the lawyer to visit the arrested members of the Beja Congress has been denied permission to do so.

The Beja Congress says so far 8 of its key figures in Kassala have been arrested recently and they are now on a hunger strike and the Beja Congress has failed to reach the ICRC and human rights organisations.

A key member of the BC says this crackdown on their members is an attempt by authorities to block US attempts to send in an envoy but added that the Beja Congress will not keep quiet on the issue.

Other Developments

Probe blames pilot for Garang crash

(*AFP/ST* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) An official probe into the helicopter crash that killed former south Sudanese leader John Garang last year concluded the pilot was to blame, a member of the investigation panel said Wednesday.

Siraj al-Din Hamid told reporters in Khartoum that the final report was submitted to Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir on Tuesday night and could be officially published on April 14.

He said one of the main causes of the crash on July 30, 2005 of the helicopter carrying then First Vice President John Garang was the pilot's insistence to apply visual flying rules in bad weather.

"The plane was flying at low altitude and the pilot was applying visual flying rules instead of using onboard instruments while it was dark and the weather was bad and cloudy," Hamid said.

He also cited the lack of adequate planning, poor knowledge of the area and the failure by the pilot and co-pilot to make the right decisions in rough weather as contributing factors.

A total of 14 people were killed when the Russian-made Ugandan presidential helicopter crashed in a mountainous region in southern Sudan.

Citing the many crashes in which senior military officials have died over recent years, many southerners accused Beshir of engineering the assassination of the former rebel chief but the report ruled out foul play.

Garang died only days after moving to Khartoum to assume his new position as first vice president and was the emblematic figure of the January 2005 peace deal that ended 21 years of deadly north-south civil war.

The official publication of the report on the crash was initially expected several months earlier. The international panel was chaired by former Sudanese vice president Abel Alier and the black boxes were analysed in Russia.

Hamid said the final report had yet to receive the Sudanese and Ugandan governments' stamp of approval before being released.