

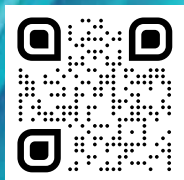
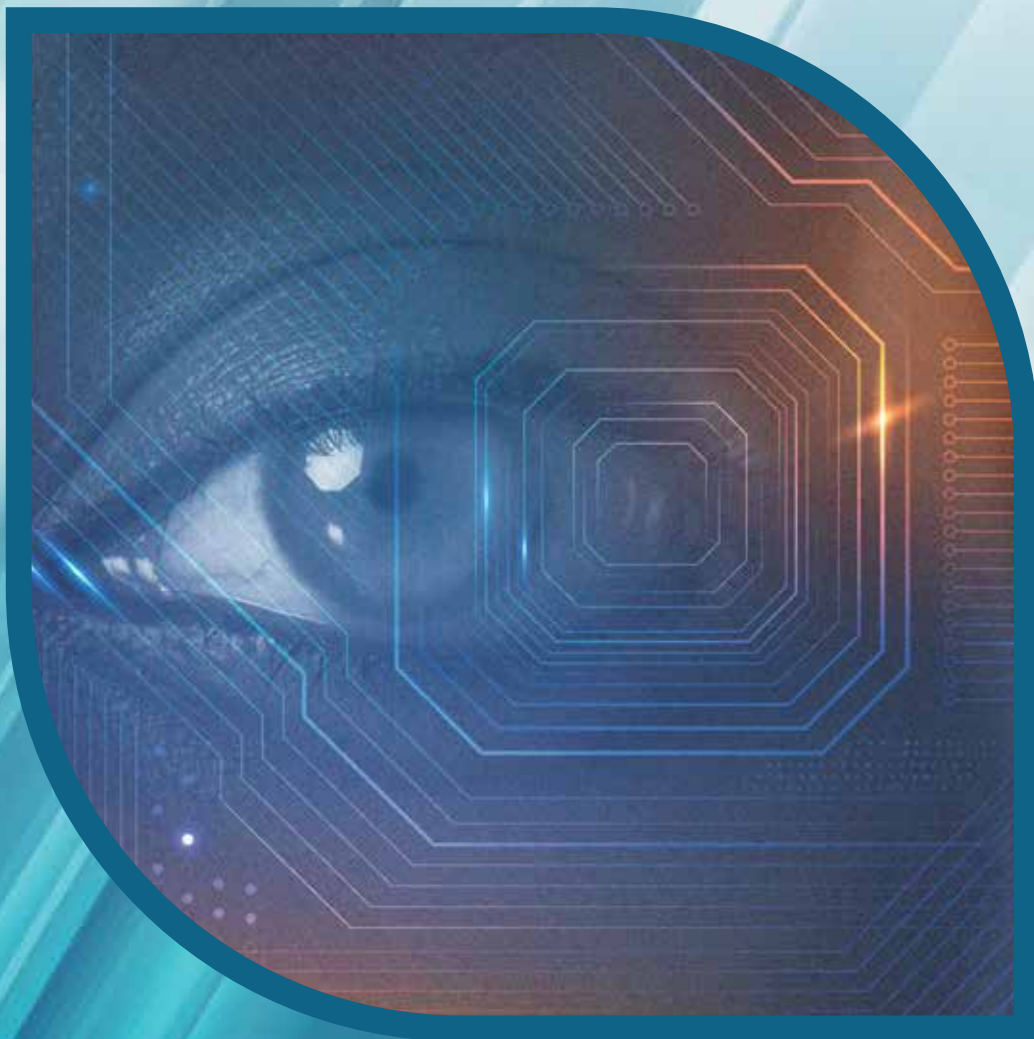


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JULY 2023

SEYCHELLES

JULY 2023

ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF AFRICAN DAY OF SEAS AND OCEANS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES, MR. WAVEL RAMKALAWAN

24 JULY 2023 | BLUE ECONOMY

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Greeting to you all.

It is my pleasure to address you on this auspicious occasion, in the celebration of our African aquatic heritage.

Evidently, Africa's aquatic resources are worthy of recognition and celebration - for let us not forget that Africa boasts of some 26,000 nautical miles of coastline and 13 million km² of Exclusive Economic Zones.

Remarkably this year, the African Day of Seas and Oceans is being commemorated through a Blue Economy Awareness Week!

Dedicating a whole week to blue economy-related discussions is indeed significant, and indicative of the increased significance that we, African citizens, progressively assign to the sustainable development of our aquatic resources.

To be reminded is that Africa's lakes, seas, rivers and oceans have been acknowledged by the African Union as the centerpiece of Africa's sustainable development pathway.

Excellency's, ladies and gentlemen, in the last decade, there has been a rising global movement that is urging humanity to review and rethink the manner in which it operates within its natural environment.

Our adoption and implementation of Africa's Blue Economy Continental Strategy, is indicative that Africa is responding to this global call!

This is understandable in view of the many threats that plague our seas and oceans, most of which emanate from global human actions that instigate climate change, and threaten life on earth as we know it.

At the end of the day, no matter how big or small a part we have played in the global environmental decline, we have all heard and felt the warnings of how humankind's reckless exploits are gradually pulling us into an age of scarcity and deprivation.

Although it is indeed important for us to be mindful of all these threats, in order for us to move forward and try to take control of our own destiny, it is equally significant for us to focus on the opportunities that have risen out of all these threats.

For one, these environmental pressures have forced us to look at our aquatic resources through a broader lens. It has taken us out of our comfort zones and taught us to: look beyond our limited, traditional tourism and fisheries practices, and to explore new possibilities with more promising socio-economic and environmental returns. Consequently, today we are not only becoming more business-minded in terms of efficiency, but also more environmentally cautious and therefore more sustainable. Case in point, we are learning on how to add value to a single resource, so as to earn more from less. A plain example is Seychelles' efforts to fish less but to increase the value of one fish, for instance through our boosting of the fish processing industry. Moreover, there is also our effort to explore the development of new sectors such as circular economy and marine biotechnology to diversify our revenue stream, all the while reducing pressure off our traditional economic sectors, the likes of fisheries and tourism.

Ladies and gentlemen, one lesson learnt from the Seychelles' blue economy experience is that we need to put our people at the centre of development. We need to ensure that whatever we are doing is relatable to the general population and that they are thoroughly engaged. We have to be mindful that community or local buy-in is one of the main decisive factors in the extent that any project or initiative is successfully implemented. This is a message that we need to echo far and wide across the continent!

This is why Seychelles together with AUC are advocating for increased blue economy sensitization and improved communication strategies - it is only when people gain understanding, that they can identify with an idea and eventually commit to making it work.

Moreover, the need for youth integration across our endeavours cannot be overly stressed. Youths are not only a source of innovation and ingenuity, but they also add the element of continuity - or the sustainability component to our plans and objectives. They are after all our succession plan and should be nurtured, empowered and educated accordingly.

On this note, I am pleased to share that Seychelles has piloted an initiative to integrate ocean science in the national school curriculum. This is something that we would encourage other

African countries to emulate in future.

Last but not least, I would also like to highlight the need to foster more collaboration and partnerships across African nations - for there is strength in numbers. Hence, we have to work together to find our true north and to illuminate the pathway to a desirable future for all of Africa's children.

I thank you, and wish you an enriching experience throughout the Blue Economy Awareness week!

Source: Al Jazeera news

SUDAN

3RD JULY 2023

STRUGGLING AGAINST ODDS: HUMANITARIAN AID BATTLES OBSTACLES IN SUDAN HUMANITARIAN AID IN SUDAN FACES MOUNTING CHALLENGES AID DELIVERY HAMPERED BY LOOTERS, INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS

JUBA: The dire humanitarian crisis in Sudan, stemming from the prolonged conflict, has left millions of people in desperate need of assistance. However, relief efforts face significant challenges. Funding shortages, security constraints, and bureaucratic obstacles imposed by local authorities have hindered the delivery of essential aid. And gaining access to conflict-affected areas has posed additional difficulties due to the disregard for humanitarian laws.

According to the UN, more than \$3 billion is urgently required from international donors to support the humanitarian response in Sudan and the neighboring countries hosting large numbers of refugees.

However, during a pledging conference held in Geneva last week, donors only committed half of the required amount. Kate Phillips-Barrasso, vice president of global policy and advocacy at Mercy Corps, said the significant funding gap presented a major obstacle to scaling up the response.

She noted her frustration with the international and regional communities for not providing adequate support and highlighted the need for self-reliance. Aid groups are currently facing difficulties in distributing the limited resources available. While nearly 3 million people have received aid since April, the absence of safe humanitarian corridors to conflict-affected areas has forced individuals to heavily rely on neighbors and mutual aid networks.

In addition to funding shortages, relief organizations face bureaucratic hurdles imposed by local authorities. Visa complications, supply import restrictions, and withheld permits have hampered the timely delivery of aid. These measures, ostensibly for security purposes, have been seen as attempts to tighten control over humanitarian operations. Such bureaucratic obstacles have further exacerbated the suffering of those in need and limited the involvement of international agencies with the expertise and resources to address the crisis effectively.

Mukesh Kapila, a former UN resident and humanitarian coordinator for the Sudan, highlighted the unique challenges of delivering aid.

He told Arab News: “The nature of the conflict renders fighters on both sides indifferent to the rules of humanitarian law, making aid delivery dangerous and unpredictable. Foreign workers evacuated swiftly when violence erupted, and regaining access is difficult. “Implementing smuggling operations on a larger scale might help, by strategically transporting aid to conflict areas to prevent targeting by looters and fighters. Local individuals, such as activists familiar with the ground realities, should take the lead in these efforts.”

The Sudanese Red Crescent Society, described as the country’s largest humanitarian responder, has also found security to be the main obstacle to its operations. Barakat Faris Badri, the organization’s operations director, said that although they recently delivered supplies from the World Food Programme to the residents of Khartoum, the demand for assistance was far greater. The distribution of more food and increased action was urgently needed, he added.

The looting of humanitarian warehouses and offices has further compounded the challenges faced by aid agencies. To ensure the safety of their operations, organizations have been forced to close their Khartoum headquarters and relocate to the eastern city of Port Sudan, situated along the Red Sea. Both the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army have been accused of involvement in the looting and diversion of aid, undermining their earlier commitments to facilitate humanitarian assistance following recent mediation efforts in Saudi Arabia. William Carter, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Sudan, told Arab News:

“To improve the situation, we are considering engaging with Chadian authorities to establish an operating base in Chad. This would facilitate the delivery of aid to Darfur.

“Additionally, obtaining consent from the Sudanese government and the Rapid Support

Forces for cross-border assistance would be crucial.” Carter pointed out the organization’s efforts in initiating an education and protection program, with a special emphasis on traumatized children. He said: “The NRC is actively working with collective shelters for displaced people from Khartoum, and by supporting these locally led initiatives, we can ensure that the assistance provided is tailored to the specific needs of the communities.

“As we continue our work in Sudan, we are looking into expanding our relief efforts and exploring the possibility of implementing cash-based programs. This approach can provide affected individuals with the flexibility to get the items they need the most.”

Source: <https://arab.news>

3RD JULY 2023

DARFUR TEETERING ON THE BRINK OF GENOCIDE?

According to recent reports, Arab militias, supported by paramilitary forces, have allegedly attacked civilians fleeing El-Geneina. (FILE/AFP)

UN urges action to halt 6wanton killings as conflict escalates Donor fatigue, other crises diverting attention from Africa

As the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region escalates, the UN has urged immediate action to prevent a potential genocide, but experts say that intervention has been hampered by the ongoing fighting, donor fatigue and attention on other humanitarian crises around the world.

According to recent reports, Arab militias, supported by paramilitary forces, have allegedly attacked civilians fleeing El-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, near the border with Chad. The situation has reached a critical point, with the UN's human rights office declaring El-Geneina "uninhabitable" and infrastructure severely damaged. Volker Turk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, has called on the leadership of the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, to end the killings and stop vilifying people on the basis of ethnicity.

Bakheet Suliman Adam Abdallah, human rights advocate hailing from Al-Fashir in Darfur and a member of the Tame tribe, which is predominantly Muslim, has disclosed distressing details about the ongoing conflict in the region. In a telephone interview with Arab News recently, he said he witnessed widespread acts of murder and targeted violence executed by various militias. "Being black-skinned automatically designates you as one of the primary targets," he stated.

Furthermore, Abdallah revealed that following the outbreak of war, community leaders in Al-Fashir endeavored to quell the internal clashes between the RSF and Sudan Armed Forces, or SAF, resulting in the division of the city into two zones. Finding himself in the eastern part under RSF control, he said he was harassed and falsely accused of espionage on two separate occasions solely based on his skin color. "They held a gun to my head, detained me at the gate for two hours, looted all my money, and confiscated my phone."

Abdallah said that as the violence escalated, and with RSF soldiers forcefully entering people's homes, he felt he could not continue his human rights work. Consequently, he decided to flee through South Sudan and seek refuge in Uganda.

With citizens having no weapons to defend themselves, a growing number of desperate Sudanese youths have approached SAF bases in recent days to volunteer for combat. William Carter, who is Sudan country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, told Arab News recently that "the situation is very challenging." His organization has been unable to

deliver aid due to the ongoing fighting in the region. “Our organization had to suspend its work in Darfur, and some staff members have even become refugees in Chad,” he added. While people like Abdallah have called for the UN to launch a peacekeeping mission, there is little chance of any external intervention.

“That’s not only because of the lack of political support but also among the parties involved,” Dr. Jair van der Lijn, a senior researcher and director of the Peace Operations and Conflict Management Programme at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, told Arab News recently.

“Right now, the appetite for large-scale peace operations among Security Council members is low, and finding troop-contributing countries would be challenging,” Van der Lijn added. Previously, the world body’s peacekeeping force, UNAMID, or UN – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur was deployed in 2007 to protect civilians and address the conflict, in which between 80,000 and 400,000 casualties were reported. The mission concluded on Dec. 31, 2020, after making progress in stabilizing the region.

However, there remains an urgent need for aid. “There is not enough humanitarian assistance at this point, also to the refugee camps,” Van der Lijn added. “Donor fatigue and competing humanitarian crises divert attention and resources away from Africa.”

Source: <https://arab.news>

4TH JUL 2023

FIGHTING RAGES IN SUDAN AS ARMY TRIES TO CUT RSF SUPPLY LINES

The army launches air strikes as heavy artillery fire and ground battles are reported in Omdurman. Smoke rises over Omdurman near Halfaya Bridge during fighting between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army [File: Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah/Reuters] Fierce battles have broken out across Omdurman, a city across the Nile from Sudan’s capital, Khartoum, as the army tries to cut off supply routes used by its paramilitary rivals to bring in reinforcements.

The army launched air strikes and fired heavy artillery on Tuesday, and there were ground The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) said it had shot down a fighter jet, and residents posted footage that appeared to show pilots ejecting from a plane. There was no immediate comment from the army. The conflict, which erupted between the army and RSF on April 15, has brought daily fighting to the capital, triggered ethnically motivated killings in the western region of Darfur and threatened to drag Sudan into a protracted civil war.

Video Duration 03 minutes 28 seconds 03:28

SUDAN UNREST: RIVAL FACTIONS ENGAGE IN FIERCE BATTLES IN OMDURMAN

The RSF quickly took control of swathes of Khartoum and has brought in extra fighters from Darfur and Kordofan as the conflict has deepened. It has transferred its reinforcements across bridges from Omdurman to Khartoum and Khartoum North, the three cities that sit at the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile and make up the wider capital area.

Residents said Tuesday's fighting in Omdurman was the heaviest for weeks and the army was fending off an RSF attack against a police base as it tried to gain ground. "There's been very heavy bombardment for hours, air strikes, artillery and bullets. It's the first time for us that there have been continuous strikes at this level from every direction," said Manahel Abbas, a 33-year-old resident of Omdurman's el Thawra neighbourhood.

The conflict broke out due to disputes between the army and RSF over an internationally backed plan for a transition to civilian rule, four years after the overthrow of long-ruling leader Omar al-Bashir during a popular uprising. Saudi Arabia and the United States brokered several ceasefires at talks in Jeddah that were suspended last month after both sides continuously violated the truces.

In a move that could escalate conflict in western Sudan, tribal leaders from South Darfur on Monday declared their allegiance to the RSF. The RSF originated in the Arab militias that helped crush a rebellion in Darfur after 2003. It has since developed into a national and officially recognised force. Nearly 2.8 million people have been displaced since the start of the fighting, including almost 650,000 who have crossed into neighbouring countries, according to the latest United Nations figures?

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

LAST UPDATED: JULY 5, 2023

SUDAN: AN ARMY PLANE SHOT DOWN DURING CLASHES IN KHARTOUM

A fighter jet was shot down in Khartoum on Tuesday, where clashes and artillery fire targeted several neighborhoods in Sudan's war-torn capital, witnesses said. "We saw pilots parachuting as the plane dived towards the ground," said a witness in northern Khartoum. A source within the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (FSR) told AFP that the FSR had shot down the army plane. The FSR said they had "arrested the pilot after he landed" in a statement, also accusing the army of "heinous massacres" in the Khartoum region.

The Sudanese army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhane, has been at war since April 15 with the paramilitaries of the FSR led by its former number two, General Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. The conflict has killed nearly 3,000 people, according to the NGO Aclad, and 2.8 million displaced persons and refugees, according to the UN. A resident of Omdurman, in the northern suburbs of the capital, reported on Tuesday "violent clashes using various types of weapons". Other witnesses said they observed "airstrikes (near) the state television building", which the RSF launched an attack on this week and used anti-aircraft missiles on Tuesday.

In the east of the capital, residents also reported clashes with machine guns. The army also "launched rockets and heavy artillery" at RSF bases in the centre and north of the capital, a witness said. Homes were damaged and civilians were rushed to one of the few hospitals still operational, another added.

In Khartoum and the western Darfur region, the fighting mainly affected densely populated neighborhoods. The streets are littered with dead bodies and houses have been targeted by missiles, witnesses said. Trapped by the fighting, civilians have had to ration water, food, electricity and medicine for almost three months.

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

5TH JUL 2023

‘CRISIS OF HUMANITY’: UN CONDEMNS RISING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SUDAN

UN AGENCIES DEMAND AN END TO SEXUAL ATTACKS AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE WAR-HIT COUNTRY AND CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS.

Top United Nations officials have expressed shock at increasing sexual violence against women and girls in Sudan as fighting in the country extends to nearly three months. The vicious conflict between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has killed thousands of people, forced millions from their homes and exacerbated an acute humanitarian crisis.

On Wednesday, a joint statement from UN agencies said the world body’s human rights office in Sudan has received credible reports of 21 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence against at least 57 women and girls since the conflict erupted on April 15. “In one case, as many as 20 women were reportedly raped in the same attack,” the statement. The heads of the agencies demanded an immediate end to sexual violence as a tactic of war and called for thorough and independent investigations into all alleged violations and abuses to hold perpetrators to account.

Martin Griffiths, UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs, said it was “unconscionable” that women and children whose lives have been upended by the war “are, He added: “What we are witnessing in Sudan is not just a humanitarian crisis; it is a crisis of humanity.” Human rights Chief Volker Turk said women and girls are left with little or no medical and psychosocial support amid the intense fighting. “There must be zero tolerance for sexual violence,” he said.

Even before Sudan was gripped by war, more than 3 million women and girls in the country were at risk of gender-based violence, according to UN estimates. This figure has since risen to an estimated 4.2 million people, the UN said.

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

SOUTH SUDAN

TORIT - 1ST JUL 2023

GOVERNMENT URGED TO RAISE JUDGES' SALARIES TO COMBAT CORRUPTION

A two-day human rights training session for local government officials in Torit concluded on Wednesday with significant resolutions. The training, organized by the UNMISS Human Rights Division in South Sudan's Eastern Equatoria State, aimed to enhance human rights, access to justice, and accountability in the country's judicial system. The event held under the theme, "Human Rights, Access to Justice, and Accountability," brought together members of the SSPDF, Police, Prison Service, and youth leaders from Torit, Magwi, Ikotos, and Lafon counties. The attendees collectively agreed on several crucial resolutions, including the need to combat corruption and promote fairness within the justice system. Vitale Abure Benjamin, executive director of the Torit-based national organization Value Interest Nonviolent Alliance (VINA), shared the resolutions during the training.

He emphasized the importance of ending arbitrary arrests and torture to ensure human rights are respected throughout the nation. Benjamin proposed practical measures such as deploying additional police officers at the grassroots community level to effectively combat crime, promoting awareness of legal rights are respected throughout the nation. Benjamin proposed practical measures such as deploying additional police officers at the grassroots community level to effectively combat crime, promoting awareness of legal rights in remote villages and towns, and establishing clear procedures for reporting and sharing information on law violations. To bolster the integrity of the justice system, Benjamin urged the state government to lobby the national government for increased deployment of armed forces. Additionally, he highlighted the significance of motivating judges by providing them with higher salaries to curb corruption within the judiciary. Benjamin also stressed the need to empower community leaders, augment police forces, and disarm civilians in rural areas. He called for suspects to be promptly apprehended and presented before competent courts of law, while emphasizing the importance of ceasing torture against those arrested.

Anthony Nwapa, the head of the Human Rights Division at UNMISS's Torit field office, expressed satisfaction with the training's outcomes. He pledged to continue raising awareness on human rights among key stakeholders, including those in positions of authority, to combat human rights abuses effectively.

"I am delighted that we have made significant progress over the past two days. I urge all of us to remain committed to the principles of good governance, human rights, and the rule of law. Together, we can build a progressive and developed society for our great state. Let us continue to unite our people in peace and human rights, as this state has already set an example in terms of development and unity," stated Nwapa.

Maj General Angon Ungom Chut, the acting commander at Division 7 SSPDF in Torit, advocated for the continuation of such forums on human rights. He stressed the importance of inclusive participation, especially among groups in the community who may not be fully aware of recent developments in protecting human rights.

Furthermore, Siama Nartisio, the advisor for human rights in Eastern Equatoria State, acknowledged the support of peace partners in tackling the challenges faced by the country. She called on organized forces and chiefs to understand their roles better to foster trust among the populace.

“Implementation of the discussed resolutions remains our primary objective. It is essential for each of us to understand our respective roles. As women, we were initially unaware of our rights, but now even those in rural areas have knowledge of their rights. I have learned how to address land-grabbing issues and exercise my rights. All organized forces, including the SSPDF, police, prison services, and chiefs, are now well aware of their roles. Instead of blaming one another, we must strive to grant rights to all marginalized individuals. We have heard enough; it is time for us to fulfil our roles in the fight for human rights,” stated Nartisio.

The successful training session in Torit has paved the way for a more transparent and accountable justice system in South Sudan, with increased salaries for judges serving as a crucial step in combatting corruption and upholding the rule of law.

JUBA - 2ND JUL 2023

TROIKA CONCERNED ABOUT MOBILIZATION TO ATTACK MALAKAL POC

The Embassies of Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States have expressed deep concern regarding the escalating reports of armed groups mobilizing in Upper Nile State, particularly in the Malakal Protection of Civilians (POC) site.

In a joint statement, the Troika emphasized the urgent need for influential stakeholders to take immediate action in support of peace and security. They also called for those responsible for instigating violence to be held accountable for their actions. Highlighting the gravity of the situation, the Troika emphasized the importance of expediting the deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) as outlined in the 2018 revitalized peace agreement.

The three countries further noted that any hindrance to progress in this regard jeopardizes the well-being of the South Sudanese people. The Troika’s statement reflects the growing alarm within the international community over the potential outbreak of mass violence in Malakal, prompting urgent appeals for intervention and swift action to prevent further bloodshed.

The 2018 peace deal has significantly reduced fighting in South Sudan, but violence remains rife in areas where rights to grazing areas, water, farmland and other resources are under dispute. In recent months, Upper Nile State has been an epicentre of violence mainly orchestrated by armed groups.

UNITY STATE - 3 JUL 2023

TRUCK KNOCKS TWO DEAD IN RUBKONA COUNTY

A tragic head-on collision involving a motorcycle and a truck in Rubkona County, Unity State, on Sunday morning, left two people dead, traffic police said. The pillion passenger, a 29-year-old male identified as Kume Wierol Koang, died on the spot and the rider of the motorcycle, Maliah Biel Nyuon, 34, succumbed to injuries on Sunday afternoon at Bentiu Hospital. Speaking to Radio Tamazuj in Bentiu on Monday, the State Director of Traffic Police, Domai Dak Kai, blamed the accident which happened between Rubkona and Bentiu towns on speeding.

“There was a truck moving at high speed from Bentiu headquarters to Rubkona town and it hit the motorcycle and killed the rider and one passenger,” he said. “The passenger died later in the afternoon at the hospital where he was rushed” According to the traffic officer, the truck driver has been arrested pending investigations. “After the incident, the first thing we did was to arrest the suspect and he is being detained at Bentiu Police Station until investigations are completed,” Dak said. He extended condolences to the families of the deceased and urged them to remain calm.

DAK CAUTIONED DRIVERS AGAINST SPEEDING.

Meanwhile, Taker Riak Koang, the chairperson of the motorcycle taxi association in Unity State, confirmed that accidents are common on the Bentiu-Rubkona road due to speeding. Meanwhile, Taker Riak Koang, the chairperson of the motorcycle taxi association in Unity State, confirmed that accidents are common on the Bentiu-Rubkona road due to speeding.

“I condemned the death of my colleague and his passenger who were killed by a truck on Sunday,” he said. Taker appealed to the Unity State government to institute speed limits.

WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL - 3 JUL 2023

SECURITY HEIGHTENED IN WAU AHEAD OF KIIR'S VISIT

Security has been tightened in the Western Bahr el Ghazal state capital, Wau, ahead of a visit by President Salva Kiir which is expected on Tuesday. Kiir, who also doubles as the chairperson of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), is expected to hold a political rally and celebrate his endorsement as the SPLM flagbearer for the 2024 elections.

Currently, state governors in the greater Bahr el Ghazal region and senior SPLM officials from Lakes, Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western Bahr el Ghazal state, and Abyei area have already arrived in Wau to receive President Kiir.

Addressing reporters after the state council of ministers in Wau town on Monday, Western Bahr el Ghazal state governor Sarah Cleto, a leading member of the opposition SPLM-IO, said all preparations have been made and that the president is expected to arrive in Wau on Tuesday morning. "I want to assure all the people of Western Bahr el Ghazal state and the visitors who are coming from different parts of the country that Western Bahr el Ghazal state is stable and friendly and in terms of security, it is 100 percent peaceful," said Cleto.

She added, "I want to assure everyone that we in the state, we are prepared for the reception of the president, and we are excited to receive him, and in terms of security, we have all our security in the state deployed," she said.

Sarah, who is also the chairperson for the opposition SPLM-IO in Western Bahr el Ghazal State, said: "Western Bahr el Ghazal is the mother of the greater Bahr el Ghazal region and we are welcoming everyone to our arms and taking care of all our visitors from the other states. I want to reiterate that we are the mother of the democracy where we see all the parties in the state have political space to organize their events because this is a celebration of the SPLM party."

The state governor called upon the SPLM leadership to allow other political parties in the state to attend their rally, which is expected to be addressed by President Kiir.

"This is a celebration of the SPLM, and all the other parties, if they are also invited, they will be there to support and stand with the president. So we assure the population that we in the state have a political space where all political parties have rights to practice their political activities without any intimidation," she concluded.

MALAKAL - 3 JUL 2023

SPLM-IO LAUNCHES MEMBERS' REGISTRATION IN MALAKAL

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) over the weekend officially opened its secretariat and launched a registration exercise for its members in the Upper Nile State capital Malakal. Hundreds of people and party supporters donning blue T-shirts and caps on Saturday rode and marched in the town to welcome the SPLM-IO Secretary General Regina Joseph Kappa and other party dignitaries and officials who traveled from Juba for the ceremony.

The SPLM-IO launched its Malakal secretariat under the theme "Towards a democratic, united, and prosperous South Sudan." Addressing a crowd of supporters at the party's state secretariat, Kappa said she was pleased by the good turn-up. "Today (Saturday) we are launching the SPLM-IO party in Upper Nile State's Malakal town and I am delighted to see the big numbers here. This is the testimony of the hard work the SPLM-IO party leaders in the state have been doing and that you have been implementing the peace agreement and doing party work," she said. "Congratulations to all of you. To our people in Upper Nile State, we are in government at all levels because of you, and we are not sleeping."

"What made us launch the party office in Malakal today is to change our country for the better," Kappa added. Meanwhile, Upper Nile State Governor James Oodhok, the party's state chairperson, said the SPLM-IO has been working with other political parties to carry out party activities peacefully and without hindrance.

"I want to thank the other parties for creating this conducive environment for the people of Upper Nile to be here today because I was a little bit worried that we may have the same crises as in other states," he said. "We must applaud other parties for attending this occasion because, in other states, the other party chairpersons do not attend such occasions. We want to grow up because politics is not about arresting and intimidating people but about sharing."

"We have secured office premises and established party structures at the state and county levels such as the liberation council secretaries, standing committees, and county leadership," Oodhok added. He said the SPLM-IO party continues to be resolute and determined and has remained a vital signatory to the peace agreement and remains the only genuine voice and beacon of hope, reforms, and progressive change.

On her part, the representative of the Other Political Parties (OPP), Nyagoal Deng, said she will work with all parties and urged them to work for peace, and encouraged the youth to work hard. "I want to promise that we will continue to work with all the parties and all the parties will do the same. The peace agreement that was signed in 2018 by our leaders has to be implemented as the people want," Deng said. "We the OPP support peace and not war because most of the people are looking for peace."

UPPER NILE - 3 JUL 2023

LONGECHUK COUNTY GRAPPLES WITH SHORTAGE OF DRUGS

Longechuk County in Upper Nile State is grappling with shortages of drugs, according to health officials and local residents. Speaking to Radio Tamazuj on Friday, Gatkuoth Nuer, the county's health director, expressed concern over patients' dire situation as health centers run short of drug supplies. "We have been informed through email by our partners since the beginning of April that they would supply drugs to the rest of the county. However, no drugs have been delivered to Longechuk County," Nuer stated.

He emphasized that the scarcity of drugs has disrupted the normal functioning of the Primary Health Care Unit staff. "We, as the local authorities, have raised concerns about the shortage of drug supplies not only in the headquarters hospital and Longechuk town but also in the 11 Primary Care Centers (PCC) and the four Primary Health Care Units (PHCU) in the entire county," Nuer revealed.

"The entire community is in need of drugs, and the shortage is causing significant suffering. Our community is really struggling," he added, urging the health partners responsible for supplying medical drugs to Longechuk County to intervene. The health official said emergency drug supplies were sent to the county in the last three months by the Ministry of Health of Upper Nile State in collaboration with UN agencies. However, he pointed out that these supplies were not sufficient for the population, leading to daily deaths due to the shortage Nuer explained.

"Our health situation is critical. We have witnessed a rise in diseases such as malaria, amoebiasis, and diarrhea. These illnesses are exacerbated by the lack of drugs to treat the sick," Nuer emphasized. Nyabuony Deng, a resident of Longechuk County, voiced the community's urgent need for drug supplies "We urgently request UN agencies to provide us with drug supplies. We are on the verge of death if our government does not prioritize our situation," Nyabuony lamented. She further stated that the community lacks the energy to travel to Lokchuk town, which is rumored to have some medical supplies for patients.

Nyamal David, another resident of Longechuk County, highlighted the lack of active facilities in the county due to the shortage of drug supplies. "The challenge we face is the prevalence of several diseases, such as malaria, amoebiasis, and diarrhea, which contribute to the deaths of our young children. We urge the government at the Upper Nile and national levels to respond to our situation," Nyamal urged.

Dr. Isaac Kwongo Ogilo, the Director General of Upper Nile State's Ministry of Health, confirmed that all 13 counties in Upper Nile State are facing drug shortages, including health facilities in Lokchuk County. "Some facilities in Longechuk County lack adequate drug supplies," he acknowledged. "I was informed by the County Health Department (CHD) in Longechuk County that there are currently no medical supplies in all of their areas," Dr. Kwongo added. Dr. Kwongo speculated that the drug supplies may arrive in the area within the next one to two weeks.

<https://www.radiotamazuj.org>

SOMALIA

1ST JULY 2023

AU FORCE IN SOMALIA COMPLETES FIRST PHASE OF DRAWDOWN

THE NEW ARAB STAFF & AGENCIES

The African Union force backing Somali military and security forces against an Al-Shabaab insurgency said it has completed the first phase of a troop reduction.

The [African Union](#) force in conflict-torn [Somalia](#) said it has completed the first phase of a troop reduction aimed at eventually putting security fully in the hands of the national army and police.

The African Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) said in a statement dated Friday that a total of seven bases had been handed over to Somali security forces, enabling the drawdown of 2,000 troops by the June 30 deadline.

ATMIS chief logistics officer Bosco Sibondavyi described the handover as an “important milestone” in the implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan and UN Security Council resolutions on the transfer of security responsibility.

The Security Council on Tuesday renewed for six months its authorisation of the AU force, which has a deadline of the end of September for the departure of a further 3,000 soldiers.

The ATMIS contingent had included over 19,000 soldiers and police officers from several African nations including Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, but will have to be reduced to zero by the end of 2024.

SOMALIA REFUGEES IN YEMEN STRUGGLE IN HARSH CONDITIONS

Somali refugees, who fled the war at home and sought refuge in Yemen, are struggling to survive under very difficult conditions, *Anadolu Agency* reports.

These refugees lack access to clean water, toilets and proper shelter in the Al-Ajlaniya Refugee Camp in Yemen's Hadhramaut Governorate. Somalia has been plagued by insecurity for years, with Al-Shabaab fighting the government and the African Union mission in the country since 2007.

The Al-Shabaab and the Daesh terrorist groups continue to threaten the safety of Somalis.

Gaza rulers Hamas display weapons for first time

[*The New Arab Staff & Agencies*](#)

ETHIOPIA

1ST JULY 2023

NEWS: RIGHTS GROUPS RAISE DEEP CONCERN OVER US BACKTRACKING ON ETHIOPIA HUMAN RIGHT VIOLATIONS COMMITMENT

Addis Abeba – Prominent human rights organizations Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have expressed serious concerns regarding the United States government’s recent position of disbelief regarding the continued prevalence of gross human rights violations in Ethiopia.

Two days ago, the US Treasury Department notified Congress that, based on an assessment by the State Department, they no longer believe the Ethiopian government is engaged in a “[pattern of gross violations of human rights](#).” This announcement paves the way for discussions between the Treasury Department and economic aid institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, concerning Ethiopia.

This development aligns with Washington’s efforts to restore its relations with Ethiopia following a peace agreement signed in Pretoria last November, effectively bringing an end to the conflict in Tigray. In a [joint statement](#), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International however, contend that this decision not only disregards the ongoing and serious human rights abuses throughout the country but also sends a detrimental message about the limited significance of the US’s evaluation of atrocities.

Sarah Yager, the Washington Director at Human Rights Watch, stated, “We’re deeply concerned that the US government no longer believes that gross violations of human rights are occurring in Ethiopia. Not only does the decision ignore the reality that grave human rights violations are continuing throughout the country, but it sends a disastrous signal that US atrocity determinations come with few consequences.”

Amnesty International also shares a similar sentiment. Amanda Klasing, the National Director for Government Relations and Advocacy at Amnesty International USA, said, “The Biden administration purports to put human rights at the center of its foreign policy; yet, their declaration that gross violations of human rights are no longer occurring flies in the face of this promise. To make such a determination before we’ve seen commitment to justice and accountability, and while reports of violations are ongoing, would be a politically expedient decision at the expense of survivors and victims.”

On 01 June, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a [report](#) revealing that ethnic cleansing, human rights abuses and forcibly expelling Tigrayans from Western Tigray persists despite the November 02, 2022 peace agreement and urged the federal government to suspend, investigate, an Earlier in March, the US determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, Eritrean Forces and Amhara forces have committed “[crimes against humanity](#)” in the Tigray region, whereas all sides have committed “war crimes” during Ethiopia’s two years’ war that started in Tigray and spread to Amhara and Afar regions.

Written by [Addis Standard](#)

KENYA

KENYA'S OPPOSITION SET FOR SECOND DAY OF TAX-HIKE PROTESTS

VIDEO DURATION 01 MINUTES 54 SECONDS 01:54

PUBLISHED ON 20TH JUL 2023

Kenya's opposition is due to protest for a second day on Thursday over the high cost of living and tax hikes after police clashed with demonstrators and arrested at least 300 people on Wednesday. "The voice of the people must be heard. Our peaceful protest continues," opposition leader Raila Odinga wrote on Twitter on Thursday morning.

The Wednesday-to-Friday demonstrations are the third round of protests that the opposition has called for this month. Senior opposition leaders were arrested after demonstrators hurled rocks at police and security forces fired volleys of tear gas.

In Mathare, a settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi, police reported one person had been shot dead. A senior police officer told Al Jazeera that police were investigating the cause of death. Al Jazeera also saw one person who had been shot and injured in the stomach. He was taken to a nearby hospital.

Local newspaper The Nation reported that Odinga's Azimio opposition party had called upon its supporters to assemble at Huruma grounds, Kangemi grounds and Central Park in the capital Nairobi on Thursday. On its Twitter page, the newspaper published photographs of armed officers on standby in Nairobi's central business district where there was a "semblance of normality" as of 9am local time (06:00 GMT).

According to Al Jazeera's Catherine Soi, reporting from Nairobi, government forces were deployed in "hotspot areas where protests normally occur" within the capital on Wednesday. Schools were closed and many businesses shuttered across Nairobi.

Veteran politician Odinga lost last August's election to President William Ruto, his fifth loss in a presidential election.

Odinga has repeatedly asked his followers to engage in acts of civil disobedience against a government he accuses of raising the cost of living and consolidating power.

Ruto has pledged to champion the interests of the poor, but the price of basic commodities has ballooned under his administration. His government argues higher taxes are necessary to help deal with growing debt repayments and to fund job creation initiatives.

ODINGA ALLIES ARRESTED

The opposition condemned the arrest of several Odinga allies. Lawmaker Babu Owino was arrested at the airport in the coastal town of Mombasa on Wednesday, where he had planned to lead the protests. The Member of Parliament Ken Chonga was also arrested with some of his loyalists during a gathering ahead of a march in Kilimo County in Coastal Kenya.

“We pleaded with them to stay there as we addressed the residents but they insisted we should disperse. They arrested us,” Chonga told journalists at Kilifi Police Station on Wednesday. Police also arrested Calvin Okoth, a youth leader in the Jacaranda Grounds People’s Parliament.

‘CAN’T SEEK LEADERSHIP THROUGH BLOODSHED’

Opposition leader Raila Odinga had vowed to lead his supporters to the street after the president assented to a new finance law imposing new taxes, and increasing some taxes on June 26.

A court ruling halted the implementation of the order but fuel prices were increased from 8 to 16 percent VAT in accordance with the new law. President Ruto and the interior minister on Friday warned that the Wednesday protests would not be allowed.

“I want to tell Raila Odinga that elections ended on August 8 last year,” Ruto told his supporters in Nakuru. “You can’t seek the leadership of our country through bloodshed, deaths and destruction of property. There is no way you will change Kenya through the route you have taken.”

ODINGA ALLEGES ASSASSINATION PLOT

Last Wednesday, Odinga had claimed that the government had hatched a plot to assassinate him during the demonstrations this week but stated that the marches would continue as planned. Odinga said his car was shot at multiple times on Wednesday while he was driving around the capital, rallying protesters. He showed journalists dents on his armoured vehicle which he said were left by bullets.

“There is no mistaking, for that the intention was basically to kill,” Odinga said, “I don’t think any police officer could aim to come to shoot and assassinate politicians without being commanded from the very top,” Odinga said.

The government in a rebuttal called for the closure of day schools in Nairobi and Mombasa as they dealt with protesters. During the protests last Wednesday last week, more than 30 pupils were rushed to hospital after police dispersing protesters lobbed teargas into the school compound.

While speaking to his supporters in Kericho on Wednesday, President Ruto said demonstrations would not lower the cost of living.

“Will the cost of maize flour be lowered by protesting with sufuria on the head? Even if it means protesting for a year; if someone stops demonstrating, goes to the farm and till the land, will the price of maize flour fail to drop?” Ruto questioned the crowd.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES

BURUNDI

17TH JULY 2023

IMF EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVES A US\$271 MILLION 38-MONTH ARRANGEMENT UNDER THE EXTENDED CREDIT FACILITY FOR BURUNDI

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a 38-month arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) for Burundi. The arrangement will provide financing of SDR200.2 million (about US\$271 million), with an immediate disbursement of SDR46.2 million (about US\$62.6 million).

Burundi faces protracted balance of payments needs with a widening current account deficit and low foreign reserves coverage, large development needs, and macroeconomic challenges triggered by spillovers from the war in Ukraine and domestic climate shocks and livestock sanitary crisis.

The 38-month arrangement under the ECF will help cushion Burundi's adjustment and support the authorities' reform agenda aimed at reducing debt vulnerabilities, recalibrating exchange rate and monetary policies to restore external sustainability, and strengthening inclusive economic growth and governance.

Washington, DC: The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a 38-month arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) for Burundi with access of 130 percent of quota, equivalent to SDR 200.2 million (about US\$271 million).^[1] The decision allows an immediate disbursement of SDR 46.2 million (about US\$ 62.6 million).

The arrangement will help Burundi address its protracted balance of payments needs, reduce debt vulnerabilities, and cope with the effects of recent domestic and external shocks. Burundi's post-COVID-19 economic recovery has slowed down, although still healthy. Spillovers of the war in Ukraine have triggered sharp increases in commodity prices and domestic inflationary pressures. Domestic shocks, including delayed rainfall, limited availability of fertilizer, and outbreaks of livestock fevers have impacted Burundi's primary sector. External imbalances have heightened, with a widening current account deficit, low foreign exchange reserves, and a still large parallel foreign exchange (FX) market premium. Higher spending needs, including on fertilizers, social programs, and vaccines have deteriorated the fiscal path and raised fiscal financing needs.

The ECF arrangement will cushion Burundi's policy recalibration and economic adjustment, while supporting the authorities' policy agenda. Key commitments include (i) a better-quality fiscal consolidation path achieved through higher revenue, scaled-up investment, and

prudent borrowing while protecting priority social spending; (ii) unification of the official and parallel exchange rate markets and foreign exchange market liberalization to restore external sustainability; (iii) tightened monetary policy in support of the ongoing unification and to rein in inflation, while modernizing the monetary policy framework and fostering financial sector stability; and (iv) undertaking further governance and structural reforms to ensure an environment conducive to inclusive growth and job creation. At the conclusion of the Executive Board's discussion, Mr. Okamura, Deputy Managing Director, and Acting Chair, issued the following statement:

“Burundi has recently been hit by several shocks. Spillovers from Russia's war in Ukraine have triggered commodity price increases, which led to heightened domestic inflation pressures and slowed the post COVID-19 growth recovery. Domestic shocks, including unfavorable weather conditions and an animal sanitary crisis, have hampered primary sector prospects and living conditions. The country faces important macroeconomic challenges, including persistently high inflation, external imbalances with a widening current account deficit and inadequate foreign exchange reserve coverage, and large fiscal needs and public debt.

“To address these challenges, the Burundian authorities have requested a 38-month arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF). The arrangement would help address the country's protracted balance of payments needs, rebuild external buffers, reduce public debt vulnerabilities, and support the implementation of the authorities' reform agenda. This is Burundi's first Upper Credit Tranche-quality arrangement with the IMF since 2016.

“Under the ECF arrangement, the authorities aim to recalibrate Burundi's macroeconomic policy mix. They plan to restore external sustainability with the unification of the official and parallel exchange rate markets and foreign exchange market liberalization, while being attuned to financial sector vulnerabilities. They will strengthen debt sustainability and achieve a better-quality fiscal consolidation path through higher domestic revenue mobilization, scaled-up investment and better targeted spending, and prudent borrowing. Monetary policy tightening, while modernizing the monetary policy framework and exiting monetary financing, will support the ongoing exchange rate unification and contain inflation. Governance and growth-enhancing reforms, as well as timely capacity development will support the program objectives.

“The arrangement is expected to catalyze donor funding, which is essential to cater to Burundi's large financing needs and support its exit from fragility.”

SDR figures for the program are converted at the market rate of U.S. dollar per SDR on the day of program approval.

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