

Initial political steps encouraging, Secretary-General says

2 November 2011 - First steps to form a government in South Sudan are encouraging, but expectations that it will become a stable, democratically governed country will not be met in the short term, according to a UN report issued today.

In his first quarterly report on the new nation, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praises initial progress to develop governance institutions based on political inclusiveness and transparency,.

“While the Cabinet remains composed predominantly of members of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), five other political parties are also represented, reflecting broader regional and gender representation.”

The Secretary-General also commends South Sudanese President Salva Kiir for stressing the importance of anti-corruption efforts in his national agenda.

But the report observes that security in South Sudan remains of deep concern, particularly in Jonglei and Upper Nile states. An August conflict in Jonglei left an estimated 600 dead and 700 wounded, while cattle raids in Unity State reportedly left 46 dead, 13 injured and 45 missing.

The Jonglei attacks had altered in nature, compared to previous ones, according to the report. “These attacks have been beyond the scale and scope of the violence typically associated with traditional cattle raiding and ... the possibility of future attacks remains a serious concern.”

The Secretary-General praises efforts to contain these conflicts. “Steps taken by SPLA (Sudan People’s Liberation Army) to deploy to affected areas are a positive measure, as are efforts by traditional and church leaders to foster inter-communal reconciliation.”

However, he urges the government to plan for longer-term stability in these areas, take steps to address the root causes of conflicts, promote equal resources, and extend its authority to the most remote and conflict-affected areas of the country.

The report notes that UNMISS plays a supporting role in protection and building political, administrative and rule-of-law capacities, especially in conflict-prone areas. “In this regard, the mission has initiated and sustained prevention and deterrence operations in Jonglei State and has provided direct support for the reconciliation efforts of traditional and Government leaders.”

In tackling insecurity due to rebel militias, the Secretary-General observes that several groups have been integrated into the SPLA, while others remained at large, including those led by George Athor in Jonglei State and Johnson Olonyi as well as Ayok Ogat along the eastern border of Upper Nile.

Efforts were also underway in SPLA disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the report states. The South Sudan DDR policy has been prepared in close cooperation with UNMISS and the UN Development Programme, which calls for the

DDR of 80,000 SPLA elements and 70,000 members of the South Sudan Police Service, Wildlife Service, Prison Service and Fire Brigade.

On civilian disarmament, the report says that the current campaign was progressing more smoothly than previous ones. “While less violent than forcible disarmament, previous campaigns lacked safeguards for the disarmed communities as well as steps to prevent the recirculation of arms.”

But the Secretary-General notes that South Sudan faced enormous challenges in rule of law, including lack of capacity in the judicial and prison systems, limited government presence outside state capitals and a critical shortage of well-trained civil servants.

“Mission consultations with the government are ongoing with regard to possible arrangement for the provision of support in mandated areas by technical experts on judicial and security sector reform,” the report says.

It also observes that serious human rights violations by the South Sudan Police and SPLA showed an urgent need to professionalize security and rule-of-law institutions. “Steps taken by the government towards the ratification of key human rights instruments are a positive sign that should now be followed by concrete actions to implement international human rights standards.”

While most security and stability threats in South Sudan were internal, the report observes that unstable relations with Sudan weigh heavily on the new government, particularly amid heightened conflict in border regions.

“The threat from the Sudan, whether perceived or real, will impinge upon the prioritization, spending and decision-making of the new Government of South Sudan, with potentially adverse implications for key priorities and delivery to its citizens, until these conflicts have been resolved,” the Secretary-General says.