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(By Public Information Office)

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UN/ Agencies

Security Council makes consultations on appointing a new mediator for Darfur (AlAyam)

Western diplomatic sources told AlAyam that the Security Council permanent members are making consultations on strengthening the mediation efforts and the peace process in Darfur through appointing a new UN-AU envoy

UN, AU envoys upbeat on prospects for restarting Darfur peace talks (UN)

20 January 2008 – After meetings with the Government and the main rebel groups, the United Nations and African Union envoys for the Darfur peace process said they are hopeful that talks aimed at ending the conflict in the war-wracked Sudanese region can reconvene soon.

The UN's Jan Eliasson and his AU counterpart Salim Ahmed Salim have just wrapped up a weeklong visit to the country in an effort to infuse new momentum into the stalled peace process.

"Our overall impression is that there seems to be cause for some degree of hope and optimism," Mr. Salim told reporters in the capital, Khartoum, on Saturday, referring to the prospects for re-launching the talks that began in Sirte, Libya, in late October.

Mr. Salim recalled that substantive talks were put on hold following Sirte to give the various movements an opportunity consult among themselves, coordinate within their ranks and to work towards unification.

"We are gratified to note that these months have been used well by the Movements, at least by some of them, to deepen that consultation and to provide some degree of unity," he reported after having met with several of the groups.

He said there are now "five main groups which we have to deal with," namely the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) Unity, the United Resistance Front, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) group led by Abdul Wahid, the Abdul Shafie group and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) led by Khalil Ibrahim.

The envoy emphasized that "the time is right" for the movements to prepare themselves for the substantive negotiations. "We believe this is in the interest not only

of the peace process, but more importantly in the interest of the people of Darfur itself."

Mr. Eliasson noted that two of the five groups have expressed their commitment to the peace process and to attending "pre-negotiations" talks, to be held in about six weeks' time, ahead of a resumption of direct discussions with the Sudanese Government.

He added that progress will ultimately depend on the political will of the parties to move ahead with negotiations leading to peaceful resolution of the conflict. "This is a challenge to prove that there is a political will to move ahead and I hope the parties accept this challenge."

The envoys also voiced concern about the worsening security situation in Darfur, and specifically about the deteriorating relations between Chad and Sudan. "The prospects for peace in Darfur will very much be enhanced if there is normalisation of relations between Sudan and Chad," said Mr. Salim.

Mr. Eliasson stressed the need for a decrease in violence if further talks are to prove successful. "We have therefore urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint, and create that climate necessary for productive talks."

Darfur rebel leader maintains his rejection to current UN-AU mediation (ST)

January 20, 2008 (PARIS) — The founder of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur reaffirmed his commitment to a political settlement of the five year conflict in Darfur. However, he reiterated that the position of his movement remains unchanged towards the ongoing peace efforts.

Al-Nur was speaking to Sudan Tribune following the publication of some reports on the possible participation of his movement in the UN-AU sponsored peace talks that concluded its first round in Libya last October.

The rebel leader said he is prepared to take part in the peace process only when the "conflict suspension" is achieved on the ground and the return of villagers to their home is secured.

Al-Nur added that the current efforts conducted by the African Union and the United Nations ignore totally their demands that will ensure a lasting peace. He added that the mediation is encouraging dissidence within the movements opposed to the current process and trying to convince field commanders into attending it.

The influential leader warned that as long as the demand of civilians' security is not fulfilled there would be no negotiations with Khartoum, asserting that the government has no credibility and they have to see what they had agreed first, the ceasefire, implemented before evolving in the new process.

(ST)

Darfur rebel commanders decry "misleading" statements by UN-AU envoys (ST)

January 20, 2008 (EL-FASHER) — A Darfur rebel movement today denounced statements made by UN and African Union (AU) envoys following the meeting held last Thursday and accused them of disseminating misleading information.

The military spokesperson of SLM Nimer Mohamed Ibrahim told Sudan Tribune by satellite phone from Darfur that they received the force commander of the UNAMID, Martin Luther Agwai, accompanied by Darfur envoys Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim from the UN and the AU, in the town of Mulagat, in northern Darfur.

The SLM official had a two-fold message to Eliasson and Salim.

"We advised Eliasson to communicate his peace proposals to our leader Abdel-Wahid al-Nur." Nimer added

The rebel spokesperson also said they made it "crystal clear" to Salim that they don't want anything to do with him because "he is a part of the problem and not a mediator".

A news report by the UN news service last Friday said that a spokesperson from SLM led by Abdel-Wahid, confirmed the movement's readiness to participate in the political process and that they urged the envoys to meet with Abdel-Wahid.

Nimer said the Eliasson and Salim contacted the Commander in Chief of the military wing of SLM, Abdel-Gader Ibrahim Abdel-Rahman also known as Gadora but he declined the meeting.

Ibrahim said the agenda of the meeting was to discuss the deployment of the hybrid forces in areas controlled by the rebel movement and ways to cooperate together.

The rebel official said the rebel delegation was composed of many officials from the SLA including Abdalla Haran, the chairman of the Political Bureau, Abdalla Khalil Abakr deputy chairman of the Political Bureau, Mohamed Abdel-Salam aka Tarada, deputy Commander in chief of the SLA, Yousef Ahmed Yousef, Chief of Staff of the SLA and Yousef Adam Abdel-Samad, commander of Mulagat as well as Nimer.

Nimer stressed that the SLM/A delegation held meetings with General Agwai only. He added that the Darfur envoys spoke with the local chief (Umda) and addressed the local civilians in the area.

He expressed his disappointment at the "baseless propaganda" by Darfur envoys adding "this move shows the difficulty we would face if we were to deal with people we don't trust."

The SLM spokesperson further said that it is "immoral" for the UN and AU officials "to hide our real position and transmit lies to outside world. How we can deal with them? This brings the integrity of the envoys and their real motivation into question"

(ST)

Children, five Sudanese societies and UNFPA implement project for merger of the AIDS and bearing health services (Khartoum Monitor)

The group of societies working in the project for amalgamation of the health services awareness and polishing of AIDS with the services of bearing children health in collaboration with the UNFPA, organized the first coordination meeting for the national organization of CAFA, Red Crescent, Family Planning and Fertility Care Society in cooperation with the states of Gezeira, Khartoum and River Nile.

UNFPA AIDS Fund coordinator said the gathering discussed the progress of the merger project in the centre as well as in the states.

UNAMID calls for more troops, UNSG envoy arrives in Khartoum (Sudan Vision)

By: Zulikha Abdel Raziz, UN Under-Secretary General for Peace Keeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno, will arrive in Khartoum within a couple of days. Sudan Vision sources said Guehenno will hold preliminary talks with senior government officials, along with technical discussions with UNAMID Leadership, before departing to Addis Ababa for participation in the technical meeting set for the 27th current January.

According to Al-Sahafa Arabic Daily, Sudan Ambassador to UN, Abdalmahmoud Abdalhalim, will arrive Khartoum during this week to discuss issues related to hybrid operations progress before leaving for Addis Ababa.

Abdalhalim who revealed that Addis meeting will include Sudan government, UN and EU and he further affirmed that Al-Bashir-Ki Moon meeting on the sidelines of the African Summit, at AU Headquarters will be held on schedule.

Meanwhile, UNAMID Spokesman, Noureddine Mezni, underscored the necessity to accelerate the pace of contributions in terms of force aerial, and land transport means, adding that UNAMID hopes to receive remarkable numbers of troops.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Salva Kiir says refused to withdraw troops far from south Sudan border (ST)

January 20, 2008 (JUBA, Sudan) — South Sudan has refused northern demands that its soldiers redeploy further south after clashes along the oil-rich border raised tensions between the former foes, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir said on Sunday.

Kiir said both sides had agreed last year to withdraw to either side of the river Kiir, after four clashes between northern army-backed militias and the southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) along the border killed dozens.

Speaking at church on Sunday in semi-autonomous south Sudan's capital Juba, he said Khartoum's army had now told the southern armed forces to move another 50 km (30 miles) further south to the town of Aweil.

"Is Aweil the south Sudan border with the north? Nobody can accept that and of course we refused," said Kiir, leader of former southern rebels who came to power after a 2005 peace deal that ended decades of war and created a national coalition government.

The team charged with demarcating the disputed north-south border, where much of Sudan's oil wealth lies, is due to begin work in February. Under the deal, south Sudan should receive around 50 percent of revenues from oil wells in the south.

"(They) would want to push away the ... SPLA so when the border committee comes they just draw the line where they may be directed by (Khartoum's northern) National Congress Party," said Kiir.

Kiir said the Misseriya, who traditionally travel south for dry season cattle grazing, have refused to disarm. But he said that like other southern tribes, the nomads could only cross into the south unarmed.

"The National Congress Party together with the Sudan Armed Forces would want them to be accepted to come to southern Sudan with arms," he said. "If they come with their guns we will fight them."

Kiir also the heavy weaponry carried by the Misseriya proved the northern army had provided them with arms.

"We know all the guns being used by the Sudanese army, and these are the ones being used by the Misseriya and we will not accept that thing being imposed on us," he said. "So we have still a problem to resolve with our partners."

(Reuters)

SPLM establishes five administrative units in Abyei, demands withdrawal of SAF force from the area (Rai AlShaab)

The SPLM has yesterday established five administrative units (Al-Lao, Tiok, Al-Naam, Taj Al-Lay) in Abyei. It has also appointed James Dood Magwat a Commissioner for Abyei.

Sudan tells the US it will not offer concessions "for free" to normalize ties (ST)

January 20, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan's presidential adviser told the top US diplomat in Khartoum that his government will not normalize relations with Washington "for free".

Mustafa Ismail, Sudanese President's adviser and senior National Congress Party (NCP) official told US Charge D'affaires Alberto Fernandez that there needs to be a roadmap for normalizing ties between both countries.

“Every concession in our end should be met with a similar concession from the US side” Ismail told reporters after his meeting with Fernandez.

The growing strain in relations between the two countries comes amidst refusal by Sudanese authorities to admit equipments stuck at Port Sudan needed for the construction of new US embassy in Khartoum.

Last week Sabir Mohammed Hassan, governor of Sudan Central Bank, asked the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas Greenfield, specifically to return money confiscated following a ruling by U.S. court that ordered Khartoum to pay some \$8 million to the families of U.S. sailors killed in the bombing of an American naval destroyer seven years ago in Yemen.

The newspaper said that Greenfield turned down Sudan’s request and said that Washington may abandon the new embassy project which incurred \$60 million in costs to date.

Hassan on his end vowed not to give the US embassy equipments any special consideration. He told the US official that the Sudanese embassy in Washington gets audited on a regular basis which costs Khartoum over \$3,000 monthly.

Ismail said that his government has fulfilled demands by Washington to normalize relations including human rights, relations with neighboring countries and democratic transition.

“We have not witnessed any goodwill initiatives by the US but rather more sanctions” he added.

The Sudanese official said that the US administration replaces its envoys after they develop an understanding with Khartoum.

Ismail was referring to US Special envoy Andrew Natsios who resigned from his post and was succeeded by Richard S. Williamson. The Sudanese government at the time made statements indicating their contentment with Natsios resignation.

(ST)

Sudanese Cabinet approves national anti-mine programme (BBC)

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

BBC, Khartoum, 20 January: The Council of Ministers, chaired by Vice President Ali Uthman Muhammad Taha, Sunday [20 January] approved a report about the implementation of the National Anti-Mines Plan, including demining of 325 areas as well as 1385 kms of roads besides rehabilitation of the victims of mines. The report was presented by the State Minister at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Secretary General of the National Mine-Action Programme, Ahmad Muhammad Harun.

The Council of Ministers considered the programme as one of the vital projects in removing the war impacts and urged the various government agencies to support the National Mine-Action Programme in order to carry out its plan for the year 2008.

In this respect the secretary-general and official spokesman of the Council of Ministers, Umar Muhammad Salih, said in a statement to the press the report reflected the immense efforts being done in destroying and removing mines as well as increasing people's awareness on the dangers of mines.

Sudan gives militia leader (Musa Hilal) government post (Reuters)

By Opheera McDoom, KHARTOUM, Jan 20 (Reuters) - **Sudan** has appointed Musa Hilal, a man Washington accuses of coordinating **Darfur's** marauding militias, to a central government position, a move which could undermine peace efforts and anger the international community.

Minister of Federal Affairs Abdel Basit Sabderat confirmed Hilal had been picked as his new adviser. The presidency had earlier denied the appointment.

"Yes he is appointed ... advisor to the minister," Sabderat told Reuters, but gave no further details. Hilal is the leader of the Mahamied clan, part of the powerful Arab Rizeigat tribe in **Darfur**.

Hilal told Reuters he would be based in Khartoum, but said the post could require travel to outlying regions. The ministry coordinates regional administrations with central government.

Washington says Hilal is the coordinator of the Janjaweed militias accused of war crimes in **Darfur**. He denies atrocities and says he mobilised his tribesmen to defend their lands after a government call to "popular defence".

Gamal Nkrumah, Africa expert at Egypt's al-Ahram weekly newspaper, said Hilal's appointment threatened to undermine upcoming peace talks between the government and **Darfur** rebels, and strain Khartoum's already troubled international relations.

"It was a surprise decision and a very unpleasant surprise," he said. "It's very negative and it just shows the complete intransigence on the government's part," he said, adding the move would also alienate **Darfur**'s rebels.

Rights groups say they have interviewed witnesses putting Hilal at the scene of atrocities during the five-year **Darfur** conflict, a charge he denies.

Some analysts suspect Hilal could be charged by the International Criminal Court, which has already issued arrest warrants for junior minister Ahmed Haroun and an allied tribal leader in **Darfur**, Ali Koshayb, for war crimes in **Darfur**.

Sudanese columnist Mekki al-Maghrabi said Hilal's appointment was worth the political risk for the ruling National Congress Party, even if he might be tried by the world court. As a tribal elder, Hilal had the kind of clout that was needed to speak to affected tribes in **Darfur** and resolve the conflict.

"The transfer of a tribal leader to a political post is a good step which will open the door to more settlements (of disputes)," Maghrabi said.

DDR Extends Tractors to South Kordofan State (Sudan Vision)

By: Alsammani Awadallah, Commissioner to North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, Dr. Sulafaddin Saleh, stated that the Commission is doing its utmost to secure decent living for all demobilized individuals.

Addressing the occasion celebrating handover of the second batch of tractors extended by the Commission to South Kordofan State, Saleh affirmed that the first 32 Agrarian tractors were delivered to the State with their complete accessories. He further noted that the targeted individuals were trained on handling those tractors as well as agricultural cooperatives operation.

For his part, State Deputy Governor reiterated his government support to all projects implemented by DDRRC, adding that cooperatives established by the Commission were well recommended by both Sudan Army and SPLA demobilized soldiers.

GoSS

El Hilu is appointed as Deputy Secretary General of Sudan's SPLM (ST)

January 20, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, (SPLM) appointed one of its leading members Abdel Aziz El Hilu as deputy Secretary General of the party.

Salva Kiir Mayadrit, who is also the First Vice President and the president of southern Sudan government issued the decree of designation on January 13.

Abdel Aziz Adam El Hilu has return recently to Sudan after two years of voluntary exile in the USA. He is a close ally of the SPLM Secretary General, Pagan Amum who is appointed as Cabinet affairs minister at the end of the last year.

The decree said that El Hilu is appointed as "SPLM deputy secretary general for organizational affairs with effect from 13th January 2008."

According to the decree he "shall be answerable to the SPLM secretary General and shall perform the following functions:"

Coordinate and oversee the organizational work of the SPLM Southern and Northern sectors and Diaspora. Coordinate and oversee the SPLM programmes of cadres training and development. Oversee the activities of the SPLM General secretariat. Act as SPLM secretary General in the absence of the SPLM secretary general. Perform any other functions or duties that may be assigned to him by the SPLM chairman or SPLM secretary general.

In a separate decree Salva Kiir also appointed El Hilu as chairperson of the Task Force and SPLM Special Envoy on Darfur. He replaces Reverend Clement Janda.

The decree said that this appointment means to reenergize the SPLM role in the resolution of Darfur crisis. The origins of El Hilu who represents the Nuba Mountains, are from Darfur. Edward Lino and Yasir Arman are also reappointed members of Darfur task force.

(ST)

South Sudan forum says opposed to confederation (ST)

January 20, 2008 (KHARTOUM) – A Southern Sudanese party has rejected calls for confederation as system of rule for the whole country launched by the deputy chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

Malik Agar Eyre, Deputy Chairman of the SPLM and governor of Southern Blue Nile State, proposed the adoption of confederal system for the whole Sudan during the celebrations of the third anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). A few days after the Secretary for foreign relations of the NCP, Mustafa Osman Ismail said ready to discuss the proposal.

The South Sudan Democratic Forum expressed in a press statement issued on Sunday its opposition to the adoption of Confederation before the 2011 referendum. The forum said this proposal is against the interest of southern Sudan people and the right of self determination "earned with their blood for the first time in their history."

"This proposal is meant to undermine the right to self-determination for the people of South Sudan and its implementation in an internationally supervised referendum in the year 2011." The SSDF said.

The SSDF said it would be ready to discuss with the northern parties a permanent constitutional system including confederation if the South Sudan vote for the unity of Sudan under 2011 referendum.

The opposition party warned that "No party or leader, however much they think of themselves, have the right to circumvent the exercise of the referendum on Self-Determination under the CPA."

(ST)

Darfur

Watchdog urges Turkey to pressurize Sudan president on Darfur (ST)

January 20, 2008 (NEW YORK) – When Sudanese President Omar El Bashir arrives in Ankara on January 21 for a state visit, the Turkish government should publicly urge him to end the ongoing atrocities in Darfur, Human Rights Watch said today in a letter to the Turkish government.

“It’s surprising that the Turkish government has chosen to honor a foreign leader responsible for massive human rights violations,” said Georgette Gagnon, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “The Turkish authorities should affirm their commitment to human rights principles by calling on Bashir to end the atrocities in Darfur.”

This will be the Sudanese president’s first official visit to Turkey in more than two decades, and he will be greeted with a full military ceremony during the state visit.

Human Rights Watch called on the Turkish government to use the opportunity to press the Sudanese leader to end the atrocities and abuses continuing in Darfur.

In particular, Turkish President Abdullah Gül should insist that Bashir immediately end direct or indiscriminate attacks on civilians, take effective steps to rein in and disarm the “Janjaweed” militia, and proactively facilitate rapid deployment of the hybrid peacekeeping force. Sudan’s president must also ensure those responsible for past and continuing crimes are brought to account.

(HRW)