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Highlights

US urge Sudan to carry out North-South peace deal

Reuters 23/6/09 - The United States urged Sudan's north and south on Tuesday not to allow disputes over oil and elections to unravel the 2005 peace deal that ended their two-decade civil war.

Disagreements over how to implement the deal could drag the African oil exporter back into conflict if not settled ahead of a ruling on a disputed oil region in July, elections in 2010 and a referendum on southern secession the following year.

"The stakes are enormous," said U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg, reflecting fears among officials and analysts that the civil war, in which two million people died, could erupt again. The war was separate from the Darfur conflict which continues in western Sudan.

Steinberg spoke at a U.S.-hosted conference that gathered officials from north Sudan's dominant National Congress Party, the south's Sudan People's Liberation Movement and 20 countries to try to keep the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on track.

The U.S. special envoy for Sudan, Gen. Scott Gration, said the Khartoum government and the SPLM, which rules the south, had agreed to work together to prevent the verdict from igniting violence.

"We have taken a commitment to ensure that we will do everything we can and come up with a plan to ensure a soft landing from both sides," Gration told reporters.

Another U.S. official said the parties had agreed in several days of talks in Washington to send representatives together with Gration to Abyei when the ruling comes out to quell dissatisfaction.

Sudan Tribune website 24/6/09 reports thirty-three countries and organizations, representing the original witnesses and other international supporters of Sudan's CPA, met at a forum yesterday in Washington, D.C. after four days of talks between the rival parties that had signed the peace deal in 2005.

Participants at the conference agreed to a joint communiqué emphasizing "the importance of credible, peaceful and transparent nationwide elections in Sudan in line with the NEC's timetable of February 2010 and legitimate popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States," indicating support to not push back the elections date again.

Figures in both the SPLM and NCP had given indications that the February 2010 election date, which already represents a delay from the treaty-mandated timetable, might be pushed back again. The communiqué also touched on potential flashpoints, like the 2011 referendum and the Abyei boundary decision soon to be announced by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

At the Park Hyatt hotel where the forum was held, US Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration said "This really is a very special event, the first high-level conference of its type since the signing of the CPA back in 2005, and we thank you for coming from near and from far."

The top negotiator for the Sudan's ruling party, Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani, called the event a "watershed" in a written statement to yesterday's Washington Times advocating for "a constructive American engagement."

Likewise, a former Bush administration official, Andrew Natsios, in today's Washington Post endorsed the Obama administration's engagement policy, though criticized administration officials for using the word "genocide," which Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg used again today in remarks on behalf of Secretary Hilary Clinton.

Secretary Clinton was scheduled to appear at the event but did not do so. Since injuring her elbow last week, she has cut back on her public appearances, said a State Department official.

Steinberg said at the conference that "as we celebrate that achievement [of the CPA], we also can never let the recent peace allow us to erase the memory of the millions who were killed in the conflict that preceded the settlement."

Gration said, "Although much progress has been made in the past four and a half years, there's still much that remains to be done. There are still many things that remain unfulfilled and unimplemented, and that's what we're here to do today. With less than 19 months to go, our work is cut out for us and we have to set a foundation for Sudan for peace, security, and prosperity."

SPLM and NCP delegations agreed to meet with the United States as mediator at three-party talks in July in Khartoum and August in Juba.

Al-Sahafa reports head of SPLM delegation to Washington conference Malik Aqar as saying that the movement is disappointed over progress of the CPA implementation, affirming his movement's commitment to the CPA implementation and non-return to war. Meanwhile, head of the government delegation Ghazi Salahu el Din has called on the US Administration to lift sanctions imposed on Sudan, saying the government is implementing the CPA despite obstacles it is facing.

AFP 23/6/09 reported Sudan and former southern rebels agreed here to accept as binding an arbitration ruling due next month on a boundary dispute over the contested oil-rich Abyei region, US officials said Tuesday.

The Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) reached the deal on Abyei before international talks opened in Washington to bolster a fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between north and south.

Both agreed to "accept the Abyei arbitration as final and binding," Scott Gration, the US special envoy for Sudan, told reporters in a conference, adding both sides pledged to ensure the people on the ground also accept it.

The ruling on the Abyei demarcation is due July 18-22, a US official said.

US warns of threats against Sudan government, west

Reuters 24/6/09 - Islamic militants have threatened violence against Sudan's government and could target Western interests following the death of a suspected militant, the U.S. embassy in Khartoum said today.

The U.S. embassy, which urged its citizens to keep a low profile and restrict their travel, did not

give details of the "jihadist website" it said had published the threats or the suspected militant that had been killed.

The warning comes at a time of already heightened tension in the capital, where a judgement was due on Wednesday to issue a verdict in the case of five men accused of murdering a U.S. aid worker and his driver.

The U.S. embassy's warden message said: "Statements threatening violent action against the government of Sudan have been posted on a jihadist website, following the death of a suspected Islamic extremist."

It said calls to attack government targets "and/or Western interests" might be repeated during Friday prayers, and warned citizens not to travel inside the capital from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on that day.

Sudanese state media last week reported a university professor, wanted on charges related to extremism, had died after a police chase.

A police spokesman was quoted as saying someone threw a stone at the suspect while he was trying to get away from officers on a motorcycle on Wednesday last week, thinking he was a thief, and he died later in hospital of head injuries.

U.S. officials have acknowledged Sudan has been cooperative in sharing intelligence on militant groups since the September 11 attacks in 2001. But Western embassies have continued to warn that militants remain active in Sudan.

SPLA deploys along White Nile border

A source yesterday said that SPLA deployed at "Juda" area, along the border between the White Nile and Upper Nile states, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* reports. The source said the SPLA troops were searching vehicles before allowing them access to the town. The source warned that the situation could aggravate if SPLA deployment continues.

Growing disobedience within SPLA

Al-Wifaq reports observers are of the view that the growing disobedience by Dinka officers within SPLA of the orders from the Nuer-dominated new SPLA chief of staff could lead to conflict within the movement.

Commander of SPLA 5th Division (based in Abyei and Bahr el Ghazal) Gen. Beyang Deng Majok has disobeyed orders from SPLA command to relocate tanks manned by Dinka Ngok which have completed their military training in north Bahr el Ghazal.

"CPA in intensive care" – South MPs

Al-Intibaha reports the South Sudan Legislative Assembly has officially rejected the census results. SSLA Social Affairs Committee Deputy Chairman Martin Takome said the CPA was in "intensive care unit". Martin said the census exercise was not fair, accusing unnamed quarters of supplying arms to southern tribes to portray GoSS as incapable of managing the south. According to *Al-Ahdath*, Takome told SPLM members in Cairo that FVP Salva Kiir has officially informed the Presidency that he would not recognize the census results and proposed the adoption of the 1990s census as a compromise.

Four apprehended in Abyei over aid looting

Al-Watan reports police in Abyei is investigating four persons accused of looting relief materials

provided by the WFP to IDPs in the area. According to the aid distribution committee chair Tabek Omer Shagiga an unidentified group looted more than 206 tons of relief materials in the area.

Sudan formally withdraws from Cotonou Agreement amendments

Sudan Tribune website 23/6/09 – The Sudanese government formally submitted to the EU a notification of withdrawal from the amendments made to the Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific - European Union Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CA) signed in 2005.

The Sudanese official said that his country does not want to be part of the changes and the government has no legal obligations with regard to what it signed in 2005.

The Cotonou treaty in its original format aims at the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty while contributing to sustainable development and to the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy.

However, the revised Agreement incorporates the fight against impunity and promotion of criminal justice through the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Committee recommends additional states in Darfur

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the committee set up to look into feasibility of increasing Darfur state submitted its report to the Presidency yesterday. The committee recommended the establishment of two additional states in Darfur: central Darfur state with Zalingei as its capital and east Darfur state with Al- as its capital.

UN allocates \$ one million for people affected by mines in south

Miraya FM 23/6/09 - UNMAO has allocated \$01 million for those disabled due to mines in South Sudan. A specialist at the UNMAO David Naggi told Miraya FM that the project which aims to enhance socio-economic activities of disabled people targets over (1,000) disabled persons. Clarifying that UNMAO has established working cooperation with the Equatoria State Association of the Physically Disabled in Central Equatoria State where the project is to be implemented.

The chairperson of the Equatoria State Association of the Physically Disabled persons Charles Lumori Enos urged the Government to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled.

Police arrest 100 “niggers”

Al-Intibaha reports Interior Minister Ibrahim Mohamoud Hamid told the National Assembly that over “100 niggers” have recently been arrested and prosecuted as part of efforts to stamp out the phenomenon. Meanwhile, the Parliament called on the Interior Ministry to speed up efforts to put an end to the “niggers’ phenomenon” and to disarm militias in the national capital.

SPLM declines to comment on attempt on the life of Salva Kiir

Al-Watan reports a number of websites have circulated news of an attempt on the life of FVP Salva Kiir in Juba two month ago. According to the news, a young man had sneaked into Kiir room but Kiir alerted his guards and the young man was found under Kiir’s bed holding a revolver. Interrogated, the man confessed his intent to assassinate Kiir. The paper yesterday contacted SPLM spokesperson Yen Mathew for comment but he declined saying, “I do not want to comment on this subject”.

First group of refugees leave Chad for new lives in US – UN

UN News 23/6/09 – As part of UNHCR programme, the first group of refugees has left Chad to begin new lives in the United States.

The 11 refugees are the first of a total of 1,800 resettlement cases – mostly Sudanese refugees from the war-torn Darfur region living in camps in eastern Chad – the agency plans to identify this year.

The group – who are heading for Kentucky, Texas, Iowa and Utah – which departed for the US by air from the Chadian capital N'Djamena on 21 June comprise refugees from the DRC, Sudan and the CAR.

Currently, 250,000 refugees from Darfur are sheltering in 12 UNHCR-run camps in Chad's east. Additionally, 70,000 CAR refugees are living in five camps in southern Chad.

The US is the first country to promote resettlement for refugees in Chad, the agency said.

"Resettlement requires a very meticulous process and usually takes seven to nine months per individual case," said UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler.

The process includes interviews, medical screenings, counseling and cultural orientation sessions, and agency staffs are trained to detect fraud to ensure they do not select refugees who are not eligible for resettlement.

December deadline for Bengali labourers

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour Gen. Adam Hamad told a seminar on unemployment yesterday that the Ministry fixed 31 December as deadline for departure of Bengali workers from the country, citing inefficiency as a reason for the expulsion, ***Al-Rai Al-Aam*** reports. Also, he said Egyptian workers would only be employed if they are in possession of work permit from the Ministry of Labour. Hamad criticized UN agencies operating in Darfur for concluding contracts with foreign rather national companies to deliver aid to IDPs.

Give peace a chance

The Washington Times. [Op-Ed]. Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani 06/23/2009. What the media aren't telling us about Darfur

Eight years ago a newly elected American administration sent a special envoy to Sudan. Sen. John Danforth put aside several years of failed United States policy and "advocacy" toward Sudan, and accepted at face value Sudanese proposals to end the civil war in southern Sudan between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Sudanese government.

Several years of American and European-brokered negotiations resulted in the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended Africa's longest-running conflict, established a coalition government and set a timetable for presidential and parliamentary elections and a landmark referendum on unity or separation for the south.

It was perhaps the Bush administration's only foreign policy success. Four years later a similar watershed has presented itself. A new administration in Washington can play a similarly pivotal role by brokering peace in Darfur - the focus since 2003 of another conflict - as well as reinforcing and sustaining the unfolding north-south peace process.

At face value, peace in Darfur in 2009 is much closer than the prospect of peace in southern Sudan was in 2001. All the stated reasons for the start of the Darfur conflict - political and economic marginalization - together with security arrangements, have been addressed in the internationally brokered 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). The DPA, which runs to more than 100 pages, is undoubtedly the basis for peace in Darfur.

It is a matter of record that the DPA drew extensively on the political and wealth-sharing formulas entrenched in the CPA. While the Sudanese government agreed to all of the additional concessions written into the DPA and signed the agreement, only one of the three Darfur rebel movements subsequently signed the document.

The ball is now in the court of the rebel movements and the international community. Both the United States and United Kingdom, for example, clearly stated that the DPA was an excellent document and strongly warned the rebel movements against rejecting it: both promised they would treat any such rejection very firmly indeed. The truth is both Washington and London did not follow through with this commitment, and paradoxically sought to bring more pressure to bear on Khartoum - itself clearly committed to the Darfur peace process.

There will be no peace in Darfur unless the international community, and especially the United States, brings pressure to bear on the rebel movements and those countries militarily and politically supporting them. The American role is pivotal.

The Obama administration could lead the international community in bringing the Darfur rebel movements to the negotiating table, amending the DPA as needed and providing any additional safeguards deemed necessary.

A constructive American engagement with the peace process both in Darfur and southern Sudan will need a new approach. Just as in 2001, when the Bush administration rose above often crude anti-Sudanese imagery, the Obama administration will have to place on hold the siren calls by the many Darfur advocacy groups that have sought to reduce the incredibly complex Darfur crisis to a two-word bumper sticker slogan.

Calls for military intervention in Darfur, whether by way of a "no-fly zone" or NATO forces, would be disastrous. It would not just derail the CPA; it would also risk creating another Iraq in Sudan, the soft underbelly of Egypt; and within the Sahel, the soft underbelly of Europe. The new post-Bush political policy in Washington must take cognizance of the fact that the Iraq debacle was the result of advocacy trumping reality.

Similar Sudan "advocacy" must be treated with considerable caution.

The present campaign within the United States for divestment from the Sudanese economy, even at second and third hand, also endangers peace in Sudan.

Given that the Darfur rebels say they started the war in 2003 in large part to secure more wealth for their region, and that much of the peace negotiations have focused on a wealth-sharing formula, deliberately draining Sudan of investment and resources merely denies Darfurians that for which they have fought. Divestment similarly undermines the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Peace in Darfur, and throughout Sudan, lies in large part in the hands of the Obama administration. It will find a willing partner in the government of national unity in Khartoum.

Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani is the leader of the National Congress Party caucus in the Sudanese National Assembly, and is a Cabinet-rank presidential adviser.

What do we expect from Washington Forum?

“The US Administration endeavoured over the past two days to achieve a rapprochement between the CPA Partners on the pending issues and to devise a roadmap to address them with hope of reaching a bilateral agreement in today’s session of the forum. But these efforts are unlikely to succeed given the differences between the two partners that are expected to dominate the meeting. They may wrap up with a declaration of goodwill stating that they will sort out their differences through direct dialogue during the few coming weeks with international assistance” Mr. Mahgoub Mohamed Saleh, ***Al-Ayyam*** analyst and former editor-in-chief writes.

“Today’s meeting in Washington will attempt to pressurize the two partners to agree but the point is that if Washington did not succeed in a week time to achieve rapprochement it will not do so in just hours”. “The forum will conclude by giving advises to the two partners and pledges for funding to assist them to accomplish the task. There will be nothing more than expression of goodwill but the contentious issues will remain until they are resolved by the Sudanese people themselves or they lead to an explosion”.

“This is not pessimism. It is a close review of the political, economic and security status quo. What will happen at the forum is that the AEC will review the pending issues and stress the need to address them especially legal reform, elections, census, Abyei and border demarcation. The SRSG Ashraf Qazi will talk about the security situation, obstacles facing disarmament, JIUs which are neither joint nor integrated; redeployment and DDR; and finally the World Bank chairman will talk about stalled economic development and peace in the Sudan. Each party will seek to place the blame on the other but they may agree to put partial blame on the international community just with hope of securing funding rather than to resolve the problems. We will find ourselves back to square one where issues will be referred for more consultation of two partners that have proved incapable of resolving their crisis without assistance from others”.