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Report Summary

Formal negotiations began Monday on a new international treaty to control the trade of conventional weapons. More than 190 nations are taking part at U.N. headquarters in New York. Supporters of the treaty say it would save thousands of lives every year. Vast majority of governments in Africa, Europe and Asia have voted in the General Assembly for the development of the treaty.

On July 2nd, the U.N. General Assembly voted unanimously to create a new agency dedicated to promoting the rights and needs of women and girls around the world. The U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is more commonly known as UN Women. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called it a major step forward to promote gender equality, expand opportunity and tackle discrimination around the globe.

Somaliland, which lies on the Horn of Africa in the north-western corner of Somalia, is not formally recognized by any country – this past week a completely peaceful presidential election was held. International observers said it met all the western standards for a free election. What's more, the incumbent president fully accepted the result the minute it was announced and handed over power to his successor and bitter political rival. It is peaceful, stable and has had several transfers of power and free elections in its 20-year history.

Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke will face a vote on a motion of no confidence that some 72 Somali lawmakers are planning to table against him in the parliament. The members of parliament said the constitutional

tenure of Omar's government has expired, urging the premier to present his new cabinet list to the parliament for approval.

At least two men were killed and three more were injured on Wednesday night after unidentified assailants hurled a grenade at a house in an area south of the Somali capital Mogadishu. It is believed that those inside were targeted for watching the Germany-Uruguay World Cup clash. Hezb al-Islam and its Al Qaeda-inspired allies from the Shabab movement have banned Somalis in the areas they control from gathering to watch the football World Cup, an activity they deem "un-Islamic".

Al-Shabab, which means "The Youth" in Arabic, controls large parts of southern Somalia and the capital, Mogadishu. The group seeks to replace Somalia's transitional government with an Islamic state. It has imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law in areas that it controls. The United States and other Western countries designate al-Shabab a terrorist group.

France has condemned as "barbaric" the bomb blasts that killed at least 74 people at World Cup parties in Uganda. Kampala has blamed the violence on Al Qaeda-linked militants in Somalia. France stands beside the Ugandan people and supports Uganda in its fight against terrorism. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said in a statement.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma has condemned the bomb attacks in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, on Sunday 11 July 2010, where more than 60 people were reported killed and scores of others wounded. Mr. Sharma's message: "I am deeply saddened by the grievous loss of life and injuries following the twin blasts in Kampala on Sunday evening. This deplorable and cowardly act has no place in our world today and I condemn it in the strongest terms. On behalf of the Commonwealth, I offer my deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Uganda. The Commonwealth stands with you in solidarity and support in these times of extreme distress."

Africa's top security official says the deadly bomb attacks in Kampala have strengthened the continent's resolve to root out al-Qaida-linked elements in Somalia. A spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council called the Kampala attacks 'cowardly and deplorable', and said Washington is ready to assist Uganda in any way possible.

Al-Qaida's affiliate in Somalia, al-Shabab, has taken responsibility for two separate bombings late Sunday in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. The death toll has risen to more than 70 and dozens more remain seriously wounded. Speaking to reporters from the Somali capital, Mogadishu, al-Shabab's spokesman Ali Mohamud Rage, said the twin blasts were in retaliation for Uganda's failure to withdraw its troops from Somalia.

The death toll of the two Kampala bomb blasts has risen to 74. Previous reports had put the figure of the dead at 64 and casualties at 67. The explosions went off at two bars packed with soccer fans watching the final moments of the World Cup final on television in an Ethiopian restaurant in Kabalagala and at Kampala rugby club on Sunday. An American was among those killed, according to the US embassy in Kampala

Kenya was on Monday under heightened security after terrorist bombs killed 74 people in Kampala. Our thoughts are with relatives and friends of the victims, and at this tragic moment the people of Kenya stand with their brothers and sisters in Uganda," the President of Kenya said in a statement.

President Obama, condemning what he called deplorable and cowardly attacks, said Washington was ready to help Uganda in hunting down those responsible. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also condemned the attacks on "innocent spectators".

The International Criminal Court (ICC) today issued a second arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, adding genocide to the list of charges for crimes he has allegedly committed in the war-ravaged Darfur region.

Civil society groups in Southern Sudan have organized demonstrations on the ninth of every month to push for the referendum slated for January to be held on time. They accuse the Khartoum Government of wanting to delay the historic self-determination referendum by failing to swear in the Referendum Commission to start its work and begin registration of eligible voters.

International peacekeepers said Sunday that 221 people have been killed in Sudan's volatile Darfur region in June. The United Nations - African Union peacekeepers in Darfur said most of the deaths were due to inter-tribal clashes. The death toll was significantly less than May, when nearly 600 people died in rebel and tribal fighting.

Leaders from northern and southern Sudan are meeting to plan for a peaceful transition after next year's referendum that will determine if the south becomes an independent state. The two sides began the discussions Saturday in Khartoum. Southern negotiator Pagan Amum said the talks are an opportunity for the two sides to strengthen their sometimes bitter relations. The semi-autonomous south is scheduled to hold a referendum January 9 on whether to become an independent state. The vote was a key part of the 2005 agreement ending Sudan's north-south civil war.

Report details

Pan Africa

Africa: UN Arms Trade Treaty Talks Begin

12 July 2010: Joe De Capua

Formal negotiations began Monday on a new international treaty to control the trade of conventional weapons. More than 190 nations are taking part at U.N. headquarters in New York.

Supporters of the treaty say it would save thousands of lives every year. The Control Arms Campaign, a coalition of civil society groups, says 128 armed conflicts since 1989 have claimed about 250, 000 deaths each year.

The campaign says since 2006, the “vast majority of governments in Africa, Europe and Asia have voted in the General Assembly for the development of the treaty.”

Anna MacDonald, OXFAM’s head of the Arms Control Campaign, says the treaty would control everything from small arms and ammunition to tanks and planes.

“The purpose of the treaty,” she says, “would be to ensure that the arms trade, which currently doesn’t have any effective global regulation, is properly regulated. And the arms aren’t flooding into some of the world’s worst conflict zones.”

She says the unregulated arms trade fuels human rights abuses and undermines poverty reduction.

Enforcement

Once the treaty is negotiated and agreed upon, MacDonald says, “It would mean any arms transfer that was coming from a country or passing through needs to be authorized by the government of that country against a set of criteria, which would include ensuring that there was no high risk that the arms were going to be used in human rights abuses or were going to unstable or a conflict area.”

She says currently there’s a lack of regulations governing the conventional arms trade, such as export controls.

“What this means is at best we have a patchwork system of arms control. And any unscrupulous arms dealer can easily find their way around it. Which is why we find so many weapons flooding into some of the poorest parts of the world,” she says.

Corruption plays a role, too

MacDonald says, “Corruption is a problem in the arms trade. Yes, we would want to see an arms trade treaty help to increase transparency and accountability within the arms trade. And we believe the responsible aspects of the arms industry would also welcome this. Because what we’re talking about is not stopping or preventing the arms trade. We’re talking about ensuring very sensible regulation within the arms trade.”

Taking a toll

The Control Arms Campaign says the lack of regulations results in many people being killed or wounded every day.

“We estimate that around 2,000 people die a day from armed violence around the world. And many more are forced to flee their home, see their lives and livelihoods destroyed,” says MacDonald.

There’s a financial toll, as well. “We estimated that Africa loses (US) \$19 billion a year as a result of armed violence and conflict. These are all situations that can be stopped, that governments do have the power to prevent.”

MacDonald says while an arms trade treaty is not a panacea, “it would certainly go a long way to prevent the situation that we have at the moment ...making bad situations a whole lot worse.”

Draft treaty

The negotiations over the next two weeks at the U.N. will determine when a draft treaty would be available. “That’s really dependent on governments...and the level of political will and ambition they have to make this happen,” she says.

The current negotiations are a prelude to a final negotiating conference in 2012.

The OXFAM official says there’s been a “huge amount of support” for the treaty from governments in conflict zones. “More than 150 governments have voted in favor of it.”

Africa: Scores Killed in Sunday's Twin Bomb Blasts in Uganda

12 July 2010: voanes

Information Minister Princess Kabakumba Matsiko says the casualty figure could go higher.

Authorities in Uganda said more than 60 people were killed and scores more wounded in two separate bomb explosions in the capital, Kampala, late Sunday.

Police said the first blast took place at an Ethiopian restaurant, while the second explosion occurred at the Kyaddondo Rugby grounds.

Both explosions took place as residents watched the final game of the FIFA 2010 World Cup from South Africa.

Princess Kabakumba Matsiko, Uganda's Minister of Information, told VOA the casualty figure could go higher.

"There is a bomb blast at two sites, one at Kabalagala. This is on the outskirts of Kampala, and about 13 people died. And, then, at Kyaddondo Rugby Club, this is on Jinja Road, about 30 people died and some were injured. But, the casualties might be more. We are still compiling the figures," she said.

No one claimed immediate responsibility for the attacks. A police official said he suspected the Somali Islamist militia al-Shabab might be behind the attack, which would make it the group's first attack outside of Somalia.

Journalist Alex Atuhaire, editor of the *Daily Monitor* said Al-Shabab had threatened revenge for Uganda's peacekeeping role in Uganda.

"Apart from the African Union summit coming up, there has already been warning that the al-Shabab will make a revenge of the Ugandan military's activities in Somalia and cause havoc here," Atuhaire said.

The 15th Ordinary Session of the African Union summit is scheduled to be held in the Ugandan capital from 19th to 27th July.

Information Minister Matsiko said every African Union summit site in Kampala has been secured.

"I can assure you security is guaranteed. All the systems have been put place, and the venues for the AU summit have secured under 24 hour surveillance," Masiko said.

In the Somali capital, Mogadishu, a commander for al-Shabab told the Associated Press he was happy with the attacks in Uganda, but refused to confirm or deny whether the group was responsible.

In Washington, White House officials said President Barack Obama was "deeply saddened" by the "deplorable and cowardly" attacks.

President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the United States is ready to provide any assistance requested by the Ugandan government.

The U.S. embassy confirmed at least one American was killed in the blasts, and media reports said at least three other Americans were wounded.

Africa: New World Bank AIDS Chief Says Prevention Challenges Remain

09 July 2010: bbc Africa

The new head of the World Bank's Global HIV/AIDS Program says much more needs to be done to lower infection rates.

Dr. David Wilson, a Zimbabwean national, takes over the job just prior to this month's 18th International AIDS Conference in Vienna. He says familiar challenges remain some 30 years into the epidemic. "I think that the major challenge 30 years on is the challenge that we faced 30 years ago. And that is making prevention work."

He says there have been some "striking prevention successes" in concentrated epidemics in the North, Asia and Latin America. But "immense challenges" remain in Africa, especially Southern Africa.

Epicenter

"You've got a band of about 10 countries with two percent of the world's population and a third of their HIV infections. But I think we're starting to see some really exciting prevention developments in Southern Africa," he says.

This includes increasing acceptance of male circumcision.

"We know that male circumcision is the single most effective prevention tool that we have," Wilson says. And countries in Southern Africa are now really

seriously beginning to expand their male circumcision programs. There's a determination and a desire to succeed."

There's also progress in behavior change, including efforts to reduce multiple or concurrent sex partners. "These have also been taken up with great urgency by governments in Africa now. I think prevention is looking more hopeful than it has for a long time," he says.

Successful prevention makes sustained treatment programs possible.

"Through that combination of effective prevention and sustained treatment we can really arrest this epidemic."

Condoms, abstinence

Some have called for concentrated safe sex programs by individual countries. For example, South African professor Alan Whiteside agrees that innovative thinking is needed. He and Oxford professor Justin Parkhurst say perhaps intense national month-long campaigns that really promote safe sex – including condoms and abstinence – could greatly interrupt infection cycles in many countries.

Dr. Wilson says, "The focus on concerted behavior change is very necessary. I think it needs to be sustained rather than simply for a month. I think what we've seen with HIV prevention after 30 years is what a tenacious and dogged virus this is. And it doesn't let up and our prevention programs have to be equally sustained."

AIDS 2010

The 18th International AIDS Conference – the world's largest AIDS gathering – will be held in Vienna from July 18th through the 23rd and will place an emphasis on the epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The theme is "Rights Here, Right Now."

"Vienna was chosen as the conference venue partly as a gateway to Eastern Europe. And in Eastern Europe, we have epidemics, which are overwhelmingly driven by injecting drugs use, which in cases of countries such as Ukraine are significant epidemics," he says.

But there's an opportunity to turn things around. Wilson says the tools exist to deal with the problem; now the will and commitment are needed.

"We do know that if we do the right programs for injecting drug users by providing clean needles and syringes – and by providing access to opiate substitution therapies – we can make a difference," he says.

Recently, AIDS 2010 released the *Vienna Declaration*, which calls for a radical change in international anti-drug policies. Among its recommendations is the decriminalization of injection drug use and treating the issue as a health problem.

“We need to present public health policies in ways which are most acceptable to the countries in question. And I certainly think that an approach that emphasizes public health rather than policing is important,” he says.

“If we simply focus on clean needles and syringes and opiate substitution, without also promoting programs to reduce drug addiction, we do isolate ourselves from the wider society and decision makers. So I think it’s an excellent principle, but it needs to be balanced against important political considerations we face.”

Flatline Funding

Many HIV/AIDS activists and NGOs this year have accused international donors of flatlined funding as they try to recover from the global economic crisis.

“I think that it is true that we are in a context when HIV money is either flat or trending towards flat,” says Wilson. And I think it is true that we face competing challenges from other health issues.”

Those challenges, he says, makes it important to make better use of existing funds and resources. “We’re not in a world where resources for HIV will continue to increase at the pace they increased in the past,” he says.

Wilson joined the World Bank in 2003, working in HIV/AIDS programs for such countries as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, India, China, Vietnam, Lebanon and Papua New Guinea.

Africa: New UN Women Agency Needs Strong Leader, Committed Funding

07 July 2010: voanews

On July 2nd, the U.N. General Assembly voted unanimously to create a new agency dedicated to promoting the rights and needs of women and girls around the world.

The U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is more commonly known as UN Women. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called it a “major step forward.”

It's got potential

Among those supporting the creation of UN Women is Paula Donovan, co-director of AIDS Free World, who says creation of the agency is just a first step.

“So far it doesn't really differ from what we've had in the past. It has more potential. But it is at present, at its very beginnings, an amalgamation of what existed in the past,” she says.

One major difference, she says, is that governments have informally agreed it should have a budget of \$500 million. That's about double what U.N. agencies dealing with women combined have had before. Another difference is that the head of UN Women will be an undersecretary-general – a much higher rank than the head of UNIFEM, the current, smaller entity for women.

“An undersecretary-general is at the same level as the heads of UNICEF and the United Nations Development Program. And it's on a par now with the other heads of agencies,” says Donovan.

What's expected?

“Our great hope is that around the world women will be able to rely on UN Women, not just for advice and not just for sort of representation at meetings, but for real programs that can make effective changes in their lives.... We're hoping that UN Women will be able to do with women what an agency like UNICEF is able to do for children.”

She says it's “critically important” that the new agency recognize that “women ...have been operating with very few resources and very little power, but excellent ideas, for all the decades when the U.N. wasn't working on women's issues.”

The success of UN Women's will depend in part on partnering with long-time women's advocates around the world, says Donovan.

Who's in charge?

The head of UN Women is expected to be named by September, and the agency is due to begin operations by next January. Donovan says a strong leader is vital to fulfilling its mission and having an equal say at the bargaining table.

She says she assumes a woman will be picked for the undersecretary-general's job, but that person must have proven leadership skills to lead the United Nations "out of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century" on women's issues.

"If a terrific, dynamic leader, who can really bring in all the women's organizations and women's advocates, who've been struggling from outside the U.N. for decades, and can also rein in the funds and support that are required, is appointed, then we have a really good shot," she says.

Asked if there are any leading candidates, Donovan says, "Your guess is as good as mine." However, she's concerned about the selection process. She says the secretary-general and others have promised the process will be fair, open and transparent.

"They've now changed that to open, rigorous and transparent. And somehow fairness has slipped off of the agenda. But so far it's the same old business as usual," she says.

Governments can nominate candidates, but Donovan says many qualified women may be passed over for consideration. She says women outside of the U.N. structure or not a favored choice of a head of state "have absolutely no information about how they can apply, what the qualifications are. And I haven't seen anything that resembles fairness or openness and certainly not transparency."

Funding

The co-founder of AIDS Free World says there's much work to be done after UN Women begins operations. "We have now the shell of a U.N. women's agency that can truly be effective for women. We have the legal premise," she says. But the amount of funding she believes will reflect donor commitment.

"Certainly the governments have made almost embarrassing financial commitments - \$500 million for the entire world's women is mortifying. And those aren't commitments. Those are simply suggestions," she says.

The United Nations calls the creation of UN Women "historic." The secretary-general says the agency "will significantly boost U.N. efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity and tackle discrimination around the globe."

Africa: HIV/AIDS Prevention Efforts Need New, Innovative Thinking

05 July 2010: BBC Africa

A leading researcher on the economic and development effects of HIV/AIDS says new and innovative prevention methods are needed.

South African Professor Alan Whiteside is calling for fresh ideas on breaking the HIV infection cycle by interrupting or delaying risky behavior.

“I think it would be fair to say that prevention is the orphan of the HIV response. We’ve made huge progress with treatment,” he says, “but we haven’t stopped people getting infected.”

Whiteside is executive director of HEARD, the Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. He’s also co-author of *AIDS in the 21st Century*. Whiteside and Justin Parkhurst of the London School of hygiene and Tropical Medicine presented their ideas in a recent article in the Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine.

Have prevention efforts failed?

“We can never prove a negative and that’s what’s extremely frustrating. For example, is it possible that if we hadn’t had the prevention, that levels of prevalence would be 60 or 70 percent in Swaziland instead of the 42 percent among the antenatal clinic attenders that there are,” he says.

Whiteside says prevention probably has worked, “just not well enough, particularly in the hyper-endemic countries of southern Africa.”

Out of the box

“We’re calling for innovative thinking. The time has come for stepping out of the box and doing some new things and trying some new ideas,” says Whiteside.

Those new ideas include having a period, perhaps one month, when people make a concerted effort to practice safe sex.

“If you could have a nationwide campaign of either safe sex or no sex – and that means everybody – then you would effectively cut HIV transmission and it would give you breathing space. And we called for perhaps a one month period of safe sex/no sex,” he says.

No sex?

Some have interpreted this to mean Whiteside and Parkhurst are calling for a month of abstinence only.

“I would say they haven’t read the article properly,” he says, adding, “What we believe would work is that if every act of sexual intercourse [were] protected, then there would be no HIV transmission during the period of a month. And that means people who have just been infected, who have a very high viral (HIV) load, would not be transmitting during that high period of viral load.”

In time, their viral load would fall and “there would be less likelihood of them transmitting beyond that period.”

While this could be done, he says, through abstinence, it could also be achieved through condoms.

“If everybody – married or in a relationship – uses a condom, then you would have the same effect of interrupting HIV transmission. It’s like if you took everybody who had a cold and put them in quarantine for a month. We’re not suggesting for a moment that that’s what you do. But we are suggesting you quarantine against HIV transmission,” he says.

Clues may be found in some Muslim countries, which often have very low HIV prevalence rates. For example, could Ramadan practices of abstinence affect HIV transmission? Further research would be needed.

The Whiteside/Parkhurst article says, “While Islam permits polygamy, it prohibits sex outside marriage and discourages the consumption of alcohol and homosexual sex. All these factors may help explain the lower levels of seroprevalence in countries with large Muslim populations.”

Naysayers

“I think the really important thing to stress is this is a bold idea and we’re going to be hit by a lot of people who don’t like what we’re saying. All we ask is think about it,” he says.

Whiteside thinks critics will accuse them of “moralizing...calling for the impossible. And we’ll be seen as loopy academics.”

During the Bush administration, there were many calls for abstinence as part of HIV/AIDS prevention. Abstinence was once a big part of PEPFAR, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. But Whiteside says their idea is different.

“We’re not talking about the Bush type abstinence, which was abstinence until you were married and then a monogamous relationship, be faithful to one partner. What we’re saying is that we would like a period of safe sex or if you can’t do safe sex (then) no sex. Where you have it on a national basis or a population basis for a month,” he says.

World Cup inspiration

Behavior change has always been a difficult program to implement in HIV/AIDS prevention.

“I think the answer is that in some of the worst affected countries it is a very saleable proposition because we don’t have many choices left,” he says.

Whiteside adds, “Two months ago, I would have felt that we were dancing on the edge of insanity in this proposal. But I’m living in South Africa and I’ve seen how our society has mobilized around the World Cup. And I know it is possible to mobilize an entire society. So I think it is possible to mobilize people around something as life and death as HIV transmission.”

He says the first step is simply to get people to talk about the idea. Whiteside will try to do that when he attends the 18th International AIDS Conference in Vienna later this month.

East Africa

Somalia: The jihadists next door

06 July 2010: Gabiley news desk

Having broken away from a failed state, Somaliland is now a success story. But the west won't recognise it.

In Africa this past week a completely peaceful presidential election was held. International observers said it met all the western standards for a free election. What's more, the incumbent president fully accepted the result the minute it was announced and handed over power to his successor and bitter political rival – and on accepting his victory, the president-elect thanked and congratulated the outgoing president for his services to his country.

What makes this election remarkable, and an important example not just to Africa but to the whole of the developing world – especially Muslim countries – is that it took place in [Somaliland](#), a self-declared republic that broke away from the rest of [Somalia](#) 20 years ago, which doesn't get a penny of

international assistance, and which hosts an estimated 600,000 refugees from the continuing civil war in the rest of Somalia.

The week before the election, [al-Shabaab](#), [al-Qaida](#)'s Somalia-based branch, warned the government and people of Somaliland not to go through with the election. Over 1 million voters ignored the threat, queueing for hours all over the country to cast their ballot.

Somaliland presents the other Somali vision that has become a reality. Next door to a country now synonymous with pirates, jihadists and suicide bombers, we have a nation of rules rather than individuals; where election results are accepted by those in power. Aside from today's South Africa, it is hard to think of any other country on the continent which is a consistent example of this.

And it could not have come at a more poignant moment. This week marks the 50th anniversary of Somalia's independence. It is a tragedy for all Somalis, whether living in the stability of Somaliland or not, that what is left of Somalia now ranks as the world's most failed state.

Somaliland, which lies on the Horn of Africa in the north-western corner of Somalia, is not formally recognized by any country – but it is accepted as a de facto country by many nations and organizations who maintain embassies and representative offices in the capital, Hargeisa. It is peaceful, stable and has had several transfers of power and free elections in its 20-year history.

It has a particularly close connection with Britain, not just in the tens of thousands who live here who have family links to Somaliland (yes, people actually go on holiday to a part of Somalia), but also in the fact that for nearly 80 years, Somaliland was a British protectorate.

For Somalilanders, formal recognition by the rest of the world is the Holy Grail, a national obsession that defines part of what it means to be a Somalilander and that cuts across all party lines. Having rebuilt itself from the ashes of the civil war and survived with no outside help, Somaliland cannot understand why other countries, particularly in the west, don't open diplomatic relations with them. Now that the rest of Somalia has become one of al-Qaida's main bases and the site of one of the world's worst crises, the question of recognition is even more complex. Somaliland is a vital platform and the only visible option for trying to stabilise Somalia and reverse al-Qaida's growth.

Somalilanders have never wanted to see their country in these terms: they want to distance themselves from the mayhem in Mogadishu as much as possible. Yet it is only by accepting this role that the international support they crave will begin to materialise. The beleaguered UN-backed government in Mogadishu has no other partners with a strong security force, democratic institutions and an intimate knowledge of Somali culture, language, clan system and politics. Up till now, the west has looked to Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and others to be their key allies, overlooking the one partner that has a

direct interest in bringing peace and security to Mogadishu and halting the spread of radicalism.

For two decades Somaliland and the west have been stuck with the status quo of acceptance without recognition. But the challenge of al-Qaida in Somalia means we cannot remain in this limbo. A new approach needs to be found – and fast.

Rageh Omaar is a Mogadishu-born broadcaster whose family is from Somaliland

Somalia: MPs to Table No-Confidence Vote against PM

8 July 2010: Garowe Online

Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke will face a vote on a motion of no confidence that some 72 Somali lawmakers are planning to table against him in the parliament.

The members of parliament said the constitutional tenure of Omar's government has expired, urging the premier to present his new cabinet list to the parliament for approval.

"The Somali government must ask the parliament for a confidence vote because its term in office has expired late last year," said one of the lawmakers

Lawmaker Ali Mumin said the government should seek approval from the parliament to allow the new cabinet gets to work.

Prime Minister Sharma'arke recently reshuffled his cabinet to include some members from the pro-government Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama militia, which signed a power-sharing agreement with the TFG on March in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Among the ministerial posts that Ahlu Sunnah got is the national security slot, which was appointed Ahmed Abdi Salan.

It's not the first time some parliamentarians have asked the government to face the house. On May, a motion against Sharma'arke led to division within the parliament.

Somalia: Two Killed for Watching World Cup

8 July 2010: Radio France Internationale

At least two men were killed and three more were injured on Wednesday night after unidentified assailants hurled a grenade at a house in an area south of the Somali capital Mogadishu.

It is believed that those inside were targeted for watching the Spain-Germany World Cup clash, says Shafi' Mohyaddin Abokar at the Somali Sports Press Association.

"A teenage boy died on the spot and the other one perished from his serious wounds at the hospital hours after the attack," Abdalla Aweys, a resident in the Elasha Biyaha neighborhood said Thursday in a telephone conversation.

"I was one of those who were watching the game, every one of us ran when the explosion occurred, praise be to Allah so that I am now safe and sound," Abdalla added.

At least five people have been killed since last month apparently for watching the World Cup, says Mohyaddin Abokar. He said that many more are being held by Islamists for allegedly watching the matches.

Hezb al-Islam and its Al Qaeda-inspired allies from the Shebab movement have banned Somalis in the areas they control from gathering to watch the football World Cup, an activity they deem "un-Islamic".

Somalia: Al-Shabaab Urges Attacks on Diplomats

8 July 2010: Abdulkadir Khalif

Mogadishu — Al-Shabaab, the strongest radical Islamist group opposing the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia has invited Islamists everywhere to act against the diplomatic missions of Uganda and Burundi.

"We urge our brothers from Chechnya, Pakistan, Afghanistan and from anywhere around the world to attack the diplomatic missions of Uganda and Burundi," said Sheikh Abu Mansur, an Al-Shabaab leader.

The call came at a rally in Mogadishu by the group to seek public support. The event took place at Maslah Compound in the northern suburbs of the Somali capital.

According to Al-Shabaab officials, the rally was meant to demonstrate public support towards the movement's latest attacks on the positions held by the government forces and by the peacekeepers serving the African Union Mission in Somalia, Amisom

Businesses in the western neighborhoods of Mogadishu were closed for many people to join the rally. The place was completely secured by Al-Shabaab militants and the Islamist leaders who declared their rejection of the presence of the Amisom peacekeepers in Somalia.

Several battalions from Uganda and Burundi numbering 6,133 are in Mogadishu to protect vital government installations including the port, airport and Villa Somalia, the state house in the capital.

Sheikh Mukhtar Robow Ali Abu Mansur, the former spokesman of Al-Shabaab told the gathering that jihadists (holy warriors) were getting the upper hand in the battle fields in Mogadishu.

The sheikh stated that if government soldiers defected and joined Al-Shabaab they would enjoy guaranteed security.

Somalia: Al-Shabab Militant Group Seeks to Replace Somali Government

12 July 2010: VOA News

Al-Shabab is a Somali-based militant group that has ties to al-Qaida and has been waging an insurgency against Somalia's Western-backed transitional government.

Al-Shabab has pledged its allegiance to al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, and there are ideological similarities between the groups.

Al-Shabab, which means "The Youth" in Arabic, controls large parts of southern Somalia and the capital, Mogadishu. The group seeks to replace Somalia's transitional government with an Islamic state. It has imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law in areas that it controls.

The group has carried out suicide attacks against peacekeepers in Somalia in recent years. Sunday's bombings in Uganda marked al-Shabab's first attack outside Somali territory.

The United States and other Western countries designate al-Shabab a terrorist group and U.S. officials have warned that Somalia could be a terrorist breeding ground with its instability and lack of a strong central government.

Neighboring Kenya says it has heightened security along its border with Somalia to guard against an attack.

Somalis accuse al-Shabab fighters of using residents as human shields and launching mortar shells at peacekeepers from densely populated areas.

Somalia: Keep Neighboring African Countries Out of Somalia, Says Analyst

12 July 2010: Radio France Internationale

Islamist Somalia-based group Al-Shebab has taken responsibility for a double bomb attack at a sport's bar and an Ethiopian restaurant in the Ugandan capital Kampala that killed 74 people. Analyst Afyare Abdi Elmi tells RFI it is likely the bombs will trigger an interventionist international response, but that foreign governments should keep other African countries out of Somalia.

Ugandan Deputy Foreign Minister Okello Oryem said Uganda will not pull its troops from Somalia and President Yoweri Museveni vowed to go after the perpetrators.

It is the first Al-Shebab attack outside Somalia and Elmi says it will have international repercussions.

"It will invoke an interventionist mood in the region and within the international community," says Elmi, author of *Understanding the Somalia conflagration*. "This might create an atmosphere where Somalia is a free for all and a number of troops are invited and come and go."

A force of some 6,000 peacekeeping troops is deployed in Somalia, comprising soldiers from Uganda and Burundi. Somali President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed has asked the African Union to send more. A regional bloc pledged to send 2,000 extra troops by September to boost an African Union peacekeeping force in Somalia, taking the number of soldiers deployed there to 8,100.

"The international community should not commit the same mistake it made in 2006 when it allowed Ethiopians to go in," says Elmi. "Somalis have many, many grievances against the Ethiopian state. If Ethiopia comes in, it will give Al-Shebab what it is looking for, which is a popular cause."

He added it might also produce a backlash against Somalis living in neighboring countries.

"The best way of defeating extremism in Somalia is not sending external troops to the country," he said. "It is building a professional and inclusive force of Somalis. This is the most important glaring fact that's been looking at us and we've been ignoring it."

He said sending in extra troops was a short-term and short-sighted solution, advocating instead "intervening in a way that establishes the Somali state, which can take over and secure its boundaries".

Somali government troops are badly paid and many troops defect to Al-Shebab, which offers more money. Some estimates say most of the 40 million dollars of arms provided to Somalia by the US has ended up in Al-Shebab hands.

"Al-Shebab is very well organised and very well disciplined but it does not have popular support in Somalia," says Elmi, but he adds that the group can attract Somali fighters because it is richer and better organised than the government. A good chunk of its money is domestically generated; they control several towns and the ports. There are also unconfirmed reports that they are getting funding from outside.

"They are controlling the majority of Somalis," says Elmi. "They've been managing their funds well."

In addition, Amisom has committed several atrocities against civilians in the Somali capital Mogadishu.

"This must end," he says. "The Amisom forces must do what it can to not give cause to their rivals."

Al-Shebab is not officially part of the Al-Qaeda network, but Elmi points out that it is not a monolithic group and there might be individuals who are linked to Al-Qaeda. He says Al-Qaeda might adopt Al-Shebab as its Horn of Africa wing.

Uganda: France Condemns Perpetrators of World Cup Blasts

12 July 2010: Radio France Internationale

France has condemned as "barbaric" the bomb blasts that killed at least 74 people at World Cup parties in Uganda. Kampala has blamed the violence on Al Qaeda-linked militants in Somalia.

"I condemn with the greatest firmness the attacks" that took place on Sunday in the capital Kampala, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said in a statement.

"The authors of these barbaric acts must be identified, pursued and brought to justice."

Two bombs ripped through crowds watching the football World Cup final at a sports bar and an Ethiopian restaurant in Kampala on Sunday.

An eyewitness who spoke to RFI said he heard a first blast followed 30 seconds later by a second explosion while he was watching the game in the upstairs section of the bar.

"We just lay flat until about after two or three minutes. Then we peeped to try and see what was happening," he said. "And that's when we started people with blown heads."

Kouchner has expressed his condolences to the Ugandan authorities and the families and friends of those affected.

"France stands beside the Ugandan people and supports Uganda in its fight against terrorism."

Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni pledged to track down the perpetrators of this "backward" and "cowardly" attack.

"If they want to fight, they should go and look for soldiers and not to come and target people who are just enjoying themselves", said the Ugandan President.

Uganda: Somali Islamist Group Claims Responsibility for Uganda Blasts

12 July 2010: Radio France Internationale

The Somali Islamist group al-Shebab has claimed responsibility for the overnight bomb blasts in the Ugandan capital Kampala that killed at least 74 people.

"We are behind the attack because we are at war with them," Ali Mohamoud Rage, the group's top spokesman told reporters in Mogadishu.

In an audio message earlier this month the group said that Uganda would face retaliation for its role in supporting the western-backed Somali transitional government.

"We had warned the Ugandans to refrain from their actions, we spoke to the leaders and we spoke to the people and they never listened to us," Rage said.

Meanwhile, the global police agency Interpol has said it will send a team to Uganda to assist local officers.

Interpol Secretary General Ronald Noble branded the attack on Kampala football fans "despicable and cowardly" and said that Ugandan police chief Kale Kayihura had requested assistance.

Uganda: Commonwealth Secretary-General Condemns Bomb Attacks

12 July 2010: Commonwealth News and Information Service (London)

"I am deeply saddened by the grievous loss of life and injuries following the twin blasts in Kampala on Sunday evening"

Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma has condemned the bomb attacks in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, on Sunday 11 July 2010, where more than 60 people were reported killed and scores of others wounded.

Below is Mr. Sharma's message:

"I am deeply saddened by the grievous loss of life and injuries following the twin blasts in Kampala on Sunday evening. This deplorable and cowardly act has no place in our world today and I condemn it in the strongest terms. On behalf of the Commonwealth, I offer my deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Uganda. The Commonwealth stands with you in solidarity and support in these times of extreme distress."

Uganda: AU: Kampala Bombs Will Not Affect Somalia Peacekeeping

12 July 2010: voanews

Africa's top security official says the deadly bomb attacks in Kampala have strengthened the continent's resolve to root out al-Qaida-linked elements in Somalia. The African Union is preparing to send reinforcements from Uganda and other countries to bring its Somalia peacekeeping mission up to full strength.

AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra see clear ties between the twin bomb blasts and Uganda's support for Somalia's embattled government.

"There are linkages between what is happening in Kampala and the fact that this country is very much engaged in peacemaking and peacekeeping in Somalia," he said.

The Somali insurgent group al-Shabab last week condemned plans by six East African countries to send reinforcements to shore up the AU peacekeeping mission known as AMISOM. Uganda is the largest contributor to the 5,000-member AMISOM force, and is preparing to increase its troop commitment.

In a telephone interview, Lamamra says the terrorist attack fits the pattern of al-Shabab and other foreign-backed groups hoping to establish Somalia as a base of operations for Islamic extremists.

"The modus operandi is very much similar to that of al-Qaida, and circumstances also lead us to believe that al-Qaida is involved directly or through al-Shabab," he said.

Lamamra says the Kampala bombings will not dent the resolve of other countries in the region to bring the AMISOM peacekeeping mission up to its full authorized strength of 8,000.

"We will be submitting a report to the [AU] Peace and Security Council in the near future to say the authorized strength of 8,000 has been duly reached. Uganda is willing to remain there until such a time as the mission is fully accomplished," said Lamamra.

East African regional bloc the Intergovernmental Authority on Development this month said 20,000 troops might be needed to save Somalia from falling into the hands of extremists. That word came at an extraordinary six-country summit following news reports that Somali government forces and peacekeepers were hemmed in to a few square blocks of Mogadishu.

But Commissioner Lamamra dismissed those reports as propaganda.

"If you listen to the propaganda of al-Shabab, Somalia would have been under their full rule some time ago," he said. "That is purely propaganda. AMISOM is holding the ground together with the Somali security forces, and I believe there is no way Shabab could take over Mogadishu and overthrow the legitimate government of Sheikh Sharif," Lamamra added.

A spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council called the Kampala attacks 'cowardly and deplorable', and said Washington is ready to assist Uganda in any way possible.

The United States, along with the European Union and the United Nations,

provide the bulk of the financial and military support to Somalia's transitional government.

Uganda: Somali Militants Claim Uganda Bomb Attacks

12 July 2010: voanews

Al-Qaida's affiliate in Somalia, al-Shabab, has taken responsibility for two separate bombings late Sunday in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. The death toll has risen to more than 70 and dozens more remain seriously wounded.

Speaking to reporters from the Somali capital, Mogadishu, al-Shabab's spokesman Ali Mohamud Rage, also known as Ali Dheere, said the twin blasts were in retaliation for Uganda's failure to withdraw its troops from Somalia.

Ugandan soldiers make up more than half the 6,100-member African Union peacekeeping force in the Horn of African country. The force, which is mandated to protect the U.N.-backed Transitional Federal Government from insurgent attacks, has been fighting near daily battles with al-Shabab in Mogadishu since the first Ugandan contingent arrived in 2007.

Ali Dheere says Uganda and the other African country contributing troops to the peacekeeping mission, Burundi, ignored previous warnings to leave Somalia. He says Sunday's attacks were carried out to prove that al-Shabab will target civilians in Kampala and Bujumbura, if the peacekeepers are not withdrawn immediately.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni condemned the attacks and vowed to hunt down the perpetrators. The country is also expected to provide the bulk of the reinforcement troops that have been pledged by East Africa's regional bloc known as IGAD to bring the peacekeeping force to its full strength of 8,000. Ugandan officials say the troops will stay in Somalia as long as they are needed to stabilize the country.

At least 74 people are believed to have been killed in the bombings that targeted fans watching the World Cup final. The first blast tore through an Ethiopian restaurant in southern Kampala. The second blast took place about 50 minutes later at the Kyadondo Rugby Club, which was showing the World Cup match on a giant TV screen.

The Ugandan government is said to be investigating reports that two suicide bombers may have been involved in carrying out the attacks.

Most of the casualties were Ugandans. But one American aid worker was killed and six Methodist missionaries from the U.S. state of Pennsylvania were

wounded.

Last week, al-Shabab's top leader, Ahmed Ali Godane, accused African Union troops of continuing to indiscriminately shell neighborhoods and killing civilians in Mogadishu. He said his group would seek revenge.

Somalis also accuse al-Shabab fighters of using residents as human shields, launching mortars at peacekeepers from densely populated areas.

Al-Shabab, is designated a terrorist group by the United States and other Western countries, has already carried out several suicide attacks against peacekeepers in Somalia.

Al-Shabab also killed more than 20 people in October 2008 in coordinated multiple suicide bombings in Somaliland and Puntland. But until Sunday, the group had not been able to attack any city outside Somali territories.

Neighboring Kenya has announced it has heightened security along its border with Somalia.

Uganda: Bomb Blasts Death Toll Rises to 74 as Al Shabaab Claim Responsibility

12 July 2010: The Independent (Kampala)

Kampala — the death toll of the two Kampala bomb blasts has risen to 74. Previous reports had put the figure of the dead at 64 and casualties at 67.

The Somali Islamist militants al Shabaab has claimed they were behind the two bomb attacks.

The explosions went off at two bars packed with soccer fans watching the final moments of the World Cup final on television in an Ethiopian restaurant in Kabalagala and at Kampala rugby club on Sunday.

The inspector General of Police, Kale Kayihura earlier this morning said that the police suspected the al shabaab, although the Mogadishu based militant's commanders denied the accusations. However a head of a suspected Somali suicide bomber was found at one of the blast sites.

Sheik Ali Mohamud Rage, a spokesman for the Somali militant group al Shabaab has now come out boldly to claim responsibility for what left many grieving in Kampala. Reports indicate that the attacks are the first time that the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab has attacked sites outside Somalia.

The first blast hit the Ethiopian Village restaurant around 10:55 p.m. local time, Uganda media centre executive director, Fred Opolot said. Two more blasts tore through a crowded rugby club as the match was going on, Juma Seiko, one of the witnesses said. Identification and trauma centres have been set up at Mulago Hospital and International Hospital Kampala.

President Yoweri Museveni who visited Ethiopian Village, Kampala Rugby Club and Mulago hospital where most of the victims are said that the terrorists behind the bombings should fight soldiers, not "people who are just enjoying themselves."

"We shall go for them wherever they are coming from. We will look for them and get them as we always do," Museveni added.

Kenya: Alert as Terrorists Bomb Kampala

12 July 2010: daily nation

Nairobi — Kenya was on Monday under heightened security after terrorist bombs killed 74 people in Kampala.

Somali militant group al-Shabaab, on Monday claimed responsibility for Sunday's twin- bomb attacks in the Ugandan capital on Sunday night and slaughtered people watching the World Cup final at a restaurant and a sports club, authorities said.

One bombing targeted the Ethiopian Village restaurant, a popular night spot that was heaving with soccer fans and is frequented by foreigners, while the second one struck the Kyadondo Rugby Club that was also showing the match.

Coordinated attacks are a hallmark of al Qaeda and groups linked to Osama bin Laden's militant network.

The al-Shabaab claims reaffirmed earlier suspicion by the Inspector General of Police, Maj-Gen Kale Kayihura, that the militant group that claims links with al Qaeda was behind the deadly attacks, after the severed head of a suspected suicide bomber was found at one of the blast sites.

Al Shahid, a Somali news agency, quoted a senior member of al-Shabaab saying the blasts were a retaliatory attack on Uganda for sending peace-keepers to Somalia to support the government of President Sheikh Sherif.

"We were watching soccer here and then when there were three minutes to the end of the match, an explosion came ... and it was so loud," a witness, Mr Juma Seiko, said at the rugby club.

The extremist group has threatened Uganda because the country has contributed soldiers to an African Union force supporting the transitional government in the lawless country.

In a BBC interview on Monday evening, the leader of the same group, Mohammed Godane, made definite claim that they had attacked Kampala.

Deputy police spokesman Charles Wahong'o said Kenya, which had beefed up security especially along its border with Somalia, was heightening its vigilance.

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni on Monday visited the bomb blast scenes under heavy security, offering public support to victims' families and vowing to track down the terrorists.

Official count

Kenya put its hospitals and other medical facilities and personnel at Uganda's disposal should that become necessary.

The two countries are partners with Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi in the East African Community, whose charter requires them to help each other in times of distress.

Public Health director Shanaaz Sharif told the Daily Nation that the country was willing to treat the injured if that became necessary, adding that no request for help had been made.

In Kampala, a Ugandan Government spokesman said: "The latest official count is 74 confirmed dead."

Earlier, officials had said 64 people were killed and as many wounded in the blasts.

President Kibaki joined world leaders, including US President Barack Obama, in condemning the attack.

Al Shabaab happy

"Our thoughts are with relatives and friends of the victims, and at this tragic moment the people of Kenya stand with their brothers and sisters in Uganda," the President said in a statement.

Earlier, BBC online reported the Somali Islamist group al-Shabaab saying it is "very happy" about the attacks. But the al Qaeda-linked group neither confirmed nor denied suspicion that it was behind the explosions.

The deadliest of the blasts was at the crowded rugby club. At both scenes, chairs lay overturned, with blood and pieces of flesh on the floor.

"At one of the scenes, investigators identified the severed head of a Somali national, which we suspect could have been a suicide bomber," said army spokesman Felix Kulayigye.

An al-Shabaab commander in Mogadishu, Sheikh Yusuf Isse, praised the attacks saying: "Uganda is a major infidel country supporting the so-called government of Somalia... We know Uganda is against Islam and so we are very happy at what has happened in Kampala. That is the best news we ever heard."

An American was among those killed, according to the US embassy in Kampala.

President Obama, condemning what he called deplorable and cowardly attacks, said Washington was ready to help Uganda in hunting down those responsible. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also condemned the attacks on "innocent spectators".

"In the city mortuary, I have been informed, there are 70 bodies," James Kakoza, Uganda's state minister for Primary Health Care, told journalists.

Police spokeswoman Judith Nabakooba said 10 of the dead were either Ethiopian or Eritrean. The US charity Invisible Children said in a blog posting that one of its members, Nate Henn from Wilmington, Delaware, had been killed in the rugby club blast.

"This shows you the criminality and terrorism that I have been talking about," President Museveni said at the rugby club. "If you want to fight, go and look for soldiers, don't bomb people watching football."

"This is a cowardly act by al-Shabaab terrorists," Bereket Simon, the Ethiopian Government's head of information, told Reuters in Addis Ababa.

Ethiopian troops invaded Somalia in 2006 to oust an Islamist movement from Mogadishu. That sparked the Islamist insurgency which still rages.

Armed police cordoned off both blast sites and searched the areas with sniffer dogs while dazed survivors helped pull the wounded from the blast scene.

Uganda, East Africa's third largest economy, is attracting billions of dollars of foreign investment, especially in its oil sector and government debt markets.

But investors in Uganda and neighboring Kenya, which shares a largely porous border with Somalia, often cite the threat from Islamic militants as a serious concern.

Kenya: Kenya on Border Alert after Uganda Blasts

12 July 2010: Dominic Wabala

Nairobi — Kenya has heightened the level of surveillance along the borders following explosions in Kampala, Uganda in which seventy people are reported dead.

"Following what has happened in Uganda, we are much more vigilant and have heightened surveillance and security along our borders and all entry ports," Kenya's deputy police spokesman Mr Charles Wahong'o said.

He said that more effort is being put especially because of the number of visitors the country receives all year round.

The deputy police spokesman said that the country's security agents have always manned the borders with Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan and Tanzania.

Truckloads of military and police personnel were being dispatched to reinforce the 675 kilometre (420 miles) frontier, according to an AFP report.

"We have tightened security at the borders, there should be no worry at all," the news agency quotes military spokesman Bogita Ongeru as saying. "We are all aware of what happened in Uganda, we are very much alert. Kenyans should not be worried at all; we are very vigilant at the borders. We have secured the borders," he said.

Abnormal activity

And, the country's deputy police spokesman appealed to Kenyans around the country to be equally vigilant and report any abnormal activity to police.

"We know we are vulnerable and we should take all precautions. People should, however, be rest assured that there is enough security but they should alert police in case they notice something that is not normal," he said.

The deputy police spokesman said that security agents are alert and prepared for anything with fully fledged teams working 24 hours to monitor the country's sea, air and land routes.

He, however, noted that Kenya has been supportive of its troubled neighbours by offering refuge to those who flee fighting especially from Somalia.

"We have a good relationship with our neighbors. It is our country that has been supportive of the people of Somalia. We have hosted them in refugee camps and those seeking asylum have stayed here," Mr Wahong'o said.

Kenyan Anti Terrorism Police Unit detectives have on several occasions arrested and detained people on suspicion of involvement in terror activities.

The country has twice suffered terror attacks, the first of the US embassy in Nairobi on August 7, 1998 and the second twin attacks in Paradise hotel in Kikambala, Mombasa and an Israeli chartered flight at Moi International airport.

Sudan: Darfur - ICC Charges Sudanese President with Genocide

10 July 2010: BBC Africa

The International Criminal Court (ICC) today issued a second arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, adding genocide to the list of charges for crimes he has allegedly committed in the war-ravaged Darfur region.

The Court's pre-trial chamber said that there are reasonable grounds to believe Mr. al-Bashir is responsible for three counts of genocide against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups, including genocide by killing; genocide by causing serious bodily or mental harm; and genocide by deliberately inflicting conditions of life meant to destroy each target group.

In March 2009 the Sudanese leader became the first sitting head of State to be indicted by the Court, which charged him with two counts of war crimes and five counts of crimes against humanity.

But the ICC's pre-trial chamber at that time rejected Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo's application to charge Mr. al-Bashir with genocide, ruling that there was insufficient evidence.

In February, the appeals chamber called for adding the charge of genocide to be reconsidered, finding the standard of proof set by the pre-trial chamber to be too demanding at the arrest warrant stage, amounting to an "error of law."

The arrest warrant issued today for Mr. al-Bashir does not replace or revoke last year's, which remains in effect.

The United Nations estimates that 300,000 people have been killed and another 2.7 million forced from their homes since fighting erupted in 2003 in Darfur, pitting rebels against Government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen. All sides are accused of serious human rights violations.

In May, the ICC's judges referred Sudan's lack of cooperation in failing to arrest the Mr. al-Bashir and other indictees - including Ahmad Harun, a former national government minister of the interior - to the Security Council.

Although Sudan is not a State Party to the Rome Statute that set up the ICC, it is obliged to "cooperate fully with and provide any necessary assistance to the court and the prosecutor" in accordance with a Council resolution adopted in 2005.

The ICC is a permanent court based in The Hague in the Netherlands and tries people accused of the most serious international offences, such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Other than Darfur, the ICC currently has investigations open in four situations: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), northern Uganda, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Kenya.

Sudan: South Sudan Groups Press for Timely Referendum

11 July 2010: Lucas Barasa

Civil society groups in Southern Sudan have organised demonstrations on the ninth of every month to push for the referendum slated for January to be held on time.

Through a group, Countdown to Southern Sudan Referendum, they accuse the Khartoum Government of wanting to delay the historic self-determination referendum by failing to swear in the Referendum Commission to start its work and begin registration of eligible voters.

Addressing journalists in Nairobi, the group headed by former Government of South Sudan Liaison Officer to Kenya John Andruga Duku wants the international community to pressurize the Khartoum government to put all the measures in place for the poll that could result to the formation Africa's 53rd state.

"The international community should go beyond just making statements and take Khartoum to task to expedite the process. We want the referendum to take place on time and be credible. To us it is a matter of life and death as it cannot

be repeated. We must get it right as any mistake will be expensive to all of us," Mr Andruga said.

Accompanied by official Jervasio Okot, Mr Andruga said recent April elections where he said President Omar Bashir got less than 10 percent of votes in Southern Sudan although his campaign platform was unity, showed residents were ready to secede.

"The allegations that Southern Sudan is not prepared to become independent and govern it is nonsense. The same was said about Rwanda after genocide that it would have cycle of killings but it has now progressed in terms of development," Mr Andruga said.

During the demonstrations to be held in whole of South Sudan, Mr Andruga said, locals would push holding of civic education about the referendum, for the polls to hold not later or before January 9, 2011 as stipulated in Comprehensive Peace Agreement and that the international community respects the outcome regardless of whether people vote for secession or unity.

"We will further demand for immediate swearing in of Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and a date for registration of eligible voters set. We will also appeal to international community to correct the mistakes of last elections by participating in the process of civic education, registration exercise and monitor the process," Mr Andruga said.

The ninth of every month was chosen for the protests as former Southern Sudan President John Garang died in plane crash on the July 9, just 21 days after he was sworn in.

Dr Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Movement\Army fought a 21 year war with Bashir's National Congress Party government which ended on January 9, 2005 following the a peace deal signed in Kenya.

Under the agreement, Southern Sudanese people were to decide whether to remain under united Sudan or secede. On Sunday, Mr Andruga said following the size of Southern Sudan which is equivalent to Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda combined and its poor infrastructure and inaccessibility of roads, "we feel there is no time to lose but to start civic education immediately."

Mr. Andruga's group has already launched campaigns in Nairobi, Juba, and Kampala and would soon be going to Ethiopia and South Africa.

"We strongly feel that in order for us to get the process move forward the international community should be present on the ground as observers to give credible outcome of referendum," Mr Andruga added.

He claimed that opponents of the region's secession were funding tribal militias so that it could appear that South Sudan could not govern itself.

The insecurity, he added, could also scare people from registering and participating in the referendum.

Mr Andruga said the East African Community member states including Kenya which chairs Inter-Governmental Authority on Development issues on Sudan should play a major role in ensuring the referendum succeeds and was done in a proper manner to avoid a return of chaos in Africa's biggest country.

He said the referendum would be the biggest thing in Africa after the football World Cup as it would greatly impact on future of the continent.

"For people of Southern Sudan unity means war, oppression, marginalization, slavery and genocide. Since independence unity has been forced to us who drove Sudan to two major wars. Anybody including the African Union and UN who are saying unity of Sudan be maintained are saying let war be in Sudan," Mr. Andruga said.

He said dispute between north and south Sudan over boundary should not be used to delay the referendum adding that the borders at independence in 1956 when south had three provinces should be used.

Sudan: Former War Crimes Prosecutor Expects Enforcement of Sudan Arrest Warrants

Peter Clotey: 12 July 2010

The former chief prosecutor for the U.N. War Crimes Tribunal for Sierra Leone said African countries have the political will to enforce the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir.

David Crane, professor of law at Syracuse University, told VOA he was impressed and encouraged by the positive response and contribution of African countries at a recent two-week conference that was held in Uganda's capital, Kampala.

The conference reviewed the Rome Statute focusing on the crime of aggression.

Professor Crane said there is a need for justice for the people of Darfur.

"The arrest warrant related to the genocide charge captures the entire event that took place in Darfur and the Sudan. It is important for justice that all of

the crimes that were committed in Darfur actually be charged so that the full truth can come out. So, I think this is a rounding out, a natural extension of what has taken place in Darfur,” Professor Crane said.

Professor Crane’s comments came after the Hague-based court issued another arrest warrant Monday against Mr. Bashir for the crime of genocide against the people of Darfur, a charge supporters of the Sudanese leader deny.

In a statement, the Hague-based court said, “there are reasonable grounds to believe him (Mr. Bashir) responsible for three counts of genocide committed against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups that include genocide by killing, genocide by causing serious bodily or mental harm and genocide by deliberately inflicting on each target group conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction.”

The ICC issued an international arrest warrant in March, 2009 against President Bashir over his alleged role in the Darfur conflict.

Judges of the court issued a warrant against President Bashir on seven counts, five for crimes against humanity, including murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture and rape and two for war crimes, including intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population or individual civilians, and pillaging. Supporters of the Sudanese leader have rejected all seven counts.

The international arrest warrant against the Sudanese leader makes President Bashir the first head of state to be charged by the ICC. But, Mr. Bashir described the warrant against him as “worthless.”

The United Nations estimates that 35,000 people have so far been killed in the Darfur conflict. But, Khartoum puts the death toll at only 10,000.

The Sudanese government is currently holding peace talks with the Darfur-based Liberty and Justice Movement in Qatar’s capital, Doha, aimed at reaching a peace deal by mid-July.

But, observers say the additional arrest warrant could undermine the ongoing talks. They also contend that the upcoming referendum scheduled for 9th January 2011 for residents in the semi-autonomous south Sudan could be derailed.

But, Professor Crane said, despite concerns, there is a need for justice for the people of Darfur.

“At this point in time, the politicians and diplomats will certainly be a bit concerned because it goes to the issue of peace versus justice. But, overall, at the end of the day, it has to be justice. We also have to account for all of the

crimes that are taking place in Darfur. So, the genocide charge must stand," Professor Crane said.

Sudan: Peacekeepers: 221 Killed in Sudan's Darfur in June

11 July 2010: VOA News

International peacekeepers said Sunday that 221 people have been killed in Sudan's volatile Darfur region in June.

The United Nations - African Union peacekeepers in Darfur said most of the deaths were due to inter-tribal clashes.

The death toll was significantly less than May, when nearly 600 people died in rebel and tribal fighting.

Darfur has experienced seven years of war and instability since rebels took up arms in 2003, accusing the government of neglecting the western region.

The United Nations says fighting and related violence have killed up to 300,000 people and displaced more than 2.7 million. Sudan puts the death toll at 10,000.

Sudan: Northern, Southern Sudan Meet to Discuss Referendum

10 July 2010: VOA News

Leaders from northern and southern Sudan are meeting to plan for a peaceful transition after next year's referendum that will determine if the south becomes an independent state.

The two sides began the discussions Saturday in Khartoum. Southern negotiator Pagan Amum said the talks are an opportunity for the two sides to strengthen their sometimes bitter relations.

The semi-autonomous south is scheduled to hold a referendum January 9 on whether to become an independent state. The vote was a key part of the 2005 agreement ending Sudan's north-south civil war.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has called for unity, but says he will accept the south's decision. Key issues like border demarcation, water rights, and distribution of oil revenues must still be worked out.

The oil-rich Abyei region holds a separate referendum January 9 on whether to be part of the north or the south.

Supporters of southern Sudanese independence held a rally Friday marking six months until the referendum. Hundreds of people gathered in the regional capital, Juba, to chant slogans and wave banners calling for separation from northern Sudan.

Southern Sudanese officials have accused the Bashir government of trying to stir up violence ahead of the referendum.