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The 15-member United Nations Security Council (UNSC), today held wide ranging discussions with the African Union Commission, headed by Professor Alpha Oumar Konare at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The UNSC delegation was led by H.E Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry of the United Kingdom.

Their discussions focused mainly on conflict prevention, combating conflict, post conflict reconstruction, the proposed transition of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to a UN operation, relationships between the AU and the UN and African development through achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The two delegations were unanimous as to the need and benefits for them to work in tandem. The African Union outlined 4 conflicts which need immediate resolution: Darfur, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia. Mr. Konare hailed the cooperation between the AU, the UN, the United States, the European Union, Canada and other partners, which led to the May 5 signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), although two rebel groups are still holding out. While stressing the need for the UN to assume peace keeping duties soon, he also emphasized the need to have a strong African presence and character to the new force and the need to continue dialogue with the Government of National Unity in Sudan. External forces, he said, cannot go into Darfur alone, without risking a generalized conflict. He said those who have not yet signed the DPA should continue to be encouraged to do so, and said it was encouraging that some of the rebel leaders have approached the AU, expressing their willingness for peace. The best way to encourage rebels, he said, is to implement the provisions of the peace agreement. Protection of civilians and disarmament of the Janjaweed militia were identified as paramount in any new mandate to be given to the AU troops in Darfur.

The UN delegation concurred that the AU, UN and Government of Sudan need to work together to bring peace to Sudan. The UN and the AU will work with each other on the modalities of the transfer from AMIS to a UN operation, as guided by the decision of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC).

With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, the AUC Chairperson encouraged the Prime Minister and President of Cote d'Ivoire to continue dialogue. A follow up on Cote d'Ivoire will be done after the July Banjul Summit of the Assembly of the AU, he said.

In the DRC, Professor Konare said the AU and UN should do everything to ensure elections take place in the best possible manner. One way to do this would be to support the capacity of local institutions to handle the elections. The AU will send observers during the election period and it is also considering sending a small African force.

The unfolding situation in Somalia, where religious militias recently took over control of the capital Mogadishu was also discussed. Both the UNSC and the AU agreed that the Somali situation needs to be treated as seriously as all the other conflicts, to prevent the war spreading and possibly destabilizing other countries in the process.

The AU also reported that a commission of inquiry has been sent to Chad and should be reporting back on its findings in the course of this week.

As for countries emerging from conflict, e.g. Burundi, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau, the meeting agreed that post conflict reconstruction measures should be implemented immediately to avoid a return to war. In this regard the UNSC announced that the Peace Building Commission of the UN should start operating this month. It will, among other things continue to monitor countries emerging from conflict, as well as coordinate interventions and assistance to avoid a return to war.

Professor Konare warned that the world needs to look out for new conflicts in order to prevent deterioration into wars. He sighted the issue of commodities, where different parties fight over natural resources, as a potential source of conflict.

Both delegations at today's meeting hailed the relations between the UN and the AU. They said the two organizations work together in many areas of development on the continent although there is need to clarify roles in terms of spotting potential conflict, how to communicate that information and who acts on it. The AU and the UN General secretariat are working together to see how best they can work better with each other. Chairperson Konare however raised the issue of the status of the AU which he said is often wrongly treated as an inter governmental organization instead of the organization of regional integration that it is.

In terms of Africa's development Professor Konare voiced Africa's concern about resources to propel Africa's development. Developed countries need to honour their commitments to increasing ODA to 0.7%, and cancellation of debt. He said

Africa needs infrastructure, energy, market access and trade to develop. He also said for its part, Africa needs to deal with conflict situations, practice good governance and attract investment. Ambassador Parry of the UNSC said the Commission for Africa identified development of infrastructure as a possible way to drive growth. Creation of a climate conducive to development was another. He also added that the onus to honour commitments is on both the donors and beneficiaries of aid.