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Referendum Monitor

Referendum Commission meets today to select the commission Secretary-General

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 02/09/10 – The South Sudan Referendum Commission meets today to select a Secretary-General. The Chairman of the Referendum Commission also revealed that the parties to the CPA say they have agreed to cut down on the schedules for some of the referendum-related processes, especially on the 3-months period between announcement of the voter registry and polling. “We would do all we can to publicise the preliminary Voter Registry, open the grounds for challenges to the registry and we would then see if we would still face time constraints and need to cut down on other schedules,” said Commission Chairman Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil. He said that the commission would embark on discussing its administrative structure after the Secretary-General is selected.

Meanwhile, GoSS Minister for Regional Cooperation Deng Alor says that the parties to the CPA have concluded about 70% of the work on border demarcation. He said that the SPLM has also dropped its demands for a southern Sudanese Secretary-General for the Referendum Commission.

Al-Sahafa says Alor has exonerated the referendum commission of all blame with regards to delaying the processes required for it to fully function, blaming instead the NCP of adopting “tactical methods” to hamper the 2011 referendum. Alor pointed out that the referendum would take place on schedule “whether the NCP wants or not”.

“Nobody wants more problems ... Sudan has suffered enough,” he said at an exclusive interview. He said it would be better to prepare to accept the results of the referendum, be it unity or secession, instead of causing more problems. The SPLM has a number of options from which to choose should there be an intentional political hurdle put before the conduct of the referendum, he warned.

Biong further revealed that three surveys conducted in the south by the SPLM and civil society organisations show that no less than 70% of southern Sudanese favour separation. “The SPLM therefore has no interest in forging the referendum results because it is a *fait accompli*,” he said.

He cited the Islamic Laws as some of the obstacles to unity because southern Sudanese “feel they would have no future in a country that is Arab at one time and Islamic at the other.”

Asked on relations with colleagues during his tenure as Foreign Minister, Deng Alor said he was very comfortable working alongside Mustafa Osman Ismail (ex-foreign minister and then Presidential Advisor on Foreign Relations) but added that his relations with then State Minister Ali Karti and then Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Muttrif Sidig were not that cordial.

Unity is coming, no doubt – Labour Minister

Al-Akhbar Khartoum, 02/09/10 – Labour Minister Dak Dop says there is no doubt unity would be achieved. The Minister noted that during a recent visit to southern Sudan, he felt the will of many southern Sudanese to vote for unity and to live within the confines of one country, despite “the fact that the other party [*reference to the SPLM*] is advocating for separation”. He pointed out that there are a number of neighbouring countries that want the south to separate out of greed for the region’s resources.

FVP Salva Kiir rules out unilateral declaration of independence

Worldpoliticsreview.com Juba, 31/08/10 - In an exclusive interview, Southern Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit told *World Politics Review* that he doesn't think "there is any point where southerners will declare a unilateral independence."

"It is not in our agenda, and we don't think that there will be a condition that will force us in the South to declare an independent Southern Sudan without the process that we have agreed upon," he said.

Inside his office in Juba, Kiir told *WPR* that both sides should ensure that the referendum moves forward as agreed. "Both parties should be committed to the conduct of the referendum, freely without any hindrance," he said. "So I'm sure -- and I hope -- the referendum will be conducted according to the agreement that we have signed."

On the post-referendum oil issues, he pointed out that the parties would be discussing these issues. "In the post-referendum arrangements, there is the issue of oil, not only whether to be pumped through Port Sudan or a new pipeline going southwards. But also, do we share it with the North or don't we share it? All these things, we are going to talk about them," he told *WPR*.

Kiir said the violence is not going to affect the referendum. "It is not the first time that the LRA has been killing people in Southern Sudan," he said, describing the LRA fighters as "terrorists" who "terrorize the civilian population [and] innocent people."

"There are people who are sending them," Kiir said, adding that the LRA continues to get its "logistics" from the government of Sudan's President Omar al Bashir in Khartoum. "This is something that will live with us and we'll have to sort it out," he continued.

"The rebellion of Gen. George Athor is not the first in the history of the world. There are people, when they lose elections, they tend to resort to rebellion, like what George Athor has done," said Kiir. "Now that he's a rebel, there are ways of bringing him back: through peaceful means, which he is resisting. And if the peaceful negotiations fail, of course, to deal with the rebels, you fight them. That is the last resort for us, and we will have to do it," FVP Kiir said referring to the rebellion of the former SPLA officer.

Partners to discuss formation of Abyei referendum body next week

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 02/08/10 – SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum says the Joint Political Committee of the NCP and SPLM has resolved all issues pertaining to the South Sudan Referendum Commission and would meet next week to discuss the formation of the Abyei Referendum Commission. Meanwhile, civil society organisations are calling on the parties to the CPA to expedite the formation of the commission and conclude the demarcation of the boundaries of the Abyei Area as per the PCA ruling. Failure to do these would lead to catastrophic results for the area, the organisations warn.

SPLA to discuss its post-referendum status

Al-Sahafa Khartoum/ Juba, 02/09/10 - The annual SPLA Command Council Conference kicks off in Juba today, SPLA Spokesperson Kuol Deng revealed. "This is a regular conference normally held every September," he said.

During the 3-day conference, senior SPLA officers would reflect on the performance of the regional army and discuss the challenges ahead as well as the post-referendum status of the SPLA, whatever the outcome of the referendum.

UN opens first office for south Sudan referendum

AP Mundiri, 01/09/10 - The United Nations on Wednesday opened its first field office ahead of Southern Sudan's scheduled January referendum on independence.

The U.N. is expanding its presence across the vast, largely rural southern part of Sudan for the January vote, which is likely to lead to the break-up of Africa's largest country. The world body is opening offices in each of the region's 79 counties, some of which are accessible only by helicopter because of violence or heavy rain.

"The referendum is real," David Gressly, the top U.N. official in Southern Sudan said at the opening of the first county referendum base in Mundri West County in Western Equatoria. "Mechanics are starting to move forward and today is symbolic of that."

Dozens of U.N. offices are being built from scratch. Barbed wire, security lights, white tents, and a water tank are the main features of the bases, which are being constructed hastily given the quickly approaching vote.

"Obviously there are a lot of decisions pending," Gressly said. "But I think it would be wrong to do anything but move ahead."

During nationwide elections in April, the U.N. transported ballot boxes by air to remote areas of the south. U.N. staff also worked with election officials in southern state capitals to train polling staff.

At the first office's launch Wednesday, local officials and government authorities from Juba urged citizens to support the U.N.'s work in holding the referendum peacefully and on time.

SSLA mulls formation of specialised referendum committee

Al-Rai Al-Aam Juba, 02/09/10 – Cabinet Minister Luka Biong says the GoSS and the federal government are committed to fully implementing the provisions of the CPA. Addressing residents of the Peace Villages in Jebel Auliya yesterday, Biong said that relations between the people of the north and south of the country would not be severed regardless of the outcome of the 2011 referendum.

Meanwhile, the South Sudan Legislative Assembly says it intends to establish a temporary specialised committee to monitor preparations for the referendum. Assembly Secretary-General Bashir Bandi said that MPs would work towards raising awareness so their people would be able to make the right choice.

Referendum with SPLA intervention would not be accepted – NCP

Al-Ahram Al-Youm Khartoum, 02/09/10 – Gabriel Rouriech, the NCP Secretary for the Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal area, says the SPLA has to be distanced from conducting the referendum for fear it may influence the results of the polls. He warned that his party would not accept the results of the referendum should the SPLA interfere.

Rouriech pointed out that the SPLM campaign for the return of southern Sudanese from the north back to their homes in southern Sudan is an attempt at intimidating southerners not to vote for unity. Most southern Sudanese favour unity but fear intimidation, he said.

Muslim community says supporting southern Sudan secession

The Citizen [via BBC Monitoring] *Juba, 01/09/10* - The Muslims community in Juba has clearly voiced their support for southern Sudanese independence come the 2011 referendum. Al-Tahir

Bior Bullen of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), who is also the Secretary-General of the Muslims Community in South Sudan on Sunday [29 August] appealed to all Muslims to remain focused and work for the common cause of the Southern Sudanese people, regardless of any political, cultural and social differences."

"I hear conflicting stories that Muslims in the South Sudan will not be happy later if Southern Sudan will opt for secession," he stated. Bior dismissed the claim, adding that Muslims were happiest and equally freed by the CPA.

County Commissioner bars herder treks during referendum registration period

Al-Ahdath Cuibet, 02/09/10 –Commissioner Mayoum Malek of Cuibet County, Lakes State, has issued a decree that would bar herders from travelling to or from the county with their herds during the registration period for the referendum. He also urged tribal leaders to encourage youths not to travel around during that period and said that the decree becomes null after registration is concluded. At a meeting with local tribal leaders of the county, the Commissioner said that such a decision was necessary in order to encourage youths to participate in the registration process.

Rizeigat of South Darfur weary of the impacts of the referendum on them

Al-Ahdath Khartoum, 02/09/10 - Rizeigat tribal leaders worry about the effects of the 2011 referendum on their people should the current state of underdevelopment continue in their area. They underlined the need to include the rights of their people to move south in search of pasture for their herds regardless of the outcome of the referendum. At a meeting of Rizeigat leaders in Khartoum, representatives pointed out that with the current state of inequitable development, Rizeigat youths may be tempted to seek jobs in neighbouring Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State should the south separate.

Other Highlights

UNAMID agrees to hand over six Kalma Camp IDPs

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 01/09/10 – The Sudanese government said today that UNAMID has agreed to hand over six IDPs suspected of instigating violence in Kalma camp last July.

South Darfur Governor Abdelhamid Musa Kasha said the six people are responsible for murder and have to face justice for these crimes. But, the latter dismissed the charges and accused pro-government militias of carrying out the violence in the camp.

Suleiman Abdurrahman Sudan's Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner, told the *SMC* that UNAMID agreed to give away the six IDPs delegates during a meeting held in the presence of officials from the central government and South Darfur governments. He added that they cleared up misunderstandings and convinced them that the defendants were the main cause of the events of the camp.

The office of the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) last month in a note sent to the head of the hybrid mission Ibrahim Gambari reminded him that "UNAMID has a responsibility to protect civilians". It also called to de-escalate tension saying the arrest of the sheikhs lead to more violence in the restive region. However, Ban Ki-Moon's office said the hand over of the IDPs only can be done under key legal conditions.

DDR Commission demobilises 6,500

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 02/09/10 – The North Sudan DDR Commission has declared it will launch of the first phase of its disarmament campaign for River Nile, Sennar, al-Shimalliya, Al-Gazira, Northern Kordofan and White Nile states after the Eid holidays. Taj-el-Sir Ali Al-Zein, a senior official of the Commission, said that the operations target to demobilize some 6,500 SAF and PDF combatants.

SPLA changes disarmament approach in Jonglei's Akobo

The Citizen Juba, 02/09/10 – The SPLA has changed its approach to the conduct of the disarmament exercise which led to clashes with civilians recently in Akobo. “The SPLA has abandoned the direct approach of asking the youths to hand over the guns and has resorted to talking to the chiefs who then identify those with arms in the area,” said a local official in Akobo.

Sudan presses World Bank on debt relief

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 01/09/10 - The Sudanese government on Wednesday urged the World Bank to help it write off its foreign debts, claiming “it has met all the requirements to merit relief or mitigation of these debts”, according to state media report.

Sudan’s official news agency, *SUNA*, reported that Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha Wednesday held a meeting in Khartoum with the visiting World Bank’s Vice President for Africa, Obiageli Ezekwesili, and discussed among other things debt relief.

According to Sudan’s minister of finance, Ali Mahmud, the government had demanded that Sudan’s foreign debts be relieved on account of “the challenges it faces after signing several peace agreements and adopting fiscal and economic reforms as well as poverty fighting and infrastructure programs.”

“If Sudan’s debts are mitigated, Sudan will rise to advanced levels” the minister told reporters. He further underlined the importance of the World Bank’s support as the country approaches the referendum on south Sudan’s self-determination.

Officials inspect alternate site for Kalma IDP Camp

SUNA Nyala, 01/09/10 - The Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid, Suleiman Abdurrahman, and South Darfur Governor, Abdulhamid Musa Kasha, inspected yesterday the alternate site for the Kalma IDP Camp east of Nyala town.

The Governor said there is no political motive for the transfer of the IDP camp, pointing out that these measures were necessary to improve the image of the camp and to guarantee protection of innocent civilians. The camp has become a haven for criminals and outlaws, the Governor said.

Kasha said that Kalma camp has become a shelter of armed movements and political forces

He called on ministries and humanitarian organizations to provide the new location with the necessary facilities

Official accuses Uganda of eyeing resources of southern Sudan

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 02/09/10 – Presidential Advisor Ali Tamim Fartak says neighbouring Uganda is eyeing the resources of southern Sudan besides seeking to expand its territories at the expense of southern Sudan. That’s why Uganda wants the south to secede, he said.

Speaking at a symposium in Khartoum organised by the Middle East and Africa Studies Centre on the “Ugandan Role in Endeavours to Secede the South,” Fartak said Uganda should have given an explanation around the plane crash that led to the death of late SPLM leader John Garang.

Professor Malik Ibrahim Saeed of Juba University said that Uganda would benefit a lot from southern Sudanese secession and is therefore exerting much effort towards that end. He pointed out that the economic standing of Uganda has improved a lot since the CPA was signed.

Kibaki breaks silence on Sudan leader’s visit

Daily Nation Nairobi, 01/09/10 - President Kibaki has pointed out that because of the fragile situation in Sudan ahead of the January referendum, the international community should embrace leaders of the oil-rich Eastern Africa state.

“It is my wish that the international community would appreciate the delicate situation of Sudan and act proactively. We should not isolate the people of Sudan. Let us encourage them to play their rightful role in the community of nations,” President Kibaki told the 14th Comesa summit of heads of state and government in Ezulwini, Swaziland.

He added: “I call upon all Comesa member-states to support and encourage the people of Sudan to resolve the outstanding issues in the agreement as we look forward to the holding of a peaceful referendum in the Sudan.”

The president said he was impressed with the leaders in the Sudan – President al-Bashir and first Vice-President Salva Kiir — for agreeing to work together.

UK envoy to Kenya says AU decisions on Bashir irrelevant to ICC obligations

Sudantribune.com Washington, 01/09/10 - The British foreign office today summoned the Kenyan ambassador to express its disappointment over Nairobi’s decision to invite and receive Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir during the promulgation of the country’s new constitution.

The British foreign minister Alistair Burt issued a statement revealing the content of the message conveyed to the Kenyan envoy in London on Wednesday.

"I am disappointed that President Bashir of Sudan last week travelled to Kenya in defiance of International Criminal Court arrest warrants for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide," Burt’s statement reads.

"We made clear that the British government expects the Government of Kenya to stand by its obligations under the Rome Statute, and as a UN member state. The Government of Kenya has repeatedly committed itself to full cooperation with the ICC in respect of crimes in Kenya, and I reiterate the importance that the British government places on such commitments".

The British High Commissioner to Kenya Rob McCaire, who described Bashir’s attendance as a "shame", stressed that AU resolutions cannot supersede its obligations to the ICC under the Rome Statute it ratified in 2005.

"As Kenya is State Party to the Rome Statute, it is legally bound to arrest and surrender those with an ICC arrest warrant against them. Most African countries have therefore declined to invite President Bashir onto their territory," McCaire said in his blog.

"For a state that follows the rule of law, no political position by the AU, or regional realpolitik, should overcome that basic legal obligation. And it is deeply troubling that such a decision should have apparently been made by a minority of ministers within the coalition government.

Today the Rwandan Foreign Affairs minister Louise Mushikiwabo expressed support to Kenya's move. "As far as my government is concerned, it is Kenya's sovereign decision to deal with its neighbours the way it deems so. Kenya has been involved as a member of The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and has been involved in talks including engaging President Bashir," Mushikiwabo told the Ugandan *Daily Monitor* newspaper.

"Kenya is making efforts to stabilise Sudan. It makes sense to us that government of Kenya would love to deal with President Bashir. That engagement is in line with the AU's position. Justice doesn't work in a vacuum. Justice is to bring order and not create chaos to satisfy the international community," she added.

The top Rwandan diplomat described her country as one that has been "affected by the international law system since 1994" in reference to the genocide that took place in that year.

Similarly, today the 14th Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Summit in Swaziland said that criticism against Kenya on the issue of Bashir is unwarranted.

Kidnapped Russian pilots returning to Khartoum – envoy

Itar-Tass Moscow, 01/09/10 - Russian pilots who were kidnapped in South Darfur are returning to Khartoum, Sudan, Russia's presidential envoy to Sudan Mikhail Margelov told *Itar-Tass* on Wednesday.

At the airport pilots will be met by officials of the Russian Embassy in Sudan and representatives of the Badr Airlines, which employs them, he said.

The pilots were released on Tuesday after talks with the kidnappers, Sudan's special services and the air carrier and they stayed in Nyala. Crew captain Viktor Malai told a news conference that the management of the air company would have to decide whether or not the Russians will continue to work in the company.

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