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Referendum Watch

Ban urges calm in Southern Sudan as referendum process is finalized

31 January - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged both parties to the peace agreement that ended Sudan's North-South war to remain calm as the results of the referendum on the future of the south are finalized, commending the two sides for the peaceful conduct of the plebiscite.

"Sudan has reached a historic point. All reports indicate a generally peaceful referendum process with a large turnout," Mr. Ban said in an address to a high-level meeting on Sudan convened by the United Nations and the African Union (AU) in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, on the sidelines of the AU's annual summit.

"As the Sudanese people adjust to the new realities on the ground, the CPA parties must shift their attention to the key post-referendum arrangements that will sustain the North-South relationship in the long term," Mr. Ban said.

The survival of both the North and the South, he added, required agreement on the sharing of oil revenue, while borders have to be agreed on and demarcated, making it possible for traditional migration of communities between the two territories.

"And the futures of millions of Southerners and Northerners depend upon agreements that guarantee basic rights, freedom of movement and livelihoods, regardless of where they live," the Secretary-General said.

Mr. Ban also discussed these issues in a meeting with United States Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg, voicing the hope that the peaceful conduct of the referendum will lead to renewed focus on resolving post-referendum issues and helping Southern Sudan establish strong democratic institutions.

In his remarks, the Secretary-General deplored the outbreak of violence in the Abyei enclave as the rest of the Southern Sudan voted and urged both parties to the CPA to prevent any further violence in the area and other border regions.

"I also urge the parties to find a sustainable solution that addresses the needs of all populations in the area and lays the foundation for long-term coexistence. The referendum is only one aspect of the broader search for sustainable peace in Sudan," said Mr. Ban.

On Darfur, the Secretary-General voiced concern over escalating violence, which he said has continued to displace thousands of people.

"All parties to the conflict should put down their arms and engage with the peace process. Now is the time to step up our encouragement to the parties, to advise them that there will be rewards for peace, and consequences for further conflict," Mr. Ban said.

He called for renewed support for the UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and its strategy to ensure its freedom of movement throughout the region, protect civilians and help humanitarian agencies assist those in need.

"Millions of Darfurians continue to live in unacceptable conditions, far from their homes. They deserve from the international community the same high levels of cohesion and urgency we have demonstrated in the work of implementing the CPA," Mr. Ban said.

The Secretary-General pledged the UN's continued commitment to working closely with the AU

to reach a common vision for peace in Sudan.

While in Addis, the Secretary-General also held separate meetings with Presidents Alpha Conde of Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea and Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, as well as Vice-President George Kunda of Zambia.

Sudan government says accepts vote outcome

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 01/02/11 - President Al-Bashir says Sudan is prepared to cooperate with any "honest" party that sincerely seeks to help shore up peace in the country. Speaking at the AU summit meet in Addis, Al-Bashir said his government respects the results of the referendum and assured Sudan would be among the first to recognise and interact with the new state.

In a separate story, *local dailies* report today that Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha said at a press conference in Khartoum yesterday that he accepted the preliminary results of the referendum that showed over 99% favouring separation from the north.

"We announce our agreement and our acceptance of the result of the referendum announced yesterday," said the VP as he wished the people of southern Sudan good luck and a fruitful future.

Meanwhile, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* also reports that the opposition alliance, National Consensus Forces, has also voiced their acceptance of the preliminary results of the referendum.

China says more work needed for peaceful Sudan

AP Beijing, 31/02/11 - China has called an independence referendum in Southern Sudan "an important step" toward stability in the oil-rich region.

China has been seeking strong relations with officials in both Sudan's north and south works to secure its energy needs. Sudan is sub-Saharan Africa's third-largest oil producer, producing 490,000 barrels of oil a day last year, a 50 percent increase from 2006.

The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission announced Sunday that 99 percent of voters in the south voted for independence during a referendum earlier in January.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said Tuesday that the referendum was not the end and that the "ultimate goal" should be to bring lasting peace and stability to Sudan.

Forces to redeploy with effect from today – Joint Defence Council

Al-Rai Al-Aam Juba, 01/02/11 – A meeting of the Joint Defence Council held in Juba yesterday has resolved that the two sides form a joint infantry brigade to provide security for the Abyei area. This force would also have the duties of securing migration routes for the nomads as well as returnees to the south.

Council Spokesperson Ahmed Abdalla also revealed that the two sides agreed to form two infantry battalions to guard the oilfields in the Falluj and Adariel areas and their environs in Upper Nile State. The JDB also resolved that forces of the two sides should redeploy to their respective sides of the 1.1.56 border with effect from 1 February (today) through 9 February.

According to *Al-Ahdath*, Abdalla also said that the SPLA expressed some reserve over redeployment of its forces from Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan State on the grounds that there are problems in these areas and because these areas would be undergoing the popular consultations exercise.

SPLM says Abyei cannot be left as part of the north

Sudantribune.com Juba, 31/01/11 - An official from south Sudan's ruling party said Monday that there is "no way" the disputed border region of Abyei could be left as part of north Sudan. Bol Makueng, described citizens of Abyei as part of the South and that there was no reason to leave them as part of the north under any circumstances.

Makueng told *Sudan Tribune*: "Liberation is won. The citizens of Abyei are pure south Sudanese by identity. There is no question about that. They are part and parcel of south Sudan and the liberation struggle. They went to the war twice with the people of south Sudan because of Abyei. So, there is no way we can leave Abyei behind in the north come what may."

United Nations officials in Abyei who did not want to be named, as they had not been authorized to speak to the media, on Sunday described the security situation to be relatively calm.

One UN official told *Sudan Tribune*: "At the movement, the security situation is relatively come. The new Joint Integrated Units from Wau are moving into the area. There have been no immediate security concerns during the last two weeks at the border areas." Joint Integrated Units, established after the peace deal, consist of both the southern army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) controlled by Khartoum.

The UN official said that they have reports from a patrol force that a large crowd of armed men with assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and machetes, amassed north of Abyei town in Difra on Friday. But he said the patrol was not permitted to meet the group.

Taha calls for national constructive dialogue

Sudan Vision Khartoum, 01/02/11 - The Government has officially announced acceptance of the preliminary results of the southern Sudan referendum. Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Vice-President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha renewed the Sudan Government commitment to work side-by-side with the would-be independent state in the south until it sets up viable constitutional and legal institutions. "Any disorder will reflect on the situation in the north," he said. He pointed out that the final government position on the referendum would however soon be announced by the Presidency.

On the outstanding issues, Taha noted that a number of committees have been tasked with looking into issues, with Abyei in the forefront. He noted that the two partners have agreed to resolve Abyei question bilaterally and to maintain the current administrative arrangements until a political solution is reached. The VP further noted that the border demarcation issue is close to being resolved. The VP also noted that the relevant commissions continue to discuss the issue of nationality in the post-separation period, pointing out that the idea of "dual nationality" has been brushed shelved. He revealed however that the two sides have agreed to avoid the emergence of people without nationalities.

On the situation in the north, VP Taha urged political powers and civil society organizations to engage in political dialogue as proposed by President Al-Bashir, for the creation of the "new republic" in Sudan.

VP Taha also said that the current constitution would remain in place until the end of the Interim Period with some slight modifications to some articles.

Kiir accepts inclusion of political parties in constitutional review committee

Sudantribune.com Juba, 31/01/11 - The president of the semi-autonomous regional government of south Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, and chairman of the South's ruling party (SPLM), says he accepts the participation of other southern political parties in the reviewing and drafting in the constitutional review committee.

Kiir, said he welcomed the participation of the other political parties days after issuing a presidential decree appointing John Luk Jok, the south's Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional to lead a 24 member constitutional review committee, seen by many to have excluded other political parties, civil society and faith based organizations.

Some public figures and civil society organizations had earlier accused President Kiir and his party of violating resolutions relating to constitutional review made in a conference of the south's political parties held in October 2010 in Juba.

However, minister Jok, in an interview with *Sudan Tribune* in Juba last week Friday said the presidential order appointing him to lead to constitutional review committee did not violate the conference's communiqué but rather implemented the resolutions of the conference.

Khartoum to host conference on possibilities of Sudan debt relief

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 01/02/11 – The Ministry of Finance has announced that Khartoum would host a meeting on 9th February that would bring together representatives of the IMF, the World Bank and a number of states to discuss possibilities for debt relief for the country.

Finance Minister Ali Mahmoud revealed in a pres statement yesterday that the Vice-Chairman of the IMF is expected in Khartoum on Thursday for talks with the relevant organs in the government over Sudan's debts and the mechanisms through which to implement those measures. The minister stressed that debt relief should cover both the north and south of the country.

On the economy, the minister disclosed that plans are underway to commission the new 20,000bpd Hamra oilfield north of the Higlieg oilfields.

Other Highlights

AU calls for halt on ICC warrants

Al-Ayyam et al Khartoum, 01/02/11 – The AU has called on the United Nations Security Council to halt the ICC arrest warrant on President Al-Bashir in “recognition for his personal commitment to preserve peace between north and south Sudan” as well as his “considerable efforts to resolve the Darfur crisis”.

The AU also lauded Sudan for the conduct of the referendum pointing out that the success of that exercise is a clear indication that Sudan would not return to a war footing but would seek peaceful solutions to any conflicts that may arise.

Police deny beating student protestor who later died

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 01/02/11 – Police in Khartoum denied yesterday earlier reports that a student of the Omdurman Ahlia University was killed after sustaining injuries during street protests on Sunday. The police issued a statement yesterday in response to reports circulating on the internet that it described as baseless accusations against the force.

A senior source in the police challenged that the police is prepared to go and present its condolences if only they could be shown where the funeral would take place.

Minnawi field commanders resolved to join peace process

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 01/02/11 – The Sudan Armed Forces has repulsed an attack by SLA (Abdulwahid) forces on the Rokro area on the Jebel Marra Mountain. SAF Spokesperson Al-Suwarni Khaled said yesterday that the rebels tried to enter the market and cause chaos but were repulsed by the army without loss to lives.

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