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Media Monitoring Report

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Headlines

- Parliament endorses Abyei Referendum Bill (**Dailies**)
- Abyei oil will deplete in 10 years so conflict is needless – Ministry (**Al-Ayyam**)
- Sudan's Kiir objects national security act (**ST**)
- SPLM always object to bills, UN is not concerned - NCP (**Akhir Lahza**)
- Riek Machar resigns from SPLM political office – sources (**Al-Intibaha**)
- SPLM plane accident in Tonj, South authorities deny the incident (**Al-Khartoum**)
- President Al-Bashir arrives in Mauritania (**Al-Raed**)
- Sudan is considering joining OPEC oil cartel - official (**ST**)
- Chadian foreign minister to visit Sudan on Wednesday (**ST**)
- LRA leaders must be put on trial -UN rights chief (**Reuters**)
- Jonglei NCP minister defects to SPLM (**ST**)
- Darfur peace process has reached “critical” juncture – UNSG (**UN News**)
- UNSC expresses support to work of AU panel on Darfur (**ST**)

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Highlights

Parliament endorses Abyei Referendum Bill

Local dailies report the National Assembly yesterday endorsed the Abyei referendum bill for 2009 at the second reading stage. According to **Sudan Vision**, Parliament Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir affirmed the importance of the Act and announced that the Popular Consultation bill for Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile will be presented in today's session.

“Abyei oil will deplete in 10 years so conflict is needless” – Minister

Al-Ayyam reports Energy Minister Al-Zubeir Ahmed Al-Hassan as saying that Abyei oil will deplete within the few coming years so it should not be a cause of conflict. Al-Hassan told a joint session of the National Assembly and the Council of States convened yesterday to debate on Abyei referendum bill that oil production from Abyei wells would fall to 10% within ten years time.

Sudan's Kiir objects national security act

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/09 — FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit has objected the National Security Act passed by mechanical majority vote on Sunday by the NCP block at the National Assembly saying he is not supportive of the act.

SPLM parliamentary bloc member Ramdan Shella told Miraya FM that Kiir would not sign the law when submitted to the Presidency.

“SPLM always object to bills, UN is not concerned” - NCP

Akhir Lahza reports NCP official Ibrahim Ghandour as saying that the national security bill was endorsed after lengthy consultations by the political committees of the two partners and an agreement was reached on the law. He said the SPLM is in the habit of objecting to bills once presented to the Parliament, adding those who speak about respect to the constitution should remember that the Parliament is established based on this constitution and that laws could not be amended in this way at a time when preparations are continuing for elections. Ghandour told journalists at the NCP HQs yesterday that UN has nothing to do with passing of laws by legislative assemblies in the various countries.

Riek Machar resigns from SPLM political office – sources

GoSS Deputy President Riek Machar arrived in Khartoum yesterday on a surprise visit, **Al-Intibaha** reports. Sources at the SPLM Political Office have confirmed that Machar has tendered his resignation from the SPLM Political Office but declined to comment on whether he has also submitted his resignation from the SPLM. The paper learned that Machar upon arrival in Khartoum engaged on a series of meetings with several political parties' leaders.

SPLM plane accident in Tonj, South authorities deny the incident

GoSS authorities and SPLM leaders have kept mum on the news of an accident involving the movement's plane in Tonj area last Sunday, **Al-Khartoum** reports. GoSS official said the plane was not transporting FVP Salva Kiir, it was carrying some of Kiir's guards and it skidded off the runway but no casualties. However, other sources said the plane crashed killing four passengers on board. A source spoke about foul play but the SPLM denied.

The paper has learned that the plane was flying an advance delegation of President Kiir who was supposed to visit Rumbek but the visit was cancelled after the accident.

President Al-Bashir arrives in Mauritania

President Al-Bashir arrived yesterday in Mauritania on 3-day visit and was received by his Mauritanian counterpart Mohamed Abdul Aziz, *Al-Raed* reports. Ministerial Joint Committee meetings began yesterday and would be culminated by a summit between the two Presidents.

Sudan is considering joining OPEC oil cartel - official

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/09 – The Sudanese Government announced today that it is considering joining the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), as a full-fledged member, the country's deputy energy minister said Monday.

Azhari Ibrahim told reporters on Monday at the oil cartel meeting in Luanda that joining OPEC is "under discussions within the Government of Sudan" but no final decision has been made. Sudan is currently an observer in the organization.

The Sudanese official has said that his country is currently producing about 500,000 barrels a day of oil and expects to maintain this level of output next year.

Joining OPEC is a prestigious step for oil producing nations but for other countries it carries with it the unnecessary burden of adhering to production quotas though its members have routinely violated it.

Chadian foreign minister to visit Sudan on Wednesday

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/09 — The Chadian foreign minister is expected to visit the Sudanese capital on Wednesday to discuss way to normalize bilateral ties between the two countries.

Minister Moussa Faki Mahamat will hold talks with Sudanese on the issue of the Chadian rebels that Chad want to see expelled from Sudan or at least kept far from the border area.

Ghazi Salah Al-Deen was in N'djamena on October 10 where he met with President Idriss Deby. The Sudanese Presidential envoy expressed Khartoum willingness to improve ties and end the current tensions between the two countries.

During a visit to Paris at the end of October, Deby said Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir had committed himself to remove the Chadian rebels and to confine them far from the border. He also said he agreed to allow Sudan to verify the presence of Darfur rebels in his country.

LRA leaders must be put on trial -UN rights chief

Reuters 21/12/09 - Leaders of Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army must be brought to justice for carrying attacks of deliberate brutality in neighbouring Sudan and Congo, the top U.N. human rights official said on Monday.

Launching two reports on investigations into a series of assaults on civilians, including babies, in the past year in the African neighbours, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said it was critical that LRA leaders be tried in international court for what may be crimes against humanity.

"The brutality employed during the attacks was consistent, deliberate and egregious," she said.

"Women and girls were often raped before being killed, and many of those who were abducted were forced to marry LRA members, subjected to sexual slavery, or both," the report said.

"These attacks and systematic and widespread human rights violations carried out by the LRA ... may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity," it concluded.

Jonglei NCP minister defects to SPLM

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/09 – Jonglei state's National Congress Party minister has joined the SPLM.

Agot Alier Leek, the state minister for health, and state Member of Parliament Peter Mabor are not the first southern potential politicians defecting to SPLM ahead of general elections.

Speaking at a tea party organized by SPLM state secretariat office and attended by Gov. Kuol Manyang Juuk who doubles as state SPLM chairperson and several political figures, Agot Alier says he leaves NCP because SPLM has a future for southerners.

Mr. Agot, a medical doctor, acknowledged that unity is vital in attaining progressive south.

Darfur peace process has reached "critical" juncture – UNSG

UN News 21/12/09 - The peace process in the war-racked Darfur region of Sudan has reached a "critical point," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, calling on both the Government and rebel groups to accelerate efforts to reach a compromise.

The Joint African Union-United Nations Mediator Djibril Bassolé has been working with Qatar to drum up momentum by giving civil society a voice at the peace talks, Mr. Ban told the Security Council.

"Efforts must continue to encourage the Government, and more especially the rebel movements, to make concessions, and embrace the consensus which Mr. Bassolé is building," the Secretary-General underscored.

The AU High-Level Implementation Panel – comprising former South African president Thabo Mbeki, former Burundian leader Pierre Buyoya and former Nigerian president Abdulsalami Abubakar – and the international community have a key role to play, he added.

The 15-member Council today was briefed by both Mr. Mbeki and AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping on the Panel's new report, which provides a "frank assessment and insightful analysis" of what is happening in Sudan and offers recommendations on the way forward, according to Mr. Ban.

"Perhaps above all, the panel members have insisted on seeing Sudan in its totality," he said. "They have clearly articulated the links between the crisis in Darfur and broader efforts to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [CPA]," the 2005 pact that ended the more than two decades of north-south strife.

In the coming months and years, Sudan will experience elections and two referenda, "which will determine the future shape of Sudan," the Secretary-General told the Council, and their outcome will require "genuine cooperation" between the two parties to the CPA, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

He also underlined the need to continue compliance with the Council resolution referring the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which issued an arrest warrant for President Omar Al-Bashir in March for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity

committed in the region.

Following today's meeting, the Council issued a press statement read out by Ambassador Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso, which holds the body's rotating monthly presidency, in which they welcomed the Panel's report, noting that they "looked forward to the implementation of a holistic approach to the problems facing Sudan."

Council members said they agreed with the new report that the causes and consequences of the Darfur conflict have yet to be addressed, repeating their call on all parties that have yet to take part in the peace talks to join the dialogue.

UNSC expresses support to work of AU panel on Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/09 – The UN Security Council today (UNSC) welcomed the report compiled by the African Union High Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD) that contains a roadmap for resolving the crisis in Sudan's Western region.

The ambassador of Burkina Faso Michel Kafando, who holds the UNSC rotating presidency, said that the council "looked forward to the implementation of a holistic approach to the problems facing Sudan".

Kafando said that the UNSC "agreed with the report that the causes and consequences of the conflict in Darfur have yet to be addressed".

The AUPD former chairman Thabo Mbeki addressed the UNSC along with the Chairperson of African Union Commission Jean Ping on the findings of the commission and their plans for implementing the recommendations.

Mbeki emphasized the need to resolve the Darfur crisis well before the April 2010 elections to enable Darfuris to take part in the polls.

"We were concerned that should the people of Darfur feel excluded in any way from both the elections and consideration of matters relating to the referendum, this would serve to underline their marginalization and disempowerment, which were a central cause of the armed uprising which started in 2003," he said.

"For this reason, we thought it was important that the Darfur negotiations should be concluded before the impending general elections," Mbeki added.

The former South African president reiterated the root cause of the conflict in Darfur and Sudan being the "concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a Khartoum-centered elite and the consequent marginalization of the so-called periphery, including Darfur".

It was, therefore, necessary to restructure the country, he said, pledging that the Implementation Panel would work closely with the people to build what had been described as "the New Sudan". While the planned 2011 referendum in South Sudan could result in secession by the South, he noted, historical power relations in the North could still remain, making democratization there critical.

Furthermore he said that the panel recommendations enjoyed broad support among the people of Sudan as highlighted during his recent visit.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in his speech before the UNSC described the Panel's

report as a revealing assessment that looked at the Sudan in its totality.

Ban also lent his support to the joint UN-AU mediator Dijibril Bassole in his efforts to bring the Darfur warring parties together.

“By giving Mr. Bassole our unequivocal support, we will send a strong message to all parties that they must engage in the negotiations he is leading” he said.

The same message was relayed during the UNSC closed session held afterwards by the UK delegation which emphasized that Mbeki’s work on Darfur and North-South dossier should not undermine the work by UN missions and its political figures, according to a UN diplomat who attended the closed meeting.

An African diplomat speaking to Sudan Tribune last month said that the AU is seeking to have Mbeki take over from the joint United Nations (UN) - African Union (AU) Darfur mediator Dijibril Bassole.

The AU particularly Chairperson of African Union Commission Jean Ping as well as Mbeki view Bassole as being “closer” to the UNSC, the diplomat said while the joint mediator “is trying to be impartial in his role without favoring the Sudanese government”.

The UN diplomat said that the Libyan envoy who received a paper note from his Sudanese peer blasted the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant for the Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir last March saying it sabotaged the peace efforts.

The issue of the ICC was not brought up by other UNSC members but the UN chief did mention that their needs to be compliance with resolution 1593 referring the Darfur case to the Hague based court.

Mbeki’s report made an implicit endorsement of the ICC prosecutions saying that it can only prosecute few cases leaving an impunity gap that must be handled by a hybrid criminal court containing Sudanese and foreign judges.

The Sudanese government has rejected the proposal saying it violated its constitution and the independent of its judiciary.

The Libyan delegation said that the donors should fulfill their obligations to the East African nation saying that development is the only way to quell the political unrest and crisis.

His Russian counterpart reminded the UNSC of the decision taken to punish any party in the Darfur conflict that is obstructing peace efforts naming the Darfur Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) led by Abdel-Wahid Mohamed Al-Nur who resides in Paris as candidates for sanctions.





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