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Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes in Africa



MEDIA MONITORING

6 February 2015

Great Lakes region must unite to stamp out armed groups in DR Congo, urges UN envoy

Source: UN News Centre

5 February 2015 - Countries must come together to “neutralize all negative forces” terrorizing the population in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region urged today following meetings with top Rwandan officials to discuss recent peace and security developments in the region.

The call for united action comes a day after a massacre of civilians took place in the area of Beni town in the DRC’s restive northeast. Civilians in the village of Mayangose-Kibidiwe were attacked with machetes. At a separate attack in Kasu, in Eastern Province, several villagers were beheaded by people from outside, the UN Mission in that country (MONUSCO) confirmed.

"Countries in the region should remain united in efforts to neutralize all negative forces in eastern DRC and support military action against the FDLR," Special Envoy Said Djinnit said in a statement released from Rwanda’s capital, Kigali, today.

The FDLR, or the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, is an armed group comprised of perpetrators of the 1994 Rwanda genocide who have a long history of heinous crimes in the DRC. They were given six months to voluntarily surrender, as set out by the joint International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) meeting of Ministers of Defence on 2 July 2014.

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That deadline expired on 2 January, at which time the UN Security Council urged that “all necessary measures” be taken to disarm the rebels.

During his visit to Rwanda, Special Envoy Djinnit met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louise Mushikiwabo; Minister of Defense, James Kabarebe; as well as senior defence and security officials. He also met with the Chairman of the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC). During various meetings, Mr. Djinnit stressed the need to address the root causes of conflict including socio-economic and governance challenges.

He pledged UN’s support to help DRC Government take military action against the FDLR, which has caused ‘untold suffering to innocent people.’ Meanwhile, Rwanda’s Government must stay engaged on the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework, signed in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2013. The UN fully supports the repatriation process of the ex-M23 combatants involving DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, in line with the Nairobi Declarations, Mr. Djinnit said.

“I welcome the joint Communiqué signed on 3 February by representatives of the Governments of the DRC and Rwanda, in which they agreed on steps for the repatriation of the ex-M23 combatants and the handing-over of military equipment to the DRC as soon as possible,” the Special Envoy added.

He encouraged efforts towards convening the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) Summit that is expected to bring together the Heads of State of Burundi, DRC and Rwanda. Rwanda must continue to play its role, together with other regional countries, in the preparation of the Great Lakes Private Investment Conference planned for this year.

In a separate statement yesterday, the head MONUSCO, Martin Kobler, stressed that nothing will deter the UN mission from its purpose to neutralize all armed groups. Mr. Kobler, who is also the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in the country, pledged UN support to the Congolese authorities to ensure that ‘everything is done’ to prosecute the perpetrators of atrocious killings.

L'ONU appelle les pays de la région des Grands Lacs à neutraliser les forces des FDLR

Source: Agence de presse Xinhua

6 février 2015 - Les pays de la région des Grands Lacs doivent unir leurs efforts pour neutraliser les forces déstabilisatrices dans l'est de la République démocratique du

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Congo (RDC) et soutenir les opérations militaires contre les rebelles des Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), a déclaré jeudi l'Envoyé spécial du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies pour la région des Grands Lacs, Saïd Djinnit.

"Les pays de la région devraient rester unis dans leurs efforts visant à neutraliser toutes les forces négatives dans l'est de la RDC et à soutenir une action militaire contre les FDLR", a déclaré M. Djinnit dans un communiqué de l'ONU.

M. Djinnit a conclu mercredi une visite dans la capitale rwandaise à l'occasion de laquelle il a rencontré la ministre des Affaires étrangères du pays, Louise Mushikiwabo, le ministre de la Défense, James Kabarebe et d'autres hauts fonctionnaires rwandais, afin de discuter de la paix et la sécurité dans la région.

L'Envoyé spécial a en outre souligné l'importance de promouvoir le renforcement de la confiance et de la coopération économique entre les pays de la région, deux objectifs essentiels de l'Accord-cadre pour la paix, la sécurité et la coopération pour la RDC et la région, signé à Addis-Abeba le 24 février 2013. A cet égard, il a encouragé les efforts en cours pour la convocation du prochain sommet de la Communauté économique des pays des Grands Lacs (CEPGL), qui devrait réunir les chefs d'Etat du Burundi, de la RDC et du Rwanda.

Les combats contre les rebelles rwandais n'ont pas encore commencé

Source: ARI (Rwanda)

Kigali, 5 Février 2015 - Les combats proprement dits n'ont pas encore commencé sur terrain contre les FDLR depuis l'annonce par les autorités congolaises le 29 janvier du lancement d'une action militaire contre ces rebelles rwandais retranchés à l'Est de la RDC depuis 1994.

Cette indication a été faite par le chef de la Monusco (Mission de l'ONU en RDC), Martin Kobler, au cours de la conférence de presse hebdomadaire des Nations Unies à Kinshasa.

« En effet, l'armée gouvernementale, soutenue par les Casques bleus de la Force de la MONUSCO, a lancé le 29 février 2015 contre les combattants des FDLR, l'opération dénommée 'Sukola 2' (Nettoyage 2). A ce jour, aucun accrochage significatif n'a été rapporté entre les troupes coalisées et les rebelles des FDLR. », a indiqué Martin Kobler.

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«Nous n'avons pas d'information sur les opérations qui ont commencé. Nous ne voyons pas beaucoup cet état de coopération, de planification avec nous. De notre point de vue, ça n'a pas encore commencé», a-t-il poursuivi.

Le chef de la MONUSCO a précisé que les troupes de la Force de la MONUSCO appuyant les militaires congolais, ont depuis le lancement de cette opération menées seize (16) patrouilles vigoureuses de domination de terrain, visant à interdire tout mouvement aux unités de l'ennemi et à protéger les populations civiles.

Alors qu'il se trouvait en Ethiopie pour un Sommet de l'Union africaine, le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, Ban Ki-moon, s'est félicité de l'annonce par Kinshasa du début des opérations militaires contre les rebelles des FDLR et a souhaité des résultats concrets sur le terrain.

"Il est important que cela se traduise maintenant par des résultats concrets sur le terrain", a-t-il dit, précisant que la MONUSCO se tenait prête à participer de manière opérationnelle et logistique à ces opérations.

L'Envoyé spécial des Etats-Unis sur les Grands Lacs, Russ Feingold, pense qu'il faut «laisser une chance aux Congolais, et voir s'ils vont effectivement de l'avant avec cette opération ».

Anti-government demos in DR Congo killed 27: OFFICIAL

Source: AFP World News

Kinshasa, 5 February 2015 - Violent anti-government protests in the Democratic Republic of Congo claimed 27 lives in late January, nearly double the death toll previously announced by the authorities, the government said Thursday.

"Having announced 14 deaths, including that of a policeman, the number of people who died across the national territory is today estimated at 27 [persons killed], four in Goma, 23 in Kinshasa," government spokesman Lambert Mende told a press conference.

Mende said the victims included two police officers and that three children were killed in Goma, a town of about a million people in the far east of the vast central African country.

Demonstrators took to the streets between January 19 and 22 to protest an electoral bill that critics feared would enable President Joseph Kabila to remain in power after the end of his second term in late 2016.

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The police opened fire on the protestors with live ammunition, killing around 40 people and wounding dozens, according to separate reports from The International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) and New York-based rights watchdog Human Rights Watch.

The government had rejected those casualty estimates at the time, saying it had counted less than half as many dead.

Following a Senate amendment, both houses of parliament agreed to drop a controversial provision in the bill making any presidential poll contingent on a new voters' roll being drawn up after a census -- a process that had been expected to take years.

But the opposition remains concerned over other articles in the bill that could spell delays to a whole series of national elections.

During the protests, which ended in rioting and looting, the government shut down internet and cellphone services to weaken the opposition by hindering communications.

Fixed-line internet connections have been restored, but, despite a return to calm, mobile internet services and text messages remain blocked.

DR Congo's constitution bans Kabila from seeking re-election after two five-year terms.

Last year, Burkina Faso's president Blaise Compaore was ousted from power when he tried to change the constitution to extend his mandate.

DR Congo rejects UN ultimatum to sack tainted generals

Source: AFP World News

Kinshasa, 5 February 2015 - The Democratic Republic of Congo on Thursday rejected a United Nations ultimatum for two tainted generals leading an offensive against Rwandan rebels in the country's east to be replaced.

"For us, we would only replace someone in the (army high) command if that person had been convicted by our military courts. Yet, no such thing has happened," government spokesman Lambert Mende told a press conference in Kinshasa.

The UN's 20,000-strong MONUSCO force had been working with Congo's army on a plan of attack against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu militia based in eastern Congo for more than two decades.

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But in a surprise move, the army unilaterally announced last week the launch of operations, without the UN troops.

The army also announced that Generals Bruno Mandevu and Sikabwe Fall would be leading the offensive, despite being on a UN "red" list of known human rights violators.

UN officials reacted by giving Kinshasa until February 13 to sack the two generals or forfeit MONUSCO's support for the operation.

Shrugging off the threat Mende announced that the two generals, who had "always worked with the United Nations", would remain in charge of the offensive.

"It's a sovereign decision," Mende said, declaring that DR Congo was "not under anyone's supervision".

The FDLR was established by ethnic Hutus who fled Rwanda following the 1994 genocide of 800,000 people, mostly minority Tutsis.

Opposed to President Kagame's Tutsi-dominated government, they are accused of carrying out brutal attacks on civilians in eastern DR Congo and of smuggling gold and charcoal.

Several prominent FDLR leaders are wanted for suspected crimes against humanity.

UN has talks 'at highest level' with Congo over 2 generals

Source: Associated Press

United Nations, 5 February 2015 - A United Nations spokesman says talks are under way "at the highest level" with Congo's government after it appointed two generals accused of human rights abuses to lead a military offensive that the U.N. spent months preparing.

Farhan Haq told reporters Thursday that the appointment of generals "who are known to us as having been heavily involved in massive human rights violations is a grave concern."

A senior U.N. official has said the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo will not support the country's military offensive unless the generals are replaced.

President Joseph Kabila had announced that his forces would lead the operation, supported by the U.N.

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An estimated 2,000 members of the FDLR militant group remain in eastern Congo. It is not clear if the military offensive has actually begun.

South Africa to Host Next AU Summit

By SA News

4 February 2015 - South Africa will host the 25th African Union assembly in Johannesburg in June or July 2015.

This was declared at the end of the 24th AU Summit concluded on Saturday after deliberation on a number of issues and the Adoption of Agenda 2063, a vision and action plan towards a prosperous and peaceful Africa.

President Jacob Zuma led the South African delegation to the summit where Zimbabwe was elected chair of the union for this year.

The AU Summit was held under the theme “Year of Women Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”.

The summit also focused on peace and security matters and the escalation of terrorism in parts of the continent, and the endorsement and adoption of Agenda 2063, whose 10-year action plan will be adopted at the next AU Summit.

The summit also looked at the AU’s coordinated response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, as well as development and administrative-related issues with regard to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and on alternative sources of financing the AU and its programmes.

During the summit, the AU Peace and Security Council met to discuss security on the continent, focusing on the situation in the Great Lakes Region, South Sudan and the threat posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the surrounding countries.

As a member of the Peace and Security Council, President Zuma participated in the meeting of the council.

The growth and threat of terrorism by Boko Haram in certain parts of the continent was discussed.

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President Zuma indicated that the countries of the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger) established a multinational force and sought endorsement from the AU.

“The council endorsed the establishment of this multinational force and decided that the requisite financial and material resources be provided for this mechanism,” said President Zuma.

With regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a special meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) took place on the margins of the summit to consider the current developments in the DRC and the Great Lakes Region.

The matter was also discussed at summit level, where it was decided that the negative forces in the region must be disarmed as a matter of priority.

President Zuma stated that the operationalisation and time frame for the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation of these negative forces were one of the key issues during discussions.

Focus on South Sudan, Ebola

On the current developments in South Sudan, President Zuma said member states of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) met on the side-lines of the AU Summit in an attempt to finalise the agreement related to the modalities on how the government of South Sudan would be structured.

“A report on the situation in South Sudan will be presented to the AU Peace and Security Council once negotiations, which are at a delicate stage at the moment, are concluded,” said President Zuma.

The summit also reviewed the ongoing progress made in addressing the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone).

In this light, the summit reiterated the need to urgently establish the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention as a result of this epidemic.

It was agreed that this centre, which will coordinate medical research on the continent, should be operationalised this year.

President Zuma elaborated on the AU Summit’s deliberations on the issue of alternative sources of financing the African Union.

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It had been agreed that assessed contributions will need to be adapted according to the GDPs of member states. Domestic sources of funding will be the prerogative of each member State according to their own financial structures.

President Zuma stressed that it was imperative that the AU independently fund and implement its own programmes without conditions.

In this regard, President Zuma stated that in order to ensure the financial independence of the AU, the summit established the AU Foundation, which is a mechanism to raise funds by member states and in partnership with business.

Bientôt le rapatriement des rebelles ex-M23 du Rwanda convenue entre Kinshasa et Kigali

Source: Forum des As (Kinshasa)

Par Rachidi Mabandu

5 février 2015 - Le coordonnateur du mécanisme national du suivi des accords d'Addis-Abeba sur la RDC conduit à Rwanda une délégation chargée de finaliser le rapatriement au Rwanda des éléments de l'ex-rébellion M23 venus de ce pays tandis qu'un retour volontaire en RDC est proposé aux membres congolais de la dite rébellion, suivant a convention passé entre Kinshasa et Kigali.

5 février 2015 - La République démocratique du Congo et le Rwanda se sont mis d'accord pour le rapatriement d'environ 473 éléments de l'ex-M23. Une délégation congolaise conduite par le coordonnateur du Mécanisme national de suivi (MNS) se trouve présentement à Kigali pour les derniers réglages devant permettre un retour volontaire au Congo des membres de l'ancien mouvement rebelle.

« Les choses se précisent. On va récupérer les armes et nos compatriotes qui le désirent », a fait savoir François Muamba. « A ce stade, il faut dire que de la même manière qu'on a fait en Ouganda, cela se fera aussi avec les éléments de l'ex-M23 », a précisé le coordonateur du MNS affirmant qu' « il y a un accord avec le Rwanda. Cela se fera incessamment ». Soixante ex-rebelles du M23 en provenance de l'Ouganda sont arrivés à Bunia (Province Orientale) le 28 décembre 2014.

C'est le deuxième groupe d'ex-éléments du M23 rapatriés d'Ouganda après celui qui est rentré il y a une dizaine de jours. Ces ex-rebelles sont accompagnés de trois dépendants, deux femmes et un enfant. Ils sont arrivés samedi 27 décembre dans la soirée à Goli, village situé à la frontière entre l'Ouganda et la RDC, en territoire de

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Mahagi. Après leur défaite militaire au Nord-Kivu en novembre 2013, plusieurs centaines de combattants du M23 ont pris la direction de l'Ouganda. Après la promulgation de la loi d'amnistie, certains ont accepté de rentrer au pays.

Quid de l'absence du Rwanda

Sur un autre registre, François Muamba n'a pas voulu faire trop de commentaires sur l'absence du Rwanda à la cinquième réunion d'évaluation de l'Accord-cadre dans le cadre du sommet de l'Union africaine.

« La délégation rwandaise a participé à la phase préparatoire du communiqué final ayant sanctionné cette réunion ».

« Il faut simplement noter que ce cadre d'évaluation des engagements des uns et des autres par rapport à l'Accord-cadre vise à inciter les uns et les autres d'aller dans le sens du respect des engagements », a martelé François Muamba.

Pour le coordonateur du MNS, « cette réunion d'évaluation n'a pas été de trop », contrairement aux déclarations de la partie rwandaise qui a brillé par son absence.

« C'est une réunion structurelle reconnue par l'Accord cadre ».

« Quand ces assises sont co-présidées par le secrétaire général Ban Ki-moon et un représentant de Vladmini Nkosazana Zuma. Peut-on parler d'une réunion de trop ? », s'est interrogé François Muamba.

Le coordonateur du MNS s'est étonné de voir le Rwanda jouer à la politique de la chaise vide alors qu'on débattait notamment autour de la question liée aux Fdlr. « Lorsque les Etats se réunissent, ce sont les conclusions qu'on retient quel que soit ce qui a été dit par l'une ou l'autre partie. On ne tient plus compte des dispositions du départ », conclut François Muamba.

Burundi radio boss denied bail

Source: AFP

Bujumbura, 4 February 2015 - A Burundi court denied bail Wednesday to a radio station boss accused of complicity in the murder of three Italian nuns, his lawyer said.

The arrest of Bob Rugurika, director of the popular independent African Public Radio (RPA), has sparked protests by civil rights activists and fellow journalists, coming ahead of elections in May and June.

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Rugurika was arrested in mid-January after broadcasting the purported confession of a man claiming he was one of the killers.

For broadcasting the alleged confession and refusing to give up the self-proclaimed killer, Rugurika was charged with complicity in the murders, "breach of public solidarity" and disclosing confidential information regarding a case.

He faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

"This is an unfair decision, which disappoints us greatly because it confirms again that the Burundian judiciary is not truly independent," said lawyer Lambert Nigarura.

"Instead of illegally holding Bob Rugurika, judges should release him to help to bring out the truth of the assassination of the three nuns, but that is not their goal."

Burundi, a small landlocked nation in central Africa's Great Lakes region, emerged in 2006 from a brutal 13-year civil war. The political climate remains fractious ahead of local, parliamentary and presidential polls in May and June.

Opposition politicians and critics say the government is doing all it can to sideline political challengers ahead of the elections, including arrests, harassment and a clampdown on free speech.

The three Roman Catholic nuns, aged between 75 and 83, were murdered at a convent north of Bujumbura in September. The purported confession contradicted a police account of the crime and implicated a top official.

U.S. Concerns about Reported Extra-Judicial Killings and Detentions in Burundi

Press Statement

Marie Harf

Deputy Department Spokesperson, Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC, 5 February 2015 - The United States is troubled by reports implicating Burundian security forces in the extra-judicial killing of at least two dozen members of a rebel group after they surrendered in Cibitoke Province in early January. The United States calls on the government of Burundi to fully and credibly investigate these allegations, prosecute any crimes that may have been committed, and hold those responsible accountable.

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The United States is also deeply concerned by the increase in irregular detentions and prosecutions of media workers and members of political parties ahead of elections in May, including the recent detention of journalist Bob Rugurika, and continuing due process flaws in the prosecutions of Frederic Bamvuginyumvira and members of the Movement for Solidarity and Democracy youth. These cases raise troubling questions about freedom of expression and the independence of the Burundian judiciary. We urge the Government of Burundi to respect the rights of these individuals and all its citizens to due process of law and to ensure that the judicial process is not politicized. An independent, professional judiciary is a key component of the Burundian government's stated commitment to having a free, fair, and credible electoral process during this important election year in Burundi.

L'experte indépendante de l'ONU sur les droits humains, en Centrafrique mardi

Source: VOA

En dépit des progrès, Marie Thérèse Kéita Bocoum reconnaît que la situation sécuritaire reste « très précaire », les menaces et exactions persistant.

6 février 2015 - Cette quatrième visite de Marie-Thérèse Kéita Bocoum va porter sur l'examen de l'évolution de la situation des droits humains en Centrafrique et sur la mise en œuvre de ses recommandations, signale un communiqué du Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies aux droits de l'homme.

L'experte, qui restera en Centrafrique jusqu'au 14 février, estime que « la situation en République centrafricaine (RCA) semble être à la croisée des chemins, avec des initiatives positives, comme le lancement des consultations nationales pour préparer le forum de Bangui sur la réconciliation nationale ».

Néanmoins, Mme Kéita Bocoum reconnaît que la situation sécuritaire reste « très précaire », les menaces et exactions persistant, ce qui affecte les droits fondamentaux.

Au cours de cette visite, l'experte compte se rendre à l'intérieur du pays pour évaluer la situation des droits humains, ainsi que les conditions de vie des déplacés internes.

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L'ONU veut un millier de casques bleus supplémentaires en RCA

Source: VOA, Reuters

Le secrétaire général de l'ONU réclame le renfort de 750 militaires et 280 policiers, qui porteraient les effectifs en uniforme de la Minusca à près de 13.000 hommes.

Nations Unies, 5 février 2015 - Le secrétaire général des Nations unies a demandé jeudi au Conseil de sécurité de valider l'envoi de 1.030 casques bleus supplémentaires en République centrafricaine (RCA). Ban Ki-moon a expliqué que la Minusca, la mission de l'Onu en RCA, avait dû affecter des hommes à la protection de la capitale après des violences en octobre dernier, ce qui laisse moins de troupes disponibles en dehors de Bangui.

Cela, souligne Ban, "limite la capacité de la Minusca à répondre avec souplesse et rapidité aux crises émergentes à travers le pays". Le secrétaire général réclame le renfort de 750 militaires et 280 policiers, qui porteraient les effectifs en uniforme de la Minusca à près de 13.000 hommes.

Le Conseil de sécurité de l'Onu doit renouveler en avril prochain le mandat de la mission. "La situation est fragile et les affrontements se poursuivent entre les anti-balaka (chrétiens) et des éléments de l'ex-Séléka (ex-rebelles majoritairement musulmans)", écrit Ban Ki-moon dans une lettre à l'instance onusienne.

"Des poches de communautés musulmanes vulnérables restent pratiquement tout le temps sous la menace et dans des conditions humanitaires désespérées, en dépit des efforts des forces internationales", ajoute-t-il.

Environ 5.600 casques bleus africains et 2.000 soldats français se sont déployés en décembre 2013 en Centrafrique pour mettre fin aux violences politiques et religieuses. L'Onu a pris le relais de la mission de l'Union africaine en septembre dernier et la force française, baptisée Sangaris, doit s'effacer peu à peu derrière la Minusca, qui aura normalement déployé en avril les neuf dixièmes de ses effectifs.

South Sudan government, rebels sign ceasefire deal

Source: Al Jazeera

Deal would keep Salva Kiir president and make Riek Machar vice president, but other details are still to be worked out

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2 February 2015 - South Sudan's warring factions signed a ceasefire agreement early Monday in the latest effort to end hostilities in the 15-month conflict, which has left more than 10,000 people dead. The government and rebels have previously signed at least three peace deals, which were broken quickly.

"Complete cessation of hostilities in South Sudan is expected as of this morning," Seyoum Mesfin, a negotiator from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional grouping of east African nations whose mission in part is to "promote peace and stability in the region," told reporters on Monday in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, where the ceasefire deal was signed.

African diplomatic sources said that the agreement, which has not been made public, sets out how the two leaders would share power once they formed an interim government.

Under the deal, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir would remain president while rebel commander Riek Machar would become vice president. The rebels, however, said that many more details need to be ironed out before the deal can be labeled a "power-sharing" agreement.

"If the government respects the deal, then there will definitely be a decrease in the level of violence. But if they remain in the same mood, it is not going to stop the fight," South Sudan rebels' military spokesman Lul Koang said.

Since fighting broke out in December 2013, more than 1.5 million South Sudanese have fled their homes and tens of thousands have sheltered in United Nations bases.

The World Food Program has said the conflict has left the country on "the brink of a hunger catastrophe." Over 479,000 people have fled to neighboring countries, according to the international aid organization Oxfam. Tens of thousands of those refugees have fled to Ethiopia.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said since the conflict began "insecurity and logistical constraints owing to heavy rains have hampered the delivery of food and other essential items."

IGAD leaders will take severe action against anyone who breaks the latest agreement and report them to the African Union (AU) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Mesfin said. Both have threatened sanctions against those undermining peace in South Sudan, the world's newest nation.

Both the government and the rebels agreed to conclude a comprehensive agreement to end the crisis before March 5, and a transitional government of national unity will start

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functioning July 9, mediators said. Some sticking points still remain, they said, including the allocation of power.

Fighting broke out in December 2013 between Kiir's troops and those loyal to Machar, who Kiir accused of plotting a coup against him. Machar - who previously served as vice president before being fired by Kiir in July 2013 - denied the charge, but his followers in the army took up arms after the government detained a group of allied politicians. Much of the violence has pitted the ethnic Dinkas, who back Kiir, against the ethnic Nuer, who support Machar.