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Highlights

NCP, SPLM agree to amend referendum schedules

Al-Sahafa (Khartoum) 17/8/10 – The NCP and the SPLM have reportedly agreed to a suggestion by the Referendum Commission to amend the referendum schedules, ending long running differences over the process. The forthcoming Presidency meeting is expected to endorse the agreement for implementation.

GoSS International Cooperation Minister Deng Alor told the newspaper that the two partners have considered a proposal submitted by the Referendum Commission to the federal government and the GoSS on the need to amend schedules of the referendum by reducing the time allocated for implementing each referendum phase - from one month to just 15 days - but without prejudice to the referendum deadline. He pointed out that the Commission did not propose postponement of the referendum because it has no right to do so.

Meanwhile, the SPLM has lashed out against Commission chief Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil, calling on him to observe neutrality. Alor said the SPLM deplores Khalil's statement on unity and secession, adding the statement questions the neutrality of the head of the Commission.

SPSL SG Pagan Amum, for his part, considered Khalil's threat to resign as "escape from responsibility and non-recognition of the right of the people of the South to decide their destiny based on the CPA".

Southern Sudan not prepared for independence – De Chan

Sudan Tribune website 16/8/10 - Majority decisions in favor of an independent Southern Sudan in next year's referendum could have serious repercussions not only in the region, but the entire African continent, a renowned Sudanese Political scholar has warned.

David De Chand, the Chairman of Southern Sudan Democratic Front (SSDF) party told journalists in Kampala, Uganda that it's still too early for the semi-autonomous region to secede from the north, given its "lack of leadership capabilities".

Asked to elaborate further, De Chand said, "I should now tell you that Southern Sudan is not united at all. It [still] lacks leadership capabilities to govern itself and our experience with the SPLM [Sudanese People Liberation Movement] leadership has been disastrous for the last five years".

The SSDF Chairman also accused the southern Sudan ruling party of its alleged interference in the April general elections, saying the latter "deliberately and willfully" barred other Southern Sudan parties from freely propagating their political ideas to the population.

"The elections were not democratic because they were rigged by the SPLM and the way the SPLA [Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army] behaved during the elections showed that they are partisan and not a national force," he said.

De Chand maintains that unity remains the only option in the forthcoming referendum, and that an independent Southern Sudan could undermine efforts to achieve the East African integration.

According to the SSDF leader, the current political boundaries of Sudan needed to be preserved, arguing that if the south separated from the north, the entire country will disintegrate, citing likely scenarios in Darfur, Southern Blue Nile, Eastern Sudan and the Nuba mountains.

"To make matters worse, that scenario would lead to the disintegration of other African countries and that is what Europe wants to achieve. This has been the major cause of conflicts between Sudan and western countries," Prof. De Chand told journalists.

"We will decide our destiny even without the referendum commission" – Brig. Zacharia

Al-Ahdath 17/8/10 – Governor of West Bahr El Ghazal state brig. Rizig Zacharia has threatened that his state would decide its destiny even without the referendum commission. He said war could breakout between his state and South Darfur if the Border Demarcation Committee fails to annex Kafia Kingi area to West Bahr El Ghazal and called on the civilians who gathered yesterday at Wau stadium to commemorate the departure of SPLM leader John Garang to transcend their personal and tribal differences so that the referendum is successful. "Dispute over Huftrat Al-Nahas may lead to a third war between West Bahr El Ghazal and South Darfur," he warned.

Meanwhile, Governor of Warrap state Nyandang Milik has called on the civilians to free themselves through the referendum. On Abyei, she said the Khartoum regime is committing "serious violations", urging the people to take to streets to protest the violations.

"In the event of secession, each country will be responsible for its nationals" – NCP official

Al-Ahram 17/8/10 – the NCP has described as "premature" the call by SPLM leaders for guaranteeing the four freedoms between the North and the South if secession takes place, saying each country will be responsible for its nationals once they part ways.

"Secession has not taken place yet. However, if it happens, each country will be responsible for its nationals including their accommodation, residence, work etc.," Qutbi Al-Mahdi, NCP secretary for organizations, warned.

Al-Bashir to meet political parties on Thursday

Al-Sahafa 17/8/10 – NCP political secretary Ibrahim Ghandour said President Al-Bashir would hold a consultation meeting with leaders of the political forces on Thursday for discussion on the Sudanese issues particularly referendum. He said all the political

parties were invited to attend the consultation meeting with the President.

Ghandour has reiterated the NCP's commitment to conduct the referendum on schedule and said he was optimistic that unity would be maintained.

US Special Envoy heading to Sudan, Kenya

Sudan Tribune (Washington) 16/08/10 - US special envoy to Sudan Scott Gration headed to the region for a two week visit that will focus mainly on the preparations for the referendum in South Sudan that is scheduled for early next year.

The US State Department said that Gration will hold talks with senior leaders of the Government of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) "to discuss implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), preparations for the January 2011 referenda on self-determination for Southern Sudan and Abyei, and negotiations on issues relating to the period after the CPA".

"He will also initiate a broader dialogue regarding security, conflict mitigation, and planning for the post-referendum period. The Special Envoy will discuss security and stabilization efforts in Darfur with Sudanese officials, former President of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan Thabo Mbeki, and UNAMID Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari," the statement read.

The US has reportedly decided in a recent meeting of senior administration officials to endorse a plan by Gration to focus on the referendum and place the crisis in Darfur as a low priority on its agenda.

Other Highlights

Border row with Sudan stalls construction of road in Uganda

Sudan Tribune website 16/8/10 - Ugandan official said border row with Sudan halted several development projects in the disputed area including a 66- kilometer road to the Sudanese border.

In statements published by the state-owned newspaper New Vision on Monday, Sylvester Opira, the deputy resident district commissioner of the Ugandan Kitgum district, said land wrangles between the two countries stalled the construction of the 66 road from Kitgum to the Sudanese border.

The Ugandan official pointed out that the Sudanese are claiming about 20 kilometers of land inside Uganda including "parts of Madi-Opei, Agoro, Potika, Lokung and Palabek sub counties".

"The Southern Sudanese authorities have stopped Ugandan engineers from surveying Kitgum-Madi-Opei road up to the border. The engineers should have started last year but the dispute has stalled it," he further said.

Government allows aid agencies to enter Kalma camp

Local dailies 17/8/10 – South Darfur state Government issued a decision permitting UN agencies and international NGOs to access Kalma camp to deliver relief.

According to *Al-Akhbar* 17/8/10, South Darfur state HAC commissioner Jamal Yousuf told *SMC* that the state government has allowed the agencies and the NGOs to enter the camp but pointed out that the state government did not receive official confirmation from UN on deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the camp following the recent incidents. He said the decision allows the NGOs and agencies to provide all types of humanitarian services.

Botswana says Bashir still vulnerable on its territory despite AU resolution

Sudan Tribune website 16/8/10 - The government of Botswana reiterated its position regarding the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir saying the latter will be arrested should he set foot on its territory.

“We have not surrendered the sovereignty of this country to the AU” Botswana Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Phandu Skelemani told reporters adding that Botswana signed the Rome Statute as a sovereign country.

“The International Criminal Court (ICC) Rome Statute is signed by a Country not AU. Botswana does not fear being isolated by other African countries since they [Botswana] are implementing the international protocols they have signed,” Skelemani added.

“That decision by the AU was a consensus. It was not a unanimous decision. Other countries do not even want the issue to go to a vote,” said the minister.

Botswana Vice president Mompoti Merafhe reportedly addressed AU leaders at the summit held in Kampala saying that his country "cannot associate herself with any decision which calls upon her to disregard her obligations to the International Criminal Court".

Merafhe said while Botswana respected the call by other African states for parties to balance their obligations, "Botswana intends to comply with its obligations and to cooperate with the ICC."

He further said that there are no contradictions between the legal instruments of the African Union and the Rome Statute that established the ICC.

"In our view the obligations to the two bodies are not at all in conflict.....The heads of state and government have made a commitment to fight impunity, and to protect our constituents against various crimes including crimes against humanity," he added.

Merafhe said his explanation of Botswana's position was not directed at any particular case, but was addressing the issues of principle.

South Africa has also declared that it will not abide by the AU resolution on cooperating with the ICC.

Government expels six senior staff of ICRC and UN in Darfur

Al-Sahafa 17/8/10 – Sudan Government yesterday expelled six staff from UN and ICRC operating in Darfur. The government reportedly said the ousted staff members had committed “personal crimes” and the newspaper has learned that some of the expelled staff arrived in Khartoum yesterday prior to their departure.

West Darfur HAC commissioner Mohamed Hassan Awad said those expelled include three staff from UNHCR, one from FAO and two from the ICRC. “The crime of each ousted staff member differs from the other and they are personal crimes. Their organizations have taken disciplinary measures against them,” he said.

Sudan Tribune website 16/8/10 reported that Sudan on Sunday, August 15, ordered five foreign aid workers to leave West Darfur State, only one week after president Al-Bashir publicly mandated Darfur governors to expel foreigners who “exceed their work agreements”.

A UN official told Reuters yesterday that the Sudanese authorities had asked three UN staff members and two of ICRC to leave western Darfur.

“The heads of the UNHCR [U.N. refugee agency] and FAO [UN Food and Agriculture agency] in West Darfur as well as the head of UNHCR agency in Zalengei have been asked to leave,” said Abdallah al-Fadil, the head of UNAMID in west Darfur.

He added to Reuters that the government also informed him “that it had asked both the ICRC’s heads of delegation in Al-Geneina and Zalengei [town] to leave too.”

According to Reuters, Fadil said it was not clear why the authorities had told the staff to leave, only that they had made mistakes “beyond their mandate.”

Reuters also quoted another UN source speaking on condition of anonymity as saying that the head of FAO office in West Darfur was told to leave because he had forwarded a petition against hunger without obtaining approval for it.

The local daily newspaper Ajrass al-Hurriyah reported that humanitarian officials in Darfur declined to comment on the decision but said that “it was a matter falling within the state’s jurisdictions.”

The expulsion coincided with calls by the UN’s humanitarian chief, John Holmes, on the Sudanese government to lift its aid blockade of the Kalma camp in South Darfur.

UN chief voices concern over situation in Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 16/8/10 - The United Nation’s secretary-general, Ban Ki Moon, has voiced concern over kidnappings of international peacekeepers as well as tension at Kalma camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), warning that these incidents have “contributed to a worsening of the situation” in the restive region of Darfur where

two UNAMID peacekeepers were recently abducted.

Two Jordanian police advisers working for UNAMID were kidnapped while walking to a UNAMID transport point near their residence in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state. Their kidnapers have demanded ransom for their release.

“Continued attacks on UNAMID peacekeepers and abductions and mistreatment of UN staff and humanitarian workers will only aggravate the situation,” warned a statement released by Ban’s spokesperson yesterday.

However, the statement said that the UN chief “appreciates” the restoration today of humanitarian access to Kalma camp after aid groups were not allowed into the camp for two weeks after fighting between opponents and proponents of Darfur peace talks claimed eight lives and catapulted UNAMID relations with the government to a tense standoff over the sheltering of six refugees accused by the government of instigating the violence.

Aid groups yesterday confirmed that the Sudanese authorities allowed them back in Kalma camp but said that the situation there remains tense.

The secretary-general’s statement was keen to note that “constraints on aid agencies operating in Darfur have been steadily increasing since March 2009, when 11 international NGOs were expelled from the region” which occurred concurrently with the issuance of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for president Al-Bashir on charges of war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur.

Ban Ki Moon called on the Sudanese Government “to apprehend and bring to justice those who attack UN staff and humanitarian workers and to take all possible measures to ensure that humanitarian access to all Sudanese remains open and humanitarian space protected.”

UNAMID, Government dig security trench around Nyala

ReliefWeb 16/810 - Responding to the increase in incidence of kidnappings and carjacking in Nyala, South Darfur, targeting the international community in particular, UNAMID and the local government have agreed to work together to construct a security trench which will span the town's perimeter.

UNAMID's Chinese Engineering Company began work on Sunday on the Mission's half of the trench. The measure is designed to reduce the high incidence of criminality by regulating travel to and from the town. While limiting entry and exit through small roads, the town will remain fully accessible through major roads and highways.

The trench, measuring 2 meters deep and 2 meters wide, will span approximately 40 kilometers long and is expected to be completed within 4 to 5 weeks. Local authorities will provide 24 hour protection for UNAMID equipment and personnel until the project's completion.

Sudan accomplishes MDG on reducing maternal, infant mortality rates

The Citizen 18/08/10 – Sudan has announced it has accomplished the Millennium

Development Goals in cutting down on maternal and child mortality rates by half, five years ahead of the planned date. The Federal Ministry of Health unveiled in a report yesterday the results of the household survey that shows major progress in combating maternal and infant mortality, citing South Darfur and Khartoum State as samples.

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