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(By UNMIS Public Information Office)

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Highlights:

Annan fails to convince Sudan to accept UN Darfur force

(Reuters/ST, the local press – 3rd Jul. Banjul) U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Sunday failed to persuade Sudanese leader Omar Hassan al-Bashir to allow a U.N. force into Darfur, but said he still expected it to be deployed eventually.

Annan met Bashir on the fringes of an African Union summit where he called the Darfur crisis "one of the worst nightmares in recent history". He has previously described Bashir's opposition to the U.N. force as "incomprehensible".

At a news conference later he said the United Nations would work with the AU to strengthen its under-resourced 7,000-strong force in Sudan's western region and had asked the summit to extend its mandate for at least three more months.

Referring to his meeting with Bashir, Annan said: "I of course continued to press for the eventual deployment for a U.N. force in Darfur and we agreed that dialogue had to continue."

He added: "President Bashir has indicated that in the world of politics things change. We hear 'never' and ... yet in time it does come round and so I am still expecting that in time there will be a U.N. peacekeeping force deployed in Darfur."

The summit in Gambia's steamy seaside capital has been dominated by the intractable Darfur crisis and rising tension in Somalia after Islamist forces conquered Mogadishu.

The AU had wanted to pull its force out of Darfur on September 30 and have it replaced by U.N. troops but a meeting held between Secretary-General Annan and President Bashir agreed to back an extension of the African Union mandate in Darfur for a further 3 months until up to the end of this year.

The United Nations Secretary-General also said that he has received assurances from President Bashir to present to the United Nations the government's plan for Darfur for the next six months

They cannot be deployed without Bashir's consent but diplomats say little pressure can be brought to bear on him.

Western powers, the U.N. and analysts all say the crisis, in which 2.5 million people have been driven from their homes into squalid camps, can only be stopped by a strong U.N. force.

Khartoum says the deployment would be a Western invasion, attracting Islamic militants and creating an Iraq-like quagmire.

Annan said a conference would be held in Brussels on July 18 to seek support for the AU force and Bashir would present a plan for the next six months by the end of July.

Annan said a May 5 peace deal signed by Khartoum and one rebel group must be implemented immediately.

Defence and Interior ministers back Bashir's rejection to deployment of international troops to Darfur

(The local press – 3rd Jul. Khartoum) In a meeting with editors-in-chief of local papers in Khartoum yesterday, the Minister of Defence said that the SAF is fully behind their Commander-in-Chief and President of the Republic, Field-Marshal Omar el-Bashir, in his position against the deployment of international forces in Darfur.

The minister pointed out that the country is being targeted and this requires reconciliation and that the people forget their differences and partisan views and unite against the international forces.

“All experiences of an international intervention, the last of which is the Iraq example, shows what can happen in our country should we allow these forces in,” warns the defence minister.

“The President of the Republic has expressed his rejection and his words were clear. The dimensions are well-defined. No honourable nation can accept this new form of colonialism,” he added.

The chief of intelligence who also attended the conference said that the international community is dealing with the issue as if the deployment of international troops to Darfur is a goal in itself and purposefully ignores the other options available.

This, he adds, is a signal that there are some hidden agenda and goals.

He further pointed out that the government proposed a number of options which include the formation of a joint force between the government and the rebel forces of Darfur to provide camp security.

The minister pointed out that the government does not see the United Nations as an enemy since Sudan is a member of the international body but, he adds, government sovereignty over all the territories of Sudan must be respected.

He described the President's rejection to the deployment of international forces to Darfur as a source of pride to the nation. He added that the issue could be resolved through dialogue but should the United Nations insist on its position then the state has said its word.

On his part, the Minister of the Interior said he does not rule out the possibility that the “diplomatic battle between the government in Sudan and the international community may turn military” [*reference to the possible deployment of United Nations troops to Darfur*].

On the other hand, the Minister of State for Information pointed out to the role of the press in mobilising public opinion against such an intervention.

SLM- Minnawi welcomes UN Pronk call to amend Darfur deal

(*Sudan Tribune* – 3rd Jul. **Paris**) The main rebel group in Darfur that signed the DPA with the Sudanese government has welcomed SRSG Pronk’s recent statements for amendments to the agreement in order to accommodate the demands of the holdout rebel groups.

SLM-Minnawi praised a paper written by the UN envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk in which he admitted the necessity to amend the African Union mediated Darfur Peace Agreement to meet key rebel demands to save the foundering agreement.

The faction’s spokesperson, Esam Edin al-Haj, renewed the demand for a suspension of the Abuja deal.

He urged the international community to support the SRSG’s position saying the DPA has provoked a deterioration of the security situation in the region. He also appealed the international community to protect civilians against attacks.

Government rejects SRSG Pronk’s statements on amending the DPA

(*AlAdwhaa* – 3rd Jul. **Khartoum**) The signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (the Sudan government and the SLM faction led by Mr. Minnawi) have expressed similar views on recent statements attributed to SRSG Jan Pronk calling for amendments to the DPA.

While government went public in its rejection of the SRSG’s statement, the SLM expressed some reserve and only described the statements as a “political mistake and an about-turn in the United Nations position on the issue.

Dr. Amin Ahmed Omar insisted that the DPA will not be amended and that Mr. Pronk’s statements are meaningless and totally contradictory to his statements in Abuja.

“The agreement will never be amended be it from a request by Mr. Pronk or any other person,” he added.

On the other hand, the SLM’s Mahmoud Hussein, said that they are committed to the implementation of the DPA and see Pronk’s statement as an attempt at accommodating AbdelWahid and Khalil into the agreement.

African Union says Pronk's statements are personal

(*AllIntibaha* – 3rd Jul. **Khartoum**) African Union Spokesperson Nouredine Mezni has described recent statements on SRSG Pronk's personal blog on the internet calling for amendments to the DPA as Mr. Pronk's personal views broadcast on his personal website.

Mezni pointed out that there is no alternative to the implementation of the DPA that came as a middle-ground that forms an appropriate and practical framework for the realisation of peace in Darfur.

The African Union spokesperson further pointed out that Mr. Pronk followed the Abuja talks right from its beginning until agreement was reached and was among the first people to go to Darfur to advocate for the agreement.

Pronk denies having called for amendments to the DPA

(*The local press in English and Arabic* – 3rd Jul. **Khartoum**) SRSG Jan Pronk issued a statement* yesterday denying earlier reports that he had recommended amendments to the DPA.

The SRSG pointed out that any annexure to the DPA should only be recommended through the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue conference.

Pronk further added that the deployment of international troops to Darfur only comes as a third strategic priority. He added however that those forces would only be deployed with the consent of the Sudan government.

The SRSG called for more pressures on AbdelWahid to come on board.

The SRSG proposed that to consolidate the DPA, the agreement has to be adhered to, efforts should be made to advocate for the agreement, the will to implement must be available, there should be sincere security guarantees from the state, a clear plan for disarmament of the Janjaweed must be drawn, more funds must be committed for compensation and reconstruction of the villages where the IDPs and refugees escaped from must be clearly carried out.

** The story ends with a full text of the statement attributed to Mr. Pronk.*

UN peacekeepers divide Sudanese government partners

(*Sudan Tribune* – 2nd Jul. **Khartoum**) Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's opposition to the deployment of UN peacekeepers to the troubled western region of Darfur has deeply divided the government of National Unity formed after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement last year.

First Vice President Salva Kiir, who heads the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) which waged a deadly two-decade war against government troops in the south

that ended with the January 2005 deal, sharply distanced himself from Bashir by calling on the Security Council to deploy the UN force.

Before signing up to a peace agreement that speaks of autonomy for the south and adjacent disputed areas only, the SPLM used to champion the rights of all Sudan's "marginalised minorities", including the myriad non-Arab groups of the Darfur and the eastern Beja, as well as southern Christians and animists.

A first rebellion by ethnic minorities in Darfur, which ended with a 1989 peace conference, was backed by the SPLM. "The position of the SPLM is obvious and has no problem with the deployment of international forces in Darfur," Kiir told a rally in the main southern city of Juba on Friday.

"We have previously expressed our agreement to the deployment of those forces in accordance with the (2005) agreement," he said, referring to an existing UN force deployed in the south under the CPA. "We do not see any problem in their presence in Darfur, as, since entering south Sudan, they have not committed any violation and they have remained committed to all provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

"We have notified the (ruling) National Congress Party of our agreement," he added in reference to the president's northern, Islamist-dominated ruling party.

Under the 2005 accord, Beshir's ruling party shares power in Khartoum with the former rebels and other smaller factions on the basis of a formula set out in the deal.

But the president, who originally came to power in an Islamist-backed military coup in 1989, has so far strongly resisted Western plans for a Nato-backed UN force to deploy to Darfur.

The largest Darfur rebel faction hailed the support from the southern former rebels for a more robust peacekeeping force than the existing 7 000-strong African Union contingent that has struggled to patrol a vast desert region the size of France.

"Yes, as Sudanese, we are for the sovereignty of the country," said Abdel Karim al-Sheikh, envoy of the mainstream faction of the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). "But we support the deployment of international forces to help implement the Darfur peace agreement provisions related to protecting civilians," he told the Khartoum daily Akhbar al-Youm.