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UNMIS Media Monitoring Report, 17 January, 2006
(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

UN

The customs seize containers of weapons and munitions of UN mission in Sudan

Editorial, Al-Khartoum Daily-- The customs Administration refused to offer clearance to around fifty containers that belong to the UN mission in Sudan. A knowledgeable source said the customs took the action after they found out that they contained unauthorised material. The source elucidated that the containers comprise bombs, explosives and ammunition. He added that the UN mission was apparently reliant on the international immunity and forgot that it should have got permission prior to importing any weapons into the country.

Foreign Sources describe Pronk as “Srebrenica Butcher”

(Al-Hayat, 17 Jan, Khartoum) Some academic sources warned against what it called the replication of the scenario of “Srebrenica Massacre”, nicknaming the SRSG Pronk as being “Srebrenica Butcher”. At the same time, these sources warned against the foreign military intervention in the Sudan that is proposed to replace the AU forces in Darfur.

Further, the sources revealed SRSG Pronk's special relationship with Cuba and the African communist movements. These also pointed out Pronk's role in the Netherlands Peacekeeping Force that ended up in the famous massacre of Srebrenica, as a result of which hundreds of Moslems were killed; and as a result of that Mr. Pronk was forced to resign his Ministerial position by the time.

(Quoted from an Article written by the Australian writer: George Sandal, anthropology expert - Comment by PIO).

Government of National Unity

Council of Ministers reviews statements released by UNSG and SRSG on Darfur

(*Al Sahafa*, 17 Jan, **Khartoum**) The Council of Ministers, chaired by President Al Bashir, reviewed the report presented by Dr. Lam Akol, the Sudanese Foreign-Minister, on the statements given by Mr. Kofi Annan, UN SG, and SRSG Pronk with regard to

the future position of AU forces in Darfur, and also the proposal of sending international military forces to Darfur.

Dr. Akol said that the African Union actually did not ask the United Nations to provide military assistance. Further, the Council of Ministers confirmed, following hearing the report that the Sudan will continue its efforts exerted along with the AU within the framework of the agreed-upon mandate on Darfur.

Al Bashir closes down Azat Al Sudan military recruitment camps for students

Akhbar Al-Youm, 17 Jan, Khartoum-- The President of the Republic of Sudan, Omar Al Bashir, issued a presidential decree on closing down the camps of the Military National Service for the students of high secondary schools' certificate for the current year, and transferring overall relevant human and financial resources to the nation-wide literacy programme.

Al Bashir adheres to African Union sponsorship for solving Darfur crisis

SMC, Monday 16 January 2006-- President of the Republic Field Marshal Omer Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir condemned what he called the invisible hands that seek intervention of the foreign forces in Darfur, stressing confidence of Sudan in the African Union and its capability in solving Darfur issue. In the mean time, the government of North Darfur state announced a public mobilization, and organization of a big march in Fashir in the upcoming days as an expression of rejection of the state people to any foreign intervention, particularly after the demand made by the representative of the UN secretary general to Sudan Jan Pronk regarding deployment of 20 thousand troops of international forces in the state. The government in a meeting comprised the governor of the north Darfur State, his government's ministers and the security committee condemned the stance of the armed movement in Darfur due to their welcome to the proposal of deployment of foreign forces in Darfur.

President Al Bashir who addressed the opening session of the African Universities Forum in the Friendship Hall – Khartoum said that the forum coincides with anniversary of the independence, and the first anniversary of signing of the comprehensive peace agreement CPA, pointing out that the CPA is considered as an evidence of the capability of the African continent in solving its problems without foreign intervention , stressing the importance of continuity of sponsorship of the African Union -AU for solving Darfur issue ,which came as an indication of the capability of the Africans in solving their problems far away from the foreign hands and the invisible agenda.

Al Bashir pledged to pose the recommendations of the African universities forum before the African leaders during the convocation of the African Union Summit in Khartoum the current month, for building best future of the sons of the continent and the whole humanity, Al Basir said that the summit will consider the proposal of Sudan regarding establishment of African Education, Science and culture Organization under the umbrella of the African Union.

Al Bashir commended the role of The Africa International University and its capability in serving the Africans in the domains of science and knowledge and rendering its services to thousands of students from some 60 African and Asian states.

Darfur:

UN: US's Rice backs major UN role in Sudan's Darfur

(Sudan Tribune, Jan 16, 2006 (MONROVIA) — U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Monday she favoured a major U.N. role in Sudan's troubled Darfur region and told Khartoum it must cooperate in accepting international help.

Rice, on a visit to Liberia for the inauguration of Africa's first woman president, said the African Union mission in Darfur was "not falling apart" but it needed help from the United Nations and possibly more NATO assistance.

"I think it's doing a good job but it is pretty close to the limits of what it can do in its size and configuration. There are issues in how to sustain it," said Rice of the estimated 7,000 African Union (AU) troops struggling to keep the peace in Sudan's vast western region.

"We favour a U.N. mission which has the qualities of sustainability that comes from the whole U.N. peacekeeping system," she added.

Sudan has rejected U.N. suggestions that U.S. and European troops should be sent to Darfur and argues the international community should instead provide more cash to African forces already on the ground.

"I think the Khartoum government should be cooperative," said Rice. "They have a problem in Darfur. The international community expects them to contribute to solving it and also expects them to allow the international community to contribute to solving it," she added.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in Darfur since mostly non-Arab rebels took up arms in early 2003 accusing the central government of neglect. Khartoum denies U.S. charges of genocide but the International Criminal Court is investigating alleged war crimes there.

Rice said NATO could also possibly do more in Darfur. Asked whether the United States was willing to provide troops, a move Khartoum opposes, Rice did not answer the question but pointed out that the United States was a member of NATO.

If there were to be any significant deployment of U.S. troops in Darfur, it would be Washington's first major foray into African peacekeeping since it quit Somalia in 1994.

Rice stressed the AU wanted this to be an African mission in Darfur and hopefully there would be enough African troops to do the job.

"There will undoubtedly also need to be more forces available for the AU mission. We will pretty soon here be in the business of seeing who might be willing to contribute more towards the AU mission," said Rice.

Rice said she was troubled by the deteriorating security situation between Chad and Sudan over rebel and militia raids in Darfur and this heightened the need for U.N. involvement.

Chad has demanded that Sudan disarm Chadian rebels in Darfur as a condition for peace talks to end the growing dispute. Sudan, in turn, accused the government in Chad of using the dispute to deflect attention from troubles at home.

Sudan may be in line for taking over the rotating chair of the African Union at a summit this month, a move senior State Department officials have said would be a conflict of interest because of the AU's role in Darfur.

Rice declined to comment on the issue and said it was an internal AU affair.

(Reuters)

Sudan: UN envoy calls for stronger action on Darfur

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

Sudan Tribune, NAIROBI, 16 Jan 2006 (IRIN) - A much bigger peacekeeping force and targeted sanctions are needed to end the ongoing violence in the western Sudanese region of Darfur, Jan Pronk, special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Sudan, told the Security Council.

At least once a month, groups of 500 to 1,000 militia attacked villages, killing dozens of people and terrorising others, he said. Only international security guarantees such as those provided by the African Union could help.

"The force necessary to provide such guarantees should be much bigger than the present one," he said on Friday. "It should not be on call, but in place, present wherever people may be attacked.

"It should be strong, able to defend itself, able to deter attacks on civilians and able to disarm militias and the Janjawid, who should have been disarmed by the [Sudanese] government in the first place," he added.

The perpetrators of the wide-scale attacks in 2003 and 2004 had achieved their goal. Many areas of Darfur had been "cleansed", and millions of villagers sitting in camps were too afraid to return home, as the terror continued, he noted.

Pronk urged that a stronger peacekeeping force be supplemented by sanctions on troop movements not in accordance with any peace agreement; arms deliveries; and those who had caused atrocities.

Sanctions should target "the commanders and political leaders responsible for the carnage of 2003 and 2004, and those who have refused to stop the atrocities of 2005", he said.

Salim Ahmed Salim, special envoy of the African Union for the Darfur peace talks, expressed his regret over the lack of progress at the negotiations in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

"The negotiations so far have been characterised by an unacceptable level of inflexibility in the positions of the parties, suspicion, absence of even the minimum level of confidence and deep distrust," he noted.

Pronk said that one could not ignore the impression that the parties had lost all sense of urgency and did not really care about deadlines.

The continuation of violence, killings, rapes and human rights violations was not only a tragedy for the people of Darfur, it also constituted a violation of the requirements set out in previous Council resolutions, he noted.

The UN envoy stressed that a sustained and lasting ceasefire in the region was of the utmost importance.

Only when the fighting had stopped could the parties, together with others who had not taken up arms - tribal leaders, civil society, representatives of displaced people, intellectuals and others - reach a fair, inclusive and sustainable agreement on governance, power, wealth, land, water and economic development, he said.

[ENDS]

U.N. Envoy Wants Sudan Militias Disarmed

Associated Press; 13 January 2006, By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer-- The top U.N. envoy in Sudan declared Friday that efforts to bring peace to Sudan's Darfur region have failed and called for a U.N. peacekeeping force of up to 20,000 troops to disarm marauding militias and provide security so over 2 million refugees can return home.

Jan Pronk said an ethnic cleansing campaign in 2003 and 2004 had been successful and a larger, more sophisticated and mobile force was needed to help end the continuing rapes and killings and stop the groups of 500 to 1,000 militia on camel and horseback that still attack villages at least once a month.

"Looking back at three years of killings and cleansing in Darfur we must admit that our peace strategy so far has failed," he told the U.N. Security Council. "All we did was picking up the pieces and muddling through, doing too little too late."

Decades of low-level tribal clashes over land and water in the vast western Darfur region erupted into large-scale violence in early 2003 when ethnic African tribes took up arms, accusing the Arab-dominated central government of neglect.

The government is accused of responding by unleashing Arab tribal militias known as Janjaweed to murder and rape civilians and lay waste to villages. It denies the charge.

An estimated 180,000 people have died in the upheaval -- many from hunger and disease.

Pronk briefed the council a day after the African Union's Peace and Security Council accepted in principle the need to transform its 7,000-strong peacekeeping force in Darfur into a U.N. peacekeeping force.

The AU council extended the AU force's mandate until March 31, authorized consultations with the U.N., and said a final decision would be taken by ministers at the end of March, Tanzania's U.N. Ambassador Augustine Mahiga told reporters.

The AU force has made a significant difference where its troops have been deployed. But it has been hampered by a shortage of funds, troops, and equipment and its mandate has been limited to monitoring an April 2004 cease-fire that is regularly broken by all parties and offering limited protection to civilians.

Pronk said a new type of force with sophisticated military hardware and air surveillance is needed to disarm militias, help stop attacks, and deploy to villages so the 2.2 million people who fled the violence and now live in camps can return to their homes.

"People don't go home if they are uncertain, unless there are reliable people to protect them," he said.

Pronk said he envisions a U.N. force of at least 12,000 to 20,000 troops.

But a U.N. force could face problems from the Sudanese government, which has opposed non-African peacekeepers.

Sudan's charge d'affaires Yasir Abdelsalam told reporters that "the African Union is doing well" and Pronk commended its work. "This is why we think the African Union should be given more support to succeed," he said.

Tanzania's Mahiga, the current council president, told reporters the Security Council hopes that negotiations between the government and rebels on a peace agreement in Darfur will be completed before a U.N. force deploys.

Both the AU and the Security Council must authorize the hand over and no date has been set.

Meanwhile, Sudan's bid to chair the African Union has been called into question because of the country's poor human rights record and the conflict in Darfur.

By tradition, Sudan's President Omar El-Bashir should become the next chairman of the 53-nation regional group at its upcoming summit in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, on Jan. 23-24.

But Tanzania's U.N. Ambassador Augustine Mahiga, the current Security Council president, said Friday that no decision has been made.

Fri Jan 13, 2006 9:56 PM ET
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AU: US's Rice says AU mission in Darfur has not failed

Sudan Tribune, Jan 16, 2006 (MONROVIA) — Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice disputed that the African Union mission in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region has failed - but said U.N. peacekeepers would be helpful there, nonetheless.

"The AU mission is not falling apart," Rice said, countering a claim by the top U.N. envoy to Sudan.

However, she said: "The circumstances are beginning to change in a way that suggests that the AU mission may not be sufficient and may not be sustainable over the long-run."

As a result, she said, the Bush administration favors a U.N. peacekeeping force - and possibly more NATO involvement - to help the African Union troops stop militias from raping and killing.

Rice spoke late Sunday while travelling to Africa for the inauguration of Liberian president-elect Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

On Friday, Jan Pronk, the top U.N. envoy in Sudan, declared that efforts to bring peace to Darfur have failed, and said that a larger, more sophisticated force was needed to help end the violence. He called for a U.N. peacekeeping force of up to 20,000 troops to disarm militias and provide security so over 2 million refugees can return home.

Rice said the African Union mission has succeeded "in what it is trying to do" and has helped lessen violence where it is deployed.

But, Rice said, the African Union's effectiveness may be limited, given its size, and that a U.N. mission has widespread access to money and troops. A shortage of both, as well as equipment, has plagued the African Union.

The African Union's Peace and Security Council last week accepted in principle the need to transform its 7,000-strong peacekeeping force in Darfur into a U.N. peacekeeping force. The AU council extended the AU force's mandate until March 31, authorized consultations with the U.N., and said a final decision would be taken by ministers at the end of March.

Rice also urged cooperation from the Khartoum government in stemming the violence.

"They have a problem in Darfur," she said. "The international community expects them to contribute to solving it and also expects them to allow the international community to contribute to solving it."

The conflict began in 2003 when Darfur's herding and farming communities, split by years of skirmishes over land and water, took up arms in large-scale fighting. More than 180,000 people have died from famine and violence. The Arab-dominated government in Khartoum has been accused of backing the Janjaweed militia against the ethnic tribe members in Darfur.

Darfur rebel SLM rejects Sudan's tripartite force proposal

Sudan Tribune, Jan 16, 2006 (CAIRO) — Darfur's main rebel group on Monday rejected Khartoum's offer to deploy joint forces alongside African Union (AU) troops to curb the violence in the war-torn region of western Sudan.

"The Sudan Liberation Movement rejects the Sudanese government's proposal... and insists on the deployment of an international force," the rebel group said in a statement.

The Sudanese foreign ministry had said that it proposed during a meeting in Addis Ababa of the African Union's Peace and Security Council the deployment of a tripartite force comprising troops from the government, the rebel movements and the AU.

The move by Khartoum came after it rejected a proposal by the United Nations to send its own troops to Darfur to replace an AU contingent which has struggled to quell the bloodshed.

Sudan has expressed its satisfaction with the performance of AU peacekeepers and urged the international community to come forward with the funds for the contingent to continue its mission.

Up to 300,000 people have died and 2.4 million have been displaced since Darfur rebels complaining of marginalisation by Khartoum launched an uprising which was brutally repressed by government forces and their proxy militias.

The Sudanese Communist Party proposes to GoS as how to block foreign military intervention in Darfur

(Akhbar Al-Yaum, 17 Jan, Khartoum) The Sudanese Communist Party suggested to the Government of Sudan to undertake certain serious actions in order to be able to block the road against any foreign international monitoring forces to Darfur, such as changing its strategy in Darfur, disarming the Janjaweed, and bringing all those who are accused of committing crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court.

East:

Tripoli Talks adjourned to 27 January

(Al Sahafa, 17 Jan, Khartoum) The Libyan mediator officially informed the Government of Sudan of the adjournment of the talks' round – which was proposed to be held today – to the 27 January 2006.

Other Developments:

Sudan is Most Competent State to Chair AU Presidency

SMC, Monday 16 January 2006-- Sudanese expert in the affairs of Horn of Africa professor Hassan Maki said Sudan is the most competent African state for heading the AU presidency for the next round. Professor Maki however has predicted that the summit should endorse the African UNESCO project initially proposed by Sudan.

He pointed that the summit should concentrate on education, culture and science as priority issues. Maki stated that president Al Bashir is also competent to chair the AU presidency.

Sudan still faces threats, despite peace in the South

Sudan Tribune, Jan 16, 2006 (UNITED NATIONS) — Despite international efforts, resulting at least with a peace accord between the Khartoum government and rebels in the south, Sudan still faces threats on three fronts while suffering continuing violence in Darfur.

To meet the threats and to maintain peace where it has been reached, one of the largest U.N. peacekeeping forces has been proposed, of up to 20,000 troops. The African Union already has about 7,000 in the country.

AU Chairman Alpha Omar Konare, a former Malian president, warned of a paucity of funds to finance the mission that operated at a cost of \$17 million a month.

"The funds received so far under the enhanced Assistance Mission in Sudan are almost exhausted," he said. "At present, no commitment has been made by partners for the funding of the mission beyond March 2006."

Five African peacekeepers and two civilian staff have been killed by unknown gunmen in the last four months.

Jon Pronk, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Representative for Sudan, briefed Friday the Security Council on the southern success and how it is threatened. He also brought the panel up to date on the continuing strife in Darfur. He also served notice of threats in Sudan's east and south, but this time from the Lord's Resistance Army based in Uganda.

Pronk's narrative came a day after Annan set in motion a robust U.N. operation in Sudan to pick up where the AU leaves off. He said such action was necessary because of the time needed to get a U.N. program up and running by the time the AU no longer can handle the situation.

"The killings are going on, the rapes are going on" in Darfur, Annan told reporters last Thursday, adding security was lacking for those internally displaced and for humanitarian workers.

"We have lost access to some of the needy people, and we have had to remove some of our own staff from the area" where the 3 million people were being fed.

"What we need to do is to find a way of improving security — immediate improvement in security — working with the AU forces," he said.

"They need support, logistical and financial support, to be able to strengthen security on the ground," Annan said. "Both parties are actively attacking people in Darfur, and the rebels have to take the negotiations very seriously in Abuja," Nigeria.

Annan believes the Security Council, "where necessary, will take immediate action to help redress the situation."

But, in the meantime, the AU forces' funds are limited.

"They have resources until March," he said.

So the possibility of the United Nations working with the AU to address the situation is being considered, Annan said. "We can only get involved once the African Union mandate has ended."

Then the question will be, when does the United Nations go in and that is the reason for the contingency planning.

"Even if we were to take over, we cannot do it by March, so there will be a lead time, and we should not have a gap between the two forces," Annan said.

He said the force would be structured differently, making it more mobile, from the present AU model.

Annan said it would need "tactical air support must have helicopters and ability to respond very quickly, so it would be a different type of structure. And we will need very sophisticated equipment, logistical support, and I will be turning to governments with capacity to join in that peacekeeping operation if we were to be given the mandate."

That indicates he would be looking to Europe and the United States, among others, despite Khartoum's insistence on only African forces.

"We need to get the Government to work with us in bringing in an expanded force with troops from outside Africa," he said.

The U.N. Security Council has tried for a year to end the violence in Darfur, disarm the government-sponsored Janjaweed militia, end impunity and find a political solution.

Pronk advocates between 12,000-20,000 peacekeepers and called for enforcement of sanctions in Sudan.

Pronk said that though the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Southern People's Liberation Movement/Army remained firm, many in the South have become suspicious about the government's lack of transparency in reporting the oil revenue that is supposed to be shared.

Added to that issue are suspicions in the North that the SPLM does not want to promote national unity as it prepares for the referendum on separation scheduled for six years after the CPA was signed, he said.

"The government in the North should do everything to make this attractive. It can do so by guaranteeing a fair share of power, resources and income to the people of the South for expenditure and investment in water, schools, jobs, agriculture, housing and health care for all those people who were deprived of these decades along."

"Where is the peace dividend?" Pronk asked.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants have yet to begin in the South, Pronk said.

He said without support, expectations of the population in the south would not be met and tensions between various ethnic groups may be exacerbated.

On the unrest in eastern Sudan Pronk said, the government and rebel movements there had agreed to start discussions leading to peace talks facilitated by the United Nations in the third quarter of last year, but afterward the world organization was sidelined.

Parties agreed to Libya as a facilitator, but talks have yet to start.

On the western front, beyond the violence of Darfur, ongoing since 2003, the Security Council president for January, Ambassador Augustine Mahiga of Tanzania, told reporters Chad alleges rebels or deserters from its army have crossed into Sudan and have been given sanctuary there while "continuing to cause problems" for Chad.

However he said the panel has not yet received Sudan's version of the issue, but tensions have risen between the two countries, he said, resulting in a negative effect on the Darfur negotiations.

New Nigerian appointed AU force commander in Sudan's Darfur

Sudan Tribune, Jan 16, 2006 (LAGOS) — A Nigerian, Maj-Gen Collins Remmy Umunnakwe Ihekire, has been appointed as the new force commander of the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the African Union (AU) military mission in the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan.

According to the Nigerian daily the Guardian, Ihekire replaces Maj-Gen Patrick Okonkwo (photo), the pioneer head of the AU intervention force in the Darfur region.

Ihekire was granted regular combatant commission on 13 December 1975 and belongs to the Nigerian Army Corps of Engineers. He was commander, Nigerian Army Contingent and chief of operations to the OAU-sponsored Neutral Observers Group (NMOG) in Rwanda.