

24 February 2010

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Elections Special:

Presidency informs NEC about elections delay in Southern Kordofan

The Presidency has sent an official letter to the NEC about the postponement of elections in Southern Kordofan state, *Al-Sahafa* reports.

Meanwhile, SPLM presidential candidate for GoSS Salva Kiir Mayardit will launch his elections campaign today in front of late John Garang's grave in Juba. The political parties (Juba Coalition) will also hold a meeting in Khartoum today to take common position on the issue of participation in the political parties' summit called by the AU Panel Chief Thabo Mbeki.

Last minute discord over elections cause delay in Darfur pact ceremony

Sudan Tribune website 23/2/10 reported that mediators, diplomats and other officials looked both bored and bewildered at the conventional hall in Doha as they waited for the signing ceremony to commence with no explanation for why it was running well behind schedule.

The Qatari emir, Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir, Chadian President Idriss Deby, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki and JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim emerged more than two hours later to sign the accord.

According to *AFP*, the delay was caused by the JEM's demand to the Government delegation to agree to postpone general elections set for April, but no deal was reached on that point.

JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein said "there is a consensus among the people of Darfur and Sudan that the election must be postponed".

A senior JEM official told Sudan Tribune over the weekend that it is all but certain that Khartoum would agree to reschedule the elections. Another source in Doha said that JEM would seek a delay for five years during the formal negotiations with Khartoum to prepare the country for the polls.

However, it remains to be seen whether the NEC or the SPLM would agree to postpone the elections.

The NEC deputy chief stressed during a meeting with Gration last week that the Doha accord will not change the elections timetable.

Call for elections postponement unjustifiable – Nafie

Al-Sahafa reports Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie as saying that the dialogue between the NCP and the SPLM in Cairo focused on a range of issues particularly the need to keep Sudan united. Nafie also described the call by the political forces for postponement of elections as "unjustifiable".

While sources in Khartoum revealed that the NCP-SPLM dialogue in Cairo focused primarily on an Egypt's proposal to postpone parliamentary and state elections as well as self-determination for the South until the CPA contentious issues and Darfur crisis are resolved, the NEC warned

that any postponement would confuse the entire process, saying it is not easy to agree on new timetables.

UN concerned over elections obstacles

Akhbar Al-Youm reports that UNMIS expressed concern over some obstacles to the upcoming elections, adding it has no mandate to monitor the process. UNMIS Chief Electoral Officer Ray Kennedy told a press conference yesterday that tribal conflicts in Southern Sudan could impact the electoral process and called on tribal chiefs to maintain security during elections. He said UNMIS shared its experiences with the NEC and the Political Parties Affairs Council in the area of training and funding to ensure the conduct of credible elections. Mr. Kennedy denied any move to postpone elections, saying it is not advisable to delay the process after all the preparations were put in place.

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports Kennedy as saying that the NEC is facing major challenges relating to the huge size of the country, a weak infrastructure, the different levels of the elections and the uncertainties in the political situation that led to the postponement of the polls primarily scheduled to take place in the CPA's third year. He also pointed out that some political parties face challenges with regards to launching their electoral campaigns and some NGOs were not allowed to carry out elections-related workshops.

He said UNMIS would not be observing the elections but would only advise the parties in the Government on how to carry out the process. Kennedy reiterated UNMIS' commitment to assist, within its abilities, in bringing the process to a successful end. He added that the NEC, despite its resource limitations, has so far played a major role towards the success of the electoral process.

UN News Centre 23/2/10 reported that many challenges remain with just under 50 days left until the historic national polls in Sudan, but a United Nations official today expressed hope that the process will continue to be peaceful and reflect the will of the people of the vast African nation.

"We have all recognized for some time the complexity of these elections," Ray Kennedy, UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer told reporters today in Khartoum.

"Many aspects of the elections are new for voters, and especially so for the majority of voters who are taking part in multi-party elections for the first time in their lives," Mr. Kennedy pointed out.

In spite of its meagre resources, the National Elections Commission (NEC) has displayed "admirable commitment" in its work to organize and conduct the polls, he said.

For their part, the official said, the Sudanese people can prepare themselves for the elections by attending debates and rallies to learn about the parties and candidates; discussing their views freely and openly with their friends, neighbours and colleagues; and understanding the many ballots they will come across.

The media has a key role to play in informing the electorate, "both by presenting factual information and by encouraging readers and listeners to analyze the world – and the political campaign going on – around them," he stressed.

While the campaign to date has been peaceful overall, Mr. Kennedy noted that there have been some incidents provoking concern, including reports of civil society groups being preventing

from holding awareness workshops on the electoral process.

“We want to take this opportunity to encourage all registered parties and their supporters to continue to demonstrate maturity and respect for the rights of others to campaign, to attend campaign events, and to make their personal choice of leaders and representatives when they are in the voting booth in just a few weeks’ time,” he said.

UNMIS, he underlined, does not have a role in observing or monitoring the polls, which falls to international and domestic observers.

UNMIS is assisting the National Elections Commission in several areas, such as advising on the development of plans and procedures for voter registration, nominations, polling, counting and the results’ tabulation and announcement. It is also helping to create voter education plans and materials.

“In all these areas, we are able to offer the NEC a variety of options for these activities and to share with them our experiences with those various options elsewhere,” Mr. Kennedy said. But ultimately, “it is the NEC that makes the decisions and that guides the entire process.”

In a related development, UNMIS is also taking steps to enhance the participation of deaf people in the upcoming polls by boosting awareness of the electoral process.

Mathew Dominic, who heads the Electoral Assistance Division in Southern Sudan for UNMIS, stressed that every single vote counts. “It is important for us to recognize this fact and ensure that (persons with disabilities) have equal opportunities for voter education,” he said.

Persons with disabilities, he emphasized, have the same rights as others to take part in the elections as voters, members of a political party or candidates.

Mr. Dominic commended the Southern Sudan Deaf Development Concern (SSDDC), which organized the workshop, for its “commendable effort” in reaching out to persons with disabilities.

Editor selected Chairman of Elections Monitoring Committee

The NEC has set up an independent committee of 18 members from the NCP, the SPLM, the Umma Party, the DUP, the PCP, the Communist Party, academicians, activists and independent personalities to monitor all stages of the electoral process, *Al-Akhbar* reports. The Committee members held a meeting yesterday and selected *Al-Ayyam* newspaper editor-in-chief, Mahgoub Mohamed Saleh, as chairman of the committee. The task of the committee is to ensure the implementation of administrative measures relating to elections, submit recommendations to the NEC on work of national monitors, liaise with international organization observing the elections and to raise the people’s awareness about the electoral observation process.

Political forces to challenge NEC rule on elections campaigning

Political forces have announced that they would take measures to challenge a recently-issued NEC rule which requires candidates to obtain permission three days prior to the date of a planned electoral campaign, *Ajras Al-Hurriyah* reports.

Kassala says security measures to prevent poll-related incidents

The Kassala State High Elections Committee has downplayed a recent attack by NCP supporters on four Beja Congress candidates in the state, reports *Akhir Lahza*. The head of the State Security Committee, Mohamed Abdelmoneim, described the incident as “normal”. He said

his committee took measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Government, JEM sign framework agreement

Local dailies report that the Sudan Government and the JEM yesterday signed a framework agreement in Doha, paving the way for start of negotiations for a final agreement.

According to **Al-Sahafa**, JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim said his movement would remain committed to the ceasefire agreement. The signing ceremony was attended by President Omer Al-Bashir, Emir of Qatar, Idriss Deby of Chad, Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, AU Commissioner, Arab League, US envoy Scott Gration, French envoy and Ambassadors of the Security Council member states.

Addressing the signing ceremony, Emir of Qatar said his country would donate a billion dollars for reconstruction in Darfur and praised Chad, Eritrea, AU and UN for their efforts towards the agreement.

UN News Centre 23/2/10 reported that SG Ban Ki-moon called on all parties to the Darfur conflict to agree on a definitive political settlement following the signing of the cessation of hostilities accord between the Sudanese Government and the JEM.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban hailed the agreement signed in Doha, Qatar, by the Government and the JEM as “an important step towards an inclusive and comprehensive peace agreement” for Darfur.

“The Secretary-General looks forward to the full implementation of the agreement's provisions, and encourages all parties to engage in the inclusive Doha peace process with flexibility and political vision, and to agree on a definitive political settlement of the Darfur crisis,” the statement said.

JSR Ibrahim Gambari who was in Doha to witness the signing ceremony also commended both parties on their efforts.

“The conflict in Darfur cannot be resolved by military means, but only through an all-encompassing, inclusive political solution through a political agreement that would also involve Darfur’s civil society and other stake-holders,” Gambari said.

In a related development, **Sudan Tribune website** 3/2/10 reported that ten Darfur rebel groups currently in Qatar announced that they have united under a new umbrella called “The Liberation Movement for Justice”.

Mahjoub Hussein who is the Secretary General of “The Liberation Movement for Justice” said during a press conference that they would not be party to the JEM-Khartoum accord signed today and that they would sign their own framework agreement in the coming days.

SLA/AW refused to go to the negotiation table saying Khartoum must disarm militias and stop attacks on civilians.

North-South peace partners break deadlock over challenging issues

Sudantribune.com Juba, 24/02/10 - The NCP and the SPLM have finally overcome the impasse over several contentious issues in the implementation of the CPA.

The two parties had for a very long time witnessed a stalemate over the issues of inadequate representation of the South at the national level, the border demarcation between the two regions in addition to formation of referendum commissions that would process and oversee the conduct of January 2011 referenda in Southern Sudan and in Abyei.

In a statement to the press shortly after his arrival from Khartoum on Tuesday, GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar revealed that the two parties have agreed on the immediate demarcation of areas agreed upon in the two thousand long contentious North-South borders as the clock ticks towards referendum on independence.

“The Presidency has given instructions after listening to North-South border committee for immediate demarcation of the areas agreed upon. As for the areas where there is disagreement - they are actually five areas - there will be a report on which the Presidency will act, either forming a committee or assisting the North-South border committee in its resolution,” he added.

On the membership of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, Machar said the two parties have also agreed on the composition of the Commission and the nomination of chairman and deputy chairman, the identity of whom he did not reveal.

“We have difficulty in getting a candidate who would chair the Abyei Referendum Commission. So we are still looking for an angel who would be acceptable to both parties. The dialogue is continuing,” he said however.

In resolving the contentious issue on the results of the 2008 population census, which earlier reduced representation of Southern Sudan at the national level from the CPA’s pre-elections power sharing agreement of 30% to 21%, the two parties have agreed to create 40 additional seats for Southern Sudan in the National Assembly in order to compensate for the reduction.

He further explained that 4 more additional seats were also agreed upon to specifically go to the Nuba Mountains, which is within the geographical Southern Kordofan state, while 2 other additional seats for Abyei, making all the additional seats 46 in number.

The 40 seats for the South will be appointed after the results of the elections under a mechanism that will be based on the performance of each political party in the South, he further explained. The other 6 seats for Nuba Mountains and Abyei shall have a different mechanism for appointment.

He however said the state of Southern Kordofan shall only participate in presidential and national parliamentary elections, adding that it will postpone the state level elections to a later date.

On post-referendum issues, Machar who also chairs the newly established Southern Sudan Referendum Taskforce that would be guiding the region on the conduct of the referendum and post-referendum scenarios said the two parties would soon start negotiations.

Arab League investors pledge to launch projects in South Sudan

Sudan tribune website 23/2/10 –The Arab Conference on the Investment and Development in South Sudan kicked off today in Juba

A large delegation of Arab investors and business representatives had arrived in Khartoum on Monday before traveling to Juba. The number of Arab participants is supposed to reach around 100. Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa said Monday in Khartoum that the pan-Arab organization would actively contribute to the investment conference, the Kuwait News Agency reported.

Secretary General Moussa also announced in Juba that the Arab League would provide scholarships for South Sudanese students to be selected by the GoSS.

"The conference in its final session stressed the necessity for concentrating on the projects of infra-structures, top of which roads, airports, agriculture, industry, free zones, rehabilitation of schools, hospitals as well as building of slaughter houses," **SUNA** reported.

Participants at the conference also decided to open Arab bank branches in the south, establish energy and food security besides setting up a joint mechanism between the Arab League and the Southern government to follow up the implementation of these projects. It is not yet clear when any of this will begin.

The opening session of the event was addressed by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, leader of the region's Government. He said "South Sudan is rich in formidable resources and potentials and I hope the Arab states would come to invest in the south."

"The Arab League, of course, wants southern Sudan to continue to be part of the Arab world," he said referring to the region's unity with northern Sudan, "but if the separation occurs, the South would not move to the Indian Ocean or the Atlantic seaboard, and relations between the two sides will continue." According to the newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Ausat, he also pointed out that "there are Southern workers in the North and vice versa as well as students." asserting that their situation will not be affected. He added jokingly "the Nile will continue in force from south to north," pointing out that the Nile is the world's only river that flows from south to north, in contrast to all the world's other rivers that flow from north to south.

He also stressed the need to respect southerners' will if they vote for independence.

Sir Derek Plumbly calls for intensive work to make unity attractive

Addressing a workshop organised in Khartoum by the Commission on the Rights of Non-Muslims in Khartoum State, the head of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) Sir Derek Plumbly underlined the need to intensify work to make unity attractive, **Sudan Vision** reports. He pointed out that no one can predict the outcome of the 2011 referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan. He also stressed the importance of the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Police apprehend three people carrying \$200 millions

Al-Sahafa reports police authorities yesterday arrested three people in Khartoum who were carrying \$200 million and a US flag in a black box. Reportedly, the three persons admitted that the amount was intended for an electoral campaign of an unnamed signatory movement.

Sudan Ambassador to UN retires

Ajras Al-Hurriah reports an unnamed Sudanese diplomat as saying that Sudan Ambassador to UN Abdul Mahmoud Abdul Haleem has been pensioned off as he reached the age of retirement.