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(By Public Information Office)

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IN THE NEWS TODAY:➤ **UN/ Agencies**

- UN peacekeeping chief, Sudanese officials set for talks on Darfur force (UN)

➤ **GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)**

- Sudan to convene peaceful coexistence conferences to settle border clashes (ST)
- Presidential decree on five working days - Sunday-Thursday (AlSahafa)
- NCP, SPLM to agree soon on elections law (AlSahafa)
- Chiefs, SAF, SPLAS meet to quell border tension (The Citizen)
- Sudan says hopeful for balanced relations with US (ST)
- Sudan feeling the heat on the appointment of a Janjaweed leader (ST)
- Sudan neighboring countries (Egypt, Libya, Eritrea, Chad) meet joint mediation 1st February to discuss unifying Darfur rebel groups (AlRai AlAam)
- PROFILE: Musa Hilal from a convicted felon to a government official (ST)
- Sudan to provide free healthcare for under-fives (ST)
- Sudanese president defends appointment of suspected militia leader to government (AP)

➤ **GoSS**

- Salva Kiir designates 36 members committee to prepare SPLM convention (ST)
- Southern Sudan parties reject call for confederation (Sudan Vision, Khartoum Monitor)

➤ Darfur

- Darfur rebels claim downing Sudanese military aircraft (ST)
- Turkey to provide support to help solve Darfur issue in Sudan (Xinhua)

Highlights

UN/ Agencies

UN peacekeeping chief, Sudanese officials set for talks on Darfur force (UN)

21 January 2008 – The head of United Nations peacekeeping is due to arrive in Sudan today for talks with senior Government officials on issues relating to the deployment of the joint UN-African Union Mission in Darfur, the war-wracked region in the country's west.

Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno is expected to reach the capital, Khartoum, today to begin a four-day visit, UN spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters.

Assistant Secretary-General Jane Holl Lute is already in the African country, having visited all three states in Darfur since arriving on Friday. She returned to Khartoum today for a meeting with Mutrif Siddiq, the Undersecretary at the Sudanese Foreign Affairs Ministry.

While in Darfur, Ms. Holl Lute visited camps housing internally displaced persons (IDPs), met local Government officials and held discussions with the military and civilian leadership of the new peacekeeping operation – known as **UNAMID** – including the AU/UN Joint Special Representative Rodolphe Adada.

Although the mission is now in operation in Darfur, many outstanding issues between it and the Government remain.

UNAMID Force Commander Gen. Martin Luther Agwai and the mission's Police Commissioner Maj.-Gen. Mike Fryer gave detailed briefings about the work of the mission to the Sudanese armed forces, police and state security service at a meeting over the weekend in Khartoum.

The mission described that gathering “as an important confidence-building meeting,” noting that Maj.-Gen. Fryer emphasized the need to intensify community policing, fight gender-based violence and improve cooperation between the UNAMID police force and local officers.

UNAMID is being deployed to try to quell nearly five years of violent clashes between rebels, Government forces and allied militia known as the Janjaweed. More than 200,000 people have been killed across the vast and arid region since 2003 and at least 2.2 million others have been displaced.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Sudan to convene peaceful coexistence conferences to settle border clashes (ST)

January 21, 2008 (HEGLIG, southern Kordufan) – It was agreed today to hold peaceful coexistence conferences in Sudan's North – South border areas in order to settle frictions between cattle-herders and southern Sudan army.

The clashes between the southern Sudan army and the northern nomadic Misseriya tribe reignited fears for the fragile peace agreement that also allows southerners to hold a referendum on independence in 2011.

Delegations from the federal government and three states governments besides officials from the two Sudanese armies as well as traditional leaders agreed Monday to convene a conference on peaceful coexistence between the states of southern Kordufan and northern Bhar El-Ghazal on February 21, 2008 and to hold another conference on February 30 between the states of southern Kordufan and Unity state.

This meeting was commissioned by the Sudanese presidency in the framework of the CPA implementation and peace-building process in the country. Further its aims to meet the challenges facing the redeployment of troops and border demarcation as well as providing safe movement of citizens between the various States, especially after the recent clashes in the border between South Kordufan and northern Bahr el Ghazal.

Sudan's First Vice-President and President of southern Sudan government, Salva Kiir on Sunday said that the Misseriya, who traditionally travel south for dry season cattle grazing, refuse to disarm. He further indicated that like other southern tribes, the nomads could only cross into the south unarmed.

During the civil war, successive northern governments armed tribes including the Misseriya to wage war in south Sudan. Many were not disarmed following the peace deal.

Addressing Sunday meeting on peaceful coexistence in the North South border areas, Sudan's Cabinet Affairs Minister and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Secretary General, Pagan Amum, urged joint effort to overcome challenges facing the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Pagan pointed out that discussions on troop withdrawal must take place in the Joint Defence Board in accordance with the directive of the Sudanese presidency meeting related to troops' redeployment in a way to ensure peace and rebuild confidence between the forces

He stressed that it is up to the Boundary Commission to conduct border demarcation. He added that this body had covered the theoretical level. He said that the government will work to create conducive atmosphere for the team to conduct its task.

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.

He said that the administration the interests of the citizens, the unhindered movement of cattle herders, merchants or passengers, besides securing the movement of goods is the responsibility of the Federal Government and concerned state governments in order to ensure the security for all.

He urged troops from the two sides to adopt openness and develop new plans based on building trust between the forces. Further, he called upon the three governors and their governments to agree on a programme of case management through bilateral meetings and conventions.

Pagan affirmed that the Government of National Unity and the Government of South Sudan work to make the border areas places of peaceful coexistence through the implementation of various development projects.

The meeting was attended by the Minister of Federal Government Abdel-Baset Mardi, State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and member of the six-member committee Ahmed Mohamed Haroun, General Esmat Abdel Rahman, Chairman of the Joint Staff, members of the Joint Defense Board, governors of Unity, Southern Kordufan and northern Bahr el-Ghazal, and members of security commissions together with a number of the traditional administration leaders in the three states

(ST)

Presidential decree on five working days - Sunday-Thursday (AlSahafa)

President al Bashir has issued a presidential decree reducing the working days from six to five days a week (Sunday-Thursday). The new policy will be effective starting from Saturday 26 January.

NCP, SPLM to agree soon on elections law (AlSahafa)

The NCP leader Ibrahim Ghandoor said that his party and the SPLM have agreed on most of the points in regard to the elections law. He expects the two parties to reach a final agreement on the bill very soon.

Chiefs, SAF, SPLAS meet to quell border tension (The Citizen)

The defence ministers and chiefs yesterday converged at the border areas to defuse mounting border and tribal tensions. President Omer al Bashir and FVP Salva Kiir ordered the summit by their respective defence chiefs, following the clashes in the region in December and early January, which left dozens dead.

“The agenda is to discuss the security situation on the ground,” SPLA Deputy chief of staff Hoth Mai said. “The summit is about telling the population how to move (across the border) and try to avoid fighting one another.”

Sudan says hopeful for balanced relations with US (ST)

January 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese official said today that his country is hopeful to have balanced relations but he blamed Washington for not showing enthusiasm to resolve outstanding issues.

Ali Karti, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Monday reaffirmed Sudan's desire to have balanced relationship with the United States based on mutual respect. However he added that Washington hinders efforts to reach common understandings on resolving the outstanding problems between the two countries

According to the official SUNA, Karti made this statement following a meeting with UN academic delegation. It didn't provide further details about the goal of the visit or their academic institutions.

Former Sudanese foreign minister and presidential adviser, Mustafa Osman Ismail said yesterday that his government will not normalize relations with Washington "for free".

"Every concession in our end should be met with a similar concession from the US side" Ismail told reporters after his meeting with the US chargé d'affaires in Khartoum Alberto Fernandez.

Nonetheles the US officials have repeatedly told Sudan that any improvement in bilateral relations, or easing of US sanctions on Sudan, depends on the Khartoum government's follow-through with peacekeeping commitments for Darfur.

Karti said he briefed the visiting delegation about the developments in the peace process in the Sudan, especially the government's efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement in Darfur, besides the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

He commended the role played by civil society organizations and popular delegations in strengthening relations between peoples.

Further, he pointed out that the delegation got acquainted during its visit to Darfur with real information on the situation in the region and expressed surprise at what caused the western media on Sudan.

The minister pointed out that he sensed a genuine will of the delegation to know the facts of what happens in the Sudan away from the effects of "the western media prejudiced against Sudan," the official news agency reported.

(ST)

Sudan feeling the heat on the appointment of a Janjaweed leader (ST)

By Wasil Ali, January 21, 2008 (ANKARA) — The Sudanese president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir defended his choice of a **Musa Hilal** a notorious Janjaweed leader, as government adviser last week.

"Mr. Hilal himself is a Sudanese citizen. He has a very influential personality in Darfur. He has contributed greatly to stability and security in the region," Bashir told a joint news conference with Turkish President Abdullah Gul.

The leader of Arab tribes in Darfur told Miraya FM last week that he will assume his new responsibilities soon after the oath taking ceremonies.

Hilal has been named by numerous eyewitnesses in Darfur as leading terror campaign against the African tribes in the war ravaged region.

The United States, the European Union and rights groups are unhappy with Bashir's visit, though Turkey insists it will press home the West's message that Sudan needs to work towards resolving the Darfur crisis.

The Sudanese president denied that Hilal was involved in any wrongdoings in Darfur and alluded to rebels being behind the massacres in the war ravaged region.

"In Sudan we don't think the claims against Hilal are true. We absolutely do not believe them. The people who really commit murders in Darfur are receiving help from Europe and others."

(ST)

Some information for this report are provided by Reuters

Sudan neighboring countries (Egypt, Libya, Eritrea, Chad) meet joint mediation 1st February to discuss unifying Darfur rebel groups (AIRai AIAam)

Sudan four neighboring countries (Egypt, Eritrea, Libya and Chad) are expected to meet on the 1st of February with UN-AU joint mediation team to discuss ways and means for unifying the Darfur rebel groups. The will likely be held in N'djamena.

PROFILE: Musa Hilal from a convicted felon to a government official (ST)

- ▶ Born in 1961, married to three women with 13 kids and leader of Arab Mahameed clan in Darfur.
- ▶ His father has relocated the tribe to the Amu region in 1976 after he acquired the land (originally owned by Africans) through forgery and bribing a local official.
- ▶ Hilal was arrested in 1997 for killing 17 people from African tribes but was not convicted.
- ▶ He was convicted in 1998 for leading armed robbery against the Central Bank of Nyala in which one policeman was killed.
- ▶ Hilal was transferred to Kober prison under tight security then to Medani prison then to the coastal Sawakin prison in Eastern Sudan and back again to Kober.
- ▶ In 2003 and with the breakout of the Darfur conflict the Sudanese government freed Hilal from prison to help crush the armed rebellion. It is believed that Sudan's First Vice President Ali Osman Taha and Chief of the Armed Force Abdullah Safi Al-Nur secured his release.
- ▶ Some reports indicated that Mubarak Al-Fadil, leader of the opposition Umma reform party, accompanied the notorious Jinjaweed leader Musa Hilal in 2004 to meet

with the US Charge d'affaires in Khartoum. During the meeting, thought to have been videotaped, Hilal provided detailed information on Khartoum's support of the Jinjaweed militias in Darfur.

- ▶ In 2004 the US State Department designated Musa Hilal as one of the top Jinjaweed leaders running a terror campaign in Darfur against the African population.
- ▶ Numerous eyewitnesses from Darfur refugees named Hilal as calling for killing the African natives in the region.
- ▶ In 2005 Musa Hilal told HRW that he recruited people from Arab tribes on behalf of Sudan's Central government to fight the Darfur rebels but denied any wrongdoings.
- ▶ On April 2006 the UN Security Council imposed financial and travel ban against Hilal for obstructing peace in Darfur. The US president George Bush issued an executive order enforcing similar sanctions on them.
- ▶ In 2006 Hilal threatened to fight anyone trying to handing him over to an international court.
- ▶ On February 2007 Hilal was named in the filings made by the ICC prosecutor as making a speech in July 2003, which was characterized as "racist". However he was not named as a war crime suspect. "Hilal was enthusiastic about unifying to fight the enemy and characterized the conflict as a holy war" the ICC prosecutor said in the document he submitted to the judges.
- ▶ On 18 January 2008, the Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir appointed Musa Hilal as a special advisor for the Ministry of Federal Affairs in Sudan.

(ST)

Sudan to provide free healthcare for under-fives (ST)

January 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Rising oil revenues mean Sudan will give free healthcare to children under five and waive fees for caesarean sections from Feb. 1 in a move that will cost \$20 million a year, a senior health official said on Monday.

"After decades of north-south civil war ended in 2005, oil revenues have increased and the economy has boomed despite conflict in Darfur.

"This is a long-term plan to make all medication, treatment and investigations free ... for this vulnerable group of children under five," health ministry under-secretary Kamal Abdel Gadir told Reuters.

Many in Sudan complain that three years on they have seen little peace dividend and even less of the oil revenues Sudan receives from its output of more than half a million barrels per day. The move will help thousands of families who struggle, beg and borrow to pay for expensive healthcare.

The policy will also apply to emergency and elective caesarean sections, which costs on average \$50 in government hospitals.

According to the World Bank, per capita income in Sudan is \$650 year.

Abdel Gadir said the money would come from the central health budget and arose from the increase in oil revenues following the 2005 peace deal.

"We need to bear the burden of the citizens on contributing to their services," he said, adding that new hospitals were being built and existing ones were being renovated.

In Khartoum local and central government taxes are heavy and services such as electricity, healthcare and water are expensive for Sudanese.

The reforms began in part last year when emergency caesarean operations were made free. Health Minister Tabitha Botros from the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), appointed after the deal, was previously a nurse in Britain's free National Health Service.

The SPLM pledged to provide services for Sudanese after the war although south Sudan has seen slow progress.

Millions in Sudan's west and south still depend on foreign aid as the nation struggles to emerge from decades of conflict.

(Reuters)

Sudanese president defends appointment of suspected militia leader to government (AP)

Source: English General News Date: January 21, 2008, ANKARA, Turkey_ **Sudan's** president defended the appointment of a suspected militia leader accused of atrocities in the **Darfur** region to a senior government position.

"He is an influential figure in **Darfur**. His leadership has contributed to stability and security," President Omar al-Bashir said of Musa Hilal, who is accused of having led the so-called janjaweed militias and was named adviser to **Sudan's** Ministry of Federal Affairs.

"We think the accusations against him are untrue. We certainly do not believe them. Those who commit murders in **Darfur** right now are those who receive support from Europe," al-Bashir said during a joint news conference Monday with his Turkish counterpart, Abdullah Gul.

It was unclear whom al-Bashir was referring to, but **Sudanese** rebel leader Abdulwahid Elnur lives in exile in Paris, and other rebel leaders are also thought to be based in Europe.

Sudan's Federal Affairs Minister Abdelbasit Sabderat told The Associated Press by telephone on Monday that "Mr. Hilal will be handling tribal affairs throughout the **Sudan**," and that **Darfur** would not be the adviser's only focus.

Hilal is the leader of the Mahamid, a clan belonging to the powerful Rezeigat tribe of nomad Arabs in **Darfur**. He is accused of having led the proxy-militia raised by the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum to fight **Darfur's** ethnic African rebels. The government denies it is backing the group.

More than 200,000 people have died in **Darfur** and 2.5 million have been chased to refugee camps since 2003, when rebels took up arms against the Arab-dominated **Sudanese** government, accusing it of discrimination.

The U.N. Security Council imposed travel and financial sanctions against Hilal and three others in April 2006 for his alleged role in what U.S. President George W. Bush has called a "genocide."

Hilal has denied any wrongdoing, stating in a 2004 video interview with New York-based Human Rights Watch that he always acted on orders and under Khartoum's control.

Gul on Monday called on "everyone to actively work to end the human tragedy in **Darfur**."

A day earlier, Human Rights Watch criticized al-Bashir's visit and called on Turkish leaders to press him to end bloodshed and abuses in **Darfur**.

"It's surprising that the Turkish government has chosen to honor a foreign leader responsible for massive human rights violations," said Georgette Gagnon, the international rights group's Africa director. "The Turkish authorities should affirm their commitment to human rights principles by calling on Bashir to end the atrocities in **Darfur**."

Under heavy international pressure, al-Bashir agreed in June to a hybrid U.N.-African Union peacekeeping force for **Darfur**. But U.N. officials say his government has thrown up numerous bureaucratic obstacles to the deployment and has tried to limit its powers.

The **Sudanese** leader was invited to Turkey as part of the government's aim to expand ties with African nations.

Al-Bashir was scheduled to meet Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other Turkish officials during his three-day stay. He will also visit Istanbul for talks with members of Turkey's business community.

GoSS

Salva Kiir designates 36 members committee to prepare SPLM convention (ST)

January 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan People's Liberation Movement yesterday has announced the formation of the committee charged with the organisation of the Second Convention of the party.

The First Vice President, Southern Sudan government president and chairman of the SPLM, Salva Kiir Mayadrit, designated a 36 member committee headed by James Wani Egga, the speaker of the southern Sudan parliament as chairman, and Abdelaziz

El-Hilu as deputy chairman of the committee to prepare for the second conference of the party.

Below the names of the appointed members of the Convention organizing committee:

1. James Wani Egga, Chairman
2. Abdel Aziz Adam El Hilu, Deputy Chairman.
3. Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior, Member.
4. Mark Nyipuocho, Member.
5. Taban Deng Gai, Member.
6. Wathig Kameir, Member.
7. Kom Kom Geng, Member.
8. Aliosio Emor Ojetuk, Member.
9. Jemma Nunu Kumba, Member.
10. Martin Majut Yak, Member.
11. Twenty six (26) members as representatives of 25 states of Sudan and Abyei Area to be recommended by the committee to the SPLM chairman for approval. In recommending these names due consideration shall be given to gender and regional balances.
12. Six members as representatives of the SPLM members in Diaspora from various continents.

Any other member that may be co-opted by the committee on ad-hoc basis.

The SPLM secretary general, the two deputies' secretary general and the SPLM treasurer shall be ex officio members of the committee.

The committee shall undertake the following task:

- ▶ Preparing and organizing the SPLM Convention in the first quarter of 2008, but not later than may 2008.
- ▶ Proposing mechanisms and criteria for participation and representation in the convention based on the SPLM's vision programmes and priorities.
- ▶ Prioritizing all documents that are to be presented to the convention for deliberation or adoption by the convention.
- ▶ Proposing criteria for invitation of observers representing other national, regional and international political organizations.
- ▶ Preparing its own budget to be presented to the SPLM IPB for approval.
- ▶ Mobilizing the necessary resources for the convention and to ensure such resources

are used transparently and in accordance with the SPLM financial regulation, 2006.

- ▶ Developing its own regulations for conduct of its business.
- ▶ Performing any other functions or duties that may be assigned to it by the SPLM chairman.

In undertaking the above task, the committee shall work in close cooperation with the SPLM General secretariat and shall be guided by the resolution and decisions of the Interim national council and Interim political Bureau, the decree said.

(ST)

Southern Sudan parties reject call for confederation (Sudan Vision, Khartoum Monitor)

South Sudan Parties Parliamentary Group has rejected the proposition launched by the Deputy Leader of SPLM and Governor of the Blue Nile State for the adoption of a confederate system in Sudan.

The group dismissed the proposition as reneging on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and conflicts with it particularly as regards the South Sudan right of self-determination.

The group said it believes the trend for con-federation is finding support as it has been launched by Agar who is the deputy leader of SPLM and holder of a constitutional post.

In this connection, the group cited the statement of the presidential adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail who said NCP does not object to discussing the federal system if proposed by SPLM.

At a press conference held yesterday, the head of the group, Peter Abdurrahman Sule, described Agar's call as unfortunate time-wise. He added that the time is now for the implementation of the CPA to the letter and spirit and the democratic transformation. Sule said the call is rejected by Southerners as it is opposed to the right of self-determination which would lead to deliberate unity or separation. He said confederation is intended for a lasting unity.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Southern Parliamentary Group expressed its unchanged position on CPA, adding that it can understand SPLM call for conducting dialogue on the system of governance in North Sudan without prejudicing the right of self-determination for South Sudan.

Meanwhile, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Lam Akol was quoted by Akhbar Al Youm Arabic daily as saying that confederation between the North and South is meaningless because the two are parts of one state, adding that this idea was rejected during the peace negotiations

Darfur

Darfur rebels claim downing Sudanese military aircraft (ST)

January 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Darfur rebels said on Monday they had shot down a government plane bombing their areas in West Darfur, but Sudan's army denied the claim, the first from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) this year.

JEM has emerged as the most powerful threat to the government after almost five years of fighting which experts estimate has killed 200,000 people, but its latest claim could not be independently verified.

"It bombed our areas in Jabel Moun and our defence forces shot it down, it was a MiG-29," JEM commander Abdel Aiz el-Nur Ashr told Reuters from the West Darfur region. He said the aircraft crashed in a mountainous area in North Darfur between the towns of el-Fasher and Kebkabiya.

An army spokesman said the news was "utterly untrue".

"All our planes are in their hangars," he said.

Ashr also named four people killed and one injured by bombing in Sureif Judad in West Darfur on Jan. 12 and said another four were injured and one killed in bombing on Jan. 13 near Zalengei town.

Mostly non-Arab rebels took up arms in Darfur in early 2003 accusing central government of neglect. Khartoum mobilised militias known as Janjaweed to quell the rebellion and who now stand accused of atrocities.

Divisions among rebel factions have stymied efforts to end the fighting. From two groups, the insurgents split into more than a dozen factions with individuals often changing loyalties.

On Monday, three members of Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) founder and chairman Abdel Wahed Mohamed el-Nur's movement said they were resigning. They accused Nur of dictatorial leadership and criticised the tribalism that has plagued the rebels.

"We joined the insurgents because we were marginalised but now Abdel Wahed has marginalised us within the movement," SLM humanitarian coordinator Mohamed Abdel Karim told Reuters, adding that two SLM members from the Middle East office were with him.

Nur lives in Paris and has specified tough conditions to join any peace talks. He enjoys popular support among the 2 million people who fled their homes in Darfur and are now forced to live in miserable camps.

(Reuters)

Turkey to provide support to help solve Darfur issue in Sudan (Xinhua)

Source: Xinhua Date: January 21, 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gul said on Monday that Turkey would continue to provide support to help solve **Sudan's Darfur** issue.

Gul made the remarks during a joint press conference with visiting **Sudanese** President Omer al-Bashir after a tete-a-tete meeting.

Turkey hoped that problems of **Sudan** would be solved within the framework of the country's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and through peace and dialogue, said Gul.

"Turkey supports UN Security Council's resolutions and implementations on this matter," said Gul, calling on all relevant parties to do their best to contribute to the solutions of the **Darfur** problem.

For his part, al-Bashir said that he appreciated Turkey's aid to the people in **Darfur** after Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to the province.

"**Darfur** has become a safe region and security was settled in the south of the country," said al-Bashir.

Touching on bilateral relations between Turkey and **Sudan**, al- Bashir said that political and commercial relations between the two countries have been boosted in recent years, adding that there were great opportunities for investors in the areas of oil, natural gas, mining, construction and agriculture in **Sudan**.

The **Sudanese** president arrived in Ankara early in the day on an three-day official visit.