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UNMIS Media Monitoring Report, 6th April, 2006
(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

UN

Sudan says will Allow UN official to visit Darfur

(AP/ST, *Sudan Vision* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan said Wednesday it would allow U.N. Undersecretary Jan Egeland to visit Darfur, three days after it barred his flight to conflict-ridden region of the country.

"We reiterate our commitment to receive concerned officials from the United Nations and all others who are engaged in extending humanitarian aid and assistance," Sudan's state minister for foreign affairs, Al-Samani Al-Waseela, said in a press statement.

The visit of Egeland, the U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, had been postponed for 10 days because of "internal reasons," the statement said, without elaboration.

Egeland arrived in southern Sudan on the weekend, but was told his plane wouldn't be allowed to land in Khartoum, the national capital, or Darfur, where U.N. agencies are providing relief and assistance to hundreds of thousands of people.

Tuesday, the U.N. Security Council expressed concern at Sudan's decision to bar Egeland and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed "regret" at the move.

The top U.N. envoy in Sudan, Jan Pronk, had written to the government asking for an explanation of its barring Egeland, who is due to report to the Security Council on the situation in Darfur.

Egeland said Monday he suspected the government didn't want him to see what was happening in Darfur.

The *Sudan Vision* adds in its story on the same issue that it is to be noted that the visit of Egeland had been earlier postponed for ten days due to its coinciding with the Mulid Celebrations marking the birth of Prophet Mohamed and to considerations relating to the personal safety of Egeland due to the reactions provoked by the Danish cartoons depicting Prophet Mohamed.

UN may send a Muslim SRSG for Sudan

(*AlRai AlAam* – 6th Apr.) Media reports say the UN is considering a new strategy to deal with the issue of Sudan and this may entail appointing a new Muslim SRSG for Sudan.

The reports say this move comes following the refusal of the Sudanese government to grant permit to Jan Egeland, UN Humanitarian Coordinator, to visit Darfur and Khartoum and government criticism of SRSG Pronk.

A spokesperson for Kofi Annan (Stephane Dujarric) told a press conference yesterday that the UN is trying to create an appropriate climate to enable it carry its functions in full cooperation with the Sudanese government in future.

The spokesperson answered, "no comment", to a direct question on whether Secretary-General Annan is thinking about sending in a high level Muslim envoy to facilitate interaction with the Sudanese government.

Canada mulls adding troops in Sudan

(*ST/AFP* – 5th Apr. **Ottawa**) Prime Minister Stephen Harper said that his government was considering sending more troops to Sudan, where it has a small presence in international forces in the violent African country.

"We have given that some preliminary consideration. We haven't reached any final decision," Harper told reporters outside the House of Commons in response to questions about Canada's future role in Sudan.

"This is obviously something that would have to be worked out in concert with all of our allies, including the United States and others, and I do plan to have further discussions with President (George W.) Bush and others on the subject."

Canada has 47 soldiers in Sudan: 32 with a United Nations mission and 15 with the African Union in the troubled, vast western region of Darfur.

Harper and Bush had discussed Sudan briefly at a recent North American leaders' summit in Mexico, but no details of their talks were provided then.

"Obviously, we're anxious to do what we can to stop the massive humanitarian tragedy that is occurring in that part of the world," Harper said.

"We are concerned. The humanitarian problem is enormous. It's deeply shocking to anyone who is familiar with it. At the same time, we need to ensure that any political or peacekeeping initiative will be effective."

CPA

RETURNS:

Blue Nile State receives wave of refugees returning from Ethiopia

(*AlAyaam* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) Reports from Ethiopia said yesterday that the commissioner for refugees handed over to Sudanese authorities in Kurmuk the first batch of refugees returning from Ethiopia.

The returnees were well received by the authorities and the people in Kurmuk.

This first batch that numbers up to 500 people crossed over from the refugee settlement in Bonga, Ethiopia, and arrived in Kurmuk after a 3-day trip.

400 IDPs return to South Kordofan

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) As part of a voluntary returns program, a 400-person convoy took off yesterday heading for Lagawa and Telloushi in South Kordofan.

The 10-vehicle convoy was mainly composed of people residing around the outskirts of Khartoum (Haj Yousif, Mayo and Oumbadda).

MP Affaf Tawer who flagged off the convoy from Khartoum yesterday said the returns were being supported by the Nuba Mountains Women Network in collaboration with the Dutch Embassy in Khartoum and will continue in ample time before the rains come in.

OAGs:

Southern Sudanese militia groups clash at Khartoum airport

(*AlRai AlAam* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) A militia group loyal to Mjr. Gen. AbdelBagi's forces (SSDF) and another group loyal to Gen. Paulino Matip clashed at Khartoum airport yesterday as they were waiting to board a 20-seater aircraft to Juba.

Deputy assistant police chief Mohamed Naguib told a press briefing yesterday that the two sides engaged in fistfights at the airport but the police managed to calm the situation. No casualties were reported and the two groups left for Juba.

GoNU

Sudan plans to increase diplomatic presence abroad – President says foreign elements seek to encourage the secession option

(*ST, AlRai AlAam, Khartoum Monitor* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) The president Omar al-Bashir, has announced a wide state's plan for diplomatic representation that will cover the whole of Africa, countries in the Arab and Asian world, the Caribbean as well as Southern America.

During his address to the closing session of the deliberation conference for the Foreign Ministry today, he said he was content with the Sudan's diplomatic performance in the past. He presented the diplomatic achievements made at different levels, among them, restoring ties with the whole of the Arab world and as well as Sudan's place in Africa.

Al-Bashir also lauded the role of Sudan's diplomacy in making both the Arab and African summits a success. "We are ahead of a challenge to lead the Arab nation during the year. Sudan will make its utmost effort to solve the different Arab issues, unite the nation and its ranks to face challenges", he said.

President Al-Bashir urged the donors to commit to the pledges made in Oslo and Paris for the sake the Southern Sudanese citizen as well as the unity and stability of Sudan and Africa.

The President also pointed out that there are some foreign quarters that are trying to encourage the secession option but warned that secession (*the papers do not elaborate*).

Speaker accuses ministers of contempt for the House

(*AlRai AlAam* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Speaker of the National Assembly has accused ministers of lack of respect for parliament because they do not attend sessions.

This comes following the adjournment of a recent session as a result of the fact no minister attended.

The Speaker pointed out that attending such sessions are part of the functions of the ministers and such absence will not be tolerated any longer.

Sudan-US relations

US House OKs bill to bar Sudan war suspects

(AP/ST – 5th Apr. **Washington**) People implicated in war crimes in Sudan could be denied entry into the United States and have their assets frozen under legislation that passed the House on Wednesday.

The legislation, approved 416-3, would bar U.S. aid to nations violating U.N. Security Council resolutions that impose an embargo on arms transfers to the African nation.

"The crisis in Darfur continues with catastrophic consequences," said Rep. Christopher Smith (news, bio, voting record), R-N.J., a senior member of the House International Relations Committee. "The people of Darfur cannot afford to wait while we debate on how best to confront Khartoum."

The legislation, which requires Senate action, is the latest of several acts of Congress to condemn Sudan over war in Darfur and impose penalties on its government. In 2004, Congress enacted a measure to stop trade and separately approved a resolution declaring that the atrocities in western Sudan were acts of genocide.

"This legislation contains critical initiatives to help make matters better: stop the violence, bring the parties to the table and get the humanitarian assistance to the people," said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. In February, she joined a congressional delegation to Darfur.

The bill would not authorize the use of U.S. forces in Darfur, but it would confer on the president authority to assist an expanded African Union mission.

It would expand the 2004 law to impose an asset freeze and travel ban against those accused of perpetrating genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity in Darfur. The president can waive the ban if it is in the national interest.

U.S. penalties against Sudan go back to 1997, when the Clinton administration by executive order imposed comprehensive financial and commercial punishments on the country.

In a largely symbolic measure, the bill would encourage the president to deny entry at U.S. ports to Sudanese cargo ships or oil tankers. It also moves to lift export and import restrictions in southern Sudan and other marginalized areas.

The bill also asserts that restrictions against Sudan should not be lifted until the president certifies that Sudan is taking such steps as acting peacefully to resolve the crisis, disarm the Janjaweed militia that is accused of attacking black Africans and putting in place the terms of a peace agreement reached last year.

At a House International Relations subcommittee hearing Wednesday, Rep. Frank Wolf (news, bio, voting record), R-Va., urged the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, to travel to the area. "We need to do something dramatic," Wolf said. "I think you will be able to speak with such clarity."

Bolton did not respond. He did appear interested in a suggestion from Wolf that all nations on the Security Council join in sending a delegation to Darfur.

Information on the bill, H.R. 3127, can be found at

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c109:2:./temp/c109EvU4G6::>

US against sanctions on Sudan officials -diplomats

(*Reuters/ST* – 5th Apr. **United Nations**) The United States is opposing the inclusion of any Sudanese official on a potential U.N. Security Council sanctions list of individuals blocking peace in Darfur, two diplomats said on Wednesday.

Britain and other nations on a council sanctions committee have recommended a list of eight names of people including some government officials who would be subject to a travel ban and an assets freeze. All 15 council nations have to approve.

The United Nations is trying to halt atrocities in Sudan's western region of Darfur where the government is accused of backing Arab militia, known as Janjaweed who have raped, killed and driven more than 2 million African villagers from their homes.

But the United States recommended for the sanctions list just one middle-ranking Janjaweed militiaman and a rebel fighting opposing the militia, the diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the secrecy of the process. The names were not disclosed.

Washington expects to include names of government officials in the future, a U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. It wants to be able to gradually increase pressure on Sudan and to make sure there is a solid case against any people on the sanctions list, he said.

Richard Grenell, spokesman for the U.S. mission to the United Nations, said, "Stay tuned."

"Although it is a bit too early to talk about specific names, the next action will be a down payment for the full purchase of justice and accountability," Grenell said.

The Security Council a year ago made its opening move on the Darfur crisis by asking an expert panel to make a list of those most responsible for the crisis.

The panel returned in December with a list that recommended for sanctions Sudan's interior minister, defense minister and the chief of Sudan's Mukhabarat intelligence agency, among others.

One of the names on the list is Maj. Gen. Salah Abdallah Gosh, the intelligence chief, who diplomats and news reports have said has been collaborating with U.S. government in its war on terrorism.

A senior U.N. diplomat said he doubted the relationship with Gosh accounted for U.S. hesitation on the list.

Russia, China and Qatar, the only Arab member of the council, appear to want to ditch the sanctions list altogether, diplomats said.

China's U.N. ambassador, Wang Guangya, said there were more-pressing priorities in the effort to stop Darfur conflict, such as humanitarian relief and peacekeeping. "We do hope that other issues that some members have will not in a way play a role that might derail the process," Wang said on Tuesday.

Darfur/ Abuja talks

Mini-summit scheduled on Saturday to spur peace in Darfur

(*ST/AP, AlAyaam* – 6th Apr. **United Nations, Khartoum**) Vice-president Taha travels to Juba today for final consultations with Vice-president Kiir before travelling to Abuja to bolster the negotiations process.

Meanwhile a Sudan government delegation led by the governor of South Darfur has left for Abuja ahead of Taha's visit.

On the other hand, a mini-summit has been scheduled on Saturday in Nigeria to discuss ways to speed up peace talks between Sudan's government and rebels in Darfur, the U.N. spokesman said Wednesday.

Participants at the meeting in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, will include high-level representatives from the Republic of Congo, which currently chairs the 53-nation African Union, Nigeria and Sudan. AU Commission chairman Alpha Oumar Konare and U.N. deputy envoy Taye Zerihoun will also participate, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol said last month he was optimistic of a breakthrough in the peace talks "in the next weeks." African Union Peace and Security Commissioner Said Djinnit said at the same time that a peace deal was within grasp by the end of April.

Darfur Peoples' Forum turn down V-p Taha's offer to fly with its leader to Abuja

(*AlAyaam* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Darfur Peoples' Forum says it has turned down Vice-president Taha's invitation to its leader to join Taha and the government delegation on their trip to Abuja.

The Darfur Peoples' Forum, a group concerned with enhancing dialogue and peaceful coexistence between the people of the region, says however that its leader will travel to Abuja at a later date to present to the parties the recommendations of the recent roundtable conference of political forces held in Dar-el-Salaam, Tanzania.

A source in the Forum pointed out that the Darfur Peoples' Forum had presented a number of initiatives on Darfur but all were turned down by government. This, he said, shows government is not sincere in its quest for solutions in the crisis.

Southern Sudan/GoSS

Vice-president Salva Kiir and Rebecca Garang receive copies of crash report

(*AlAyaam* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum**) The head of the national team investigating the helicopter crash that killed Vice-president Garang, Mr. Abiel Alier, presented to Vice-president Kiir and Rebecca Garang yesterday a copy of the final report of the probe team.

Alier declined to give any further details to the press but SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amoum says the SPLM will announce its position over the report after studying it.

Southern Sudanese leader to run for presidency in next election

(*SRS/ST* – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) Former Vice-President of Sudan George Kongor Arop says that he will contest for the presidency in the up-coming elections.

In an interview with Sudan Radio Service (SRS) in Khartoum on Saturday 1 April the former vice-president said southern Sudanese should not remain Vice-presidents forever.

Arop said his party supports self determination for the people of southern Sudan, but did not say whether he supports unity or separation of the country.

Meanwhile, Arop urged the Government of National Unity to dissolve the People's Defence Force, arguing that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement only allows the existence of the Sudan Armed Forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and joint integrated units.

Recently, Kongor confirmed conflicts within the ruling party and disclosed the formation of a new political party vowing to support peace in the Sudan.

Former Vice-President of the Republic and current Chairman of the newly-formed African National Congress (ANC) Lt-Gen George Kongor Arop confirmed conflicts within the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and especially conflict over NCP's southern forum which led him and a group of southerners to defect from the NCP.

SPLM political bureau meeting revisits the oil accounts

(*AlRai AlAam* – 6th Apr. **Rumbek**) The SPLM concluded yesterday a meeting of its political bureau with an initiative to unify the Darfur armed movements and proposals for an Eritrean role in the mediation efforts for eastern Sudan.

The political office also renewed doubts over the veracity of the oil accounts and the GoSS share of the same and stressed that its relations with their partners at the National Congress party will depend on the level of commitment to the implementation of the CPA.

Yassir Erman has been delegated to discharge the tasks of AbdelAziz el-Hilu (now outside the country) while Pagan Amoum has been appointed Official Spokesperson for the SPLM.

The the political bureau also resolved to meet every month and plans to hold talks with the NCP political office through arrangements between Vice-president Kiir and President Bashir.

Eastern Sudan

Five Beja Congress leaders released

(*AlAyaam* – 6th Apr. **Khartoum, Kassala, Asmara**) The Beja Congress has announced that authorities in Kassala released yesterday 5 key figures detained earlier.

The release, they say, comes in the wake of pressures exerted by the US administration on the authorities of Kassala State calling for their release.

Other Developments

Sudan to open new oil pipeline

(Reuters/ST – 5th Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan's oil production is more than 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) and will rise to half a million bpd on April 10 with the long-delayed opening of a new pipeline, an oil ministry official said on Wednesday.

After years of north-south civil war fuelled by what southerners call northern exploitation of Sudan's oil reserves which are mainly in the south, the foes signed a peace deal last year enshrining wealth and power sharing.

But disputes have arisen over the amount of oil produced in a sector where Western companies have withdrawn over allegations of rights abuses and Chinese and Malaysian companies now operate. There is little transparency in Sudan's energy sector and under the deal the south should receive 50 percent of oil revenues from southern fields.

The newly-appointed and highest southern representative at the oil ministry, Angelina Teny, has said crude production is 500,000 bpd. But the energy ministry has officially maintained it is around 330,000 bpd.

Teny is the wife of the vice president of the new autonomous southern government, Riek Machar.

Sources in the oil ministry said production would rise to 500,000 bpd with the opening of a new pipeline run by a conglomerate called Petrodar.

"On April 10 we will travel to Upper Nile to celebrate the opening of the Petrodar pipeline," said an oil ministry official. The pipeline will take crude from the Melut Basin to the east, Port Sudan.

Sources in the oil business in Khartoum said the pipeline had been much delayed by faulty foundation work. It was due to come on line in August last year.

Petrodar is a partnership of made up mainly of China's state-owned CNPC and Malaysian Petronas with smaller shares for Chinese SINOPEC, Sudanese Sudapet and Dubai-based company al-Thani.

It works mostly in the southeastern Upper Nile region of Sudan. The main oil areas of Upper Nile and Abyei remain the most troubled despite the peace deal.

Southern First Vice President Salva Kiir on Monday accused his northern partners of continuing to support southern militias against the SPLA.