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Office of the Spokesperson***Press Release No. 23/06*****Sudan, UNMIS Discuss East, Abyei and LRA**

Khartoum, 10 May 2006 – A high ranking U.N. official in Sudan has met with a Government of National Unity minister to discuss preparations for the first round of talks between Khartoum and the Eastern Front, the resolution of the Abyei question, and efforts to address the activities of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) in southern Sudan.

The Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, met in Khartoum with the Minister of the Council of Ministers, Deng Alor, to discuss issues relating to the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and to explore ways of making further progress on a number of issues relevant to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

With regard to eastern Sudan, Zerihoun and Alor discussed the recent progress made in engaging the relevant parties in a direct dialogue. The U.N. official explained that the recent positive development in ties between Sudan and Eritrea was one main reason. Minister Alor describe to Zerihoun the ongoing preparations of the GNU and SPLM, and underlined the importance of engaging the international community, including the U.N., in this peace process until an agreement is reached. Talks are expected to start towards the end of May.

On the issue of Abyei, Zerihoun stressed to the Sudanese Cabinet Minister the importance and urgency of the Presidency finalizing this matter given that the report of the Boundary Commission was submitted to the Presidency last July. Zerihoun expressed his concern with restrictions on the movements of UNMIS monitors in the Abyei area. Alor asserted that the SPLM and the National Congress Party will continue discussions of the issue, in accordance with the CPA.

The U.N. official also discussed with Alor the security risks posed by activities of the LRA in the south. They reviewed recent contacts conducted between the SPLM and LRA in Western Equatoria. They discussed the idea of a regional mechanism to deal with the LRA issue which would involve Sudan, Uganda and Congo and the cooperation of MONUC and UNMIS.

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