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HIGHLIGHTS:

United Nations and the Transition Debate

Union of Arab Lawyers backs President Bashir on rejection to transition

The Union of Arab Lawyers has expressed support for President Bashir's decision to reject the deployment of United Nations troops to Darfur, *AlRai AlAam* reports.

The Dean of Sudanese Lawyers forwarded to the president yesterday a letter from the Union of Arab Lawyers expressing their backing and confirming their support for the Sudanese president's decision against the Security Council resolution which they described as in violation of the United Nations Charter.

The Union of Arab Lawyers lauded the Sudanese president for his "courageous and heroic position in defence of national sovereignty and Sudanese unity".

The fraternity described the conflict in Darfur as an internal conflict that the Security Council had no call to interfere and one that could be resolved through dialogue between Sudanese.

The lawyers' union described the situation the Sudan is now facing as a comprehensive plot against the Arab world and cited Syria, Palestine and Iraq as examples.

UN holds two-day workshop on environment in Sudan

(*UN/ST* – 20th Jul. **Khartoum**) Aiming to help war-ravaged Sudan to restore its natural habitat, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is holding a two-day workshop in the country to allow key players to exchange ideas and chart a course towards a more sustainable future.

The two-day Sudan National Planning Environmental Management Workshop, which was held in Khartoum and wraps up today, comes amid what UNEP officials describe as an increasing recognition that respect for the environment and the sustainable management of natural resources are requisites for a sustainable peace.

"This country has endured years of turmoil and years of misery," Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director, said in a news release. "A new chance for the people of Sudan will hinge on numerous factors, including strengthening the ability of the Sudanese authorities to sustainably manage their natural resources."

He emphasized that restoring and rehabilitating Sudan's economically important and productive land, forests, river systems, and other crucial ecosystems, which so many people depend on, will play an important role in ensuring stability and a lasting peace.

"Environmental issues in Sudan such as desertification, land degradation and deforestation greatly contribute to the scarcity of vital resources such as water for drinking and irrigation, animal fodder and fuel wood," he said. "This scarcity can drive and exacerbate conflicts and population displacement, which may in turn then result in accelerated environmental degradation and human suffering."

He pledged UNEP's readiness to help the Sudanese authorities to address these problems.

The agency is currently conducting a detailed assessment of Sudan's challenges with the aim of identifying environmental issues and priorities that require priority attention. That study is due to be published in October.

Much to be done before UN force to Darfur - Bush

(*Sudan Tribune* – 20th Jul. **Washington**) US President George W. Bush said that there was "a lot of work to be done" before an international force can go to Sudan's troubled Darfur region to help beleaguered African Union (AU) troops.

Bush's comments came as he met with Sudanese Vice President Salva Kiir for talks that also touched on efforts to implement a US-backed peace accord for Sudan and bring all Sudanese rebel factions into peace efforts there.

"I assured our friend that the United States is committed to helping the Sudanese people. We're committed to making sure that the peace agreement that we helped you negotiate is implemented," said the US president.

"We're also committed to helping the people in Darfur," said Bush. "Our strategy is that we want AU forces to be complemented and blue-helmeted. In other words, the United Nations should be invited in."

"We talked about how best to get that done, in order to save lives. Obviously, there's still a lot of work to be done," the president said as he and his guest sat side by side in a joint public appearance.

The international community has agreed to transform the hapless and cash-strapped African Union Mission in Sudan into a United Nations force to help protect civilians, who have been targeted by both the government-backed militia and rebel groups.

But Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has flatly rejected the deployment of any Western forces in the region, recently saying that "Sudan, which was the first country south of the Sahara to gain independence, cannot now be the first country to be re-colonized."

"We are sure that we are going to solve the problem," said Kiir, "so that we don't hear about rapes and killings in Darfur. And all other parts of our country, like in eastern Sudan, we are now also negotiating in that part, so that peace is also achieved all over the Sudan."

White House spokesman Tony Snow said Bush had "encouraged" his guest to promote a government of national unity for Sudan, to help ease the transition to a UN force for Darfur, and to work to bring all rebel factions to talks aimed at ending conflict in Sudan.

The US State Department said Wednesday that Washington will commit 116 million dollars to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

The aid comes in addition to 247 million dollars already committed to AMIS since 2004, the State Department said. The new aid will help train African Union troops to United Nations standards, said the statement.

Sudan considers International Muslim troops for Darfur

(*Sudan Tribune* – 22nd Jul. **Khartoum**) Sudanese government cogitates the implementing a plan to deploy Arab and Muslim troops in the region of Darfur in order to block the ongoing arrangements to replace the African Union troops there with international forces.

According to London based Asharq Alawsat daily news paper, the plan is being prepared by the Sudanese security and intelligence organs as well the armed forces, but declined to give details in this regard.

After a meeting with the Sudanese president in Banjul on 3 July, the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan told the press that al-Bashir had promised to give “his plan” to end the crisis within the month.

"I am still suspecting that in time there will be a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur," added Annan, whose mandate as UN chief expires end of the year.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton said on Sunday 16 July suggested that Sudan must accept UN forces from Muslim countries.

"Sudan should be pressured to accept international troops from Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh and others to help maintain peace and order in Darfur," Clinton told an audience at AU headquarters.

CPA

Sudan's Kiir says there is slow progress in peace implementation

(*Sudan Tribune* – 19th Jul. **Washington**) In a meeting with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Chapters' leaders in the USA and Canada, the Sudanese First Vice President Lt. Gen. Salva Kiir admitted that there has been a slow progress in the implementation of the CPA.

The First Vice-President, President of Government of Southern Sudan, Chairman, SPLM, General Salva Kiir Mayardit today met the SPLM Chapters' leaders in North America, thus; the United States of America and Canada.

He thanked those in the Diaspora for their role during the period of struggle without which the CPA would never have been achieved.

He asked them to continue in the same spirit because there are still a number of challenges still ahead.

On the implementation of the CPA, Kiir Mayardit, explained to the SPLM Chapters' leaders in North America that, yes, there has been a slow progress in the implementation of the CPA. First, the tragedy that claimed the life of our leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior on July 30, 2005 had a very serious impact, as this tragedy happened at the time when the CPA implementation was about to begin.

“Indeed, it was a setback to all of us!” Salva Kiir said. “For those who have always wished, SPLM/SPLA a bad luck, it was good news for them because the death of Dr. John, according to those, was an end to the SPLM/A, which they thought, was going to disintegrate into tribal

warlords. But we proved them wrong. The SPLM/A leadership were able within 24 hours to come up with unanimous decision that made the continuity of the SPLM/SPLA leadership”, the First Vice-President concluded.

Although the CPA implementation is slowly progressing, he told the audience that there are some areas where the implementation process is completely stuck. These include the National Petroleum Commission, South-North Border Commission and Abyei Border Commission. These commissions are completely at the stand still, and nothing absolutely is being done about them. For instance, the Abyei Border Commission recommendation by a group of experts was rejected out of hand by the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) of Omer al-Bashir, claiming that this group of experts that was charged by the responsibility of this commission, did over step their mandate.

The National Petroleum Commission is also dysfunctional as the NCP would not accept the mechanism that would ensure, fair and proportionate share of 50% as stipulated by the CPA.

The North-South Border Commission is also not functioning, due to reluctance and lack of will by the NCP. However; Salva Kiir assured the SPLM Chapters’ leaders that the Government of Southern Sudan will not compromise these essential areas of the CPA and must see into it that the CPA is implemented wholly without any article missed out. During the SPLM/NCP Khartoum meeting in May, 2006, the First Vice-President said, it was recommended that the out standing issues above will have to be resolved by the presidency, which Salva Kiir said, he and al-Bashir, will have to revisit those areas with the hope of finding, final solutions to them.

SPLM MPs walk out of South Kordofan legislative assembly

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 23rd Jul. **Kadugli**) SPLM parliamentarians in South Kordofan walked out of the state legislative assembly protesting a deadlock over the state’s constitution.

The head of the SPLM caucus in the regional legislative assembly said that the National Congress Party insisted on carrying on the drafting and ratification of the regional constitution and leaving outstanding points suspended while the SPLM believes a committee should be formed by the two parties.

The assembly went on debating the constitution in the absence of the SPLM representatives.

It is worth noting that the dispute was over Article (73) of the draft constitution relating to the rotation of the chairmanship of the legislative assembly and article (116) relating to local administrative units.

GoNU

National Congress Party rejects GoSS invitation to a Jewish delegation to visit southern Sudan

(*AlRai AlAam* – 23rd Jul. **Khartoum**) Assistant to the President of the Republic and the Vice-Chairman of the National Congress Party, Dr. Nafei Ali Nafei, has expressed strong rejection to a visit to southern Sudan of a Jewish delegation on a GoSS invitation.

Speaking to the press at the offices of the National Congress Party yesterday, Dr. Nafei said that the GoSS had no right to invite to southern Sudan a person who is in fact not welcomed in any part of Sudan.

“Such a visit if it does take place would be a violation”, he said.

It is worth noting that recent newspaper reports had it that the office of the SPLM in Nairobi grants entry visas for southern Sudan to Kenyans, Tanzanians and Israelis without the knowledge of the Sudanese embassy in Nairobi or the Ministry of Interior.

Further reports point out that the authorities at Juba Airport had tried to stop an Israeli coming in to Juba on a flight from Nairobi last April but SPLM officials intervened and allowed him in claiming that he was a guest to GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar.

The reports go on to say that the Ministry of Interior had brought the issue to the attention of the President of the GoSS in order to stop these violations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls for more coordination between SPLM and Sudan's embassies abroad

(*AlSahafa* – 23rd Jul. Khartoum) The spokesperson for the foreign ministry, Ambassador Jamal Mohamed Ibrahim, said that they do receive regular reports of the V-P's visit to Washington but lamented the fact that the visit is being handled by the Office of the SPLM in Washington instead of the Presidency of the Republic.

The foreign ministry has urged for more coordination between Sudan's embassies abroad and the offices of the SPLM in the future.

Southern Sudan

Fighting in south Sudan kills at least 15

(*Reuters/ST* – 22nd Jul. Khartoum) At least 15 people have been killed in sectarian fighting in south Sudan which is likely to escalate, military sources said on Saturday, describing a threat to a hard-won peace deal that ended Africa's longest civil war.

The sources differed in their accounts, but two versions pointed to violence against north Sudanese by southerners in the last few days, in response to an attack on a militia allied to south Sudan's army.

"There was an incident in Rubkona. It involved one soldier from the SAF who shot one officer and civilians. The officer belonged to the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF). They have joined the SPLA," Major General Elias Waya of the SPLA said.

"There was retaliation from the civilians which resulted in 23 killed ... They were northern traders. I don't know what motivated the incident. Now the situation is under control but I think there will be a retaliation from the north," he added.

Rubkona is in south Sudan's Unity state, which contains some of the country's largest oil fields. Disputes over whether oil-rich regions nearby lie in north or south Sudan have raised tension and left some areas without state services or aid.

Analysts say the dispute threatens to derail last year's peace deal and could trigger renewed violence.

An SAF spokesman denied a government soldier began the incident, and instead said it started with a fight between two factions of the SPLA. Two SAF soldiers had been killed trying to end the violence, in which 13 civilians died, he said.

In another account, Major General Samule Machar, a former SSDF commander, said 28 people were killed, including 18 civilians, after an SAF soldier attacked one of his soldiers, triggering a clash between his forces and the SAF.

Ugandan govt, rebels quarrels threaten Juba talks

(*Xinhua/ST* – 22nd Jul. **Kampala**) A war of words has erupted between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) delegations in Juba, threatening to derail the peace talks intended to end the 20-year-long northern conflict.

According to the new vision report released on Saturday, the LRA team renewed its accusations against the government and the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) on Friday by alleging, among other things, that one of the colonels on the government team abducted a detainee from a prison in Gulu, shot him and chopped off his head.

The statement was released by Obonyo Olweny, the LRA team spokesman, at a press briefing without naming the accused colonel.

The LRA team's comment came after the government's team leader, Ruhakana Rugunda, said earlier a member of the LRA delegation commanded the rebels who chopped and cooked people in the Patong massacre in 2002.

Responding to the fresh LRA attacks, Rugunda said, "LRA should stop the habit of making baseless allegations to grab newspaper headlines and in a desperate attempt to cleanse their image."

"They should concentrate on peace talks to ensure a thorough and speedy conclusion of the comprehensive peace agreement so that the people of northern Uganda and other affected areas can live in peace and lead a productive normal life," he said.

He denied accusations of his team breaching the rules of the talks by issuing statements against LRA.

Rugunda said it was LRA which violated the rules by distributing the statement to the press. "We have not initiated any allegation at all," he noted.

He again refuted accusations of sectarianism in UPDF after the LRA claimed that five generals were from one ethnic group.

"UPDF is a professional national army. It recognizes people's training, skills, and professionalism. It does not work on the basis of people's tribes."

He also denied allegations that UPDF was using ex-LRA combatants to commit abuses. "Former LRA combatants who wish and qualify to join the army are recruited, given training and deployed. They, therefore, cannot commit any crimes when they are part of UPDF."

As the ongoing peace talks, initiated by southern Sudan authority, went into the ninth day, the Ugandan government has rejected the ceasefire request of the LRA, saying the rebels may take advantage of it by regrouping and re-launching the insurgency as they did in the previous ceasefires.

The latest peace attempt following a dozen of such failed efforts before is seen a historic change to end one of the longest conflicts in Africa that has left tens of thousands of people dead and over 1.4 million homeless in northern Uganda.

South Sudan govt orders radio station closure

(*IRIN* – 21st Jul. **Juba**) Authorities in southern Sudan have ordered the closure of a radio station broadcasting from the city of Juba, alleging it was not licensed and that its frequency belonged to another broadcaster.

Liberty FM, however, denies operating illegally and insisted it had complied with all government requirements.

In a letter to the radio station on 17 July, the director-general of the ministry of information and communication of Central Equatoria State, Timothy Goya, accused Liberty FM's management of ignoring summons from the ministry to explain the alleged irregularities.

Liberty's manager, Peter Yata, denied receiving any summons from the ministry.

"We have the licence that was issued by the Government of South Sudan Directorate of Commerce and Supplies in Yei. The licence number is 585 and serial number 473, dated 2 December 2005," said Yata. He said that the frequency had been allocated by the Southern Sudanese Council of Communication and Broadcasting and that the Vice-President of Southern Sudan, Riek Machar, had allowed it to operate from the premises of the government-run Juba Television.

Darfur/Darfur Peace Agreement

Slovene president envoy held in Sudan's Darfur

(*Sudan Tribune* – 21st Jul. **Ljubljana**) Tomo Kriznar, President Janez Drnovsek's special envoy to the western Sudanese province of Darfur, has said that court proceedings against him have been started in the Sudanese city of Al Fasher, Drnovsek's office reported.

According to Kriznar, who was arrested on Wednesday for lacking a valid visa for Sudan, he is being dealt with in a correct manner and is expecting a hearing.

Drnovsek's office has already called on the president of the African Union commission, the Sudanese embassy in Vienna, which also covers Slovenia, as well as other foreign institutions for assistance in securing Kriznar's release.

According to the office, the Sudanese authorities should take into consideration Kriznar's health condition and his activities aimed at establishing peace in Darfur and return him to Slovenia as soon as possible.

The office also contacted Pekka Haavista, EU's special envoy to Sudan, and asked him to assist in efforts to bring Kriznar back to Slovenia as soon as possible.

It moreover called on Slovenia's Foreign Ministry to try and secure Kriznar's release through diplomatic channels.

Drnovsek sent Kriznar to Sudan in early February. He has also presented a plan to solve the crisis in the province as well as launched a humanitarian initiative.

Mini African summit to restore Sudan-Chad relations

(Sudan Tribune – 21st Jul. Abuja) An African mini summit will be held in Senegal to mend bilateral relations between Sudan and the neighbouring Chad, broken off by N'Djamena in April.

Sudan, Chad, Senegal, Gabon, Tanzania will be held next August in Senegalese capital of Dakar to restore Sudanese-Chadian ties to normal, the Sudanese president said.

Al-Bashir said efforts by African brothers are under way to patch up the ties through mediation, pointing to a meeting which brought him with the Chadian Counterpart in Gambian capital lately and the late visit by the Chadian Foreign Minister to Sudan.

A delegation will leave shortly for Chad to improve joint relations, he said.

Chad and Sudan have agreed to work to improve security on their volatile common border in a move aimed at patching up diplomatic ties broken off by N'Djamena in April, Chad's foreign minister said on Tuesday 11 July.

Chad accused Sudan of backing and arming the Chadian rebels, a charge denied by the government in Khartoum which has in turn accused Deby of supporting Sudanese anti-government insurgents in the violent Darfur region.