



[U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called for an immediate end to violence in the Central African Republic, where clashes this week left “dozens” of people dead including six African Union peacekeepers. A mass grave containing at least 20 bodies was discovered yesterday in the capital, Bangui, Kerry said in a statement e-mailed by the State Department today. The bodies of 44 people were found in the streets of the city yesterday after clashes on Dec. 24 and Dec. 25, Romaric Bekourou, a spokesman for the Red Cross, said by phone. Sixty people were injured, he said.]

BURUNDI :

Burundi: le leader de l'opposition reste en prison

Par RFI/vendredi 27 décembre 2013

Au Burundi, la Cour suprême a décidé ce jeudi 26 décembre le maintien détention préventive de l'ancien vice-président durant les années de transition et l'un des principaux opposants burundais, Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira. Il doit être jugé pour une affaire d'adultère, qui s'est ensuite transformée en tentative de corruption sur l'agent de police qui venait de l'arrêter, selon la justice. La date de son procès n'a pas encore été fixée, au grand dam de ses soutiens.

Cette fois, l'opposition burundaise dit en être sûre : « Il ne s'agit que d'acharnement politique ». La preuve, selon elle : il y a une semaine, la cour anticorruption avait placé l'ancien vice-président burundais Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira en liberté provisoire, contre le paiement de l'équivalent de 470 euros. Le procureur près cette cour, Isaac Kubwayo, s'était pourvu en appel auprès de la Cour suprême et avait réexpédié l'opposant burundais dans sa cellule, en violation de la procédure pénale, assure ses avocats.

Ce jeudi, la Cour suprême du Burundi a décidé de suivre le ministère public, en confirmant le maintien en prison de l'ancien vice-président Bamvuginyumvira pour qu'il y ait « des enquêtes approfondies », selon un de ses avocats, maître Fabien Segatwa. Celui-ci dénonce également « une affaire politique ».

Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira a été arrêté le 5 décembre. La police du Burundi l'a d'abord accusé d'adultère, avant de passer à une tentative de corruption.

La justice burundaise assure aujourd'hui qu'elle a des preuves contre lui, mais les amis politiques de l'opposant dénoncent une « volonté de se débarrasser d'un homme très respecté pour son intégrité et qui est pressenti comme futur candidat de l'opposition burundaise aux élections présidentielles de 2015 ».

RWANDA :

RDC CONGO :

RDC: la MONUSCO aide l'armée congolaise à reprendre une localité à des rebelles ougandais
Par : Yann/French.china.org.cn/ le 27-12-2013

La Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo (MONUSCO) a aidé jeudi les forces armées nationales à reprendre le contrôle d'une localité dans l'est du pays à un groupe rebelle ougandais, responsable d'une attaque meurtrière qui a fait des dizaines de victimes et provoqué le déplacement de nombreux habitants.

Tôt mercredi, les Forces démocratiques alliées-Armée nationale de libération de l'Ouganda (ADF-Nalu) ont attaqué des positions de l'armée congolaise (FARDC) à Kamango.

Les rebelles se sont emparés de cette ville après de brefs affrontements, tuant des civils innocents et entraînant des déplacements massifs de populations vers la frontière ougandaise,

affirme la MONUSCO.

"La MONUSCO condamne fermement ces attaques et s'engage à utiliser tous les moyens aériens et terrestres à sa disposition pour protéger les civils et renforcer sa présence dans la région", indique un communiqué de presse.

Conformément à son mandat de protection des civils, et en appui aux troupes des FARDC, la MONUSCO a envoyé deux hélicoptères de combat, qui ont ouvert le feu sur les positions des rebelles, permettant aux troupes gouvernementales de reprendre Kamango.

Les FARDC ont désormais le contrôle de la situation, se félicite la MONUSCO.

"La Mission est déterminée à remplir son mandat et à neutraliser tous les éléments de groupes armés qui sèment la peur et la désolation parmi des civils innocents", souligne le communiqué. Fin

UGANDA :

ADF attack: Congolese flee into Uganda

Date: Dec 26, 2013/newvision/By John B. Thawite

Over 500 Congolese nationals have fled into the western Uganda district of Bundibugyo following armed clashes back home.

The clashes broke out at dawn on Christmas day when a group of Uganda rebels operating in eastern Congo, the Allied Democratic Front (ADF), attacked Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) unit in Kamango, near the Uganda/D.R Congo border.

Confirming the incident, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) 2nd Division spokesperson, Major Ronald Kakurungu, said the ADF attacked FARDC at around 5.00am local time.

"By this evening (Xmas day), so far 500 Congolese refugees had fled to Busunga border point," Major Kakurungu told New Vision on phone.

He said the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was already moving in to relocate the Congolese from Bubukwanga.

A Congolese source based in Kasindi, told New Vision that the attackers, whose numbers could not immediately be established, struck and looted assorted weapons from the Congolese before retreating back into the eastern DRC Rwenzori jungles.

The attacks come hardly five months after similar clashes between the ADF and FARDC that saw over 30,000 Congolese flee to Uganda for their lives in July.

"We are taking precaution and put our troops on extra alert and are working with police to screen the refugees lest we are infiltrated by wrong elements disguising as refugees," Kakurungu said on Christmas day.

He said the refugees were being carefully screened as the security agencies along the Rwenzori region were monitoring the movements along the common border to stem any possible enemy attack.

The ADF, a Muslims fundamentalist group led by Jamil Mukulu, first attacked Kasese on 13 November 1996, before later spreading to the entire Rwenzori region where they committed various atrocities including the burning of about Uganda Technical College Kicwamba students in their sleep.

In 2001, the UPDF announced that it had defeated the ADF and that the remnants had fled to the DRC, where they have set up hideouts in various places.

From their hideouts, the rebels resorted to survival tactics including attacks on civilian populations, small abductions, petty trade and occasional ambushes on travellers.

"Should the ADF dare us, we are very prepared to deal with them," Major Kakurungu warned.

Richard Branson condemns Uganda over anti-gay bill

Alexander Besant/globalpost.com/December 26, 2013

"Governments must realise that people should be able to love whoever they want."

British tycoon and renaissance man Richard Branson is urging companies to boycott Uganda in light of a draconian anti-homosexuality bill passed last week.

The founder of Virgin denounced Uganda for passing a bill in parliament that could see homosexuality punished by life in prison.

"I have been courted by various people and government officials to do business in Uganda. I was seriously considering it," Branson wrote on his blog.

"However, the dreadful witch hunt against the gay community and lifetime sentences means it would be against my conscience to support this country."

He added on his blog: "Governments must realise that people should be able to love whoever they want."

The bill, which was first proposed in 2009, has yet to be signed by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

The original bill included the death penalty for certain offenses, including if the gay person had HIV or sex with a minor was involved but that clause has been removed.

The new bill makes it a crime to not report gays to police.

Supporters of the bill say that it seeks to protect family values that are being threatened by a West-based gay rights groups.

The draft law has been widely condemned by world leaders and Nobel Peace laureate archbishop Desmond Tutu compared it to apartheid.

US President Barack Obama has called the bill "odious"

Uganda: 2013 - Tax Battles, Refinery Plans Shaped the Oil Story

By Edward Ssekika/The Observer (Kampala)/26 December 2013

Some of 2012's unfinished business in the oil sector spilled over into 2013, as Ugandans kept their eyes on an industry that many feel has the ability to fundamentally alter the country's trajectory.

Tax battles in London, government's issuance of the country's first production licence to Chinese oil giant, Cnooc, accusations and counter accusations of 'meagre' compensation rates to people living around the refinery site, and the request for qualifications for oil refinery shaped the country's oil and gas sector this year.

In January, save for the continuation of public debates and discussions on the 'controversial clause 9' in the Petroleum (Exploration, Development and Production) bill 2012 that was passed by Parliament in November 2012, the month was largely quiet.

In February, parliament passed the Petroleum (Refining, Gas Processing and Conversion, Transportation and Storage) Bill, 2012. While this 'midstream' bill was crucial because it, among other things, regulates the transportation of petroleum products in the largely sensitive protected wildlife areas, there was very little debate on it.

In the same month, 14 companies expressed interest in the construction of a petroleum pipeline from Eldoret in Kenya to Kampala, which is also expected to extend to Rwanda. The interest re-emerged after both the Uganda and Kenya governments cancelled the contract that was initially handed to Libya's Tamoil in 2007.

President Yoweri Museveni assented to the Petroleum (Exploration, Development and Production) Act, 2013 in March - paving the way for the development of the country's oil resources. The Act became the first comprehensive piece of oil legislation after it repealed the petroleum act of 1985.

Though it is now operational, in practice its applicability is still limited due to the absence of the relevant institutions needed to govern the industry. Still in March, Toyota Tsusho, a company that has won the bid to build a crude pipeline between Lamu and South Sudan, proposed to Uganda's government to design a feasibility study showing the route that the pipeline would take from Hoima in the oil-rich region of western Uganda to Lamu. And the company said it would do all this free of charge.

April kicked off with Uganda winning a landmark \$283m (approximately Shs 1.1 trillion) oil tax case against Heritage. Heritage contested the \$1.45bn sale of its assets to Tullow Uganda on grounds that it did not attract capital gains tax. The case was referred to London, where the three-member arbitration team ruled that the dispute had to be settled in Ugandan courts of law.

Heritage has since lodged a case in Uganda courts, contesting the tax assessment. Tullow broke new ground in June, where the company published what it paid in taxes and other payments. According to the company's corporate social responsibility report 2012, Tullow paid \$175m in taxes in 2012.

However, the report did not adequately break down its tax payments for a clearer picture. Nevertheless, it was a breakthrough. Also in June, after a protracted legal battle, Tullow Oil won a \$313m tax case against Heritage in a London court. The case related to the taxes that Tullow had paid to Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) on behalf of Heritage following the \$1.45bn deal.

In the same month, Kenya and Uganda agreed to work together for infrastructure development in the region. A railway line and better roads are needed to transport equipment for Uganda's oil industry from the port of Mombasa to Uganda. It is estimated that up to 850,000 tons of equipment will be imported as Uganda tries to produce its first barrel of oil.

Compensation:

The residents of 13 villages in Kabaale parish, Hoima district, where government plans to construct an oil refinery, made a couple of headlines. Government is in the process of acquiring 29 square kilometres of land for the construction of the refinery and its attendant infrastructures.

Up to 7,118 people have to be evicted upon compensation to pave way for the refinery. According to the ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, after being compensated, residents will be given three-to-four months to vacate the land.

In August, former Ghanaian President John Kufuor visited Uganda and delivered a keynote

presentation at Makerere University on Uganda's petroleum industry.

Analysts say Ghana has set a good example that many African countries can learn from. Ghana discovered commercially-viable oil in 2007 and started exporting crude in 2010. Ghana has put in place strong institutions for transparency, accountability and prudent revenue management.

Production licence:

In September, government issued its first production licence to the Chinese oil giant Cnooc, for the Kingfisher oil field in Kyangwali, Hoima district. The oil field has about 635 million barrels of oil, with 196 million barrels expected to be recovered.

In October this year, government launched the search for a lead investor to construct an oil refinery when it issued a request for prequalification.

Ad-hoc committee:

In November, after two years of investigations, the parliamentary committee instituted in 2011 to investigate oil bribery allegations against three ministers released its report. The MPs said they "did not unearth any actual bribery in the sector."

However, Cecelia Ogwal, one of the committee members, wrote a minority report, saying the report could not be relied on since the committee lacked the capacity to investigate such a sophisticated case.

Refinery bids:

In December, government shortlisted six multinational companies and consortia, which were interested in leading the construction of the oil refinery.

Tullow Uganda announced that Elly Karuhanga, its long-serving president and director of Tullow Uganda Operations, was retiring from the company.

In the same month, Tullow Uganda unveiled its Uganda country report, showing that the company had invested Shs 7 trillion in oil exploration since 2004, when it started operations in Uganda.

A peep in 2014:

Next year, the Public Finance Bill is expected to dominate the oil and gas debate in the country. The bill is currently before parliament. Recently, the minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development introduced new amendments to the original Public Finance Bill 2012.

Already, the bill has aroused public debate with many seeing it as the most important piece of oil legislation since it lays out how the oil revenues will be utilized and shared.

Next year, government is expected to award a couple of production licences to Tullow Oil for some of its fields. Tullow submitted its field development plans to government in 2013. Government is still reviewing the plans.

Setting up the institutions to govern the oil industry is also expected to start next year. The Petroleum Authority and the National Oil Company are some of the institutions expected to be created next year.

And lastly, government expects to publish the relevant upstream and midstream regulations to guide the production phase as well as indentify the lead investor for the oil refinery.

SOUTH AFRICA :

TANZANIA :

Tanzania: Chinese Tourist, Boy Drown in Dar On Christmas Day

By Christopher Majaliwa and Fatma Abdu/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/27 December 2013

TWO people, including a 47-year old Chinese tourist and 18-year old Tanzanian, drowned in different incidents in Dar es Salaam on Christmas Day.

According to Kinondoni Regional Police Commander (RPC) Camilius Wambura, Ally Sheki, a resident of Banana in Ilala Municipality died at around 3pm while swimming with colleagues at Coco Beach in the Indian Ocean after succumbing to rough waves.

The Tanzania Meteorological Agency (TMA) has since Tuesday cautioned beach goers to exercise great care due to the possibility of strong winds and rough waves associated with the deepening of low pressure system in the Indian Ocean near The Comoros.

Mr Wambura also reported that a Chinese national, who was identified as Wang Ai Jian, drowned at the Golden Tool Hotel's swimming pool in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday at around 1.30pm.

"The deceased had been swimming in the hotel when he failed to swim, lost control and drank lots of water in the process," said RPC Wambura, adding that he was fished out of the pool by the police who rushed him to Ami Hospital in Msasani.

He was proclaimed dead on arrival. He said that the body was rescued by the police. Investigation is underway to establish the circumstances behind his death. Mr Wambura said that the body was taken to Mwananyamala Hospital for preservation pending burial arrangements.

Meanwhile, the police force has described the just ended Christmas celebration as the record-breaking merry-making event without major crimes in the country.

In an interview with the 'Daily News', the force's spokesperson, Ms Advera Senso, said the fact that such a big occasion was marked peacefully is something to be proud of.

"We are happy that the celebrations have ended without any major crime reported in big cities and even in upcountry. We are still intensifying security to ensure that calm prevails even after this festive season," she said.

Ms Senso noted that it is the first Christmas celebration which has been crime-free, giving a picture that the police's efforts to maintain peace in the country have been fruitful.

"There have been just minor cases reported unlike in previous years where we used to hear major cases related to armed robberies, killings and many others," she observed.

"This year's Christmas celebrations have helped us to know how far the people are aware of the significance of maintaining peace and security.

We are very thankful for this," she added. Police officers were on Christmas Day deployed all over the city where they patrolled the roads on vehicles and on motorcycles.

Others patrolled recreational areas, including the beaches and social halls. A 'Daily News' survey also established the presence of anti-crime mobile police kiosks in many places, especially around the seaside in a move aimed at intensifying security in the city.

KENYA :

South Sudan crisis: Kenya and Ethiopia leaders in Juba for talks

26 December 2013/bbc.co.uk

The leaders of two of South Sudan's neighbours, Kenya and Ethiopia, have held "constructive" talks there in a bid to halt fighting, officials say.

More than a thousand people are feared dead in violence that began 11 days ago and has raised fears of a civil war.

Ethiopia's foreign minister said the meeting with President Salva Kiir was "candid" and had centred on halting the violence and starting political talks.

Mr Kiir is involved in a power struggle with ex-deputy Riek Machar.

The fighting has exposed ethnic divisions in the world's youngest state as the president is an ethnic Dinka, while Mr Machar represents the Nuer tribe.

UN officials believe well over a thousand people have been killed since violence erupted on 15 December, when clashes broke out at a meeting of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

President Kiir accused the former vice-president, who had been sacked in July, of plotting a coup. Mr Machar denies trying to seize power.

The fighting has since spread to half of South Sudan's 10 states and is now focused on the capital of oil-producing Unity state, Bentiu, and Malakal, the main town in Upper Nile state.

Tens of thousands of people have fled to UN compounds across the oil-rich country. The UN Security Council has decided to boost the existing UN force (Unmiss) of around 7,000 peacekeepers and police to about 14,000.

In a Christmas Day message, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said "South Sudan is not alone".

Mr Kiir, wearing his trademark cowboy hat, went into the closed-door meeting on Thursday morning with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, currently head of the East African Community.

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom said later they had discussed a cessation of hostilities, an immediate start to political talks, supporters of Mr Machar who were in detention and the humanitarian crisis.

The two leaders and other East African countries would "do their best to resolve this problem amicably", he said.

The European Union is sending an envoy, Alex Rondos, to Juba to push for a negotiated solution. China said its special envoy to Africa would also travel to Juba "soon".

Both the South Sudanese leader and Mr Machar have said they are willing to discuss an end to the crisis.

But the former vice-president has said his detained political allies must first be freed, while Mr Kiir says there should be no preconditions.

Mr Machar told Paris-based Sudan Tribune on Thursday he had appointed a delegation to start talks in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

But South Sudan Information Minister Makuei Lueth told the Associated Press no contact with Mr Machar had yet been established. "For us, we are not talking with him," he said. 'Sense of confidence'

After the violence broke out, forces loyal to Mr Machar seized the key towns of Bor, the capital of Jonglei state, and Bentiu.

But government forces recaptured Bor on Tuesday and are trying to retake Bentiu.

Unmiss spokesman Col Michael Chadwick told BBC News that the area around Bor was currently relatively stable.

Some 15,000 people had fled to the UN compound in Bor but up to 2,000 of them were now moving out as the situation had become safer, he said.

"This is giving us a sense of confidence that we'll be able to establish more Unmiss flights and possibly more humanitarian flights."

South Sudan has struggled to achieve a stable government since becoming independent from Sudan in 2011.

The independence referendum was intended to end a decade-long conflict, led by the SPLM, against the north. But the oil-rich country remains ethnically and politically divided, with many armed groups active.

After a peace deal was signed in 2005, the southern rebel group appointed Mr Machar as vice-president of the South Sudan regional government, a position he retained after independence in 2011 until he was dropped in July.

Victims of 2008 election violence in Kenya 'outraged' at delay to Kenyatta trial

Peter Cluskey/irishtimes.com/Fri, Dec 27, 2013

Insufficient evidence to charge Kenyan president, says International Criminal Court

Victims of post-election violence in Kenya in 2008, which left up to 1,500 people dead and as many as 250,000 forced from their homes, have said they are "outraged" at the admission that there is no longer sufficient evidence to charge Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta at the International Criminal Court (ICC) with crimes against humanity.

Fergal Gaynor, the Irish lawyer representing the victims, told The Irish Times they were now seeking "a very clear explanation regarding the government of Kenya's co-operation with the prosecution in the Kenyatta case – and how the quality of that co-operation may have impacted on the prosecution's preparation for trial".

Key witness

The prosecutor at the ICC, Fatou Bensouda, has asked judges due to start hearing the case on February 5th to delay the trial again because one key witness is no longer willing to testify, while another has admitted giving false evidence about a key event.

"Having carefully considered my evidence and the impact of the two withdrawals, I have come to the conclusion that currently the case against Mr Kenyatta does not satisfy the high evidentiary standards required at trial," Ms Bensouda said.

Most worryingly for the victims of the violence – who she acknowledged "continue to wait for their day in court, almost six years after the crimes were committed" – Ms Bensouda did not propose a new start date, but instead said she would continue her investigations and then decide whether any new evidence was strong enough to warrant a trial.

It is the first case against a sitting head of state in the ICC's 11-year history.

President Kenyatta's lawyers have previously petitioned the court to dismiss the case, claiming that evidence against him is tainted by false statements.

With that previous application in mind, the trial judges in The Hague must now decide whether to grant the adjournment or dismiss the case entirely. A dismissal could do untold damage to the reputation of the court.

While the judges' decision is awaited, those who support the view of the African Union that the case should be abandoned because it represents, in their view, the perfect example of the alleged "hunting" of African leaders by the ICC, have been calling over the weekend for a dismissal.

"There was never any evidence to refer the matter in the first place," Kenya's attorney general Githu Muigai said. "There was no evidence to confirm the charges in the second place, and now there is no evidence to commence trial in the third place. That has been my view consistently."

Similarly, Ugandan peace negotiator, lawyer and long-time ICC critic David Matsanga welcomed the fact that, in his opinion, the ICC prosecutor was on the verge of "throwing in the towel".

'Flawed evidence'

"I feel more saddened that it has taken five years for the OTP [Office of the Prosecutor] to know

that the evidence . . . was flawed.

“For me, an adjournment is not the final resting point: I want to see the [case] collapse because of flawed and cooked evidence.”

However, victims of the 2008 violence query the willingness of the Kenyan government to cooperate with the ICC prosecutor, and say that while this raises worrying issues, they are “not intended as questioning in any way the integrity of the prosecutor or her team”.

The key questions to which victims are demanding answers, says Mr Gaynor, is “why, after all these years, the prosecution has not yet collected sufficient documentary evidence (including cell-phone data, intercepts and official records) which, combined with testimonial evidence, would be sufficient to satisfy the evidentiary standards required at trial.”

He added: “These victims believe their chances of getting true justice in Kenyan courts are negligible. The ICC is literally their only hope of justice.

Its investigations must continue for as long as necessary to ensure the truth behind these horrific crimes is revealed.”

Muslim cleric shot dead in Kenya

December 27 2013/By SAPA

Mombasa, Kenya - A Muslim cleric was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on Wednesday night in Ukunda, one of Kenya's prime coastal tourist spots, a local police officer said.

“It doesn't appear to be a normal robbery,” Jack Ekakoro, a local police commander said on Thursday. “He appears to have been a target of the attackers.”

Salim Mwasalim, as the 60-year-old preacher was known, “was shot while walking home from the nearby mosque,” he said.

“We're investigating to know the motive and get the attackers,” he added, saying the killers had escaped on a motorbike.

Ukunda lies on the Indian Ocean, south of Mombasa.

Another muslim cleric Hassan Mwayuyu was gunned down under similar circumstances, also by gunmen on a motorcycle, in the same region on December 6.

A police source told AFP that Salim Mwasalim was on a police surveillance list for allegedly recruiting youths to fight alongside Somalia's al-Qaeda-linked Shehab. - Sapa-AFP

ANGOLA :

Angola: Initial Draft On Mbanza Kongo's Candidature to Unesco to Be Submitted in January

26 December 2013/AngolaPress

The first version of the text that serves as basis for the candidature of the Angolan historical city of Mbanza Kongo to become a World Heritage site might be presented to Unesco in the end of January of 2014, as revealed by the minister of Culture, Rosa Cruz e Silva.

In an exclusive interview to ANGOP, during which she made a review of the current state of the cultural sector, Rosa Cruz e Silva stressed that in this phase archaeological excavation work is being done, as well as the collection of bibliography in the Vatican and Portugal, as part of the plan outlined by the Angolan government.

According to the minister, the registration of any cultural good at the World Heritage is a work that takes years and various stages. "The project started in 2007 and we are in 2013. It has been six years of hard work. We believe that in 2015, Mbanza Kongo will be classified as a World Heritage Site", she stressed.

As for the Chitundu Hulu caves, Rosa Cruz e Silva claims to be different because it will not need much work, given that the physical evidence is visible.

The minister stated that the registration of Angolan sites at the World Heritage list will feed the ego of Angolans, fortify the "Angola Brand" and reaffirm national identity.

Angola: Retrospect/2013 - Private Investment Doubles

By Domingos Francisco Raul/AngolaPress/26 December 2013

The private investment in Angola continued to flourish in 2013, with the National Agency of Private Investment (ANIP) having appraised and approved 177 investment contracts amounting to Akz 444,2 billion (Usd 4.4 billion) as a result of the macro-economic environment prevailing in the country.

The contracts appraised and eventually approved in 2013 are double the amount of investment projects of the previous year, which represents a great job and challenge for the ANIP management.

To ANIP board chairperson, Maria Luísa Abrantes, besides the goods and services that might result from these approved projects as they come into activity and the resulting tax revenues for the State, the investment contracts will ensure 17,109 direct jobs .

In view of the fact that a growing number of national investors is emerging in Angola that has also become a hub for huge international investors, ANIP is faced with a challenge to reduce the terms of evaluation established by the law in order to respond to the goals set by the Government.

According to the official, ANIP's great challenge in coming years will be a systematic and annual evaluation and approval of projects that are estimated to reach Akz 400 billion until 2017.

Maria Luísa Abrantes also mentioned another challenge of last year as being the follow-up of projects in implementing phase.

She said this was done in the country's 18 provinces with great limitations to Luanda where there are at least 3,400 approved investment projects since 2003, aggravated by poor monitoring due to the shortage of specialists available for the purpose.

The private sector investment situation in Luanda is even worse, the ANIP board chairperson said, due to the fact that several private investors are not based at agreed abode.

According to Maria Abrantes, the investment contract for re-activation of the Kassala Kitungo Iron Mine, in northern Kwanza Norte province, is still in evaluation phase, due to the lack of essential elements for its negotiation, as it involves a number of co-related projects that will give rise to more than just one investment contract.

Altogether, in 2013, ANIP evaluated and approved projects in various sectors, with stress to those considered a priority for the relaunch of the productive sector and diversification of the country's economy, like the fisheries, manufacturing industry, construction material industry, food industry and others.

Meanwhile, during its 2nd consultative Council, ANIP considered important the production and release of its statistic data, so that the society gains access to information about the institution's activity.

"Nowadays, there is no society, enterprises and other socio-professional associations that make success in its activity without a production of information," said the chief executive officer.

According to the manager, statistics are supposed to be launched in reviewed on a daily basis, and must be of public knowledge, so that people can make decisions based on available information.

Maria Luísa Abrantes added that the regular and punctual release of statistics on the reality of application of capitals ensures the attraction of more private investments for the country.

On the other hand, in addition to appraising, approving and following up private investment projects, ANIP took the responsibility to provide moral support for investors that seek to implement their projects within agreed timings, by issuing them with a merit certificate.

"Recognised enterprises invest strongly in the human capital, with stress to the national ones and are linked mainly to the industrial field," stressed the ANIP official.

In terms of perspectives, ANIP will take as one of its main challenges the follow-up and effective appraisal of projects whose investments have been evaluated and approved by the Government.

Due to the size of its undertakings - more than three thousand projects- and the complexity of the region, Luanda will receive a special attention to lessen the "extreme limitations" regarding the poor follow-up and monitoring whose solution requires more qualified personnel.

AU/AFRICA :

South Sudan crisis: East Africa leaders to hold emergency talks

27 December 2013/bbc.co.uk

East Africa's leaders are to meet in Kenya to discuss growing violence in South Sudan, where more than 1,000 people are believed to have died.

The talks come a day after South Sudan's President Salva Kiir met the Kenyan president and Ethiopian PM.

Meanwhile, the UN said the first peacekeeping reinforcements were expected to arrive in 48 hours.

Violence erupted 12 days ago between forces loyal to Mr Kiir and those backing his ex-deputy Riek Machar.

More than 50,000 civilians have sought refuge at UN compounds in South Sudan.
'Give peace chance'

East African regional leaders from the eight-member bloc, known as Igad, will meet in Kenya's capital Nairobi to follow up on issues raised during Thursday's talks with President Kiir in South Sudan's capital Juba.

He met Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. The talks were described by Ethiopia as "very constructive and very candid".

However, South Sudan Information Minister Makuei Lueth told the Associated Press news agency that no contact with Mr Machar had yet been established.

The head of the UN mission in South Sudan, Hilde Johnson, earlier urgently called on the country's political leaders "to give peace a chance".

"The nation that [was] painstakingly built over decades of conflict and strife is at stake," she said, speaking via a video link from Juba.

Ms Johnson said "well over 1,000" people had been killed since the start of the violence on 15 December and the casualty figures were likely to rise.

She said she expected some UN military reinforcements and critically needed equipment within 48 hours.

This came after the UN Security Council voted to almost double the number of peacekeepers to 12,500 in the world's newest state.

'Oil wells seized'

Ms Johnson said there had been heavy fighting in Malakal and Bor, while the town of Bentiu had become calmer.

The Bishop of Malakal, Hilary Garang, said the situation in the main town in Upper Nile state was one of lawlessness.

"There is no government functioning, there is no light, there is no water and people are fleeing, are going away. The town is divided in two," he told the BBC's Newshour programme.

"The two sides are taking positions and fighting can erupt any time they choose.

The fighting is also affecting oil production, which accounts for 98% of government revenue.

"Some oil wells are in the hands of rebel soldiers loyal to... Machar and we fear they may cause damage to the facilities and the environment," Petroleum Minister Stephen Dhieu Dau told Reuters news agency.

He said the Thar Jath oil field in Unity state had been captured by the rebels.

'Political conflict'

Ms Johnson said there had been internal tension within the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) before the outbreak of violence.

But, she said, no-one had expected "the unravelling of [South Sudan's] stability so quickly".

She insisted that while the rival leaders came from different ethnic groups - Mr Kiir is a Dinka and Mr Machar is from the Nuer tribe - the conflict was political.

The violence first erupted after a meeting of the SPLM's high council, when President Kiir accused the former vice-president, who had been sacked in July, of plotting a coup.

Mr Machar denied any involvement and said the accusations were an attempt by Mr Kiir to get rid of his political rivals.

The fighting quickly spread to half of Sudan's 10 states.

South Sudan has struggled to achieve a stable government since becoming independent from Sudan in 2011.

Some Stranded Africa-Bound Passengers Encounter New Problem

James Butty/voanews.com/December 27, 2013

A few of the more than 140 Africa-bound passengers who were stranded at Brussels International Airport on Christmas day were able to board flights on Thursday for their final destinations.

After staying in the airport basement for several hours, the passengers say they were finally given hotel accommodations on Thursday near the airport.

They missed their connecting flights in Brussels after their United Airlines flight was delayed for several hours at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.

But a new problem has developed, according passenger Musa Jallo from Madison, Wisconsin who was going to Banjul, Gambia.

He says his luggage and those of other passengers have been damaged and some valuable personal effects missing.

Jallo said he and the other passengers have filed claim reports with the authorities, although he says they do not know whether their luggage were damaged in Chicago or in Brussels.

"What happened is they stole a lot of my jeans and some jewelry. I'm not sure where because we had a delay in Chicago. And they were lying to us there because they told that they were mining the baggage for the two hours that we stayed at the airport, and I'm not sure if the stuff were stolen there or here [Brussels]," he said.

Jallo said some of his electronics, jeans, and jewelry are missing. He said he filed a claim after discovering his luggage at the lost and found section of the airport.

"Actually, I filed a claim because my baggages were at the lost and found. I filed a claim and they

said they are going to bring it to the attention of United Airlines,” Jallo said.

He said another passenger, who said he was going to Liberia for a wedding also had some personal effects missing from his luggage.

“There is a guy whose stuff is missing, but he’s not here right now. He’s from Liberia, I think. They stole his wedding dress and his wedding shoes and stuff like that. That’s what he said. He filed a claim too,” Jallo said.

Daniel Dogba, a Liberian who lives in Fort Worth, Texas, and has been acting as spokesman for the stranded passengers says he met Thursday for the first time with Cathy Marlier, United Airlines representative in Brussels.

Dogba said Ms. Marlier told him she and her team were fully aware of the stranded passengers’ situation.

“According to her, she and her team saw this coming but there was no way to prevent it because ‘were already packaged onboard United Flight 972 from Chicago. And that they fought and fought with SN Brussels here to hold on for about 30-45 minutes to be able to receive us so we can get transited, but the SN Brussels authorities said because it is a usual pattern with United, they were not going to wait for the flight,” Dogba said.

He said the stranded passengers were finally given accommodations at a Sheraton Hotel near the Brussels airport.

Dogba said between 8 and 10 of the 142 stranded passengers were able to fly out of Brussels on Thursday for their final destinations.

“The rest of us don’t have anything definitive. All we have been told is that we are on a waiting list. We are just hoping and praying that we can get out of here and go to our respective destinations,” Dogba said.

Maroc : démantèlement d’une nouvelle cellule terroriste

jeudi 26 décembre 2013 / par Malick Hamid/afrik.com

Le terrorisme inquiète de plus en plus au Maroc. Selon un communiqué royal, une cellule terroriste opérant dans plusieurs villes du royaume a été démantelée.

Les services de la sûreté nationale et de la gendarmerie royale ont démantelé une cellule terroriste opérant dans plusieurs villes du royaume, a indiqué, mercredi soir, un communiqué du ministère de l’Intérieur.

Tout récemment, après le démantèlement d’une cinquième cellule terroriste au Maroc, le ministère de l’Intérieur avait commencé à manifester son inquiétude sur la prolifération des réseaux de recrutement de djihadistes pour Al Qaïda. Surtout que par la suite, douze membres d’une cellule démantelée avaient été auditionnés et les informations obtenues exploitées pour l’identification des foyers de menace pour le royaume. Le pic de l’inquiétude des autorités marocaines a été enregistré lorsqu’une nouvelle cellule terroriste, Ansar Achariaa au Maghreb islamique, a été démantelée au Maroc.

Cela prouvait que les activistes étaient bien présents dans le royaume chérifien. Et voilà qu’une

nouvelle cellule terroriste est démantelée au pays. Ce démantèlement intervient à l'issue d'une coordination avec les services de la Direction générale de la surveillance du territoire, note le communiqué du Cabinet royal qui précise que ladite cellule était composée de plusieurs individus ayant suivi des entraînements pour le maniement de différents types d'armes et explosifs au sein d'organisations terroristes.

Toujours selon le communiqué, lors de l'opération de démantèlement, il a été procédé également à l'arrestation d'un ancien détenu dans le cadre de la loi antiterroriste. L'individu en question est soupçonné de jouer le rôle de coordonnateur au niveau national des opérations de collecte de fonds et de recrutement de volontaires devant combattre au sein de cellules terroristes en lien avec lesdites organisations.

South Sudan crisis: East Africa leaders hold emergency talks

27 December 2013/bbc.co.uk

East Africa's leaders are meeting in Kenya to discuss growing violence in South Sudan, where more than 1,000 people are believed to have died.

The talks come a day after South Sudan's President Salva Kiir met the Kenyan president and Ethiopian PM.

Meanwhile, the UN said the first peacekeeping reinforcements were expected to arrive in 48 hours.

Violence erupted 12 days ago between forces loyal to Mr Kiir and those backing his ex-deputy Riek Machar.

More than 50,000 civilians have sought refuge at UN compounds in South Sudan.
'Give peace chance'

East African regional leaders from the eight-member bloc, known as Igad, are meeting in Kenya's capital Nairobi to follow up on issues raised during Thursday's talks with President Kiir in South Sudan's capital Juba.

He met Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. The talks were described by Ethiopia as "very constructive and very candid".

However, South Sudan Information Minister Makuei Lueth told the Associated Press news agency that no contact with Mr Machar had yet been established.

The head of the UN mission in South Sudan, Hilde Johnson, earlier urgently called on the country's political leaders "to give peace a chance".

"The nation that [was] painstakingly built over decades of conflict and strife is at stake," she said, speaking via a video link from Juba.

Ms Johnson said "well over 1,000" people had been killed since the start of the violence on 15 December and the casualty figures were likely to rise.

She said she expected some UN military reinforcements and critically needed equipment within 48 hours.

This came after the UN Security Council voted to almost double the number of peacekeepers to 12,500 in the world's newest state.

'Oil wells seized'

Ms Johnson said there had been heavy fighting in Malakal and Bor, while the town of Bentiu had become calmer.

The Bishop of Malakal, Hilary Garang, said the situation in the main town in Upper Nile state was one of lawlessness.

"There is no government functioning, there is no light, there is no water and people are fleeing, are going away. The town is divided in two," he told the BBC's Newshour programme.

"The two sides are taking positions and fighting can erupt any time they choose.

The fighting is also affecting oil production, which accounts for 98% of government revenue.

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South Sudan has struggled to achieve a stable government since becoming independent from Sudan in 2011.

Egypt hikes assault on Muslim Brotherhood

Maggie Michael, Associated Press/Friday, December 27, 2013

CAIRO - Egypt's security authorities launched a sweep of arrests of Muslim Brotherhood members on Thursday and warned that holding a leadership post in the group could now be grounds for the death penalty after it was officially declared a terrorist organization, stepping up the government's confrontation with its top political nemesis.

The announcement came as a bomb exploded in a busy intersection in Cairo Thursday morning, hitting a bus and wounding five people. The blast raised fears that a campaign of violence by Islamic militants that for months has targeted police and the military could turn to civilians in retaliation for the crackdown.

The terrorist labeling of the Brotherhood - an unprecedented step - takes to a new level the government's moves to crush the group, which rode on elections to dominate Egypt's politics the past three years until the military removed Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in July after massive protests against him.

The Brotherhood vowed to "qualitatively" escalate its protests against the new military-backed interim government, whose authority it rejects. The group has struggled to bring numbers into the streets in past months under a crackdown that has already killed hundreds of its members and put thousands more in prison, including Morsi and other top leaders - and there was little sign of any protests on Thursday.

The moves - all playing out before the backdrop of increasing violence by al-Qaeda-inspired militants - raise the potential for greater turmoil as the country nears a key Jan. 14-15 referendum on a revised constitution, a milestone in the post-Morsi political transition. The government is pushing for overwhelming passage of the new document, while the Brotherhood vows to stop it with protests.

Ahmed Imam, spokesman for the Strong Egypt Party founded by ex-Brotherhood member Abdel-Moneim Abolfotoh, warned that the terrorism label "leaves the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters only one choice, which is violence."

Both sides are showing "a great deal of stupidity," he said, blaming the Brotherhood for failing to firmly distance itself from militant violence and the government for closing doors to reconciliation.

Speaking to military graduates Thursday, Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, who is now Egypt's most powerful figure, vowed the country will "stand steadfast in confronting terrorism."

UN/AFRICA :

UN expedites reinforcements to raging S Sudan

2013-12-27 /AFP

Juba - The United Nations said on Thursday it was speeding reinforcements to its beleaguered peacekeeping force in South Sudan, where ferocious fighting was raging in the oil-producing north.

"We are working on 48 hours delivery of several of the critical assets that we need," and the first reinforcements should arrive by Saturday, the world body's special envoy to the violence-wracked country, Hilde Johnson, told journalists via videoconference from Juba.

The UN is bulking up its peacekeeping muscle in the African nation, which won independence from Sudan only two years ago, amid a vicious fight between troops loyal to South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and fighters backing his sacked vice president, Riek Machar.

The UN Security Council agreed on Tuesday to nearly double the size of its mission known as

Unmiss, allowing for up to 12 500 soldiers and 1 300 police, after the violence sparked on 15 December and raged out of control.

Thousands of people have died, according to the United Nations, and tens of thousands of civilians are seeking protection at UN bases in the country.

While the conflict appeared to start as a power struggle - with Kiir alleging a foiled coup attempt and Machar saying it was really a purge of potential challengers to the president - it rapidly took on an ethnic dimension.

The violence now cleaves along a divide pitting members of Kiir's Dinka tribe against Machar's Nuer clansmen.

Diplomatic efforts

A South Sudan army spokesperson, Philip Aguer, told AFP troops were fighting forces allied to Machar inside the town of Malakal, capital of Upper Nile state.

"There is fighting in Malakal. Our forces are in the northern part of Malakal and the rebels are on the southern part. We will flush them out of Malakal," he said.

He also said troops were preparing an offensive against Bentiu, the main town in oil-rich Unity State,

The army on Wednesday recaptured Bor, another state capital that had fallen into rebel hands.

International diplomatic efforts are running parallel to the UN effort to try to rein in the violence.

The United States, which was instrumental in South Sudan winning independence, has reiterated it will cut off aid if Kiir is ousted in a coup.

Washington so far is not taking a more active role, though this week it deployed its military to evacuate non-essential embassy staff and other Americans. Four US servicemen were wounded in one of the missions to Bor.

There are nearly 100 US troops on the ground in South Sudan, and a "platoon-sized" Marine contingent in neighbouring Uganda ready to fly in to protect the US embassy in Juba.

Neighbouring states Kenya and Ethiopia have been trying to broker a solution.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn flew into Juba on Thursday for talks with Kiir.

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said "good progress" was made, with further talks scheduled to take place in Nairobi on Friday - yet the fighting continues and has now spread to half of South Sudan's 10 states.

Amid reports of bodies piled in mass graves and witness testimonies of massacres and summary executions and rapes, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has promised those responsible would be "held accountable".

Intense battles

The battles have been intense. An AFP correspondent who visited the recaptured town of Bor on Wednesday said bodies littered the streets and stores were looted.

The UN said aid agencies need \$166m over the next three months to distribute food, manage camps for the 90 000 displaced and provide health and sanitation.

Johnson said the UN peacekeeping office was "working around the clock" to get assets for its South Sudan mission from other deployments in Africa, notably in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan's Darfur region and Liberia.

Both manpower and equipment would be sent, Johnson said, without offering further details. Helicopters and a military transport plane are eventually expected to be deployed to South Sudan.

UN rights chief Navi Pillay said a mass grave had been found in rebel-held Bentiu and cited reports of at least two more in Juba, the capital. Around 15 bodies were found in one site in Bentiu, and another 20 bodies at a nearby river, she said.

The UN mission in Juba was more cautious, confirming 15 killed but saying it was still "investigating reports of such atrocities".

China meanwhile said it would soon dispatch its special envoy for African affairs to South Sudan to make contact with all sides and help the situation quickly return to stability.

– AFP

Congolese, UN take back town from Ugandan rebels

AP / December 26, 2013

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — The Congolese government spokesman says the military, backed by United Nations peacekeepers, has taken back a town in eastern Congo occupied by a Ugandan rebel group.

Lambert Mende said Thursday the army took back Kamango on Christmas Day, hours after it was seized by ADF-NALU, a rebel group founded in Uganda which is now making incursions into Congo. Mende said at least 22 people were killed in the operation, mostly civilians.

South African pilots belonging to a new U.N. brigade provided air support, bombing rebel positions.

For years, the Congolese and U.N. peacekeepers appeared powerless in the face of the numerous rebel groups ensconced in Congo. That changed this year with the creation of the U.N. brigade, which has an aggressive mandate allowing peacekeepers to hunt down the armed groups.

US/AFRICA :

U.S. Urges End to Central Africa Clashes as Mass Grave Found

By Crispin Dembassa Kette/bloomberg.com/ Dec 27, 2013

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called for an immediate end to violence in the Central African Republic, where clashes this week left “dozens” of people dead including six African Union peacekeepers.

A mass grave containing at least 20 bodies was discovered yesterday in the capital, Bangui, Kerry said in a statement e-mailed by the State Department today. The bodies of 44 people were found in the streets of the city yesterday after clashes on Dec. 24 and Dec. 25, Romaric Bekourou, a spokesman for the Red Cross, said by phone. Sixty people were injured, he said.

“The U.S. calls on the CAR transitional authorities to immediately end the violence, end the use of torture, and investigate and prosecute all those implicated in grave human-rights abuses,” Kerry said.

Central African Republic has descended into lawlessness since March, when an alliance of rebel groups known as Seleka overthrew former President Francois Bozize. At least 1,000 people have died in the conflict, according to Amnesty International. The violence has forced 710,000 people to flee their homes and another 75,000 have gone into exile, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency.

Central African Republic is the world’s 12th-biggest producer of rough diamonds by volume, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The gems, along with timber exports, are the largest source of foreign exchange for the \$3.6 billion economy. The country also produces oil and has deposits of uranium, the USGS says on its website.

Palace Attacked

Suspected self defense militias, known as anti-Balakas, attacked the presidential palace in Bangui last night, Guy Simplicie Kodegue, spokesman for President Michel Djotodia, said in a phone interview. Gunfire erupted at about 9 p.m. local time and continued for about 30 minutes, he said.

“Fierce fighting took place around the palace, but the attackers were repelled by the presidential guard,” Kodegue said. “All is quiet at the moment.”

An African Union-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic, known as Misca, is deploying 3,600 multinational troops in the country, while France, the nation’s former colonial ruler, has sent 1,600 soldiers to help stabilize the country.

Unidentified gunmen attacked a Chadian contingent of Misca who were on patrol on Christmas Day, killing six of them and wounding five more, the African Union said in a statement on its website.

The discovery of the mass grave yesterday comes after 30 bodies were found behind Bangui’s main water complex on Dec. 24. State Prosecutor Ghislain Gresenguet announced on national radio yesterday that an investigation has been opened into the deaths.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is “appalled” by the continuing violence, according to a statement e-mailed by his spokesman today. A UN national staff member was killed in the country on Dec. 24, he said, without providing further details.

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

La France en mauvaise posture en Centrafrique :: CENTRAL AFRICAN

Source : Xinhua/27122013

La France en mauvaise posture en Centrafrique Les soldats français déployés en République centrafricaine (RCA), dans le cadre de l'opération Sangaris initiée début décembre, sont confrontés à une situation des plus explosives, souligne jeudi la presse française, qui s'alarme en ce lendemain de Noël du sort des troupes tricolores dans ce pays au bord du conflit confessionnel.

Le journal de gauche français Libération consacre sa une à la RCA avec un titre éloquent : "Centrafrique : la France prise au piège". "(La RCA) s'enfoncé chaque jour un peu plus dans une crise où les Français se retrouvent en première ligne", constate-t-il, mentionnant "les accès de violences interreligieuses et les menaces des Tchadiens de la force d'intervention africaine (Misca)".

Libé dénonce notamment "le périlleux pas de deux" auquel se livre le pouvoir de N'Djaména en Centrafrique, pays limitrophe du Tchad.

De fait, le président tchadien Idriss Déby est "fortement soupçonné d'avoir équipé et financé la rébellion de la Séléka (ayant renversé l'ex-président centrafricain François Bozizé en mars dernier, déstabilisant durablement le pays)".

"Dans le même temps, le Tchad fournit le plus gros contingent de la force africaine chargée de stabiliser la Centrafrique, la Misca, avec quelque 850 hommes", poursuit le quotidien, mettant en exergue les "deux leviers" dont dispose N'Djaména dans ce conflit.

Pour l'éditorialiste de Libération, "les violences de Bangui, les manifestations antifrançaises, le rôle trouble de l'armée tchadienne annoncent des lendemains qui déchantent". "Pour la France comme pour les Centrafricains", ajoute-t-il, écartant la perspective d'un succès "rapide" de l'opération Sangaris, tel que l'avait prédit le président Hollande à son lancement.

Ce pessimisme est partagé par le quotidien de droite Le Figaro, qui consacre également sa une au "chaos de Bangui", indiquant que "trois semaines après le début de l'opération Sangaris, l'armée française doit faire face à une situation qui menace de dégénérer à tout moment".

L'éditorial du journal déplore "un scénario qui déraile" en RCA, soulignant que "Bangui a fêté Noël au son des rafales" et ajoutant que "l'on continue à s'étripier entre milices issues des communautés chrétiennes (anti-Balaka) et musulmane (ex-Séléka)".

"Les soldats français, qui ont déjà payé le prix du sang (deux morts depuis le début de l'opération), bivouaquent au milieu de ces haines", poursuit-il, regrettant une mauvaise préparation par les

autorités françaises de l'intervention, envisagée au départ "comme une opération sans grand risque". "Les troupes françaises ont été prises de court", estime Le Figaro.

Le quotidien Le Parisien rend compte, pour sa part, de "scènes de violence et de panique à Bangui", où "depuis le 5 décembre (jour du lancement de l'opération française Sangaris), près d'un millier de personnes ont été tuées dans les attaques des milices chrétiennes et dans les représailles des ex-rebelles Séléka".

"Malgré ses 1.600 hommes déployés, le dispositif français (..) n'a pas été en mesure d'éteindre l'incendie ni d'apaiser les esprits", conclut Le Parisien.

© Source : Xinhua

CHINA/AFRICA :

INDIA/AFRICA :

Andhra Pradesh government awaits response from South Sudan

December 27, 2013/thehindu.com

United Nations and world leaders step up efforts to restore peace in the strife-torn country

The State government is anxiously awaiting a communication from the South Sudan authorities about the safety of Indians, particularly those from Andhra Pradesh, stranded in that country.

Worried over the safety of people in the conflict-stricken country, the government has addressed letters to the Overseas Indian Affairs Ministry as well as officials of South Sudan embassy to ensure safe passage of Indians. "There is no communication as yet. We are awaiting a communication from the South Sudanese authorities," Secretary (political) in General Administration Department N. Siva Sankar told The Hindu.

With the conflict between ethnic groups threatening to turn into a civil war, world leaders and the United Nations have stepped up efforts to restore peace in the newest country.

The US, Ethiopia, Kenya and other countries are leading the peace efforts and South Sudan president Salva Kiir expressed his willingness to resolve the crisis through negotiations.

Mr. Kiir, who initiated crisis talks with neighbouring countries Kenya and Ethiopia, said he was willing to have "dialogue" with all his opponents.

Since the situation appeared to be easing up, officials are hopeful of receiving a response to its request in a day or two.

According to reports received by the NRI affairs wing here, several people had crossed over to Uganda and others were airlifted.

A majority of the remaining people took shelter in the UN compound that was by and large

unaffected by the fighting between rival groups.

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

EN BREF, CE 27 Décembre 2013... AGNEWS/DAM, NY, 27/12/2013