



Regional Coordinator expresses concern about border conflicts

UNMIS Regional Coordinator for Southern Sudan David Gressley expressed concern at a press briefing in Juba on 5 February about continuing conflict in border areas, but said the UN was urging parties to minimize tension that could undermine progress in implementing the CPA.

He also provided an update on returns, stating that the UN planned to support up to 350,000 returnees to Southern Sudan in 2008, both internally displaced persons (IDPS) and refugees from neighboring countries, Mr. Gressley said. He noted that about two million refugees and IDPs had already returned to Southern Sudan, and that 50 per cent of refugees were expected back before the end of the year.

Turning to development, the Regional Coordinator said the UN had supported the region with basic infrastructure, including construction of roads, bridges, airfields, schools and government offices. Some 8,000 kilometres of road had been surveyed and de-mined, and the Organization planned to open up a further 2,000 kilometres this year.

Mr. Gressley added that the UN had continued to support education, observing that more than a million children were now in school. The UN also hoped to provide water to 500,000 people in 2008 and continue to support the capacity of the region's water department, he said.

IDPs return south from Khartoum

Some 1,500 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returned to their homes in Southern Sudan from camps and settlements in and around Khartoum in January, according to International Organization for Migration (IOM) figures.

The IDPs traveled by land and water to reach destinations in Unity, Warrap and Upper Nile states.

The returnees were assisted by the Joint Organized Return Plan, which is coordinated and implemented by the Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan, the UN Mission in Sudan and the IOM. To date, the Joint Plan has helped more than 47,000 IDPs return to Southern Sudan.

HEARD on RADIO MIRAYA:

On clashes between Chadian government troops with rebels in N'Djamena, and accusations of Sudan's involvement ...

"Up to this moment, we weren't able to provide aid to these people. The humanitarian situation will turn to catastrophe, and that is very worrying."

Maurizio Giuliano
Public Information Officer
UN Office for the
Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs, Chad
5 February

"JEM exists in its freed areas and will not be affected by what's happening in Chad [contrary to] the Sudanese government...this confirms that the true solution of the Darfur case will never be through Chad, but by having serious and honest dialogue between all parties."

Abdel -Hamid Haroun
Justice and Equality
Movement (JEM) Secretary
of Foreign Affairs
4 February

"The talk about Sudanese government support of the opposition forces is untrue... because Sudan... has been mediating between the Chadian government and the

National Council to launch strategy against FGM

Marking the first International Day against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on 6 February, the National Council of Child Welfare (NCCW) announced the official launch of Sudan's National Strategy to eradicate FGM by 2018.

NCCW officials will carry out the strategy in close partnership with UNICEF and with the support of UNMIS' Gender unit. As part of the strategy, a draft bill considering FGM a criminal act, rather than a traditional practice, will soon be submitted to the Council of Ministers.

According to NCCW Secretary-General Amira Elfadil, some 90% of Sudanese women have undergone FGM, although the practice is now outlawed by the Sudanese Ministry of Health and medical society. Medical evidence has shown that FGM poses a serious threat to the health of women and girls, increasing vulnerability to HIV, raising the risk of maternal and infant mortality and harming psychological, sexual and reproductive health.

As the leading agency in combating FGM, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) issued a statement on the International Day calling for stronger commitment to end the harmful practice as well as protection for the rights of women and girls around the world. UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid urged governments to develop effective policies to eliminate FGM.

A ceremony to officially launch Sudan's National Strategy to eradicate FGM will take place on 9 February at Sharja Hall in Khartoum.

UNAMID deployment to become major Council issue

Deployment of the hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) will be among major issues taken up by the Security Council this month, Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias of Panama said at a press briefing in New York on 4 February.

This Friday (8 February), the Council would have a public meeting to hear Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's latest report on UNAMID, rather than its usual consultations, said Mr. Arias, whose country holds this month's Council presidency. The debate's aim would be to bring greater awareness to the entire membership of the situation in Sudan and difficulties the mission was facing, he said.

Last week Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir agreed on the need to accelerate UNAMID's deployment during a meeting in Addis Ababa on the sidelines of the AU summit.

Although the mission is now in operation in Darfur, many outstanding issues remain between UNAMID and the government. The mission, which at full deployment is expected to have some 26,000 troops and police officers, still lacks essential logistics and equipment, including helicopters.

opposition groups in Eastern Chad. It wouldn't be logical to [say we're] reconciling between the Chadian government and the opposition, and at the same time [say we're] supporting the opposition."

Ali Al-Sadiq
Sudanese Foreign Minister
3 February

"We have no relation [in regards of] supporting the Chadian opposition...these accusations are baseless and untrue, and have no evidences...we are committed to all agreements that organize the military action on the borders."

Al Sawarmi Khalid Saad
Director of Sudan Armed
Forces Spokesperson's
Office
1 February

On the call to suspend the LRA-Uganda government peace talks over accusations against the LRA of launching an attack in Kajo-Keji ...

"These talks should be immediately suspended until that situation is brought under control. The LRA cannot be killing our people at the same time they're looking for us to resolve their problems."

Zamba Duku
Head of the Legislative
Assembly in EES
1 February

Security Council demands end to Chad violence

The UN Security Council demanded on 4 February an immediate end to the violence engulfing Chad, and welcomed an African Union (AU) initiative to engage both the government and armed opposition groups in finding a durable solution to the crisis.

“The Security Council strongly condemns these attacks and all attempts at destabilization by force, and recalls its commitment to the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political independence of Chad,” the 15-member panel said in a presidential statement read out by Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias of Panama.

The Council called on states within the region “to deepen their cooperation with a view to putting an end to the activities of armed groups and their attempt to seize power by force”. It further called on Member States to provide support to the Chadian Government if it sought assistance.

Mr. Arias said the Council applauded the AU initiative to mandate Libyan leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi and President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo “to engage the Chadian parties with a view to ending the fighting and to initiate efforts aimed at seeking a lasting solution to the crisis”.

Council members also expressed concern that current fighting posed a direct threat to civilians in Chad, including IDPs and refugees. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates IDPs and refugees in the country to number more than 460,000.

UNHCR send team to assess Chadians in Cameroon

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sent a team of staff to the border town of Kousseri in Cameroon to assess an expected influx of thousands of Chadians, according to a statement released by the agency on 4 February.

Local officials told the agency that thousands of Chadians had fled N'Djamena and were reaching Kousseri, on the other bank of the Chari river, via 15 crossing points. Two UNHCR trucks carrying aid supplies were being sent to the area from Bertoua in eastern Cameroon and an airlift of more supplies from either Dubai or Copenhagen was also being considered.

High Commissioner António Guterres appealed to all sides to respect humanitarian principles when dealing with civilians. “Hundreds of thousands of uprooted people in Chad depend on international support and a very fragile aid lifeline that must reach some of the most desolate and isolated parts of the country,” he said.

He added that insecurity was forcing the agency to relocate some staff and threatened to severely affect the flow of life-saving aid to vulnerable populations. Almost all UNHCR staff had been evacuated from N'Djamena, but staff had continued to work at most camps in the east, near the border with Sudan's Darfur region.

MIRAYA HIGHLIGHTS

Live Debates and Call-ins

The role of the State Assembly in solving problems of high prices of foods, etc. in Juba: Hon. Jacob Aligo, Controller of the House, Central Equatoria State (31 January).

How can music promote peace among youth in Southern Sudan? Origin Ras Korby, President of the Southern Sudan Musician's Union, and Winlock James of the Freedom Boys group (1 February).

Police powers of arrest and use of force: Major Gen. of Police Machar Akau Machar, Director of Orientation & Service and Official Spokesman for South Sudan Police Service (SSPS) (5 February).

Features and Interviews

Interview with the Jean-Marie Guhenno, Under Secretary General for Peace Keeping Operations (2 February 2008)

“Ask the President”: Interview with GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit, where he answered questions from Miraya FM listeners, as presented by the radio station's journalists. Listener participation was local as well as global, coming from Yambio, Aweil, Malakal, Torit, Yei, Australia, Canada, amongst others (26 January).

Darfur: The Road to Peace

Street theater followed by audience feedback, from the Afia Darfur festival.

UN Mirror

Yambio Special: Interview with Francis Francisco of the Yambio-based Secretariat of the South Sudan Relief and Reconstruction Office, which works closely with UNMIS' Recovery, Return and Reintegration unit. The program also includes features about returnees to Yambio.