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(By Public Information Office)

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UN/ Agencies

UN fund set up to help protect refugees in Chad, Central African Republic (UN)

24 December 2007 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has set up a trust fund to help the Governments of Chad and Central African Republic (CAR) build the law and order capacity needed to ensure the security of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) endangered by the spill over of violence from Sudan’s war-torn Darfur region.

The Fund, supporting the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), has already received \$2.2 million from the Government of Japan, \$1 million from the Government of Norway and €250,000 from the Government of Belgium, Mr. Ban’s spokesperson announced today in a statement.

Discussions are advanced with the European Commission for a contribution of €10 million.

“The Secretary-General appreciates these generous donations and would like to use this opportunity to invite all interested donors to support MINURCAT’s mandate through a contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund,” the statement said.

MINURCAT, for which the UN General Assembly has already authorized \$182 million, was set up by the Security Council in September as a multidimensional presence including European Union military forces and comprising 300 police and 50 military liaison officers, as well as civilian staff, focusing on the areas of civil affairs, human rights, the rule of law and mission support.

More than 400,000 refugees and IDPs have been driven from their homes by fighting and insecurity in the two countries and neighbouring Sudan, and an estimated 700,000 others in host communities have also been affected.

Plans for UN presence in Central African Republic, Chad on track – Ban Ki-moon

19 December 2007 – Preparations for the United Nations-mandated, multidimensional presence in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic (CAR) – which will include European Union (EU) military forces – are on track, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in a new report.

In September, the Security Council established a new UN peacekeeping mission to Chad and CAR, to be known as MINURCAT to help protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian aid to thousands of people uprooted due to insecurity in the two countries and neighbouring Sudan.

“The complementary and parallel deployment” of MINURCAT and the EU troops under a single Council mandate “breaks new ground in peacekeeping operations,” Mr. Ban notes.

The Secretary-General says he is “pleased” by the collaboration between the UN and EU, and that he has “no doubt this will continue as the two operations are deployed on the ground.”

While he expresses hope that the EU will be able to provide the capacities required for its force, he cautions that if its capabilities are limited, MINURCAT will not be able to deploy in eastern Chad.

“I appeal to all relevant Member States to provide the force requirements necessary to enable the European Union force to deploy with the needed robustness and credibility,” Mr. Ban writes.

At the same time, the Secretary-General observes that “the deployment of MINURCAT and the European Union-led peacekeeping force alone will not solve the crisis plaguing the sub-region.”

The security situation will be bolstered by the simultaneous deployment of the UN-African Union hybrid force planned for the war-wracked Sudanese region of Darfur, known as UNAMID, as well as progress with the Darfur peace talks, he writes.

Mr. Ban voices concern over the “volatile and unpredictable” security situation in eastern Chad, with violence threatening the civilian population and further thwarting aid workers providing urgently-needed assistance.

Regarding CAR, he lauds the Government’s efforts towards an inclusive dialogue, and urges the international community to support them.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Miseriya wounded people taken to Khartoum for medical treatment (AlSahafa)

Governors of South Kordofan and Northern Bahr Al-Ghazal States are expected to have arrived yesterday at the area which witnessed the recent clashes between the SPLA and the Miseriya.

Hiraika Izzeldin (Miseriya Chief) called on the two Governors to visit the area, assess the situation and take necessary administrative and security measures.

AlSahafa has been informed that the wounded Miseriya were taken yesterday from Hijlaj Hospital for medial treatment in Khartoum.

Following clashes in Grinty: MPs visit wounded Miseriya in South Kordofan, warn of possible clashes with SPLA, head of delegation warns of massing of SPLA troops with heavy weapons (Akhbar AIYom)

A delegation from the Miseriya in Khartoum, headed by MP Mohamed Abdallah Adam (Wad Abok), visited the area where clashes between the SPLA and the Miseriya took place. The MP Mohamed Abdallah said the situation there remains tense as the SPLA is massing a big number of troops equipped with heavy weapons near Al-Meram. He warned of imminent clashes if authorities do not take urgent measures. He said the response of the official authorities is very weak. He added that ten of the wounded Miseriya who suffer serious injuries have been brought to Khartoum for medical treatment.

Meeting Seeks to Cool down Tense Situation in Grinti S. Kordofan (Sudan Vision)

By Zuleikha Abdel Raziq, A meeting that included representatives of NCP, SPLM and a number of Messeriyah and Dinka was held in Khartoum on Sunday afternoon to discuss the incidents that have recently taken place in Grinti area in South Kordofan.

The meeting came out with a package of decisions, primarily committing SPLA to cessation of any preparations for attacks, convention of a meeting between the governors of Aweil and South Kordofan for striking an agreement between the two parties in addition to deployment of police forces in the area.

Attended by SPLM Secretary General, Pagan Amum, NCP member Al-Dirdeeri Mohammed Ahmed, Al-Amir Huraika Ezzudin, head of the Messeriyah High Council, Deng Alor, Lt. Gen. Mahi Babu Nimir and some Messeriyah and Dinka leaders, the meeting underlined the need for the two Naivasha partners to make political moves to put an end to hostilities in the area.

Meanwhile, SPLM denied any involvement in the incidents as SPLM Secretary General, Pagan Amum, attributed the incidents to acts of provocation by both sides, refuting the presence of any differences between the Messeriyah and SPLM.

On the other hand, Huraika Ezzudin, the head of Messeriyah High Council, revealed that a number of Messeriyah and SPLM National Assembly members will visit the area to oversee implementation of decisions of the meeting on the ground and to activate the role of tribal leaders for normalizing relations, noting that the meeting has also decided to call for a peaceful co-existence conference for tribes residing in points of contact.

Bush Administration's new scandal on Darfur (AlRai AlAam)

Press reports in New York revealed that an investigation on the American company Pacific Architects and Engineers, which has been granted a contract to supply the hybrid forces in Darfur with food and camps, is being conducted. It is expected that the investigation might disclose the role of the US administration in corruption. Investigations revealed correspondence between the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the UN in which the Secretary of State has asked the UN to give the contract to this company without opening bids.

Sudan describes former US special envoy mission as 'failure' (ST)

December 25, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — A senior Sudanese official described the mission of the former US special envoy Andrew Natsios as a “failed one”. Ali al-Sadig, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking to Miraya FM, also criticized the appointment of a new special envoy to replace Natsios.

Natsios will be succeeded by Richard S. Williamson, a prominent Illinois Republican and former U.S. ambassador who has held senior posts in three GOP administrations.

(ST)

Sudan central bank to switch trading from dollar to Euro next week (ST)

December 25, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan Central Bank is set to switch its foreign currency reserves from dollar to Euro next week to hedge the impact of US economic sanctions.

The central bank released a set of instructions on Monday outlining practical steps that will be taken to enforce the new policy of trading in Euro as well as recommendations to the business community. The central bank notice advised the banks to inform their clients of the risks involved in keeping an account in US dollars.

However should the clients wish to keep their dollar accounts they are obliged to provide a written risk disclaimer acknowledging their understanding of the potential financial risks involved.

Sudan's monetary authority said that banks should recommend that its clients who import or export goods to use the local currency of the country they are dealing in or a currency other than the US dollar.

The Central bank also authorized the local banks to meet any pending US dollar obligations in other currencies.

However the notice stressed that the process of switching from US dollars to other currencies is "optional" for local banks and that recommendations set forth are advisory in nature.

The decision by the government caused concern among some Sudanese businessmen who argued that the switch might increase risks rather than mitigate it.

The Washington Post quoting CIA officials earlier this year said that Khartoum established a committee to look into ways of making the economy less dependent on the US dollars. The committee concluded that the proposal is not feasible.

Last May the US slapped sanctions on 31 companies, including oil exporters, blocking them from US trade and financial dealings.

Sudanese officials dismissed sanctions saying that it will have little impact on their economy.

However several reports have indicated that the Sudanese economy is beginning to feel the effects of the US financial sanctions.

(ST)

Cardinal Wako says Sudan's leaders become sources of division (ST)

December 25, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Cardinal Gabriel Zubeir Wako, Archbishop of Khartoum, on Tuesday has lamented that political leaders become sources of divisions and hatred mistrust and violence, in his Christmas message.

“Our Political Leaders, our organs of Social Communications, our organized and security forces, which should create an atmosphere of trust, unity and dialogue among the people, often become sources of division, hatred, suspicion, mistrust and violence.” The Cardinal said.

He warned that no hope for peace without real brotherhood that transcends the boundaries of tribe, language, religion, region, ethnicity and social status.

"There can be no peace unless great effort is put into the promotion of the common good of all. Why can't we put more effort into creating the family spirit of brotherhood than into preparing and training for war, and justifying unjust and discriminating ways of talking and acting, and picking up quarrels?"

(ST)

SPLA force, Arab tribe clash in north-south Sudan border (ST)

December 24, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — More than seventy persons were killed during two-day clashes between Misseriya pastoral tribe and units from Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) following the arrest of a cattle herder by the SPLA.

Fierce fighting broke out over the weekend — Saturday and Sunday December 22 and 23 — between the SPLA and members of the nomadic Misseriya tribe in southern Kordofan.

James Hoth, a major-general in the SPLA said that more than 20 SPLA soldiers were killed and more than 50 Misseriya killed. But Misseriya sources said they lost 9 people during the two-day clashes and that 30 SPLA soldiers were killed.

The SPLA Spokesperson attributed the attack to local tensions and insinuated that the cattle herders were manipulated. "Somebody told them that we have gone beyond the border; that we are in the north," Hoth said. "They told the Murahaleen that we will not allow people to go to the south." He told Reuters today from Juba.

The independent Al-Sahafa daily reported that the fighting occurred when SPLA soldiers on Saturday arrested a cattle herder from the Dinka tribe but working with the Misseriya. The SPLA soldiers blamed the herder for having a weapon, which is banned in the region.

It was reported that the first day ended with the killing of 4 Arab tribesmen.

On Sunday, the Misseriya from Miram locality, about 90 km south west of Al-Mujlad region in southern Kordofan attacked an SPLA camp in Grenti in northern Bahr Al-Ghazal to avenge the killings of their people.

(ST)

SPLM to rejoin Sudan's government after Christmas (ST)

December 24, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese First Vice President and Chairman of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Salva Kiir Mayardit, has announced today that SPLM ministers would rejoin the national unity government after the holiday of Christmas.

"The constitutional post holders from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) will resume their activities in the Government of National Unity immediately after the Christmas and the two partners had overcome the crisis," Mayardit said in a message aired from Juba to the Sudanese people and the Christian particularly on the occasion of the Christmas.

He reiterated that there will never be a return to war, pointing out that the two partners to Naivasha agreement agreed to press ahead with the implementation of the agreement.

(ST)

Journalists Union Denounces Journalists Detention at Rank, Demands GoSS Apology

By: Nasr Addeen Al Tahir Ghatas, Sudanese Journalists General Union has announced its absolute condemnation of the detention of a host of Journalists by Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the area of Molbik of Upper Nile while they were accompanying the National Congress Party (NCP) delegation visiting the State congratulating citizens on the occasion of Eid Al Adha Al-Mubarak celebrations.

In a statement to SMC, Journalists Dean, Dr. Mohieddin Teitawi, stressed that the Union rejects any obstruction to Journalists while conducting their duties, noting that the detention of TV, Radio and SUNA reporters by SPLA is a gross violation of International Conventions and Laws.

Teitawi demanded official apology on the Part of Government of South Sudan (GoSS) as well SPLA, pointing out that SJU will report the case to the International Journalists, African Journalists and East Africa Journalists Unions, stressing that SJU will not forgive such a conduct and strongly counter any inconveniences against its members.

It is worth mentioning that the detainees, who were released after being subjected to severe insults and other inconveniences, included Ibrahim Mousa of SUNA, National TV Representatives: Almannah Ali Almannah, Omer Hassan Yahia, Yahia Ibrahim and Alamin Mohammed Beshir.

SPLA Forces Retreats after Being Chased By Misarya (SMC)

Monday 24 December 2007, Al Muglad (smc), SPLA has pullout forces toward the south from AL Garaf near Al Maram in south Kordofan. It redeploys its forces at Majok after they were chased away by Misarya to counter an attack led by SPLA

against nomads in the area. An eye witness told (smc) that large number from Misariya tribe were mobilized including 80 horse riders and 12 car loading fighters some of them from Rizagat nomads to launch counter attack against SPLA elements who retreated from Al Girinti and Um Shaaria areas toward the south. "Tensions in the area started since two months ago when after SPLA mobilized forces something 70 Kilometers north ward to 1956 border line." said Kibir Mohammed Kibir one of dignitaries in the area. He said SPLA forces intercepted shepherds from Misariya tribe while returning to their areas after the rainy season. He said SPLA relocated forces in the area with two tanks and four Dushka cars. Kibir said Misariya forces engaged with SPLA at Al Girinti and Um Shaaria and killed and injured eight elements from SPLA and lost five persons plus 12 others injured.

The following were names of Misariya live claimed: Idam Hamid Al Bara: Abdallah Mahmmed Idam :Gibril Al Shafi Hamdan: Hssain Mahmoud Ahmed Numan and Abdallah Ismail: The injured persons are Dawood Abdallah Numan: Omer Abdallah Baood: Abdel Rahman Abu Al Gasim Mohammed: Wad Karoma Hamdain Yousif: Adam Al Sayed Zakaria: Abdallah Madibo: Ismail Issa: Ibrahim Rafik Kafi: Numan Abdel Rahman and Osman Mohmoud.

NCP Members Detained by SPLA in Rank Release (SMC)

Monday 24 December 2007, Khartoum (smc), Local authorities in Rank have released National Congress Party (NCP) delegation members arrested by SPLA elements while they were on a visit to a number of southern Sudan states. Presidential advisor and deputy chairman for southern sector at NCP Ali Tamim Fartak said the party's delegation headed by Fadwa Shuway Deng was exposed to an attack and arrest by SPLM elements in Rank. He said they were locked for two days and mistreated. The presidential advisor revealed that NCP contacted the government of the south and as consequence local authorities in Rank released the detainees. In the some development NCP delegation however demands that SPLA should behave in a disciplinary way in favor of preserving partnership between the NCP and SPLM.

Southern leader says no "return to war" in Sudan

Text of report in English by state-owned Sudanese news agency Suna website

Juba, 24 December: First Vice-President of the Republic and President of the Government of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit has announced that the constitutional post holders from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) would resume their activities in the Government of National Unity immediately after the Christmas after the two partners had overcome the crisis.

The first vice-president reiterated that there will never be a return to war, pointing out that the two partners to Naivasha agreement agreed to press ahead with the implementation of the agreement. Salva Kiir directed a message of congratulations to all the Sudanese people and the Christians in particular through the local media in Juba on the occasion of the Christmas.

The first vice-president of the republic and president of the Government of Southern Sudan called on the citizens to show the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness and work together to boost peace that has been realized in the country, stressing the importance of unity of ranks for facing the challenges of development and realizing peace all over the country. He called on the Sudanese people to pray for finding a solution to Darfur problem.

BBC Mon ME1 MEEau 251207/za/hh

Sudan's peace partners agree to exert efforts to contain tribal clashes in south

Text of report by state-owned Sudanese TV on 24 December

Sudan's peace partners have agreed to exert efforts to contain the recent incidents in southern Sudan. In its 1900 bulletin Sudan TV reported on a meeting between a delegation from Al-Misiriyah chieftains led by Huraykah Iz-al-Din Huraykah, Sudan People's Liberation Movement [SPLM] Secretary-General Pagan Amum and National Congress (NC) leading figure Al-Dirdiri Muhammad Ahmad to discuss means to address repercussions of incidents in southern Kurdufan in which some people belonging to Al-Misiriyah tribe were killed.

They agreed that southern Kurdufan and Northern Bahr al-Ghazal governors visit the scene of the incidents to investigate and stress the need for stability to prevail in the area.

In exclusive statements to Sudan TV, Ahmad termed Al-Misiriyah's meetings' with the NC and SPLM leaderships as "an important step that would boost security and stability and stop any escalation of the situation in the region".

"The need for the police to assume its role in both states of Bahr al-Ghazal and Southern Kurdufan and protect the citizens and secure their movements was stressed in the meeting," Ahmad said.

For his part, Amum stressed the need to take prompt action to put an end to these incidents, avoid its repetition and maintain the pillars of peace among citizens in Southern Kurdufan and North Bahr al-Ghazal.

In statements to Sudan TV, Amum said: "We regret the incidents that took place in the area between Southern Kurdufan and North Bahr al-Ghazal. We agreed that prompt action would be taken to put an end to these incidents and avert its repetition because we seek peaceful coexistence."

Al-Masiriyah chieftains called on the peace partners to work for preserving the unity of the area and their partnership and abstain from responding to any provocation that would undermine the social fabric.

Huraykah said: "A full comprehensive agreement has been reached that the ongoing incidents in the area should come to a stop. Brothers in the movement, especially Mr Amum, showed commitment and affirmed that there would be quick strong messages to the army commanders in the movement to the effect that there should be no operation or response to any clashes or provocations. There also should be a field meeting between the rulers of Southern Kurdufan and North Bahr al-Ghazal at the scene of incidents to make sure that the incidents come to a stop and life returns to normal."

In a live telephone interview with Al-Dirdiri Ahmad in Khartoum, he said: "The most important thing [in the initiative] is the keenness to contain the tension that took place and both parties willingness not to escalate the crisis.

"The meeting stressed the need for both partners to send a united message to the people of the area in particular and the Sudanese people in general to the effect that the two partners are committed to what have been approved recently, especially the outcome of the presidency institution meetings." he added

Source: Sudan TV, Omdurman, in Arabic 1900 gmt 24 Dec 07

BBC Mon ME1 MEEau 251207 za/hh

Peace anniversary celebrations to be marked in Sudanese capital on 9 January

Text of report in English by state-owned Sudanese news agency Suna website

Khartoum, 25 December: Secretary-General of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Pagan Amum announced that the ministers of SPLM at the Government of National Unity would take oath on Thursday [27 December] and that celebrations of the peace day would be launched on January 9 from Khartoum and Wau, capital of West Bahr Al-Ghazal State.

Addressing worshippers at the Catholic Church in Khartoum, Amum said that the country celebrates these days Id Al-Adha, Christmas, Peace Day and Independence Day.

He affirmed that President of the Republic Umar Al-Bashir and First Vice-President Salva Kiir are keen on realization of peace on the basis of justice, equality, balanced development, rule of law and public freedoms and democracy.

He pointed that they work to serve the poor and end the conflict in Darfur and make the year 2008 as year of peace in Sudan.

Source: Suna news agency website, Khartoum, in English 26 Dec 07

BBC Mon ME1 MEEau 261207/hh

GoSS

One SPLA soldier killed in Murles bus-hijacking in Jonglei (ST)

On last Friday December 21, around 12:00pm a group of Murles militias hijacked a bus carrying passengers and left one Major from SPLA forces dead, and wounded nine people. The Murles attackers were in green military uniforms. "They were in hiding and after seeing the bus they immediately open a fire where they wounded me," said Mary Ayen, a victim of attack. Among the wounded, there are three young children between 10-15 years of age; all are school children, one policeman and some are 20 years above.

In other development, the same group waged other attack on Saturday December 22, killing one people who was looking after his cattle and they went with fifty head of cattle in Deer, in Makuach payam

(ST)

New governor of Sudan's Jonglei pledges to disarm the state (ST)

December 24, 2007 (BOR) – Jonglei State officials, civil society organisations and population today have welcomed today the newly appointed Governor, Kuol Manyang Juuk, who pledged to restore security.

"By the beginning of coming year, all the civilians will be disarmed, but disarming will start with our brothers who are posing insecurity;" he said. Adding that other counties will fellow immediately because "They misuse guns for killing themselves."

Governor Juuk disclosed that he had talked with Murles leader, Sultan Ismael Kony, who accepted disarmament of Murles. Manayang Juuk further said that Sudan's First Vice-President and southern Sudan leader wanted a peaceful disarmament conducted by the allied Murles leadership. Nonetheless, he warned that if Kony fails then forceful disarmament will follow.

(ST)

Southern Sudan authorities release members of visiting ruling party delegation

Text of report by pro-government Sudanese Media Centre website on 24 December

Local authorities in Renk have released members of the [ruling] National Congress [NC] delegation who were arrested by Sudan People's Liberation Army [SPLA] soldiers while on a visit to a number of southern Sudan states.

In a statement to SMC [Sudanese Media Centre] Presidential Advisor and NC Deputy Chairman for the Southern Sector Ali Tamim Fartak said the NC delegation headed by Fadwa Shuway Deng who were visiting regions in Upper Nile State were attacked and verbally insulted by SPLA forces in Malbuk, south of Renk. They were then detained for two days, he added.

Fartak revealed that contacts the NC made with the Government of South Sudan secured the release of the delegation. He also pointed out the Renk authorities apologized to the delegation who were conveying Id and Christmas greetings to the mayor of Malbuk region.

Meanwhile the NC delegation requested that the SPLA should behave in a disciplinary manner that favours preserving the partnership between the ruling partners.

Source: Sudanese Media Centre website, Khartoum, in Arabic 24 Dec 07
BBC Mon ME1 MEEau 251207/hh

Darfur

Sudan army attack rebel positions in West Darfur – SLM leader

The Sudanese army launched a combined air and ground operation against the positions of the Sudan Liberation Army in Jabal Marra, in West Darfur, the SLM founder Abdelwahid al-Nur told Sudan Tribune on Tuesday.

"Around 4000 troops took part in a ground attack today against our positions in Wadi Toro, Balaroy and Shao Fogo in northern west Jabal Marra;" al Nur said. He further added that the assailants were transported by 60 Land Cruiser vehicles.

The rebel leader said that two military aircrafts Antonov raided the three rebel held positions before the ground attack. Al-Nur, who refuses to participate in the AU-Un mediated peace process, condemned the attack saying that Khartoum still thinking can end the Darfur crisis through the military solution.

(ST)

Darfur rebel group reports mass defection by Arab militias (ST)

December 25, 2007 (NORTH DARFUR) — Darfur's rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) announced today that a large group of Arab tribal leaders and military commanders joined their ranks. The rebel group said that the defectors included "seven Arab Emirs (princes) and 22 top Arab commanders".

The JEM statement described the event as a "breathtaking development"; adding that the group included "some who previously acted as Janjaweed leaders or enlisted under the infamous Border Guards".

The JEM statement said that Sudan's spy Chief Salah Gosh and Interior Minister Abdel-Rahim Mohamed Hussein "were on a desperate tour to West Darfur with the mandate for revamping government support among the Arabs of Darfur".

Mubarak al-Fadil, leader of the Umma Reform and Renewal told Sudan Tribune in an interview that Hamiditi defected from the government along with his 20,000 heavily armed supporters. The opposition leader said that Hamiditi felt that the “government abandoned him after they accepted the peacekeeping force as well as the fact that they are not paying them as they are used to”. Al-Fadil added that the Sudanese government used the air force against Hamiditi in South Kordofan to quell his rebellion.

An analyst speaking to Sudan Tribune from Khartoum on condition of anonymity said that the defection of Arab militias represents a new and alarming development to the Sudanese government. He added that Khartoum will “feel threatened by shift in alliances”.

(ST)

Darfur rebel leader to remain in France despite Sudan pressure (ST)

December 24, 2007 (PARIS) — The decision by the French government to extend the residence permit of an influential Darfur rebel leader is likely to anger the Sudanese government. Yesterday the French government announced that it has decided to renew the residence permit of leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) Abdelwahid al-Nur. "The length of stay of Mr. Abdelwahid al-Nur has been extended by three months" the spokeswoman of the foreign ministry Pascale Andreani told reporters on Monday.

(ST)

Nigerian soldiers returning from Darfur fight a new battle, financially (ST)

December 24, 2007 (LAGOS) — Over 5,000 Nigerians who have served in peace keeping operations in Sudan’s war-torn Darfur are yet to be paid most of their allowances. Some of the soldiers cried out in a petition that military top shots are deliberately withholding the soldiers’ allowances amounting to about N1 billion. The military authorities confirmed owing the soldiers but denied sitting on the entitlements of the troops, saying a loan has been secured and approved by the presidency to ensure that they are paid before the end of this month.

According to Nigerian soldiers in Darfur, each soldier was being paid \$200 monthly when they were in Darfur, with a promise that the remaining \$600 being kept for them as savings and would be paid when they return to Nigeria.

(Daily Trust)

AU chief urges Sudan to facilitate Darfur force (ST)

December 24, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan’s government should facilitate the deployment of a joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force to Darfur and rebels should rejoin the peace process, Africa’s top diplomat said on Monday.

Alpha Oumar Konare, head of the African Union Commission, was visiting his 7,000 Darfur peacekeepers, who have struggled with shortages of equipment and funds to protect even themselves.

The shortcomings of the AU force have angered Darfuris, who have begged for international protection for almost five years.

Konare urged the government to allow the deployment of the hybrid AU-UN mission, which Khartoum reluctantly agreed to after months of threats and negotiations.

(Reuters)

AU chief calls for more efforts to enhance peace process in Sudan's (Xinhua)

Source: Xinhua Date: December 24, 2007, EL FASHIR, **Sudan**, Dec 24, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission Alpha Oumar Konare on Monday called for more efforts by the **Sudanese** government, rebels in **Darfur** and the international community to enhance the peace process in the war-torn western **Sudanese** region.

In his address at a meeting of AU and **Sudanese** officials in El Fashir, the capital of North **Darfur** State, Konare urged the conflicting parties in **Darfur** to commit themselves to ceasefire and extend necessary support for the UN-AU Mission in **Darfur** (UNAMID).

"Our second message is to the armed movements in **Darfur**," he said, adding that the rebel movements should "announce the ceasefire in exchange with what had been announced by the **Sudanese** government."

"Our third message is to the international society, which ought to provide us with what we need to carry out our mission," Konare said.

AU chief holds talks with Sudanese president on Darfur

Text of report by state-owned Sudanese TV on 24 December

The African Union commission chairman, Alpha Oumar Konare, today briefed the president of the republic, field marshal Umar Al-Bashir, on his visit this morning to Al-Fashir town to thank African troops for their work in Darfur.

He conveyed his gratitude to HE the president of the republic on Sudan's cooperation with the African Union and on his commitment to the resolution of the Darfur conflict.

Mr Konare stressed the African Union was committed in finding a fast and speedy resolution of the Darfur crisis with the cooperation of all parties.

In a statement on television, Mr Konare stated the president of the republic had expressed his satisfaction with the role of the African Union in peace building in Darfur and on Sudan's need to ensure there was peace and stability in the area.

Source: Sudan TV, Omdurman, in Arabic 1800 gmt 24 Dec 07

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Sudan says preparations for deployment of hybrid operation in Darfur complete

Text of report by state-owned Sudanese radio on 25 December

[News reader] The government has announced that it has completed arrangements in preparation for the hybrid operation in Darfur and achievement of the following steps, especially after the approval of its budget by the UN. Ambassador Ali al-Sadiq, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said the transfer of the AU mission in Darfur to the joint AU-UN mission comes in accordance with the resolution.

For more explanation, [Correspondent] Muhammad Hamad al-Lil contacted Ambassador Ali al-Sadiq and asked him about the government arrangements regarding the hybrid operation.

[Al-Sadiq] As the [indistinct word] has been completed, we expect this will reflect positively on countries' contributions and the arrival of the African troops as soon as possible. For its part, the Sudanese government went beyond what is required from it and offered much regarding the creation of the appropriate atmosphere for the coming troops to be deployed and starting the peace-keeping operation that the citizens there have long awaited.

[Correspondent] The arrival of Mr Oumar Konare to the country and his meetings with some state officials comes in the context of boosting this operation. How do you regard this visit and the consequences on the launching of the hybrid operation?

[Al-Sadiq] There is a visit in the context of consultation and full coordination between the Sudanese government and the African Union. It is known that the African Union and the Sudanese government maintained good relations throughout the crisis of the transfer of the peace-keeping mission from the AU to the UN. Mr Alpha Konare comes now to give this operation more momentum over the coming period, especially [indistinct words] the transfer of the peace-keeping mission from the AU to the UN.

[Correspondent] There is also a movement of the transfer from the AU to the UN in Al-Fashir next week. This step comes in the context of boosting the launch of the hybrid operation. How do you regard this step and the outcome regarding the bolstering of the Darfur peace march?

[Al-Sadiq] Yes, the Sudanese government, through approval of the international Resolution 1969 and showing its full readiness to implement it and abide by it with full accuracy and transparency, was affirming that the peace-keeping operation in Darfur is on top of its interests as citizens in Darfur had suffered much. Consequently, there had been efforts to make it help the state establish the pillars of peace and stability.

When the UNAMID [United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur] takes over the peace-keeping operation in Darfur, the Sudanese government [indistinct words] in the first place and there would be full coordination to achieve this mission as soon as possible so that peace and stability would be restored in Darfur and people could practise their normal life as was the case in the past. We also hope that the launching of this peace-keeping operation would reflect positively on the ongoing political process. We hope the coming stage will be a decisive stage regarding the political solution to Darfur [crisis] so that the political line and the hybrid operation integrate and reflect positively on the situation on the ground.

Source: Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 1000 gmt 25 Dec 07

BBC Mon ME1 MEEau 251207/za/hh

➤ **Miscellaneous**

Pope urges leaders to find wisdom, courage to end conflicts in Darfur, Iraq, (AP)

Source: AP DataStreamAAA, Date: December 25, 2007, VATICAN CITY_Pope Benedict XVI issued a Christmas Day appeal Tuesday to political leaders around the globe to find the "wisdom and courage" to end bloody conflicts in **Darfur**, Iraq, Afghanistan and Congo.

Benedict delivered his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" speech _ Latin for "to the city and to the world" _ from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, blessing thousands of people gathered in the square below under a brilliant winter sun.

Wearing gold-embroidered vestments and a bejeweled bishops' hat, or miter, Benedict urged the crowd to rejoice over the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth, which he said he hoped would bring consolation to all people "who live in the darkness of poverty, injustice and war."

He mentioned in particular those living in the "tortured regions" of **Darfur**, Somalia, northern Congo, the Eritrea-Ethiopia border, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Balkans.

"May the child Jesus bring relief to those who are suffering and may he bestow upon political leaders the wisdom and courage to seek and find humane, just and lasting solutions," he said.