



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN
UNMIS

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(By Public Information Office)

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UN

UN Sudan Mission welcomes Darfur peace deal

(*Xinhua/ST* – 6th May. **Khartoum**) The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) on Saturday welcomed the signing of a peace agreement between the Sudanese government and a main rebel faction over the conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region.

UNMIS spokesman Bahaa Elkoussy told Xinhua that the peace agreement signed on Friday by the Sudanese government and a key faction inside the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Minni Arkou Minnawi, was "a big transformation."

"We hope that this big transformation will have positive impacts on the security and humanitarian situations in Darfur," Elkoussy said.

The spokesman added that disarmament of the militias and the rebel armed forces would facilitate the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations in Darfur.

Friday's signing of the peace agreement is expected to help pave the way for the deployment of international peacekeeping forces to replace the 7,800-strong AU forces in Darfur. But the Sudanese government has so far turned down the deployment.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called on all the concerned parties to seize the historic opportunity to bring the conflict in Darfur to an end.

Sudan welcomes UN peacekeepers after Darfur deal*

(*AP/ST, AlAyaam* – 7th May. **Khartoum**) A Sudanese government spokesman said on Saturday that United Nations peacekeepers now would be welcome in Darfur after a peace agreement between Khartoum and one of the rebel groups.

Bakri Mulah, secretary-general for external affairs in the Information Ministry, issued the invitation on behalf of the Khartoum government after the agreement was reached Friday in Abuja, Nigeria.

The Sudanese government initially rejected calls for U.N. peacekeepers to replace the thousands of African Union peacekeepers now in Darfur.

"We heard the appeal of the U.N. secretary general (for U.N. peacekeepers to join those of the African Union)... Now there is no problem," he said.

Two rebel groups, though, have rejected the accord backed by the African Union, United States, Britain, the European Union and the Arab League and skipped the signing ceremony in a hall at a Nigerian presidential villa Friday night.

Optimism was muted by that and a history of failure to live up to agreements struck over two years of negotiations in the Nigerian capital.

At the U.N., American Ambassador John Bolton welcomed the agreement but said U.N. peacekeepers would become essential if the agreement were to hold.

"Recognizing that this is a very positive development in Abuja, we now would like the government in Khartoum to follow through and give the necessary visas and other arrangements to allow the U.N. planners to go in," Bolton said. That would lead to the strengthening of the African Union force during the transition, he said.

Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, who helped spur negotiators to agree to stop the killing, said the embattled East African region was far from safe even if the peace agreement were to take hold.

U.S. President George W. Bush intervened during the difficult negotiations, sending a letter to the largest rebel group, Minni Minnawi, with assurances that the United States would give strong support to implementation of the peace accord, help monitoring compliance, hold accountable those who do not cooperate and support a donors' conference for Darfur, Zoellick said in a telephone interview from Abuja with reporters in Washington.

In Cairo, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa welcomed the agreement and urged the rebel groups that opted out to reverse their decisions.

Moussa, in a statement faxed to The Associated Press, expressed confidence that the agreement would end the violence and open the way for reconstruction and development.

Khartoum had dropped opposition to a U.N. peacekeeping force, citing new conditions created by the peace deal.

"There would be no problem to have the support of the United Nations and other partners, the U.S. and EU, to help in implementation," Mullah told AP.

Mulah said the agreement also would help in repairing relations between Sudan and Chad, strained over the flood of refugees from Darfur.

Beyond that, he told AP, he expected Minnawi, the head of the Sudan Liberation Movement, to play an important role in the peace process as a member the Sudan's national unity government.

Mulah said the agreement was not closed to other rebel groups who had refused to sign.

"The other parties still have a chance to do so, but if they refuse then they will be treated just like the *Janjaweed* (the anti-rebel militia the government was accused of backing) or any other outlaw factions.

"This is not a government stand; it is that of the international community, the AU, the U.N. and the U.S. They will not tolerate any violation of the agreement," he warned.

** Also read related story below*

Foreign ministry critical of Kofi Annan's statement following Abuja deal

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 7th May. **Khartoum**) Sudan's foreign ministry has welcomed the signing of the Abuja Agreement between the government and a key rebel group of Darfur.

The ministry issued a statement describing the peace deal as a credit to the AU's efforts in conflict resolution and reaffirmed commitments to the AU Peace & Security Council resolution on the AU's mandate that expires in September this year.

In reaction to the recent statement by Secretary-General Kofi Annan following the signing of the agreement [*see story below*] in which he called for a strengthening of the AU force in Darfur until a transition to a UN operation, Sudan's foreign ministry pointed out that only the government has the right to decide whether or not there is a need for international forces in Darfur.

Foreign ministry spokesman Jamal Mohamed Ibrahim said that it is still early to think of such a transition and added that the UN should help in efforts to consolidate the peace.

Annan welcomes peace agreement on Darfur, stresses need for speed and aid

(*UN News Centre* – 5th May. UN) United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today welcomed the peace agreement on Darfur signed between the Government of Sudan and the main rebel group at the inter-Sudanese talks in Abuja, and he urged the two parties outside the deal to “sign and seize the moment” to end this “tragic chapter” in the history of the country.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Annan also emphasized that there is an urgent need for more humanitarian assistance to Darfur and said that once an agreement is concluded in the region the international community would also have to move very quickly to have the right impact on the ground.

“The implementation of the agreement, once concluded, would require that we immediately begin to strengthen the African Union force on the ground so that they can begin implementation of the critical aspects of the agreement,” he said.

“We would also need to intensify our own humanitarian efforts, and we need the resources required to do this, and as you know we have so far received only twenty per cent of the resources required.”

He also called on the Government of Sudan to allow a UN assessment team to visit the region to make preparations for the transition from the African Union (AU) force to one from the world body.

“Now is the time for them to allow the assessment mission to go in, for us to move expeditiously, and I do intend to be in touch with the Sudanese authorities precisely on this point.”

Mr. Annan also emphasized the need for humanitarian assistance for Darfur, where some 180,000 people have been killed and some 2 million uprooted from their homes in three years of fighting between the Government, pro-Government militias and rebels in a region that is about the size of France.

“The U.S. has been very generous, but we are looking at the other traditional donors in Europe, and we are also trying to expand the donor base and we are reaching out to the Gulf States and governments with capacity to step in and help,” he said. “All hands on deck; and whoever can make a contribution, we would urge them to do it - not leave it to governments alone.”

Earlier in the day in Washington, the Secretary-General made a similar call for international assistance to the people of Darfur, saying their human rights have been violated in the most “appalling” way, and describing the situation in that part of Sudan as an “inexcusable tragedy.”

Egeland visits Darfur today

(*AlSahafa* – 7th May. **Khartoum**) UN USG for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland visits Darfur today where he will hold talks with the Governor of South Darfur before heading for Gireida, the scene of a complex humanitarian situation.

UNMIS Spokesperson Bahaa Elkoussy says that tensions in Gireida have dropped to a level that does allow Jan Egeland to visit the areas and assess the situation there.

He pointed out however that international agencies are still unable to provide services to the people there.

Of the Egeland visit, the Spokesperson said that the UN humanitarian chief will be touring the area to assess the needs and the conditions faced by international organisations operating there. He ruled out possibilities of Mr. Egeland having talks with armed groups in South Darfur.

In Nyala where Egeland will be spending two days, the UN humanitarian chief will hold talks with UN agencies and then host a press conference on his visit.

Egeland will then travel to Khartoum where he will hold talks with representatives of UN agencies and (separately) diplomatic representatives of donor states.

Egeland will then hold a press conference after talks with the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and will, after that, hold talks with AU representatives and then travel to Abeche in Chad on 10th May.

Sudanese security forces in Darfur enjoy impunity - UN

(*AP/ST* – 5th May. **Khartoum**) The Sudanese government grants "broad immunity" to its security officers for rights violations in Darfur and minimizes the scale of the killings and rapes taking place there, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said Friday.

"In a statement issued at the end of a six-day visit to Sudan, Louise Arbour said that while government security forces maintain a high profile throughout Darfur, "there is no apparent minimum level of physical protection for the communities affected by the conflict. On the contrary, the pervasive presence of the national security apparatus inspires fear and apprehension among internally displaced persons and their host communities."

Arbor said that in the 19 months since she first visited Darfur in late 2004, the situation in Sudan's western region was "just as critical and in some respects worse."

"There are continuing attacks on civilians, raids and pillaging of villages and rape and gender-based violence," she said. During her stay, she said she had met women with babies born as a result of rape, and heard reports of children being recruited or abducted to serve as soldiers.

In an interview, Arbour said both men and women in the camps for displaced people in Darfur fear to venture outside to collect firewood, for instance.

"Women fear sexual violence ... men fear being killed," Arbour said.

In the interview, Arbour said the signing of the peace agreement would "open up space for improvement" in Darfur by encouraging donors to recommit themselves to the region and resume aid.

Arbour said the government's security forces required fundamental overhaul.

"A crucial part of this reform is the abolition of the broad immunity granted to officers of the security apparatus," she said in the statement.

She added that during her visit to Darfur, she heard reports of rebel violence against civilians and humanitarian workers.

"A particularly worrying development is the proliferation of armed groups (with no clear allegiances or political aims) engaged in criminal activity," she said.

"Despite a number of measures taken by the authorities, notably the establishment of special courts and committees, impunity remains the norm in most cases of human rights violations in Darfur," she added.

The government has acknowledged that rights abuses have occurred in Darfur but it has long denied that they are systematic. It has also denied supporting the pro-government militia, the Janjaweed, which is blamed for the bulk of abuses.

"In discussing the critical situation in Darfur with Sudanese local and national authorities I was struck, as I was during my first visit, by their efforts to minimize the gravity of the problem," Arbour said.

She also spoke of the fall in humanitarian aid to the region, citing a shortfall in contributions from donors and an insecurity that impeded access to communities outside the major towns.

Arbour said in the interview that on her visit to southern Sudan this week, she found that more than a year after the signing of the January 2005 peace treaty which ended the civil war, armed groups and militia "continue to terrorize people."

"Disarmament is a critical issue," she said.

She visited an area 10 minutes' drive from Juba, the capital of the south, where the people said the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group from northern Uganda, had recently killed 10 members of the community.

UN aid worker shot and wounded in eastern Chad near Sudan

(*ST* – 6th May. N'Djamena) A United Nations aid worker was shot and wounded in eastern Chad after being pulled from her car in a volatile region near the Sudanese border, the agency said Saturday.

Sylvaen Ndakas of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees said the French woman, who was attacked in Abeche on Friday night, was taken to the capital of N'Djamena and hospitalized. Details of her condition were not released.

Eastern Chad has been a staging ground for rebels looking to topple President Idriss Deby, who faced only token opposition in Wednesday's presidential election.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad

SRSR Pronk continues pressure on AbdulWahid to join peace deal

(*AIRai AlAam* – 7th May. **Abuja, Khartoum**) The Sudan has started practical steps towards the implementation of the recently-signed Abuja Agreement and has instructed military field commanders in Darfur to consolidate the implementation of the cease fire agreement.

Meanwhile AU Chairman Denis Sassou-Nguesso and the US delegation led by Robert Zoellick left Abuja yesterday and the Sudan government delegation is expected to return to Khartoum tomorrow but SRSR Jan Pronk is still in Abuja in a bid to pressure the AbdulWahid faction to sign the peace agreement.

Two of three rebel groups refuse Darfur peace deal

(*ST* – 5th May. **Abuja**) The African Union's year-old drive to bring peace to the devastated Sudanese region of Darfur was in crisis once again on Friday, after rebel fighters refused to sign a peace accord.

Despite massive pressure from international mediators, both insurgent groups at peace talks in Abuja defied the third in a series of 48-hour deadlines and rejected a proposed deal with the Khartoum government to end their war.

The chief AU mediator at the talks, Salim Ahmed Salim, said more meetings would resume at 9.00am (0800 GMT) after a stormy overnight session, but sounded far from optimistic about how the negotiations could proceed.

"It was rough and tough. I'm not encouraged. I think we've reached a point of reality," he told reporters at Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's official residence in Abuja, the current venue of the peace talks.

"We've one consideration in mind, which is the plight of the people of Darfur. It will be a bad day for the people of Darfur if, after all the efforts made and days spent, the (rebel) movements are still wanting," he warned.

This week senior international envoys, including US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, came to Abuja to strongarm the warring parties into a peace deal which would allow humanitarian aid to flow and elections to be held.

The Western diplomats fine-tuned the draft accord, pushing the government to offer better guarantees on the disarmament of the Janjaweed and on recruiting former rebels into the national armed forces.

Following this intervention, Obasanjo and the current AU chairman President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of Congo personally hosted Thursday's overnight session in a bid to persuade the parties to accept a deal.

But Mohammed Tugod of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) said the draft peace accord failed to answer his group's demands for Darfur's three states to be united into a single autonomous region.

"We clearly explained the reasons why this document failed to take into consideration the opinions of the movement and why the African Union mediation failed also to come out with a reasonable document," he said.

"We came to the conclusion that it's extremely difficult for us to accept this kind of document unless fundamental changes have been made ... therefore we decided not to sign it," he told reporters in Abuja.

Abdelwahid Al-Nur, one of the leaders of Darfur's other rebel movement the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), said simply: "We need the document to be improved upon. We are not going to sign it."

Zoellick was clearly angered by the insurgents' intransigence.

"We've made the parties realise that their people are dying. They need to think over this. It's time for the leadership of the (rebel) movements to step forward and to help their people," he told reporters.

"These are great opportunities which good leadership must take, but this leadership in the movements is in question," he said.

Tugod said a peace deal should include a larger provision to bring leaders from Darfur into the Sudanese federal presidency.

As drawn up by the AU, the proposed peace plan would call for a referendum in Darfur to decide whether to create a single administrative region, but only after fighting has halted and national elections have been held.

Ruling party hails Darfur deal, says committed to implementation

(*ST* – 6th May. **Khartoum**) The ruling National Congress party has welcomed the agreement signed in Abuja Friday 5 May between the government and some of the armed movements in Darfur.

Deputy Chairman of the National Congress for Political and Organization Affairs, Nafei Ali Nafei affirmed the government's keenness to implement all articles of the agreement to consolidate security and stability in Darfur.

He expressed hope that the remaining factions would join the peace, which has become the demand of the Sudanese people and the international community.

Nafi in a press statement Saturday 6 May thanked the African Union leaders, the mediation team, the Nigerian Government, the UN and the international community, including the observers and facilitators for the efforts they exerted.

The government of Sudan and the main Darfur rebel faction signed a peace agreement on Friday to end three years of fighting that has killed tens of thousands of people and forced 2 million to flee their homes.

Majzoub al-Khalifa, head of the government's negotiating team, and rebel Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) faction leader Minni Arcua Minnawi signed the agreement in the Nigerian capital Abuja after days of intense negotiations and international pressure.

AU mediators pledge to continue Darfur peace efforts

(*ST* – 6th May. **Abuja**) The African Union (AU) has promised to continue international efforts to bring lasting peace to western Sudan's Darfur region despite the refusal of a rebel group and a faction of another to sign a UN-sponsored agreement.

The deal was signed in the Nigerian capital on Friday by representatives of the Sudanese government and the main faction of the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM), led by Minna Minnawi, in the presence of the peace talks host Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and mediators.

But another rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and a smaller faction of the divided SLM, led by AbdulWahid al-Nur, refused to sign, saying they would not accept the United Nations-sponsored deal.

"Our hope is to have everybody on board. The AU and the international community will continue the efforts to have a deal where every single movement (rebel group) will be in," AU spokesman Nouredine Mezni said.

"The door is still open till mid-May to have the others on board. It is the AU Peace and Security Council that will decide the matter," he said.

The council is expected to meet on May 15, but Mezni did not disclose the venue.

JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussain said "all options are still open. What I can say for now is that we are committed to our people and we are standing with them."

Nouri Abdallahi of the al-Nur SLM faction also said his group was still open to negotiations, but added that delegates would start leaving for home Saturday.

Two of Sudan's closest neighbours, Egypt and Chad, welcomed the signing of the agreement by Khartoum and the region's main rebel faction but urged the other parties to sign.

Chad's Foreign Minister Ahmat Allami said in a statement he was "pleased by the conclusion of the peace agreement in Abuja".

"The conclusion of this agreement marks a significant first step towards the establishment of a definitive peace and reconciliation between all the peoples of this land," the statement continued.

But the minister criticised the JEM and al-Nur's SLM faction for their refusal to sign, and called on them to do so "for the greater good of the peoples of Darfur and for the peace and security of the region".

France also welcomed the accord. "The government of Sudan and the main rebel movement have had the courage to seize this unique chance to re-establish peace in Darfur and settle this crisis fundamentally," said a statement from France's foreign ministry, which also called on the rebel movements that were still reticent should join in.

UN relief coordinator Jan Egeland was due to arrive in Darfur Sunday in the first visit by a United Nations official to the region since the signing of the peace deal.

He will have talks with local leaders and visit refugee camps before heading to Khartoum Monday for meetings with Sudanese officials.

World leaders have given a cautious welcome to the peace deal but urged the other rebel groups to join it.

The accord offers a referendum on the future status of the region, obliges Khartoum to disarm and neutralise the Janjaweed by mid-October, provides for the rebel movements to be represented in the Sudanese government and creates a fund for the reconstruction of Darfur.

But analysts warned that a lack of political will to implement the treaty by Khartoum, already accused of renegeing on promises from a previous agreement with rebels in southern Sudan, could prove disastrous for the country.

Southern Sudan

Uganda says most LRA rebels relocated to DR Congo

(*Xinhua/ST* – 5th May. **Kampala**) The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has said about 95 per cent of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels in southern Sudan have relocated to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The UPDF 5th Division spokesman, Lt Chris Magezi, told Xinhua by telephone on Friday 5 May that most of the rebels have crossed to the DRC to join rebel leader Joseph Kony and his deputy Vincent Otti who are believed to be hiding in the jungles of Garamba National Park, eastern DRC.

"About 95 per cent of the LRA are now hiding in the DRC after our hot pursuit in southern Sudan," said Magezi.

He noted that there just a few remnants that are remaining in southern Sudan which the rebels used as their base to launch attacks against the Ugandan government, in a rebellion that has left tens of thousands of people dead.

"Our forces in southern Sudan have made major successes in wiping out these rebels. And because of our fire power, they are fleeing to the DRC," Magezi added.

UPDF spokesman, Maj Felix Kulaigye told Xinhua by telephone on Friday that Defence Minister Amama Mbabazi had returned from Sudan where he had gone to meet President Omar Al-Bashir and the UN Khartoum team to reach a regional mechanism to handle the LRA.

President Yoweri Museveni said on Thursday that there is need for the government to work in conjunction with the Sudanese government, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and the United Nations Force in the DRC (MONUC) in ending the war in northern Uganda.

The Ugandan military said recently if Kony and his 150 armed combatants are given a safe haven in the DRC, they could build up and become a regional problem.

According to Minister Mbabazi, Uganda is to send defence and foreign affairs officials to meet the DRC authorities on how the two neighbouring countries can wipe out LRA rebels.

"It is a matter we are pushing with vigour and we are sure to receive positive reports," Mbabazi said shortly before leaving for the Khartoum meeting.

About two weeks ago, the Ugandan government proposed to the UN Security Council to allow the UPDF pursue the LRA rebels in the DRC.

Last week, the DRC government said UPDF soldiers were sighted on its territory pursuing the LRA, a thing the Ugandan army denied.

The LRA rebels have been fighting the Ugandan government for the last 20 years in a rebellion that has left tens of thousands of people dead and over 1.4 million people living in internally displaced persons camps in northern Uganda.

Governors' Forum kicks off in Juba

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 7th May. **Juba**) The 10 southern Sudanese state governors met in Juba on Wednesday to discuss state maps, the GoSS budget and to convene a series of meetings with the UN agencies in what they called a Governors' Forum.

The one-week forum concludes on Tuesday 9th May.

World Press Freedom Day celebrated in Juba

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 7th May. **Juba**) The Independent Union of Southern Sudan Journalists staged a peace procession in Juba to mark the World Press Freedom Day last Friday.

GoSS Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Samson Kwaje, declared freedom of the press as stipulated in the GoSS policy and called on media practitioners to embrace this opportunity for the development of impoverished southern Sudan.

He assured that no journalist will be harassed and reaffirmed the information ministry's desire to work together with all media personnel without restrictions.

The journalists' union appealed to the GoSS leadership and NGOs to refrain from dividing the people and to instead work to create an enabling environment for all in southern Sudan.