



## CHAIRPERSON VISITS DARFUR TO ASSESS SITUATION

From 20 to 22 June, Chairperson Konare led a delegation from the Commission to Sudan, in order to assess the situation in Darfur and have some consultations on the ongoing process in Sudan. The delegation, which included ten journalists drawn from Ethiopian and international media, spent two days in Khartoum and El Fasher, where the Force headquarters of the African Union Mission in Sudan is located. In Sudan, many other journalists from Sudanese and international media joined the group.

At the end of his trip Professor Konare had a closed meeting with Sudanese president Mr. Omar Hassan El Bashir during which he briefed the president on his observations on the ground in Darfur, especially after the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Among his most important observations were:

- There has been no fighting among the parties since the signing of the agreement. This is an encouraging sign, he said
- In certain regions in Darfur, there is still some fighting in and between factions.
- This fighting has implications on Non Governmental Organisations and others in the humanitarian field. In this regard he expressed the AU's wish for a ceasefire to enable these organizations to carry out their work.

In view of the need to implement the provisions of the DPA, the Chairperson emphasized the ur-

gency of disarming the Janjaweed militia; deal with incidence of banditry and to help signatories to the agreement to work together.



Chairperson Konare consulting with AMIS officers in El Fasher

The signatories are the Government of National Unity of Sudan and the larger faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Mr. Minni Minnawi. In addition, he said the AU will keep encouraging the other parties to sign the agreement. He said he was encouraged by overtures from them expressing an interest in peace. The Chairperson was referring to the signing of a Declaration of Commitment to the DPA by four field commanders and responsible officers of the Darfur Movements, on 8 June 2006.

In the Declaration, the four agreed to be bound by the letter and spirit of the DPA and to assume and implement the relevant obligations arising

from there as well as to commit themselves to ensure that all the organs, committees and structures under their control comply with the provisions of the DPA.

As concerns the anticipated UN take over of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the Chairperson, underscored that

the Government of Sudan would like clarification of the world body's role. He outlined that Sudan is a member of the United Nations and of the AU and is open to co operation with the UN. However, it has concerns regarding its sovereignty and other questions which need to be answered.

In the meanwhile, the Darfur Joint Commission comprising the AU and UN, US and European Union as well as the international community held its first meeting since the DPA at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa on 23 June. The meeting concentrated

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Communication and Information



Mr. Mazimhaka delivering the official opening address. With him are Economic Affairs Commissioner Dr. Mkwezalamba and Mrs. Habiba Mejri Cheikh: Head of Communication and Information

The idea of creating a Pan African Radio and Television channel was unanimously welcomed by African Ministers of Communication and Information who attended a conference at the African Union Commission from 14-15 June, 2006.

All 41 representatives of AU member states hailed the truly African nature of the proposed initiative, emphasizing the major role it will play in fostering and speeding up African integration.

They agreed that the channel should be all encompassing: i.e. focusing on news, sports, culture, films and documentaries in its efforts to promote a common vision for the building of the African Union, projecting a correct image of Africa, and enabling Africans to face the challenges of globalisation and communication.

The ministers saw it as an initiative whose time is overdue; as Africa's window to the world and the world's window on Africa. They deplored the continued characterization of Africa as the land of endless hunger, famine, disease, corruption and bad governance, at the expense of the positive and sometimes outstanding developments across all sectors.

Deputy AU Commission Chairperson, Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka got

As Africa sets sights on a greater voice in international affairs...

## MINISTERS MEET TO CONSIDER FORMATION OF PAN AFRICAN RADIO AND TV CHANNELS

the ball rolling when he presented the official opening speech, in the presence of the Commissioners for Social Affairs and Economic Affairs. He touched on the problems facing Africa in the area of communication. He stated that Africa has very little or no control over the means of communication especially the technology used in the production, distribution and broadcasting of programmes. He also reminded the ministers of the challenges of the project especially in terms of reducing the domination of African airwaves by foreign cultures and finding the resources to start up and run the channel.

Mrs. Habiba Mejri Cheikh, Head of AU Communication and Information division presented a preliminary paper focusing mainly on the development of the project and giving an account of the Meeting of Experts held in Cairo Egypt from 21-23 November 2005 and the Meeting of the Follow Up Committee also held in Cairo from 6-7 February 2006. She presented the conclusions of the two meetings concerning the nature and the missions of the channel, its legal and institutional framework, the programme content, target audience, the technologies to be used, financing mechanisms and the broadcast languages.

Thereafter, the ministers considered the conclusions of the two preparatory meetings. They were keen to emphasize that once established the channel should be a success and avoid past scenarios where projects have been started but suffered due to lack of funding. A lot of debate went into considering possible partnerships and means for financing because it is a costly project, with initial estimates pegged at 34 million dollars.

Apart from funding issues, ministers were also interested in knowing the satellite technology to be used, the exact programme content, linkages between the new channel and other existing similar initiatives, as well as the channels legal and managerial structure. They also emphasized that a project of this magnitude cannot succeed without strong political will and proactive leadership. There was widespread recognition that the channel will be existing in a globalized environment where it will need to compete with other more established stations, who have better funding and distribution systems; but there was no doubt that Africa would be in the driver's seat.

The ministers also deliberated the best way forward, to ensure that the Pan African Radio and television channel succeeds. A progress report will be presented to the Heads of State and Government Summit in Banjul this July. Thereafter, senior officials will look at all the aspects involved in the setting up of the channel before ministers can again meet to put together recommendations for considerations by Heads of State.

A bureau was elected to coordinate the activities of the meeting and the setting up of the channel. It consists of:

Chairperson	Lesotho
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chair	Togo
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair	Rwanda
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair	Egypt
Rapporteur	Equatorial Guinea

\* AUC NEWS is saddened to report that one of the ministers who contributed a lot to the debates, Dr Tichaona Jokonya of Zimbabwe passed away hardly a week after the conference.

Youth Development

# AFRICAN MINISTERS ADOPT YOUTH CHARTER

The African Union Ministers of Youth held the First Session of their Conference in the African Union Conference Hall in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 28 May 2006. The objective of the Conference convened by the African Union Commission was to adopt the Youth Charter and a Structure for the Conference of Ministers, among other things. The Conference also endorsed the report of the Experts meeting held from 26 to 27 May 2006, which was preceded by the Youth Forum organized from 22 to 24 May.

As per the agenda, the ministers went through the following:

**Presentation of Experts' Report**

The Ministers heard the presentation of the Experts' Report .

**Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Youth Charter**

The Ministers scrupulously considered the Charter and made substantial amendments to it before adopting it.

**Strategy for Popularization of the Charter**

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation took note of the Document on the Strategy for Popularization of the Charter. They made a commitment to take the most effective measures to ensure its popularization in partnership with all the stakeholders.

**Revitalization of the Pan African Youth Union**

In line with the guidelines defined in the Experts' Report, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation took note of the document on the revitalization of the PYU.

**Adoption of the Structure of the**

**Ministers' Conference**

After consideration of the draft Structure presented to them, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation adopted same with amendments. The Structure comprises:

The Conference of Ministers; The Bureau; and The Steering Committee

**Adoption of the Declaration of the Ministers of Youth**

At the end of their deliberations, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation adopted a Declaration underscoring their commitment to support all initiatives aimed at ensuring implementation of the Charter and the promotion of youth.

She stressed that its approval by the Assembly of the Union scheduled to take place in Banjul, The Gambia, would give a fresh impetus to the interventions geared to youth promotion.

She assured the Ministers of the commitment of the African Union to fulfill the expectations of the African Youth and to pursue efforts aimed at creating enabling conditions for Member States to foster integration and regional cooperation.

Mrs. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) addressed the gathering via video conference from New York.

She commended the African Union for its initiative in developing the African Youth Charter. She went on to stress that the African youth should be endowed with the necessary skills and the wherewithal to enable them generate the resources which they need for their existence.

The following countries were elected to the Bureau:

- Chairperson Zimbabwe
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair Kenya
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-Chair Republic of Congo
- Rapporteur Mali

The meeting was attended by 129 delegates from 35 AU Member States. 23 representatives of Regional Economic Communities, governmental and non governmental organizations, specialized agencies of the UN and other partners also attended.



The African Union is taking all the necessary measures to establish a continent-wide youth organization to facilitate communication with the youth

Commissioner Najia Essayed of Human Resources, Science and Technology highlighted that the adoption of the Charter would pave the way for identifying the most effective ways and means to find sustainable solutions to the problems of youth.

On this score, she indicated that the African Union was taking all the necessary measures to establish a continent-wide youth organization to facilitate communication with the youth and create youth platforms on the continent, while monitoring implementation of the Charter.

## Education

### EXPERTS PREPARE PLAN OF ACTION FOR SECOND DECADE OF EDUCATION

The First Meeting of Working Groups for the Second Decade of Education (2006-2015) took place in Johannesburg, South Africa from 5-8 June 2006. The objective of the Experts' Meeting was to prepare a comprehensive Plan of Action in the areas of focus adopted by the Extra Ordinary meeting of the Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union (COMEDAF), which took place in Addis Ababa, in January 2006. 18 countries, 3 Regional Economic Communities and a number of non governmental organisations attended.

The meeting came against the backdrop of the sixth Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held in Khartoum in January this year, which adopted a decision to launch a Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015). The first decade had been proclaimed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1997. The Khartoum assembly acknowledged that while

there have been significant strides in many areas, a number of obstacles and challenges which confront the continent have prevented the full achievement of all the commitments made in 1997 by the OAU.

Participants at the Johannesburg Experts' meeting were split into working groups, to discuss the following topics: quality management for the second decade of education for Africa; curriculum and teaching material; tertiary education; education management and information systems; gender and culture; teacher development and training; and technical and vocation education and training (TVET). Each of these groups identified priorities.

The Director of UNESCO Regional Centre in Dakar, assured participants that if necessary UNESCO programmes will be modified to fit into the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa. She appealed to all development partners to support the decade and called for COMEDAF, AU Summit, and RECs to push for commitment at the level of Member

States and requested them not to allow for parallel programmes to divert their attention.

At the end of the meeting, the representative of the African Union Commission, Dr Botlahale Tema, who is the Director of the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology, informed participants that the group reports would be compiled into a draft Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education in Africa. Thereafter the Report of the First Meeting of working Groups on the Second Decade for Education was adopted.

The Second Decade will be launched in Maputo, Mozambique in September 8<sup>th</sup> 2006, together with the Plan of Action drafted by the experts' meeting. Before the launch, the draft Plan of Action will be reviewed by the Bureau of the Conference of Ministers of Education in July, who will present it to an Extra-ordinary session COMEDAF in Maputo, from 5<sup>h</sup> to 7<sup>h</sup> September 2006.

### AMBASSADOR SIGNS 3 INSTRUMENTS

The Ambassador of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic signed 3 instruments at the AU Commission on June 20, 2006. They were:

1. The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of PELINDABA)
2. Protocol to the African Charter on

Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa  
3. Convention of the African Energy Commission

### AU AND WHO: COLLABORATING FOR AFRICA'S FUTURE

A collaborative seminar on NEPAD between the AU and World Health Organisation was conducted on 26 May 2006 at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. It was an example of the close collaboration between the two organizations in various areas of mutual interest.

Dr. Kamel Esseghairi, Director of AUC's Department of Social Affairs made a presentation.

The seminar aimed to cover: the

history of NEPAD; relationship between the AU and NEPAD; how the AU is organized to support health agenda in Africa; the complex organizational landscape within which NEPAD is supported in Africa; how the UN system supports NEPAD in the African Region; and the requirements for WHO's involvement in taking forward the NEPAD agenda; etc.

This is the second in a series of seminars being offered in 2006, aimed at increasing awareness on NEPAD in WHO, thereby enabling technical staff

to align their activities with NEPAD priorities in response to UN General Assembly Resolution 57/7, and to work with regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa. In the resolution adopted on 4 November 2002, the UN General Assembly threw its weight behind NEPAD, affirmed that international support was essential, and urged the international community and the United Nations system to organize support for African countries in accordance with the principles, objectives and priorities of NEPAD.

## Investment

**AFRICAN UNION TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN 2007**

The African Union will organize a fair/ exhibition of electricity materials and equipment micro products in the second half of 2007, in an effort to promote business and to promote the utilization of renewable sources of energy by the majority of Africans, many of whom currently rely on biomass, which has negative consequences for the environment and human health.

The Union also intends to organize a private sector forum every year to showcase the continent's investment potential.

These two positive developments were announced by Economic Affairs Commissioner Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba when he addressed a regional conference on investment organized by Proinvest-

ment/CDE in Addis Ababa on June 7, 2006.



Underdeveloped infrastructure such as roads can hamper development

At the conference, Dr Mkwezalamba said Africa needs to establish ambitious trans-African infrastructure networks in terms of roads, railways, airports, energy and water resources as well as Information Communication Technologies. He gave many examples from the developed countries which show that infrastructure is the

bedrock of the development of civilizations since the beginning of history. He also challenged the delegates to consider why Africa seems less attractive to investors than Latin America or Asia.

The objective of the conference was to promote infrastructural investment in Africa, which the Commissioner said was in line with the Vision and Mission of the African Union.

The Vision of the African Union in matters of infrastructure, he said, is to build "an Africa with an integrated transport, communication and energy infrastructure that is reliable and efficient, viable and affordable; capable of boosting regional integration and ensuring the Continent's participation in globalization".

## Investment

**ISSUES OF INVESTMENT OCCUPY EXPERTS GROUP**

The Commission of the African Union hosted the second meeting of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA) at its headquarters in Addis Ababa from 19 to 20 June 2006. The opening ceremony for the meeting, which took place in Committee Room 1, was presided over by the Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr. Bernard Zoba on behalf of the Chairperson.

The Consortium is a product of consultations undertaken among the G8 countries as well as between them and Africa's top leadership following the release of the report of the Commission for Africa under the Chairmanship of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony

Blair, which identified and prioritised investment in infrastructure as a key factor in bringing about sustainable development and poverty eradication in Africa.

Members of the Consortium are major current and prospective financiers of infrastructure in Africa including the G8 countries, African and international multilateral financial institutions as well as continental and regional development coordination organisations.

The African Development Bank (ADB)



Commissioner Zoba (Center) addressing the ICA meeting

hosts the Secretariat of the Consortium. The inaugural meeting of ICA took place in October 2005 in London, United Kingdom.

## Peace and Security

## UN SECURITY COUNCIL VISITS AUC



Head of the UNSC delegation;  
Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry

The 15-member United Nations Security Council (UNSC) visited the AU Commission headquarters on 7 June and held wide ranging discussions with the African Union Commission. 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 together. The African Union outlined 4 conflicts which need immediate resolution: Darfur, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia. The AUC Chairperson, 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. He 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. He also identified protection of civilians and disarmament of the Janjaweed militia as paramount in any new mandate for 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).

As for countries emerging from conflict, the meeting agreed that post conflict reconstruction measures

fight over natural resources, as a potential source of conflict.

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



Delegates who attended a briefing by the UNSC at the AU Commission

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 soon. 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

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.

## Somalia

**AU URGES EXEMPTION TO FACILITATE IGASOM**

The African Union, together with the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), has expressed its strong view that the UN Security Council should take an urgent decision regarding an exemption to the arms embargo, to allow for the expeditious deployment of the IGAD Peace Support Mission to Somalia (IGASOM).



Commissioner Said Djinnit

Speaking at the end of a consultative meeting on the Somalia reconciliation and peace process which took place at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa on 19 June, Commissioner Said Djinnit of Peace and Security Department said the AU and IGAD representatives informed the meeting that they are

planning to undertake a visit to New York to brief the Security Council on the matter and secure its consent for an exemption to the arms embargo.

The meeting welcomed the approval by the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP), on 14 June 2006, of the national security and stabilisation plan endorsed by the Somalia Council of Ministers, as called for by the Security Council in its Presidential Statements.

It acknowledged that the new situation of Somalia, which emerged following the defeat of the warlords in Mogadishu and Jowhar, remains fluid. There is therefore need for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities to avert further loss of life and destruction of property, and create an environment that would be conducive for initiatives aimed at consolidating the outcome of the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference that was held in Kenya in 2002 – 2004, under the auspices of IGAD.

Further more, dialogue should be undertaken with urgency by the Transitional Federal Government and other stakeholders, in line with the relevant AU and IGAD decisions. The IGAD and the AU informed the meeting of their readiness to facilitate such a dia-

logue.

The meeting was informed of the steps being taken by the AU and IGAD for the convening of a joint planning meeting to prepare the ground for IGASOM deployment and other related tasks. It was further informed that the joint planning meeting will be followed by an assessment reconnaissance mission to Somalia that will comprise AU/IGAD and international partners representatives to assess the situation and make recommendations for a more sustained and focused engagement of the international community in Somalia.

Information was provided on the modalities of seeking financial support from the Africa Peace Facility (APF) to contribute to the financing of peace support operations undertaken under the authority of the AU.

The meeting agreed that periodic consultative meetings between AU, IGAD and international partners should take place in Addis Ababa, to review the situation and ensure the required level of coordination.

**Darfur Ceasefire Commission****NEW DARFUR CEASEFIRE COMMISSION IS INAUGURATED**

Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe chaired the inauguration of the CFC

The Darfur Ceasefire Commission (CFC) was inaugurated on Tuesday, 13 June 2006, at the Force Headquarters of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in El

Fasher, Sudan. The CFC is the organ responsible for implementation and monitoring of the ceasefire provisions of the DPA, and other previous agreements between the Sudanese parties.

The ceremony was chaired by Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, Special Representative of the AUC Chairperson and Chairman of the Joint Commission; in the presence of Amb Said Djinnit, and Mr. Jean-Marie Guehenno, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations who are leading the AU/UN joint Technical Assessment Mission.

Representatives of the Government of Sudan and the Mini Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), as signatories of the DPA attended. Also present were representatives from the SLM/A of Abdul Waheed Al Nour and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), who have not signed the DPA, but are bound by the N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement, the Addis Ababa Agreement, and the two Abuja Protocols of 2005, all relating to ceasefire arrangements.

## ACALAN

## 2006 LAUNCHED AS THE YEAR OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

2006 was launched as the Year of African Languages at a ceremony held at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 20 June. The meeting heard that Africa has over 2000 languages, 80 of which are spoken in the AU host country of Ethiopia.



A dance troupe displays the many flags of Africa at the launch of ACALAN

His Excellency Mr. Addisu Legesse, the Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who is also the Min-

ister of Agriculture delivered the official opening statement, before many guests who included ministers and AU Commissioners, members of the diplomatic corps, specialists in linguistics, AU staff and members of the public.

Speaking at the ceremony, the AU Commission Chairperson, professor Alpha Oumar Konare underscored some of the roles that language plays. He said language is an important cultural instrument. It shapes the nature of relationships between people and between people and the environment and it serves as a link between the past, the present and the future. Language

also helps people shape their norms and traditions and it is a tool for integration. African languages constitute the bulk of the intangible common

African heritage and serve as an umbilical cord between generations: past, present and future.

Professor Konare encouraged the use of local languages in the ongoing democratization process in Africa.

To coincide with the launch, the Commission also convened the Inaugural Session of the Governing Board of the Academy of Languages (ACALAN).

The background of the launch of ACALAN lies in the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the AU Assembly, meeting in Khartoum, Sudan in January 2006, which adopted wide-ranging instruments to promote the convergence of social and cultural views and policies on the continent. Amongst others, the Statutes to establish the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) and the Language Plan of Action were adopted and endorsed.



### Day of the African Child

## ELIMINATE FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION, AFRICA IS URGED

The day of the Africa Child was observed across the continent on 16 June. This is in conformity with the decision of African Heads of State and Government to commemorate the massacre of innocent children in the South African township of Soweto by the then apartheid regime in 1976.

This year's theme of DAC was Right to Protection: Stop violence Against Children. The AU's message, as delivered by Chairperson Alpha Oumar Konare focused on

**The AU has been co-operating with other partners to curb these harmful practices**

female genital mutilation (FGM) or cutting, which he deplored as a harmful traditional practice and a violation of human rights. In his message, Mr. Konare said the African Union is very concerned about the social and psychological effects of FGM in Africa and its impact on the health of girls.

The AU has been cooperating with other partners to curb these harmful practices, he said. Various legal and



Africa has been urged to spare girls from the ordeal of FGM

policy frameworks for the protection of the rights and welfare of children and dealing with violence against women have been adopted; the two most important being: the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa.

To make these legal frameworks and Protocols effective, he said they need to be ratified by Member States and incorporated in their national laws. He therefore called on Member States to put an end to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation and free African girls and women from the ordeal.

## HIV/ AIDS

## AFRICAN UNION CHAIR RECOMMITTS TO THE TARGETS ON HIV/AIDS

Following the United Nations General Assembly's High Level Meeting on AIDS (UNGASS) which took place from 31 May to 2 June in New York, the Chairperson of the African Union reaf-



President Sassou Nguesso

firmed the commitment of all African countries to achieve coverage rates of 80% for HIV treatment and prevention by 2010. The new targets were set by African leaders during the Special Summit of the African Union on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, held from 2-4 May 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria.

"Universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention, care and support must become a reality," said Mr. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, African Union Chairperson and the President of the Republic of Congo. "Africa bears the highest burden of disease, sickness and death from the AIDS pandemic. Africa also bears a responsibility to set and fulfill measurable, time-bound targets, in order to work towards a common goal of stopping this catastrophe."

President Sassou-Nguesso also called upon African governments and international donors to work together to fully fund the AIDS response in Africa. Despite an upsurge over the last five years in resources available for AIDS treatment, care and prevention pro-

grams, the international community is not yet funding the AIDS response at the level needed. Internationally, at least \$20 billion annually is needed by 2010 to fund the fight against AIDS.

This UNAIDS estimate of annual resource needs to fight AIDS, was recognized by UN Member States during the High Level Meeting, along with a commitment to take measures to ensure that new and additional resources are made available from donor countries and also from national budgets and other national sources.

The declaration made at the close of the High Level Meeting also included a commitment to set national targets and scale up national AIDS responses towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010.

(Continued from page 1)

on efforts to find a balance between maintaining the integrity of the parties to the DPA and the need to ensure greater inclusivity when considering the Darfur ceasefire regimes. It also focused on the nature and extent of participation in the meeting by those who are not signatory to the DPA, a debate prompted by the presence of a member of the Justice and Equality Movement, which, though not a signatory to the DPA, is bound by the provisions of the N'djamena Agreement of April 2004, to which it was a party.

The Joint Commission deliber-



Field commanders and responsible officers of Darfur movements signing the Declaration of Commitment to the DPA

ates on reports of the Ceasefire Commission and takes decisive action in relation to ceasefire violations. These actions include publicizing the violations and the names of the parties

responsible, recommending prosecution of individuals who violate the ceasefire, and making recommendations to the AU on appropriate actions, including punitive measures.

Rebel groups in Sudan took up arms in 2003. On May 5 2006, the Government of Sudan and Mr. Minnawi's faction signed the Darfur Peace Agreement in Abuja, Nigeria. However two smaller rebel groupings, the Justice and Equality Movement and a faction of the SLA led by Abdel Wahed Mohammed al- Nur rejected the deal, despite last minute efforts to secure their support.

## World Refugee Day

# AFRICA'S REFUGEE SITUATION- A CELEBRATION OR CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

As Africa marked the World Refugee Day on 20 June, there were some reasons to celebrate. The celebrations arose from statistics that show an overall decline of numbers of refugee numbers in Africa and elsewhere; and from seeing the cheerful faces returning to their homes in countries such as Burundi, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Sudan.

In her message to mark World Refugee Day, Commissioner Julia Joiner of Political Affairs Department said this gives rise to celebration of hope over the despair that could easily have engulfed these populations who found themselves in situations of conflict, and where families and communities were torn apart. Africa also celebrated the adoption of the Ouagadougou Declaration and Recommendations by Ministers in charge of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

This adoption is Africa's commitment to resolving refugee problems on the continent, with an emphasis on African solutions.



Refugees sometimes return home to deprivation

On the other hand though, these celebrations are dampened by the increase in the numbers of IDPs on the continent, whose considerable needs go unmet. Commissioner Joiner said in some cases of repatriation, Africa continues to watch as the returnees come back to deprivation in areas with minimal infrastructure. In some cases daily

violations of the basic human rights of victims of forced displacement occur.

This is the paradoxical situation Africa faces as she tries to deal with the challenges of refugees and IDPs.

The Commissioner acknowledged that the situation of refugees in Africa is characterized by both celebration and sadness.

She however said Africa remains conscious of its responsibility to mitigate and address the root causes of conflict that generate forced displacement. It will advocate for settlement of disputes; respect of basic human rights; and elimination of poverty, underdevelopment and deadly diseases which impair the dream of a united and integrated Africa. The African Union will continue to appeal to its historical partners and AU member states to ensure that voluntary repatriation remains a durable solution.

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