

## UN chief lauds Sudan and S. Sudan Parliaments for ratifying agreements

Thursday 18 October 2012

October, 17, 2012 (JUBA) - The United Nations Secretary-General on Wednesday congratulated the Parliaments of Sudan and South Sudan for ratifying the cooperation agreements signed by Presidents Omer Al-Bashir and Salva Kiir in Addis Ababa on 27 September.

Ban Ki-Moon, in a statement extended to Sudan Tribune, urged both countries to now embark on the implementation of all the agreements signed and proceed immediately with the operationalisation of their Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

"The Secretary-General calls on both parties to continue their constructive engagement with the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, notably to agree on a process to settle the issue of remaining disputed and claimed areas and the determination of the final status of Abyei," adding that the UN stands ready to continue assisting the parties, in collaboration with its partners.

On Tuesday, an overwhelming majority of South Sudan lawmakers voted to ratify the deal in its entirety, while 15 members approved it with reservations seeking removal of the 14 mile area from the Safe Demilitarized Buffer Zone (SDBZ), in order to keep the South Sudanese army in the area.

In addition, two motions in compliance with the parliamentary code of conduct, which regulates procedures, were also raised to terminate the debate and put up motions in support of the movers after securing approvals.

However, the cooperation agreement, concluded after months of intense negotiations, currently faces lots of criticisms in both Sudan and South Sudan.

But while Sudan admitted existence of criticism in the agreement, and blames Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) rebels, widespread protests have, in recent days, been witnessed in neighboring South Sudan over the agreement.

Armed Police, on Monday, clashed with a group of civil right activists and residents of South Sudan's Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, who waved placards and banners demanding the "immediate removal" of the 14 mile area from the SDBZ and from the next round of talks.

Majority of the protesters openly accused the southern government of encroaching on their land.

South Sudan's Kiir, while addressing lawmakers on Monday, acknowledged the cries of the population, but insisted the 14 mile caveat of the agreement had been misinterpreted.

The President, making his first public appearance since he finalized the agreement with his Sudanese counterpart, said the issue was a temporary measure not aimed at granting the disputed land to its northern neighbor.

"People are demonstrating. They are insulting. I respect their opinion because it is their democratic right but if supposed I say, okay, that agreement is bad. Let us go and fight. I don't think that the people who are now raising slogans on the streets would even go there," Kiir told members of the house.

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