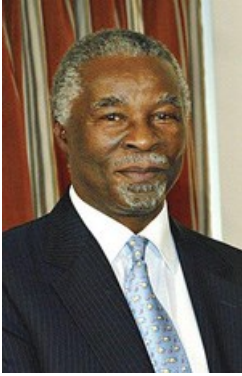


Mbeki in Khartoum to push talks

KHARTOUM, SUDAN: African Union mediator Thabo Mbeki was to arrive in the Sudanese capital on Friday, hoping to resolve differences between Sudan and South Sudan ahead of security talks this week, official media said.



(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The former South African president aims "to bring closer the views of the two parties on the disputed issues", the state-run SUNA news agency said.

"Mbeki will meet during the visit with a number of officials in Sudan to exchange points of view on the negotiations' stance and means to push them forward."

Negotiations are expected to resume in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa today, Tuesday.

Sudan and South Sudan fought along their undemarcated frontier in March and April, sparking fears of wider war and leading to a UN Security Council resolution which ordered a ceasefire and the settlement of unresolved issues, under AU mediation.

In early August those talks led to a breakthrough deal - worth billions of dollars to Khartoum - on fees due by Juba for shipping its oil through the north's pipeline for export.

However, Sudan says the oil deal will not be implemented unless security issues are settled first.

Khartoum accuses the government in Juba of backing rebels in the north, a charge which analysts believe despite denials by South Sudan's government, which in turn has accused the north of backing rebels in the south.

Disputed and claimed border areas are among the critical issues which the UN Security Council ordered to be resolved.

In order to reduce conflict, both countries have agreed to establish a joint border monitoring mission operating within a temporary Safe Demilitarised Border Zone, British ambassador Peter Tibber said in a statement on Thursday.

The UN Security Council and African Union endorsed a map of the SDBZ, which has no bearing on sovereignty or the line of the permanent border, Tibber said.

UK support

"The UK supports AU and UNSC calls for the government of Sudan to agree the SDBZ delineated by the AU map, as the government of South Sudan has done," said Tibber, whose country jointly ruled Sudan with Egypt until independence in 1956.

Sudan's opposition to the map has focused on the inclusion of a disputed area south of the Bahr el-Arab/Kiir River.

Tibber said he met this week with an AU panel of experts appointed to provide a non-binding opinion on the disputed areas, and the UK has shared "relevant historical documents" with them.

Establishing the SDBZ and joint border mission "will help to ensure that there is no cross-border support to armed groups," the British embassy statement said.

A 22-year Sudanese civil war ended in a 2005 peace deal and South Sudan's independence in July last year, but tensions have lingered.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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