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Sudan: Seven Months and Counting for the Darfur Hybrid Force

In August 2006 the United Nations Security Council authorized the expansion of the extant multidimensional UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) into Darfur.

When the Government of the Sudan refused to consent to UNMIS expansion, the idea of an African Union-UN hybrid mission emerged in November from a high-level consultation co-chaired by the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. Now seven months later there is little evidence of this mission being deployed, with not even the first phase --- the "light support package" --- fully in place. Substantial agreements have been reached in principle, however, and there is far greater clarity on the mandate and structure of the hybrid force, despite reported concerns over the envisaged command and control arrangements.

The heart of the matter --- for prospective troop and police contributors, as well as the safety and security of the people of Darfur --- is the actual and perceived credibility of the hybrid mission. Credibility hinges upon a clear and robust mandate, and sufficient means to implement and enforce it if necessary. Mission leadership is important (an excellent Force Commander, Nigerian General Martin Luther Agwai, has been appointed); and the amount and quality of personnel and equipment is important (over 20,000 troops and police are proposed). But critical to countries' willingness to contribute to the mission will be their assessment of the envisaged management and administrative structures and procedures, including they will be reimbursed for personnel and equipment deployed.

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), initially a courageous effort to bring a measure of security and stability to Darfur in the aftermath of the first negotiated ceasefire in 2005, is now widely recognized --- by the AU itself, the UN, and many concerned states and organizations --- as being inadequate and unsustainable. A recent report of the International Peace Academy based on a collaborative workshop that it organized in Accra lists the following major weaknesses of AMIS:

- ❑ Lack of clarity in the mission structure at field level and its inadequacy for the purpose of integrated management of the mission;
- ❑ Lack of strategic management capacity;
- ❑ The absence of effective mechanisms for operational level management;
- ❑ Lack of tools and know-how to handle the relations of the mission with a variety of external actors, including the Government of Sudan and international partners and agencies;
- ❑ Insufficient logistic support and ability to manage logistics;
- ❑ Insufficient capacity in the key area of communication and information systems, compounded by unclear reporting lines from the field to the AU Commission;
- ❑ Problems in force generation and personnel management; and
- ❑ Total dependence on external partners to finance the mission and provide technical advice and support.

Clearly the AMIS operation requires a complete overhaul. The November 2006 agreement in Addis Ababa produced the outline of a three-phase approach to United Nations support for AMIS as an alternative to replacing the African mission with a UN operation. The Addis proposal consists of a light support package followed by a heavy support package that would help AMIS hold the line and enable it to transition to an AU-UN hybrid operation. The support packages were conceived as enablers, necessary precursors to Phase 3, the mounting of an operation that is logistically and financially sustainable, and that is capable of contributing meaningfully to the restoration of security and the protection of civilians in Darfur.

The light support package is meant to assist AMIS in the establishment of an integrated command and control structure and to increase the effectiveness of its operations. So far, 42 military, 32 police and 25 civilian personnel (along with some logistical and material support contained in the package) have deployed to support AMIS. However, AMIS has yet to receive the medical and public information equipment and 36 armored personnel carriers planned for in the package. And the deployment of about 40 additional personnel (military, civilian and police) is on hold, pending progress in the construction of suitable working and living facilities. Some 27 staff officers still need to be provided by UN Member States, but the main challenge to the full implementation of the light support package remains the lack of security in the face of inadequate infrastructure in Darfur and AMIS camps.

The heavy support package is designed to support AMIS in a range of areas, including civil affairs, humanitarian liaison, public information, mine action and support for the Darfur political process. The package thus includes 1,136 civilian personnel, as well as 301 police officers and three formed police units. 2,250 military personnel are to be deployed to provide military transport, engineering, signals and logistics, surveillance, aviation and medical services. To implement the heavy support package, the UN requires urgent Member State contributions of specialist troops and police, the agreement of the Government of the Sudan on land and water drilling in Darfur, and the restructuring of AMIS from the current eight deployment sectors into three comprehensive sectors. Implementation also requires the immediate support of international partners for the expansion of seven AMIS camps to accommodate the deployment of two additional AMIS battalions (to provide security for extant and additional personnel), the three sector headquarters, and heavy support package engineering elements.

Although the hybrid operation will require a mandate approved by the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council, detailed agreement on mandate and structure is reflected in the May 24, 2007 joint report to the UN Security Council by the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission (S/2007/307). According to this report, the hybrid operation should focus on the protection of civilians, the facilitation of full humanitarian access and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. It should also contribute to the restoration of security in Darfur by, among other means, facilitating the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

The AU and UN have therefore agreed that the operation will have a multidimensional mandate and structure, with significant and substantive civilian mission components to deal with political affairs; human rights; disarmament and demobilization; rule of law; humanitarian liaison; child protection; gender; HIV/AIDS support; mine action; public information; conduct and discipline; and mission support. In February 2007, a joint AU-UN mission confirmed that the magnitude of the protection task and the need to ensure

compliance with the Darfur Peace Agreement will require the operation to have a large, mobile and robust military force with a total authorized strength of 19,000 to 20,000 troops, as well as 3,772 police officers and 19 formed police units. The police and force generation process will follow UN General Assembly rules and regulations.

Countries contributing to the mission (whether “re-hatted” AMIS stalwarts or new “hybrid” contributors) will be reimbursed for personnel and equipment at standard UN rates because the UN is running the entire mission administration. In fact, the structures outlined by the UN and AU joint report (S/2007/307) differ very little from those that have been established (and worked rather well) for all UN multi-dimensional operations mounted since the late 1990s. The AU cannot manage an integrated mission of this magnitude, so the arrangement makes perfect sense and should inspire confidence among potential contributors. All that differs, essentially, is that there is a dual or duplicate reporting line from the operational level (the field mission) to the strategic level (headquarters in New York and Addis Ababa.)

It is more than six months since the Security Council endorsed the Addis Ababa conclusions and the Abuja communiqué, and also called on all parties to facilitate the “immediate deployment” of the UN light and heavy support packages as well as a the hybrid operation in Darfur. Deployment has not been rapid; it has not even proceeded at a reasonable rate. UN officials have “expressed hope” that the heavy support package will be in place some time between October and the end of the year, and that the hybrid mission will be deployed in the first half of 2008.

If this is the best possible timeline, then Refugees International recommends that the United States use its influence and resources to press for the removal of substantive obstacles and to enable the deployment of a credible force to Darfur rapidly. The U.S. can assist by:

- ❑ Pushing harder for the complete deployment of the light and heavy support packages, and taking the lead in assisting in the expansion of AMIS camps to accommodate the deployment of two additional battalions, the three new sector headquarters, and elements of the heavy support package;
- ❑ Keeping up the pressure on the Government of Sudan to abide by the agreements it has already made regarding the hybrid operation and to fully cooperate with AMIS and the hybrid mission by providing timely access to land and water, the provision of suitable premises, and ensuring the timely clearance of goods from customs; and
- ❑ On the expected recommendation from the Secretary-General, providing funding for the operation in Darfur through the United Nations assessed budget.

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