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Press Release

UNAMID Takes Over Peacekeeping in Darfur

The African Union Mission Transfers Authority to the International Force in a Historic Ceremony in El Fasher

El Fasher / N. Darfur, 31 December 2007 - The Joint United Nations / African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has formally taken over from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) in an official ceremony at the new mission headquarters in El Fasher, this morning.

The ceremony kicked off with a formal salutation of the flag of the African Union, before it was lowered. A Transfer of Authority certificate was then signed by the UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Rodolphe Adada, the AU Chairperson Representative, Ambassador Mahmoud Kane, and UNAMID Force Commander, Martin Luther Agwai. The signing was witnessed by the Wali (Governor) of N. Darfur, Osman Mohamed Yousif Kibir and United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Ashraf Qazi.

The UN and AU flags were, then, simultaneously hoisted and the military and police personnel changed their head gear to the UN blue berets, signaling the official transfer of authority to UNAMID. The transfer of authority takes place in accordance with the timeline specified in UN Security Council resolution 1769 of 31 July 2007.

In his address, UNAMID Joint Special Representative of the UN and AU and Head of Mission, Rodolphe Adada, said UNAMID will now build on what AMIS has achieved with a new and robust mandate and the prospect of a larger and more technically capable force. He paid tribute to the men and women of AMIS “whose dedication, bravery and sacrifice over the last four and a half years has laid the foundation for this new enlarged joint UN and AU Mission,” he pointed out.

He called upon all Darfurians to work with UNAMID with a spirit of cooperation to create a pact of partnership for a secure and stable future. He said, “By working together we will succeed together.”

Adada also delivered a joint message on behalf of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon and AU Commission Chairperson, Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, emphasizing the critical

gaps that may hinder the UNAMID force. In their message, they pointed out the fact that the UN has “still not received any pledges for ground transportation units and aviation assets. These are essential to the mobility of the force and its ability to adequately protect the civilian population.”

The UN Secretary General and the AU Commission Chairperson appealed to governments to contribute these critical assets. They also appealed to the government of Sudan to work constructively with UNAMID, saying that they were “encouraged that Sudan recently agreed to a number of points related to the deployment, and I expect it to follow through on the commitments they have made.”

At full strength, the new mission, authorized by the UN Security Council on 31 July 2007, will be the UN’s largest peacekeeping operation, with some 20,000 troops and more than 6,000 police and civilian staff.

Some 9,000 uniformed personnel are on the ground now, including 7,000 troops and 1,200 police serving with the AMIS, which, as well as United Nations soldiers and police officers serving as part of the UN’s “heavy” and “light support packages” deployed to support AMIS over the last year.

Speaking at the ceremony, UNMIS SRSG, Ashraf Qazi, said “Peace in Sudan is, of course, indivisible. A comprehensive peace can only be achieved when all parts of this beautiful country have achieved peace and harmony.” He added, “I will take this opportunity to call on all parties to the Darfur conflict to shun violence and participate in the peace process for the sake of the future generations of this country.”

The Wali of North Darfur, Osman Mohamed Yousif Kibir, representing the Government of Sudan, made a statement at the ceremony, where he said, “We are aware that UNAMID is here to support Darfur. We pledge to provide UNAMID with the support it needs to fulfill its mandate, based on UN Security Council Resolution 1769, to which we are fully committed.”

The deployment of the UN-AU peacekeeping mission is complemented by joint efforts on the political front. The UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Darfur, Jan Eliasson, and the AU Special Envoy for Darfur, Salim Ahmed Salim, are pursuing a political settlement to the Darfur crisis through negotiations aimed at achieving a peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Darfurian movements.

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