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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

United Nations

Pronk statement unfortunate

(*Sudan Vision* – 16th Jul. **Khartoum**) The government has expressed amazement at the statements by SRSJ Jan Pronk claiming that government has not yet handed over to the African Union its plans for the disarmament of the Janjaweed.

President Bashir's Representative to the Darfur States, Lt. Gen. Mohamed el-Dabi, said that the government has indeed handed over the said plan to the African Union mission in Khartoum with a copy sent to the Commander of the African Union forces in el-Fasher.

El-Dabi said that the government is ready to fully implement the plan.

He described the SRSJ's statement as "unfortunate" and pointed out that the United Nations has nothing to do with the plan as the African Union is the party following up the matter.

United Nations says 600,000 people in Darfur do not have access to humanitarian assistance

(*AlAyaam* – 16th Jul.) The United Nations has announced an increase in the number of people affected by the war in Darfur to 3.6 million and says more than 600,000 of these affected populations have no access to humanitarian assistance.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the security situation has worsened much since January 2006 and has led to the displacement or re-displacement of 250,000 people.

He pointed out that the average number of beneficiaries of food aid in Darfur is 2.2 million while vulnerable groups have peaked 3.6 million.

In his report for March to June 2006, the Secretary-General further pointed out that agencies face difficulties in movement in Darfur and that this has minimised access to more than 600,000 people affected by the fighting.

He also said that looting of assets for humanitarian operations have also had a toll on operations in a number of regions.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations further pointed out that NGOs still face delays in access to entry and exit visas and travel permits and licence to operate and move in Darfur.

He also said that United Nations agencies are still barred from entering the whole of North Darfur.

On funding, the Secretary-General said that funding for humanitarian programs is still lagging behind despite the recent generous humanitarian contributions.

Donors, he added, have availed only 39% of the humanitarian needs for Sudan and this means there is a deficit of 939 million dollars.

Annan warned that a drop in humanitarian supplies in September and October will affect millions in all parts of Sudan if no pre-emptive measures are taken earlier.

UN Annan to lead conference on Darfur in Brussels

(*Agence France-Presse* – 14th Jul. **Brussels**) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan will lead an international conference in Brussels next week on funding the cash-strapped peacekeeping mission in Sudan's Darfur region, EU officials said Friday.

The meeting in Brussels on Tuesday, which will involve 72 delegations, will discuss financial support for the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which could run out of funds as soon as next month.

"The international community's goal is to ensure that AMIS can function at its current level until the end of the year," said an EU diplomat.

On Thursday, EU Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel said AMIS, which is likely to be replaced by a United Nations mission, could continue to operate until mid-August or early September.

"After that, we just don't have enough money," he said.

AU leaders agreed at a summit in Gambia early this month to extend their peacekeeping force until the end of the year to allow the UN to finalise its preparations to deploy in the vast troubled region.

Sudanese President Omar El-Bashir has so far refused to allow a UN force into the region, despite repeated requests from the UN Security Council, the African Union and the Arab League.

AU President Oumar Konaré, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol Ajawin are also to attend the conference in Brussels.

NATO chief says November summit to focus on peacekeeping in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Darfur

(*AP* – 14th Jul. **Riga**) NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said Friday that the alliance's November summit in Riga would focus mainly on its peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, Kosovo and the Darfur region of Sudan.

De Hoop Scheffer, who met with senior Latvian officials and toured several venues to be used at the Nov. 28-29 summit, said NATO was unlikely to offer membership to any new countries during the summit, and that it would instead focus largely on NATO's current missions.

"I expect the heads of state and government to underline their unrelenting commitment to Afghanistan. They will also reconfirm NATO's engagement in Kosovo. Depending on developments on the ground and in the U.N., they may also take further steps in continuing NATO's assistance to efforts to deal with the Darfur crisis," de Hoop Scheffer said.

NATO has peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan and Kosovo and is aiding African peacekeeping troops in Darfur.

He said NATO was unlikely to offer any invitations to join, but that it would keep an open door policy for aspiring countries such as Ukraine and Georgia.

De Hoop Scheffer met with President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis, Foreign Minister Artis Pabriks and Defence Minister Atis Slakteris, and called preparations for the summit "excellent."

The summit will be NATO's first since it added seven new member states, including Latvia, in 2004, and the first held in a former Soviet Republic.

CPA

Salva Kiir travels to Washington today

(*AIRai AIAam* – 16th Jul. **Khartoum**) Vice-President Salva Kiir travels to Nairobi later today en route to Washington, says State Minister Tilar Deng of the Presidency of the Republic.

Before travelling, says the state minister, the Vice-President will hold talks with President Bashir on the plan for his Washington trip and a separate meeting with Vice-President Taha who will brief him on the general situation in the country.

Deng said Vice-President Kiir will discuss issues pertaining to the implementation of the peace agreements, the Sudan government's position on the deployment of international troops to Darfur, Abyei and the issue of self-determination.

Southern Sudan

Sudan assures LRA rebels of safety during Juba talks

(*New Vision* – 15th Jul. **Juba**) The President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), Salva Kiir, has said the LRA delegates cannot be abducted from Juba.

Kiir told an impromptu press conference at Juba international airport VIP lounge on return from Yei that GoSS' impetus is to end rebellion in northern Uganda and usher in peace, the New vision reported.

While the presence of tight security at the LRA camp is not visible, Kiir said their security was guaranteed.

"Any member of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA negotiating team) will be safe in Juba," Kiir, flanked by his deputy Dr. Riek Machar, said.

"We have started to talk to the LRA directly. We aim at bringing a solution to the conflict in northern Uganda," Kiir said.

Machar told journalists on Thursday that the LRA leadership did not honour his request for one of the indicted five commanders to lead their team because they felt insecure in Juba. LRA deputy chief Vincent Otti on Wednesday said the top commanders would not attend the talks, citing security concerns.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) indicted LRA leader Joseph Kony, Otti and three others for crimes against humanity. The ICC wants them arrested and brought before the court in the Hague.

The Government of Uganda delegation led by internal affairs minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda arrived in Juba yesterday afternoon. "We will go for substance not semantics," Rugunda told reporters on Thursday. "Our interest is that the conflict comes to a quick end so that our people can live in peace," he added.

It was not immediately clear whether negotiations would begin on Friday or whether preparatory meetings would have to be held first. Machar had scheduled the talks for Friday.

The LRA delegation is housed in RA International camp, a few kilometres from the airport. The team travelled from the airport after arrival on Thursday, in several sleek GoSS Land Cruisers VX.

Before the opening ceremony for the talks at 4:00pm at the GoSS legislative assembly, the LRA team of 17 was locked in a preparatory meeting. Their leader, Martin Ojulu, said he hoped Uganda was sincere about the talks.

"This is a marathon. We hope government is realistic about the talks. We are here to see that peace returns to northern Uganda," Ojulu said before joining the meeting with a kaveera (polythene bag) full of drinks.

A European diplomat based in Khartoum, who is in Juba to monitor the talks, said every mission in Sudan was invited as an observer.

The diplomat said no budget for the peace process had been agreed on because "there are still many unanswered questions."

"We don't know whether they will be meeting daily, once a week or monthly. Even the logistics needed have not been listed. Those are some of the questions, but my country will definitely contribute," the envoy said on condition of anonymity.

Juba talks - Uganda threatens to walk out over harsh rebel rhetoric

(*Sudan Tribune* – 15th Jul. **Juba**) Juba Peace talks aimed at ending Uganda's brutal Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency hit a snag on Saturday as the government threatened to walk out over harsh rebel rhetoric, officials said.

Just a day after the ceremonial opening of the historic negotiations here, southern Sudanese mediators were attempting to salvage plans to bring the two sides together for the launch of detailed discussions, they said.

Kampala's delegation complained that the LRA had been too "combative" in its opening statement on Friday when the rebels vowed to continue their 19-year war in northern Uganda unless all their grievances were addressed.

"We are very concerned about the combative mood of the LRA delegation," said Paddy Ankunda, the spokesman for the Ugandan team. "That mood is not good for peace talks."

"We told them that we cannot continue with that combative mood," he said, adding that Uganda's lead negotiator, Interior Minister Ruhakana Rugunda, was meeting with mediators to unblock the stalemate.

"We are ready to compromise because we know who they are," Akunda said.

Officials with the autonomous government of southern Sudan who are hosting and mediating the talks could not immediately be reached for comment.

The spokesman for the LRA delegation, Obonyo Olweny, however, said the rebels had not been told of Kampala's complaint and defended the opening statement, maintaining it was an honest and serious appraisal of the situation.

"I am not aware of the government position," he told reporters, confirming though that Saturday's expected resumption of the talks had not yet occurred. "We are waiting for mediators to call us within the working hours of the day."

Olweny, who delivered the rebel's position on Friday, denied it had been overly harsh and reaffirmed the LRA's commitment to reaching a negotiated solution to the long-running conflict.

"I don't think it was combative, it was realistic," he said. "What we gave was a realistic statement. Maybe the government underestimates the seriousness of these peace talks."

Olweny surprised many attending the opening ceremony by accusing Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni of corruption and warning the LRA had not agreed to the peace talks because it was "militarily weak."

"If Uganda believes they can settle this on the battlefield, they are in for a rude shock," he said.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed and some two million displaced in northern Uganda since the LRA took leadership of a regional rebellion among the Acholi ethnic minority in 1988, in a bid to oust Museveni.

The talks in the southern Sudan capital of Juba are seen by many as the best chance to end the war, which is regularly described by aid agencies as one of the world's worst and most forgotten humanitarian crises.

The negotiations had been due to start on Wednesday but were delayed for 48 hours as chief mediator Riek Machar, the vice president of south Sudan, unsuccessfully attempted to convince the LRA to send its top leaders.

Uganda had wanted elusive rebel supremo Joseph Kony, his deputy, Vincent Otti, or one of three other LRA commanders wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to attend.

W. Equatoria's Maridi citizens slam MP for backing governor arrest

(SRS/ST – 14th Jul. **Juba**) Citizens of Maridi County in Western Equatoria State have written a petition letter condemning a statement made by Maridi County's Member of Parliament of in the Government of National Unity about the arrest of Governor Patrick Zamoi.

Last month the Khartoum Monitor newspaper wrote an article in which Mr. Justin Joseph Marona stated that he is in full support of the move taken by the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir, to suspend and put under house arrest the Western Equatoria Governor Zamoi.

The petition claims that the people of Maridi County were not consulted by the MP Marona before he issued his statement. The petition said that they believe the Member of Parliament was acting out of his personal interest and not the interest of the people of the county, the Sudan Radio Service reported.

The Governor of Western Equatoria state was suspended and put under house arrest last month pending an investigation into alleged involvement into tribal clashes that took place in Yambio late last year.

In despite of a strong mobilization in favour of the Zamoi release, South Sudan government seems determined to keep the governor in jail.

At the same time this arrest reminds many Azande that they were also marginalized during the reign of the autonomous southern Sudan government under the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972.

Many Azande consider that Zamoi's arrest is a symbol of the injustice practiced against them by the other dominant tribes in the region.

Darfur/ Darfur Peace Agreement

Sudan hands over militias' disarmament plan to African Union

(*Sudan Tribune* – 15th Jul. **Khartoum**) In a response to increasing critics on delay in the implementation of Darfur peace deal, Sudan has announced that plans have being handed over to the AU to disarm Janjaweed militias in Darfur.

The Spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Jamal Mohamed Ibrahim, has announced that Sudan delivered the plan for disarmament of the militias in Darfur to the African Union (AU), 24 hours before the deadline.

In press statements Saturday, Ibrahim affirmed that any statements here and there by UN officials are out of the course, stressing that the government reserves the right to doubt the desires of those who make such statements.

He added that it is not for the interest of any party involved in the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) to slow down its implementation, explaining that the government is always keener to implement the agreement.

UN top envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk was the first to mention the slowness in the implementation of the DPA signed between Khartoum and a rebel SLM faction led by Minni Minnawi n 5 May.

In a paper published on his blog Pronk wrote “timely implementation of what has been agreed. So far, nothing has been done. None of the deadlines agreed in the text of the agreement has been met. The African Union is in charge but it clearly lacks the capacity to lead the process of implementation.”

SLM-Minnawi calls for African Union intervention to open routes

(*AlAyaam* – 16th Jul. **Khrt. El-Fasher**) SLM-Minnawi has called for African Union assistance to open the routes linking territories under their control with other parts of the country.

A spokesperson for the movement said that they put forward their request at a recent meeting with the government of North Darfur and the native administration.

SLM-Minnawi has also called upon the Chadian government to stop supporting holdout rebel groups.

Minister of justice reports on the recent clashes between the Rizeigat and the Habbania

(*AlRai AlAam* – 16th Jul. **Khartoum**) The Government of South Darfur has sent reinforcements for the police and SAF to enable them stop the Habbania and Rizeigat tribes from fighting anew.

Recent clashes between these two tribes have led to the death of 230 from both sides.

The Minister of Justice is due to receive a report later today on the issue.

Aid worker shot dead by assailants in North Darfur - UN

(*AP* – 14th Jul. **Khartoum**) An international relief worker was killed Wednesday in northern Darfur, the U.N. said.

The aid worker was shot dead by unknown assailants who attacked a car carrying three international relief workers near Al Sireaf, 60 kilometres north of Saraf Omra, according to a U.N. situation report issued Thursday. The attackers drove away in the workers' vehicle, leaving the two other staffers unharmed at the scene.

The U.N. did not identify the relief organization or the victim.

The incident took place in the same area where another employee of an international organization was abducted May 3, and remains missing.

Tuesday, tribal fighting in the southern Darfur village of Um Labanya left at least 10 members of one tribe dead, and some of their bodies mutilated, the report said.

The U.N. had no information on casualties from the opposing tribe. When African Union troops tried to enter the town's clinic to verify casualties, an angry mob demanded they flee the area.

Tribal leaders were in reconciliation talks, the U.N. report said.

Um Labanya is 62 kilometers southwest of Ed Deain.

The U.N. humanitarian chief said Tuesday that Sudan's Darfur region was facing a new wave of killings and rapes, with fighting between rebel factions displacing thousands of villagers despite a recent peace agreement.

Humanitarian workers are being attacked every day, and "new front lines are opening all the time in new areas," Jan Egeland told a news conference Tuesday.

The Darfur conflict began in early 2003 when members of ethnic African tribes revolted against Sudan's Arab-led government, which is accused of responding by unleashing Arab militias known as the janjaweed who have been blamed for the worst atrocities. Khartoum denies involvement, but has committed to disarm the janjaweed under a peace deal signed May 5.

The agreement, signed by the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement but boycotted by other factions, sought to bring to an end three years of fighting between several rebel groups and pro-government forces that has killed 200,000 people and displaced another 2 million.

The fighting has also spilled across the border into Chad.

Rizeigat leaders join SPLM

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 16th Jul.) Leaders from Darfur's Rizeigat tribe participating at a rally addressed by Paulino Matib at the Bentiu Military Command yesterday have announced they are joining the SPLM.

Matib said this showed their faith in the principles of the SPLM.

Eastern Sudan

Peace talks between Sudan, Eastern Front to resume next Monday

(*Sudan Tribune* – 15th Jul. **Asmara**) The second round of the peace talks between the Sudanese government and the rebel Eastern Front will resume here on Monday, July 17, according to the East Sudan Peace Talks Coordinating Committee.

A spokesman of the Committee told the Eritrean News Agency that the necessary preparations have been finalized and that the dialogue will get underway as scheduled.

On the basis of the agenda items to be mutually agreed by the two sides, they will continue discussions on the remaining during the second round of the dialogue.

The Government of Sudan and the East Sudan Front held dialogue for the first time following a series of contacts from 14 June to 19 June 2006 here in Asmara.

The two sides then signed two agreements, namely Declaration of Principles for Resolving the East Sudan Conflict, and Agreement on creating conducive atmosphere for peace.