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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

AMIS-UN transition

Sudan to study AU's Peace, Security Council statement on Darfur

(*ST* – 12th March, **Khartoum**) The Sudanese cabinet chaired by president Omer al-Bashir, Sunday held a regular meeting and formed a 10-member ministerial committee headed by the Foreign Minister Lam Akol, to prepare a study on the communiqué of the recent meeting of Peace and Security Council of the African Union to determine the official stance of the government on this regard.

The Council of Ministers heard a report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the recent meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in Addis Ababa regarding the transfer of its mission in Darfur to the United Nations.

The Council of Ministers expressed reservations concerning some ambiguous clauses in the communiqué, besides the inclusion of issues that has nothing to do with the African Union's role and mission in Darfur.

The Cabinet underscored positive aspects of the decision of the Peace and Security Council as regards giving top priority to the political solution and the importance of intensified efforts to reach a peaceful solution through the negotiations in Abuja as soon as possible, on the ground that the political solution represents the basic means to restore security and peace in Darfur and to avoid any attempt of foreign military intervention in Darfur.

In a press statement after the Cabinet meeting, the Secretary General and spokesman of the Council of Ministers, Omer Mohamed Salih, pointed out that the Council of Ministers has expressed satisfaction over the continuity of the African Union's mission in Darfur for another six months and appreciation of the refusal of the Peace and Security Council to transfer immediately its tasks in Darfur to the United Nations, besides its affirmation of the right of Sudan to adopt the final decision in this regard.

The Council of Minister has praised the role of the Sudanese diplomacy and the extensive contacts, which were made by the Presidency of the Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the continuity of the African Union's mission in Darfur.

The Council of Minister has lauded the cohesion of the internal front with its various political parties, which was reflected through the recent huge mass rallies all over the country against the attempts of foreign intervention in the country.

Egypt welcomes AU decision over UN takeover in Darfur

(*Xinhua/ST* – 12th March, **Cairo**) Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit on Sunday welcomed the decision by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council to turn over peacekeeping in Sudan's volatile western Darfur region to the United Nations.

Abul Gheit also praised the council's decision to ensure a role for the pan-African body to play in solving the conflicts in Darfur even after the United Nations takes over the peacekeeping mission, according to the official MENA news agency.

"The foreign minister praised (the council for) reaffirming the African Union's role in supervising the peace process in Darfur and that African troops should be the backbone of the new peacekeeping mission," Abul Gheit was quoted as saying by a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

The Egyptian top diplomat hoped that all parties involved in the Darfur dispute would thrash out a peace agreement as soon as possible and urged the international community to offer necessary help, the spokesman added.

CPA

Paulino Matip says "enemies of peace" are embarrassing President Bashir

(*AlAyaam* – 13th Mar. **Khartoum**) SPLA Deputy Commander-in-Chief Paulino Matip has accused the SAF of the killing and injuring of 66 SPLA soldiers in Kharasana near Abyei last Wednesday and says this is a violation of the CPA.

The deputy C-in-C said in a press conference in Khartoum yesterday that the SPLA was afraid it would respond in another manner should such violations occur again.

Matip pointed out that such attacks against the SPLA were attempts by "enemies of peace who seek to sow the seeds of sedition" and were meant to embarrass President Bashir who is "committed to the peace process".

Matip explained that the SPLA forces was on its way south as part of the redeployment scheme and SAF Military Intelligence was informed accordingly only to find that they were ambushed on their way. He lay responsibility for the attack on SAF military intelligence whom he said were aware of the ambush.

He put the number of dead and injured at 39 and 37 respectively and said there were another number of people missing.

The SPLA deputy C-in-C further revealed that there were 3,000 citizens in Kharasana currently under UN protection and facing a bad humanitarian situation and need assistance. "They have been put under UN care because we preferred not to engage in clashes with the government forces so that we should not be accused of violating the CPA. We leave the UN and the people of the Sudan to judge", said Matip.

He further added that the SPLM has notified the government about the issue and they are still waiting for a decisive response from First Vice-president Salva Kiir.

AlRai AlAam collaborates the report and adds that Matip warned that the CPA would collapse should such attacks continue.

He also said that southern Sudanese IDPs are leading a hard life in Khartoum with continued break-ins by the police.

Returns

(*Alwatan* – 13th Mar. **Khartoum**) About 1,500 IDPs from Warrap State residing in Jebel Auliya return home today following years of living on the outskirts of Khartoum as a result of the war.

The local committee organising this return called upon the others to see this first batch of voluntary returnees off as the head towards home.

Darfur/ Abuja talks

Gadhaffi to arrange meeting between President Bashir and rebel leaders of Darfur

(*AlRai AlAam* – 13th Mar. **Tripoli**) Following the successful brokering of a meeting between Vice-president Taha and Minnawi of the SLM and Khalil of the JEM, the Libyan leadership is planning to arrange a meeting between President Bashir and the rebel leaders.

No details have been given.

President Gadhaffi is also said to be planning to come to Sudan a few days before the forthcoming Arab League summit meeting kicks off in Khartoum to give him time to tour Darfur with the aim to meet and talk with the leaders and representatives of the various rebel groups there.

Two Darfur rebel leaders arrive in Abuja for peace talks

(*ST* – 12th March, **Abuja**) Two of the rebel leaders arrived in Abuja over the weekend in a sign that the rebel groups understood the negotiations had reached a critical point.

Minni Minnawi, leader of one of the factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and Khalil Ibrahim, head of the smaller Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) arrived yesterday in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

Since the seventh round of talks started more than three months ago, Minni has spent more time consolidating his position on the ground in Darfur and neighbouring Chad than at the talks, while Khalil had not previously attended the round at all.

JEM's official spokesman Ahmad Hussein said that the arrival of Khalil Ibrahim at the negotiation's venue would boost the negotiation process. He said Ibrahim would meet the mediators and avail his capabilities to African mediators. He pointed out that the JEM's negotiating delegation had a complete mandate. '

The Sudanese Akhbar al-Yawm questioned SLM's leader Minawi and JEM's leader Ibrahim upon their arrival by private plane from Libya. Minawi said that his visit to Libya had been successful and that he had met the Libyan leader. "Gadhafi was keen to resolve the Darfur problem peacefully," he said adding that he had reiterated that SLM was also keen to resolve the problem.

"We agreed with Gadhafi that the problem needed to be resolved peacefully without resorting to war or armed work," Minnawi added.

In this regard the leader of JEM said "I hope that by coming to Abuja I will help resolve the problem of Darfur peacefully."

The visit by Minnawi and Khalil coincided with a stop over in Libya by the Second Vice-President of the Republic Ali Osman Taha. As a result information and news in Abuja reported a meeting between Taha, Minnawi and Ibrahim under the direct or indirect auspices of the Libyan leader.

Akhbar al-Yaum tried to ask Minnawi and Khalil about the truth of the matter but the SLM and JEM spokesmen declined to make any comment.

African mediators propose enhanced ceasefire implementation in Darfur

(*ST* – 12th March, **Abuja**) The AU mediators, today, presented the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebel groups with comprehensive proposals for an enhanced humanitarian ceasefire, imploring both sides to bring the bloodshed and suffering to an end.

"The humanitarian agencies in Darfur are reaching fewer people than they did when that Ceasefire Agreement was signed. The humanitarian situation is catastrophic. This is completely unacceptable" said Sam Ibok, head of the AU mediation team in Abuja.

The proposed Enhanced Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (EHCA) "contains provisions to make the N'Djamena Ceasefire Agreement, signed on 8 April 2004 in the Chadian capital, a reality on the ground" said the spokesperson for AU peace mediators in Abuja Nourreddine Mezni.

The EHCA has, at its centre, "the demilitarization of humanitarian supply routes and camps for displaced people, which the African Union contends, should be secured by A.U. peacekeepers and civilian police."

The proposal implies that the warring parties — Sudanese government and the rebels groups — withdraw their forces to clearly identified areas, with buffer zones between them.

The Head of the AU Mediation Team, Sam Ibok said "our experience over the past sixteen months has led us to conclude that there is neither good faith nor commitment on the part of any of the Parties." "Our new proposals" he added, "are based on detailed technical work by a team of AU and UN experts.

On Friday, the AU Peace and Security Council agreed to extend the mandate of the 7000 African force until September 2006. The Council also urged the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels to sign on to the proposed EHCA.

The Chief Mediator for Darfur, Salim Ahmed Salim, said: "The fate of millions of the suffering people in Darfur is in your hands. The eyes of the world are on you. Now is the time to bring this needless bloodshed to an end."

Human rights

UN human rights contacts editor-in-chief

(*Alwatan* – 13th Mar. **Khartoum**) UN human rights phoned the editor-in-chief of *Alwatan* dail and his deputy who reported on the circumstances of their arrest and conditions of their detention.

They said they have been detained for over 30 hours inside an apartment room where they slept on the bare dirty floor with mosquitoes and insects around them.

The editor-in-chief told UN human rights that he believes such detention is in violation of the space of freedom granted. He expressed the belief that it was not government policy but was as a result of a personal feud between him and a minister over the issue of the legal advisers

who had been appointed for over a year but were neither given the chance to work nor were they paid the prescribed allowances.