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Highlights

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US president discusses Darfur with UNSC members

(ST) June 25, 2008 (WASHINGTON) – The US president George Bush met with UN Security Council (UNSC) representatives at the White House today.

Bush said he discussed “a U.N. Security Council role for Darfur” among other topics but did not elaborate. The US assumed the rotating presidency of the UNSC for the month of June.

Washington has grown increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of deploying peacekeepers to Darfur and recently appeared to put the blame on the UN for the delay.

Williamson has yet to meet with Bush following his return from Khartoum after declaring that normalization dialogue with the Sudanese government has been suspended over failing to bridge differences between the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) over the oil rich region of Abyei.

Sudan expels head of MSF from South Darfur

(AFP/ST) June 25, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese authorities have expelled the head of the Dutch branch of the charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) from the war-stricken region of Darfur, a humanitarian source said on Wednesday.

"Banu Altanbas, who heads operations in Nyala (South Darfur), was ordered to leave Darfur immediately" by Sudan's Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) on Sunday, the source told AFP, asking to remain anonymous.

Kelly Gluck, the head of MSF-Holland in Sunday, told AFP she had received no formal notification on the case and refused to comment.

Altanbas, who was declared persona non-grata in Darfur by the Sudanese authorities, left the vast western region of Darfur but she has stayed on in Sudan, the source said.

Diplomats have in the past also been declared persona non-grata, notably the UN special envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk who was expelled in 2006.

However, it is the first time such measures are taken against MSF, which won the Nobel peace prize in 1999, in Darfur where five of its branches — from Belgium, Spain, France, Holland and Switzerland — operate.

MSF-Holland employs about 25 expatriates in South Darfur, while MSF in total has around 125 expatriates in war-torn Darfur, assisted by thousands of Sudanese nationals.

After a report by MSF-Holland in 2005 that highlighted incidents of rape in Darfur's refugee camps, angry Sudanese authorities briefly detained its head in Sudan, Paul Foreman, accusing him of crimes against the Sudanese state. The case was later dropped.

"It is obvious that since then MSF-Holland is being watched. The matter is very serious," said the head of a European NGO.

Other NGOs have been targeted by expulsions since the 2003 outbreak of the Darfur conflict, including the US agency CARE in 2007, the Norwegian Refugee Council in 2006, and Britain's Oxfam and Save the Children in 2004.

Two members of The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) were also expelled in 2007.

Last week, an official with HAC urged international NGOs not to collaborate with OCHA, accusing the UN agency of interfering in Sudan's domestic political affairs.

OCHA head in Khartoum said this week that conditions for humanitarian workers in Darfur were at their worst in 18 months.

"Vehicles are also attacked at the rate of one per day," said Alun McDonald, OXFAM spokesman, while escorts promised by the Sudanese government were never made available.

UN Sudan Envoys question ICC timing, call for Chad solution

(Sudan Vision) There can be no solution in Darfur without changes in both Chad and Khartoum, negotiators Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim told the Press on Tuesday. But while pressure is applied in Sudan, who is pressuring Chad's Idriss Deby government? Eliasson said that every member state with bilateral relations should use them.

On the Justice and Equality Movement's assault on Khartoum which was stopped at Omdurman, Eliasson said he and Salim Salim met with Khalil Ibrahim two weeks before the May 10 attack, urging him to desist from military action, which Khartoum had been expecting. There was "no receptiveness by Khalil Ibrahim," Eliasson said. He felt his power has "not reached its peak."

On the question of the International Criminal Court, Salim Ahmed Salim said that while "impunity must never be allowed to prevail;" the "timing of any decision becomes important." Inner City Press asked if he meant ICC prosecutor Luiz Moreno Ocampo's past or future indictments. Future, he answered, why speak about the past... Ocampo has said that the government apparatus in Sudan, above the level of current indictee Ahmad Harun, is guilty of war crimes. He has implied he might also bring

indictments of rebel groups and even their supporters. We will see.

Eliasson said that on the UN's no-bid contract with U.S.-based military contractor Lockheed Martin for Darfur peacekeeping camps, "I have no information, we have to come back on that... no information on that in any detail.". The head of the hybrid UNAMID force, Rodolphe Adada, said that the UN and also the U.S. were trying to convince Sudan to allow another extension of the contract. The latter would seem to be at the level of envoy Richard Williamson, who in his last appearance at the UN, alongside Mia Farrow, criticized UN peacekeepers for failure to respond during the attack on Abyei.

Uganda: Rebel Group allegedly still recruiting children - UN Report

(UN News Service) 25 June 2008 – Although the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) does not seem to be recruiting children in Uganda, women and children are still present in its ranks, and the rebel group is allegedly enlisting young people from neighbouring countries, according to a United Nations report released today.

The LRA, which has fought a civil war with the Ugandan Government since the mid-1980s, became notorious during the conflict for abducting as many as 25,000 children and using them as fighters and porters. The children were often subject to extreme violence shortly after abduction, with many girls allocated to officers in a form of institutional rape.

“Owing to the apparent absence of LRA from Ugandan territory, there have been no recent cases of recruitment and use of Ugandan children, or other grave violations against children attributable to LRA,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes in a new report to the Security Council.

“However, children and women are still present in the LRA ranks, and there has been no movement on their release,” he adds.

In addition, he notes there are reports alleging that the group has been recruiting children from southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR).

In one case, three boys from the Sudan and the CAR who escaped from the LRA reported that they had been forced to work for the group as porters. They also reported that girls were present in the ranks, and that they were regularly subjected to gender-based violence, including rape.

On 23 April, authorities in Dungu in eastern DRC reported that 13 people, including four students, were abducted from a primary school following LRA attacks.

“These allegations are being reported while the peace talks between LRA and the Government of Uganda are stalled, notably because of the refusal by the LRA leader, Joseph Kony, to sign the final peace agreement,” Mr. Ban writes.

Last July the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict called on the LRA to unconditionally release children used in their ranks, and underlined the absence of any concrete signs in this regard.

The Group also noted the International Criminal Court indictments against five senior members of the LRA – the leader Joseph Kony, and the commanders Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen and Raska Lukwiya – on a number of charges, including the enlistment of children through abduction.

The rebel group has maintained that it had released all children and women abducted or forcibly conscripted some time ago and that those who remained in the bush were women and children related to LRA members.

Mr. Ban says that this information cannot be independently verified because of the absence of any direct contacts between the UN and the LRA leadership.

The Secretary-General urges the LRA to provide a complete list of names and ages of the women and children remaining in its ranks for verification and to carry out their immediate release.

In addition, he says the UN Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting in Uganda, the CAR, the DRC and the Sudan, in cooperation with the UN missions in the DRC and Sudan, should develop a strategy to increase monitoring and reporting on cross-border recruitment and use of children by the LRA.

Sudan: UN-African Union Mission Chief in Darfur warns of mission shortfalls

(UN News Service) 25 June 2008 – The United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has serious troop and equipment shortfalls, six months after coming into being, and local support for the operation is being stretched thin, the mission chief warned today.

In an op-ed column published in The Wall Street Journal, Joint AU-UN Special Representative for Darfur and UNAMID chief Rodolphe Adada **said** the mission currently has fewer than 10,000 troops and police officers, compared to the 26,000 mandated for full deployment.

He stressed, “We are not sitting on our hands waiting for the troops and material to arrive,” adding that the number of monthly patrols across Darfur – an arid and impoverished area in western Sudan that is roughly the size of Texas – now tops 600.

“We are working to build the infrastructure needed to cope with our increasing troop strength. Our plan is ambitious: we aim to have deployed 80 per cent of our forces by the end of the year.”

Mr. Adada said UNAMID faced a daunting task given it is trying to “keep a peace that doesn’t exist,” with the rebel movements splintering into more and more factions, the peace process stalling and widespread violence, civilian displacement and insecurity.

“There is no simple solution to Darfur,” he wrote, noting that the imminent appointment of a new UN-AU mediator should give renewed vigour to the peace process.

“We will work to empower civil society, because the best hopes for peace lie with the traditional tribal leadership. We will expect the government in Khartoum to honour its responsibilities to protect all the citizens of Sudan, and to cooperate fully with UNAMID. We will engage the [rebel] movements, pushing them to commit to a peaceful settlement. Finally, we will encourage the international community to demonstrate equal resolve.”

Mr. Adada underscored that UNAMID, the first hybrid UN-AU mission of its kind, cannot afford to fail.

“Patience is running thin here and local trust – essential for our mission to succeed – is on the line,” he said, urging the international community to fully support the mission.

Human Rights Special Rapporteur Sima Samar due here Sunday

(**Al-Rai Al-Aam/SMC**) Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan, Sima Samar, is to arrive in Khartoum Sunday on its regular visit to Sudan, her 2nd visit to Sudan in 2008 and the 5th since her appointment. Ms. Samar will meet during the visit a number of government officials in order to get acquainted with the situations of human rights in Sudan before she submits a report to the Human Rights Council in December.

Meanwhile, the Rapporteur of the Advisory Council on Human Rights, Dr. Abdul-Moneim Osman Mohamed Taha, said in a statement to SUNA Ms. Samar would hold meetings with the Advisory Council on Human Rights and the national team as well as making visits to the states of Darfur, Abyei area and Blue Nile State and Juba. Dr. Taha explained that the national team would brief Ms. Samar with the achievements in the domains of human rights as well as the reformation of laws.

Sudan: UN-supported initiative aims to reintegrate 180,000 Sudanese ex-Combatants

(**UN News Service**) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will be supporting the reintegration of 180,000 Sudanese ex-combatants as they return to civilian life under an agreement signed today with the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is an important component of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the long-running north-south civil war in Sudan.

The agreement signed today builds on the achievements of the disarmament and demobilization pilot phase launched in 2006. The beneficiaries will include some 24,000 members of the Sudan Armed Forces and 26,000 others pre-registered by the

Popular Defence Forces. Nearly 5,300 women associated with armed forces and groups, and 17,500 disabled combatants are also eligible.

Under the four-year programme - which will be led and implemented by the DDR Commissions of North and South Sudan, with support from UNDP - ex-combatants will receive social, economic and psychological support as they make the transition back into civilian life and begin anew in their communities.

"We welcome the Government of Sudan's leadership in taking forward the DDR programme, and aim to assist the building of national and local capacities to support national ownership of the process," said UNDP Associate Administrator Ad Melkert.

"The dividends of peace are long overdue. Employment generation and re-integration of former combatants is key to this process," he added.

The agreement was signed at a DDR Donor Conference in Geneva, co-chaired by UNDP and the Government of Japan, at which donors reiterated their full support to the Sudan DDR programme, requiring \$430 million over a four-year period.

Adequate funding will be key to ensuring the sustainability of the programme which is designed to help foster peace and security in Sudan.

"It must be seen in a broader context of support to peace and national reconciliation, post-conflict stabilization, peace building and conflict reduction," said Ameerah Haq, UNDP Resident Representative in Sudan. "The reintegration programme will thus complement existing Government and UN programming that focuses on building peace at the community level."

[Report: UN to appoint new, full-time chief negotiator to Darfur; Jan Eliasson to resign](#)

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP) - Swedish radio is reporting that the United Nations' top envoy to Darfur Jan Eliasson will resign to make room for a new full-time chief negotiator.

The state-owned radio station quotes Eliasson as saying he will continue to work as special adviser on Darfur and will be available to assist in any actions.

The report broadcast Thursday cites unidentified sources as suggesting Burkina Faso Foreign Minister Djibrill Bossole may be considered for the new job of chief negotiator.

Eliasson had expressed frustration over the situation in western Sudan, and said earlier this month that efforts to restart peace talks had reached an impasse.

[GoNU](#)

[JDB meets today](#)

(Al-Sudani) The Joint Defence Board (JDB) meeting, which was supposed to take place yesterday, is postponed to today as the plane carrying SPLA officers arrived late yesterday evening. According to JDB spokesperson, Maj. Gen. Ajang the meeting will occur today at 11 am at the same venue and agenda.

Government reacts to UN-AU Envoys' call for international summit on Darfur

(Al-Ahdath) A high-level government official who spoke to the newspaper on condition of anonymity has criticized UN-AU Envoys' call for an international conference on Darfur saying such conference would be futile.

The source said the problem lies in Darfur movements' rejection to join the peace process and the two envoys' failure to achieve breakthrough.

Washington has no option but to cajole Sudan

(Al-Sudan) Former US Envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios has admitted the failure of US previous efforts to overthrow NCP regime in Sudan. He said it was a difficult task as Sudan was more complex than Afghanistan and Iraq, adding the only option for Washington was to pursue a carrot policy to prevent disintegration of Sudan as that, if happens, would be catastrophic in terms of security.

President Al-Bashir speaks to Italian Panorama Magazine

(SMC) President of the Republic Omer Al-Bashir affirmed that some organizations are working to reproduce the crisis in Darfur in order to guarantee continuity of their work in the area. This came in an interview President Al-Bashir gave to the Italian Panorama Magazine at the Guest House Wednesday. The President renewed the commitment of the Government to achieve a peaceful settlement to the issue of Darfur in collaboration with the UN, African Union and the other organizations working in Darfur, which are more than 200 organizations, employing more than 16,000.

The President further reviewed the major steps taken in the implementation of the peace agreements as well as the cooperation of the two partners of peace and preparations of the country for holding the elections on schedule. In the interview, the President explained that Sudan was bestowed with huge natural and human resources besides the accumulated expertise a matter that enables it to help end the food crisis in the world. The President also pointed out that the revenues of the Sudanese oil are being exploited to realize sustainable development, reconstruction of the war affected areas as well as bringing about comprehensive agricultural development besides providing the people with services.

Sudan army unhappy over establishment of SPLA air force

(ST) June 25, 2008 (KHARTOUM) – The Sudanese army expressed reservation about a bill adopted by the semi-autonomous South's Legislative Assembly calling for creation of an air force.

Yesterday Southern lawmakers approved a Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) White Paper on Defense stating that the armed forces should consist of "grounds force supported by air and riverine units".

The spokesperson for the Sudanese defense ministry told the daily Al-Ahdath that the SPLA is subject to numerous limitations per the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 between North and South.

"The SPLA is not allowed to carry out military operations or any other activities," Lieutenant Colonel Al-Sawarami Sa'ad said.

"The SPLA is only allowed to conduct training within the joint forces," he added.

This is the first reaction by a Northern government official to the resolution by Southern lawmakers.

The bill passed yesterday deals with the security environment of South Sudan, SPLA mission and role in the defense of southern Sudan, in addition to the administrative and military structure. The law also establishes a committee to monitor the management of SPLA budget.

According to the CPA, the SPLA forces shall be funded by the Government of Southern Sudan while the SAF and the joint units are funded by the national government.

Southern Sudan government has no military aircraft and Juba does not seem prioritizing such plan. However, formation of southern pilots is seen as first necessary step towards a future air force.

The demobilization and the professionalization of the SPLA troops have been delayed since 2005 due to the lack of funds and fears that relieved soldiers without a profession or a job can create troubles in the south.

The White Paper tries to trace a map for the transformation of the SPLA from a revolutionary army to a regular and conventional one with the formation and training of reduced army.

SPLM official comes under fire from Sudan ruling party

(ST) June 25, 2008 (KHARTOUM) – Officials from Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) lashed out at the Secretary General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Pagan Amun and called for his resignation or removal.

Amun, who is also the cabinet affairs minister, was quoted as saying that Sudan is a "failed and corrupt state". The SPLM official made the remarks during a forum on press and political freedom in Sudan organized by Ajras Al-Huriyah newspaper paper.

Sudan presidential adviser Nafi Ali Nafi called on the Amun to step down.

“Pagan must be in peace with himself by resigning and it will be welcomed by the SPLM even before the NCP” Nafi was quoted by the daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat as saying.

“The problem of Pagan and the triangle of secularism within the SPM is that they feel disappointed and miserable because the NCP is able to overcome their shrewdness and cunningness and even come out stronger,” he added.

Mandour Al-Mahdi the secretary general of the NCP political bureau also described Amun’s statements as “irresponsible for an irresponsible minister who is trying to create a split between the SPLM and NCP”.

Amun was appointed last December in the government of national unity in the critical post of minister for cabinet affairs despite earlier indications that former foreign minister Lam Akol would assume the position.

Many NCP officials look at Amun with suspicion and consider him a hardliner within the SPLM.

In 2011, southerners will be asked to vote in a referendum on whether they want to be independent or remain part of Sudan.

National Assembly extends sessions to pass Elections Act

(Sudan Vision) National Assembly Speaker, Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir announced that present round of the Assembly sessions would be extended to a maximum period of two weeks, for passing the general electoral law in its final form.

Al-Tahir said he expected the act to be presented before the Assembly at an extraordinary session after it has been approved by the Council of Ministers. He indicated that the decision to extend the round was made on the basis of the proposal presented by the head of NCP bloc in the National Assembly, Dr. Ghazi Salah Addeen, following the bloc's meeting held yesterday. He added that discussions would be confined to the elections act and that the period specified is adequate for approval of the law.

Prospective French Mediation between Sudan, Chad

(Sudan Vision) Foreign Minister Deng Alor denied any French initiatives proposed to Sudan for resolving Darfur case. Alor said in press statements he made yesterday that France agreed to Sudan's proposal to mediate between Sudan and Chad in view of France's close ties with Chad and some Darfurian factions in addition to the presence of Abdulwahid Mohammed Nur in France.

He added that by playing this role France would boost Dakar agreement.

Referring to Sudan's rejection of negotiations with JEM, Alor said the mediator would communicate with all the parties that comprise the government and the armed factions, including JEM.

He further conveyed Abdulwahid's willingness to negotiate though he said Abdulwahid preconditioned provision of security for the displaced before embarking on talks.

Alor reiterated that they have not received any notification from the US Administration regarding resumption of talks on normalization of ties.

AEC for Blue Nile to submit report to Presidency in few weeks

(SMC) Co chair of Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) for the Blue Nile state Dr Abdel Rahman Osman Acknowledges there are financial obstacle facing security arrangements. However, he said formation of legislative, and executive institutions in addition to integrated forces have been completed in the state. He cited that integration of police forces is proceeding well according to the plan.

Regarding violations by SPLA Dr Osman considered the incidents as individual behavior. He affirms that those who committed the violations would be brought to justice.

He said the commission praised the progress on CPA in Blue Nile. The commission said would present its report to presidency of the republic in few coming weeks.

GoSS

Force may be used for disarming

(**Miraya FM**) An official in the Southern Sudan President's office in Juba said that force would be used during the forthcoming national disarmament exercise, which starts on 1 July.

The official said communities that do not comply would be disarmed forcefully.

Earlier this month the disarmament exercise in Torit, Eastern Equatoria State, led to the killing of almost 14 SPLA soldiers including some villagers.

The national disarmament exercise will include Jonglei, Warrap, and Upper Nile States.

SPLM ministerial reshuffle

(**Al-Khartoum**) Foreign Minister Deng Alor revealed that SPLM would conduct ministerial reshuffle for its ministerial portfolios in GoNU, which he described as a normal matter. He said some SPLM ministers would be relieved so that they have time to focus on political work, adding it would include SPLM Secretary General and Cabinet Minister Pagan Amun but that has nothing to do with NCP demand for his resignation.

According to the newspaper, the Minister made the statements at the Parliament yesterday.

South Sudan and World Bank reach cooperation agreement

(ST) June 25, 2008 (JUBA) – The Southern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (SSRDF) and the World Bank have agreed on collaborative working arrangements between the two institutions in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that sets out how they should jointly manage donors' funds for development projects in Southern Sudan.

In a Wednesday's joint meeting of Chairpersons of Commissions and Chambers chaired by the Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, the SSRDF's Chairperson, Dr. David Nailo Mayo explained that the MoU intends to improve the Government of Southern Sudan/World Bank response and implementation capacity of both organizations by setting forth the division of responsibilities.

He added that the MoU, which is supposed to come into effect on July 1, 2008, would avoid duplication and parallel operations in the transitional period and maximize the respective strengths and comparative advantages of each.

The World Bank argued that relevant institutions of the Government of Southern Sudan needed to meet standards set by the Bank and to follow its procedures before they could receive the money.

In the MoU, the two institutions have agreed that the Southern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (SSRDF) will chair the technical committee managing the MDTF while the World Bank will continue to be the banker of such funds.

They also agreed that the SSRDF will manage the projects funded by the MDTF and disburse the funds and that the World Bank would be required to release funds on quarterly basis to SSRDF accounts.

SSRDF would account for money spent before being replenished.

Projects that are supposed to be supported by the donors' funds include development of physical infrastructure, promotion of agriculture and private sector development, institutional infrastructure development for better governance including the enhancement of Law and Order.

The MDTF would also support restoration of peace, harmony and facilitating of safe return and re-integration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.

A Famous Sudanese merchant killed in Malakal by armed robbers

(SMC) An eyewitness says three unidentified armed persons killed early morning today Al Haj Ali Yousif (a famous merchant) at his house in Malakal capital of Upper Nile. The attackers broke into the late marcher house and looted 40.000 Sudanese pounds before they shot him down and fled away. Merchants closed their shops today in Malakal protesting the incident.

Darfur

Darfur rebel group calls on Sudanese official to defect from government

(ST) June 25, 2008 (LONDON) – A Darfur rebel group issued a statement today calling on Sudan’s senior presidential assistant Minni Arcua Minnawi to defect from the government.

Minnawi has been gone missing for over a month amid reports that he traveled to the Chadian capital Ndjamena and planning to suspend his participation in the government.

However, the ex-rebel speaking to local media denied the reports saying that he is in North Darfur inspecting his troops.

“We invite Mr. Minni Minnawi to scrap the Abuja agreement before the National Congress Party to open the door for a resolution for Darfur crisis,” Mahjoub Hussain, spokesperson for Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM-Unity) said today.

“The NCP is toying with humanity in Darfur,” he added.

China says it can do no more over Darfur

(AFP) BEIJING: China said it had done all it could to help ease the bloodshed and suffering in Sudan's war-torn Darfur region, which has put the spotlight on China's close ties to the country.

Beijing, under intense criticism for allegedly turning a blind eye to Sudan's repression of an insurgency in the region, said the international community as a whole needed to address the crisis.

"The Darfur issue is still confronted with many difficulties... it's imperative that the international community make concerted efforts," assistant foreign minister Zhai Jun told an international symposium on the issue.

"We have done as much as we can do," Zhai said. "China remains committed to resolving the Darfur issue and has made unremitting efforts."

China, the main buyer of Sudan's oil and a key investor in the economy, has repeatedly been accused of not doing enough to make Khartoum stop a brutal campaign in response that has contributed to as an estimated 300,000 dead.

Liu Guijin, Beijing's special envoy to Darfur, said activist groups had not given an accurate picture of China's role.

"The western media and in particular the activities of some non-governmental organisations have caused China's role to be distorted in the eyes of the rebels," Liu told reporters.

"Some prominent opposition groups have been influenced by this."

Meanwhile, Zhai said a hybrid United Nations and African Union peacekeeping force was still not fully deployed six months after it was established, and that opposition groups remained outside the political process.

"The armed rebel groups and government forces have exchanged fire constantly, which frustrates the security and humanitarian situation of the region," he said.

In recent months, Western rights groups have tried to use the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, which begins in August, to push China to do more to end the crisis in Darfur.

Zhai reiterated Beijing's stance that sanctions on the Sudanese government would be counterproductive to resolving the Darfur issue.

Zhai said China has worked tirelessly to bring all sides in the conflict toward a negotiated solution, while also spending tens of millions of dollars on water and power projects in Darfur.

Beijing also played a key role in setting up the hybrid force of 26,000 peacekeepers and placing it under UN command, Zhai said.

Six months after the force was agreed to, only 9,000 peacekeepers have been deployed.

Zhai said the international community needed to better equip the peacekeeping force for full deployment, step up efforts to ensure a ceasefire in Darfur and provide more humanitarian assistance to the region.

Last week US rights activist John Prendergast said Beijing, a veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council, has a "disproportionate responsibility" in helping find a settlement to the conflict in Darfur.

"They must fulfil that or else we are going to see Sudan burn -- and one of the first things that is going to burn is China's own economic interests," Prendergast said.

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