

16 January 2007

## **Bush, Ban Discuss Sudan**

By Scott Stearns

U.S. President George Bush and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met at the White House to discuss efforts to reform the world body. VOA White House Correspondent Scott Stearns reports, they also discussed continuing violence in Sudan's troubled Darfur region.

It was the new Secretary General's first official visit with President Bush, and the two men got right to work discussing the broad range of issues now facing U.N. members: Iraq, Iran, the Middle East, Somalia, Lebanon, and North Korea.

President Bush praised the Secretary General for working to end humanitarian suffering in Darfur where ethnic violence has killed an estimated 200,000 people and driven more than two million civilians from their homes.

"Mr. Secretary General I want to thank you for your commitment to help the suffering people of Darfur," said President Bush. "I wish you all the best as you work hard to convince the President of the Sudan that it is in his interest and in the world's interest that the allow enhanced African Union peacekeepers in to provide peace and security for people who are suffering."

President Bush has previously called for United Nations peacekeepers in Darfur, but Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir has rejected that idea.

Secretary General Ban will attend next week's African Union summit in Ethiopia where Darfur is expected to top the agenda.

The president and secretary general also discussed the need to reform some United Nations practices, including how the world body spends its money.

Speaking to reporters after his Oval Office meeting, Secretary General Ban said it is a reform effort that will require Washington's backing.

"The United Nations should change with much more efficiency and effectiveness and mobility and highest level of ethical standards," he said. "I am very much committed to carry out this reform."

Prosecutors in New York have indicted the former director of the United Nations oil-for-food program on charges of bribery and conspiracy to commit wire fraud. They also issued similar indictments against the brother-in-law of former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The oil-for-food program was established in 1996 to ease the civilian impact of sanctions placed against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait by allowing Baghdad to sell oil to pay for humanitarian goods. The program ended when Saddam Hussein was removed from power in 2003.

President Bush and Secretary General Ban discussed the president's new way forward in Iraq, which includes sending more than 20,000 additional U.S. troops to the conflict.

The Secretary General says what he calls the deteriorating situation in Iraq demands the urgent attention of the international community

"The international community should have all possible assistance to help Iraqi government and people to restore peace and stability and recover from economic devastation," he added.

In a speech to a Washington think tank later in the day, the Secretary General will lay out his vision for the year ahead.

He is expected to say that it will be a deeply taxing year dominated by the need to confront violence in Darfur. He will talk about working with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to end Middle East violence and the need to support democracy in Lebanon.

Secretary General Ban is also expected to say that there is a need to invigorate disarmament and non-proliferation efforts aimed at North Korea and Iran.

Copyright 2007  
Voice of America