

AUHIP Press Conference

Sheraton Hotel, Addis Ababa

16 June 2011

Thabo Mbeki

We just returned from S Kordofan. We are concerned about the war going on there, its impact on the civilian population, and its impact on the negotiations.

The talks started 2 days ago. We decided it would be important to see AZH in SK in order to hear from him his own assessment so as to address any matters that needed to be addressed.

So today we travelled to SKS.

We met AZH

We agreed that negotiations should start immediately to agree on a CoH. So we came back from SK with 4 commanders from SK to join Malik Agar and others in the negotiations. We agreed those negotiations should start immediately on the ceasefire, and also to address the central issue of this conflict, the political future of SK, of BN, which relates to the political future of Sudan post July 9. Those negotiations will start asap.

We had already agreed on 2 processes, one to discuss political issues, one to discuss security issues. So the delegation of the 2 areas will now be fully constituted to be able to deal with those issues.

We agreed it was important to arrive at CoH as quickly as possible, in part to ensure there is humanitarian access. They reported there were 400,000-500,000 displaced, food and medical supplies not reaching certain areas. There were people at AZ's at Kadugli, 10,000 people congregated there, no way to supply them with food.

We are hoping to move this matter as quickly as possible to open the way for access by humanitarian organizations to that population. They specifically asked us to launch a strong appeal to the international community to meet this urgent and sizeable need.

They have identified the person whom we should liaise with [Neroun Philip] for access to the areas controlled by the SPLA.

We will have further discussions among ourselves to begin the planning for this full fledged continuing negotiations on both the political and security issues, including an agreement on the modalities relating to the cessation of hostilities, since the matter has been agreed by both sides, it needs to be translated into practical effect.

So that's where we are.

Aaron, Reuters: how agreement to SPLM-North, when Khartoum is carrying out the bombings.

TM: important to achieve CoH asap.

Peter, VoA: you have an agreement in principle but the terms of the cessation are a long way from firming up? Should it be put in place quickly?

TM: I doubt if we are a long way from it. Both sides have agreed to effect a CoH. You don't just announce it. Soldiers have to freeze where they are, or move this way or that way, you can't avoid the details. The discussion is about the practical measures to be taken. The last discussion was that we should try to conclude those discussions in a day. These things are unavoidable to implement a CoH. It is not a matter of many days.

Peter: we understand the SPLA is on the offensive? Can you give us an update?

TM: there was no fighting where we were. Both sides have briefed us on the military situation. The best thing is to ask them.

Aaron: SPLM says ethnic cleansing, what do you say?

TM: we facilitate discussions on political and security matters. The two sides have their own opinions on many matters, our task is to bring them together to engage the discussions on CoH and the political matters that will reach a settlement.

The critical matter is an agreement by both sides that there should be a CoH. The teams are now fully constituted for the negotiations. The details can be negotiated in those talks.

Peter: you are getting closer on Abyei, what is the sticking point? Is there one issue holding things up?

TM: we concluded negotiations and handed over a document for their approval, the SPLM has responded and the NCP is responding tonight, we are almost at the point of concluding the negotiations.