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(By Public Information Office)

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UN

Italy gives 1.2 mln dlrs for WFP operations in Sudan

(*Xinhua/ST* – 20th Apr. **Nairobi**) The UN World Food Program (WFP) on Thursday welcomed an Italian donation of 1 million euros (about 1.2 million U.S. dollars) towards its emergency operation in Sudan, which is providing food assistance to more than 6.1 million people throughout 2006.

WFP said in a statement issued in Nairobi that the emergency food aid is for displaced families and those affected by the conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan, as well as for people living in the other areas of the country.

"We are extremely grateful for the timing and the nature of Italy's donation," said Ramiro Lopes da Silva, WFP's Regional Director for Sudan, in the statement.

"This contribution has made it possible to send 1,000 metric tons of food to those in urgent need of assistance," da Silva added.

Famine and disease have caused many deaths since the Darfur conflict erupted in 2003. Several million others have either fled into neighbouring Chad or been displaced inside Sudan.

"To date, the operation has suffered from the slow arrival of donor funds, with a critical shortage of untied cash contributions that can be used to transport food commodities," said the UN agency.

"In the long term, Sudan has the potential to produce enough food for all its people, but that will take time to achieve," Lopes da Silva said.

While the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement ending the war in the south marked a turning point for Sudan, the need for food assistance remains.

WFP said it had required 746 million dollars for its emergency operation in Sudan in 2006 but it has received just 31 percent of that amount.

Canadian police to Sudan for UN mission

(*CP/ST* – 21st Apr. **Ottawa**) Two members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are heading to Sudan to assist the United Nations mission in an African country torn by civil war.

RCMP Sgt. Richard Davis and Cpl. Barry Meyer are expected to arrive in Khartoum in late April, when they will begin training and supporting Sudanese police and, where possible, advising them on policing methods.

Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day says police work is a key element of the peace process in Sudan.

The UN Security Council established its Sudan mission in March 2005, which is headquartered in Khartoum but maintains the bulk of its operations and resources in the country's war-weary southern regions.

International police attached to the mission also look out for human rights and other abuses, and assess policing needs through consultations with community leaders, representative groups and others.

The RCMP acts as the federal police for all of Canada, enforcing certain federal laws. It also has contracts with Canada's three territories and eight of its provinces to serve as their provincial/territorial police force. The RCMP is the largest police force in Canada; as of April 2005, the RCMP had an on-strength establishment of 22,557 personnel.

CPA

SPLM to table the issue of SSDF-Gordon before the Presidency of the Republic

(*AlAyaam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) The SPLM has threatened to take the issue of the SSDF under Gordon Koung to the Presidency of the Republic for arbitration and hints it will write a memo to the UN to intervene and to list Gordon Kouang's forces as war criminals.

Kouang's forces continue to create instability in the Upper Nile region.

A high rank SPLA officer who preferred anonymity pointed out that the Juba Declaration signed between the SSDF and the SPLA last January gives the militias the right to integrate either into the SPLA or the SAF. He said Gordon's forces chose to remain part of SAF and as such, the SAF should be held responsible for their actions.

The SPLA officer said the SPLM will present the case before the Presidency of the Republic, the National Assembly and before the forthcoming meeting next May between the SPLM and the National Congress party.

SPLA troops start withdrawal from eastern Sudan

(*ST* – 22nd Apr. **Hamesh Khoreib**) The first phase of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA) withdrawal from Eastern Sudan to the Southern Sudan commenced on 20th April.

In the implementation process of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), this is a significant step in the right direction. According to the CPA, the SPLA was to redeploy by 09 January 2006. But due to logistical delays and other unspecified reasons this move was delayed.

SPLA has informed that they will leave completely to the south by the end of May 2006. An interesting aspect in this redeployment is that the Sudan Armed Forces have provided vehicles for the move of SPLA troops from the East. SPLA has moved out even three of their tanks from this area.

What will happen to Hamesh Khoreib once the SPLA quit completely is the point of concern now. There are reports that the rebel Eastern Front is ready to launch an attack when SPLA moves out from there. At the same time SAF is also ready to move in.

Committee formed to resolve the debate over the constitution of the national capital

(*AlRai AlAam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) The Khartoum Legislative Assembly formed yesterday a committee in a bid to bridge the views of the partners to the CPA over the constitution of Khartoum State.

The head of the Khartoum State assembly said that the committee has been formed of representatives of the two sides and has listed the points of conflict as: the official language, the oath of the governor and the ministers, the status of Khartoum State, interim regulations and the local powers.

Differences over celebration of Day of Peace hastens return of GoSS delegation

(*AlAyaam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) Differences between the National Congress Party and their SPLM partners in the GoNU over marking the Day of Peace (9th July) has caused a GoSS delegation to make a premature return to the south.

The SPLM delegation sees that the Day of Peace should be marked on 9th January (the day the CPA was signed) while their National Congress Party counterparts say it should be celebrated on the day late Dr. Garang was sworn in as First Vice-President of the Republic (9th July)

The SPLM delegation led by GoSS Vice-President Dr. Riak Machar withdrew from the meeting when the NCP insisted on the 9th of July date. The SPLM delegation said the NCP could celebrate the day should they want to do so but the SPLM will not join them on that date because it has already celebrated the Day of Peace on the 9th of January this year in Juba.

GoNU

Police storm into den in Omdurman and uncover pistols

(*AlAyaam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) Following a tip-off, police in Omdurman yesterday stormed into a den of criminals and arrested a suspect.

The police also uncovered 42 pistols ready for sale.

Authorities pointed out that the law allows the possession of pistols only through licence and called upon citizens to abide by the law.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad

Minnawi instructs his field commanders to get ready for war*

(*AlAyaam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) The SLM has threatened to suspend talks in Abuja with the government should the latter remain unflinching towards the positions it holds.

The SLM says government has rejected its demands for a Vice-Presidency of the Republic during the interim period as well as their demands that Darfur be re-instated as a single region with the boundaries of 1956. The movement says the government has also refused to grant concessions on any of the outstanding points in the negotiations.

Minnawi handed a strongly-worded statement in 13 points to the AU and partners in Abuja accusing the government of violating the ceasefire agreement following Dr. Nafie's visit to the states of Darfur and of dragging its feet in the talks.

The statement also issued a maximum alert order to all factions of the movement pending the "necessary instructions" .

The movement, in its statement, demanded that government withdraw its forces from Isma, Allaiet, Jar-el-Nabi, el-ateina, Oum Barou and AbdelShakour areas of North Darfur and says they will not stand back and keep silent on these violations but will intervent to protcet innocent civilians.

The statement also calls on international forces not to wait for the next six months for a transition but to urgently intervene.

** See separate attachment*

Gadhaffi, Kabila to hold talks on Darfur and Chad

(*AlAyaam, AlRai AlAam/SUNA* – 23rd Apr. **Tripoli**) Libyan leader Gadhaffi received yesterday his counterpart from the DRC, Joseph Kabila.

The conflict in Darfur, the talks in Abuja and the tensions between Khartoum and N'Djamena featured prominently amongst the issues discussed by the two.

Sudan backs Chad, Central Africa rebels to destabilize the region

(*AP/ST* – 22nd Apr. **N'Djamena**) A prisoner captured during a failed rebel attack on Chad's capital said Saturday that he belongs to a 1,000-strong Central African rebel group that he says has joined forces with Chadian rebels and is backed by Sudan.

The African Union sent a fact-finding mission on Friday to look into Chad's claims that Sudanese-backed mercenaries and a small number of Chadian rebels attacked N'djamena April 13, killing at least 350 people. Sudan has denied any involvement.

President Idriss Deby claimed this week that Sudan has ambitions to destabilize central Africa and eventually control all of sub-Saharan Africa. There have been reports that opponents of Central African Republic President Francois Bozize's government are gathering in Sudan's western region of Darfur, which borders the Central African Republic.

Sudan has not responded in recent days to the charge it wants to destabilize the region, but in the past it has denied Chad's accusations of involvement in the eastern Chad rebellion. Instead, Sudan has accused Chad of harbouring Sudanese rebels fighting government-backed militias in its Darfur region.

Chadian officials led by Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmad Allam-mi on Saturday showed the African Union team several of what Chad claims are the rebels' desert-color pickups, some

mounted with rocket launchers or machine guns that have been parked at the National Assembly building the rebels attacked.

Talking to The Associated Press before the AU team's visit to police holding cells in N'djamena where some 200 captured rebels are held, Central Africa Republic rebel Adum Rakiss said his group joined forces with the Chadian United Front for Change five months ago.

Rakiss, a 43-year old former trader whose country borders Chad and Sudan, said that he had been to Sudan's capital, Khartoum, along with Chadian rebel leaders, to get funding for their rebellions from Sudanese officials.

Rakiss said one reason they decided to work together was, "the aid given to the other side and our side was not enough."

Rakiss, who said he held the rank of colonel, said the arms they used came from China, where a brother of Chadian Mahmoud Nour, one of the United Front for Change leaders, is based. Rakiss could not say whether the Chinese government gave the arms, or they were bought illegally.

Rakiss' claim, which has not been independently verified, points to a possible alliance of Chadian and Central African rebel groups that have nothing in common except the determination to overthrow their respective leaders, who have supported each other in the past.

Chad, an impoverished arid, landlocked country about three times the size of France where oil was recently discovered, has rarely known peace since independence from France in 1960. Other countries often played a part in the violence. Deby himself seized power in 1990 with help from Libya and Sudan, and Libya has invaded Chad more than once.

Rebels of the Chadian United Front for Change group, which Chadian officials call mercenaries, reportedly made the April 13 attack on N'djamena after a 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) drive to the capital from their base in Chad's east, where the border is porous.

Both the rebels and Deby say intelligence from France was crucial in helping government troops repulse the rebels.

Paris-based political scientist Roland Marchal said that the 38-month old conflict in Darfur has catalyzed the rebellion in eastern Chad and could also do so in Central Africa Republic, but not beyond those two countries.

The Darfur conflict, which the rebels say is for greater autonomy for the region, has seen tens of thousands of people killed, over 2 million made homeless in Sudan and another 200,000 fleeing to Chad.

Many of the Darfur rebels and Chadian rebels are from the same tribe, the Zaghawa, who found themselves in different countries when colonialists drew borders in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some of Deby's domestic problems stem from a sense among some in Chad he has done too little to help Sudan's Zaghawa.

Marchal said that to end the Chadian rebellion will require France, which is a key backer of Deby, to convince the president that he needs to negotiate with his opponents.

"France should convince Deby to respect his own promises and open a national dialogue with the opposition, both civilian and military. That won't bring a wonderful result but might be one of the last chances to avoid a major crisis in Chad and the Central Africa Republic," Marchal said in an interview by e-mail.

Other Developments

Sudanese militia kill three people in Merowe dam area

(*ST, AlAyaam, AlRai AlAam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) Three people were killed and more than fifty wounded in an attack carried out by pro government militia forces in the Merowe dam area in northern Sudan.

Merowe dam militia armed with machine guns and heavy artillery attacked the affected people while they were gathering in Amri School. The attacking militia opened fire on people without warning when they were having breakfast in the school courtyard.

Three people were killed on the spot and more than fifty injured – thirty of them critical. They were driven by fellow citizens to the nearest hospital in Kariema town 25 kilometres away. Later reports say those who offered their cars to drive the injured to Kareima hospital were later arrested by the dam security officials.

Eyewitnesses say the dam militia attacked the school using 16 pick up land cruisers equipped with heavy artillery and machine guns and opened fire without warning on people who were using the school as their meeting place. At 11.00 am while the people were having breakfast, the school was cordoned by the dam militia who opened fire randomly on the people inside.

Meanwhile local activists who were rallying for the cause of the people affected by the dam condemned these "hostilities" and the manner in which the government handled the issue and said this sows sedition in an area in Sudan that has never known political conflict. They have urged the people to mobilise against this "oppression" and say such a trend may lead to dire consequences.

The conflict between the dam authority and the affected people is about resettlement sites. Whereas the affected people demand to be resettled around the dam reservoir, the dam authority insists on resettling the people in Bayouda desert, a location rejected by the people. Affected people allege that the dam authority has sold their land to some rich Arab investor.

Merowe dam (under construction) is financed by different Arab Funds and executed by Chinese and European companies.

USAID resumes activities in Sudan after 15 year closure

(*ST* – 22nd Apr. **Washington**) The USAID announced the re-opening of its mission in Sudan after a 15-year closure. A new director of this mission was recently designated by the Deputy Secretary Robert B. Zoellick.

USAID announced the re-establishment of its Sudan mission, which had been closed in 1992 after sanctions passed by Congress brought an end to U.S. development assistance.

Sudan, one of the largest recipients of U.S. aid worldwide, "will continue to be one of the Agency's flagship rebuilding-state programs," said U.S. Director of Foreign Assistance and

USAID Administrator Randall Tobias. Katherine J. Almquist sworn in as USAID's new Mission Director for Sudan on April 20. The ceremony took place at the U.S. Agency for International Development's headquarters.

Almquist will be leaving her job in Washington as USAID deputy assistant secretary for Africa to head offices in Khartoum and in the southern city of Juba. She will oversee a development and humanitarian assistance budget worth more than \$850 million.

Her accession is historically significant because it ushers in a new development relationship made possible by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Khartoum and the Southern Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2005.

During her tenure in the country, Almquist also will serve as the U.S. representative to Sudan's Assessment and Evaluation Commission, which oversees the implementation of the CPA.

USAID Administrator Randall L. Tobias said Almquist was an excellent choice to head up the new Sudan effort because, "Kate has been a critical member of the senior management team here at USAID" and has been involved with Sudan issues for many years. As director of the Sudan Task Force at USAID she was responsible for providing policy direction and program coordination for USAID activities in Sudan and for preparing the Agency's post-conflict strategies."

As the new Sudan mission director, Tobias said, "I know she [Almquist] will continue to be an advocate for the Sudanese people and will work in partnership with other donors and political leaders to bring about lasting change" in Sudan.

Almquist said she looked forward to living in Sudan and working "in Partnership" with Sudanese of all political backgrounds to undo the social and economic devastation wrought by 22 years of civil war.

She holds a Master of Arts degree in international relations with concentrations in African studies, conflict management, and international economics from the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., and a Bachelor of Arts degree in international relations from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

High on her agenda, she said, was to tie together various USAID Sudan-related efforts in places like Juba, Khartoum and Nairobi; continue to help with reconstruction in the south; uniting disaffected areas better with the north; help establish a government of national unity and work on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

In 2005 USAID spent \$467million on humanitarian relief in Darfur, including: \$347 million for desperately needed food and \$11 million for conflict resolution. That year the U.S. Government also provided \$150 million for the African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

Dr. Turabi defends his recent statements on Islam

(*AlAyaam* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) Dr. Turabi, the main speaker at a symposium at the University of Khartoum, yesterday strongly defended his recent statements on Islam seen by a large cross-section as blasphemous to the Muslim faith.

His recent statements have drawn fierce criticism from Muslim scholars who have demanded that he repent.