

U.N. concerned by delays in peace bid for Sudan, South Sudan
By Michelle Nichols, Reuters
18 June 2012

(Reuters) - The U.N. Security Council expressed concern on Monday at delays by Sudan and South Sudan in implementing a resolution that threatened sanctions if the former civil war foes failed to halt fighting and resume talks on a string of disputes.

Sudan and South Sudan came close to war in April when border fighting escalated in the worst violence since Juba's secession in July. The 15-member Security Council was briefed on Friday by U.N. officials on compliance with the May 2 resolution.

The council passed the resolution after the African Union sought backing for its demand for Sudan and South Sudan to cease hostilities, withdraw troops from disputed areas and resume talks with the aim of resolving all outstanding disputes.

In a statement, the Security Council welcomed the resumption of talks last month between Khartoum and Juba and noted a reduction in border violence, but "expressed their strong concern about delays and stressed that important elements of the resolution remain unresolved by both parties."

"The members of the Security Council stressed the requirement that Sudan and South Sudan resolve all outstanding issues within the time frames laid out by the AU Roadmap and (U.N. Security Council) resolution," the statement said.

Sudan and South Sudan are at loggerheads over the position of their border, how much the landlocked south should pay to transport its oil through Sudan, and the division of national debt, among other issues.

The Security Council specifically said the parties had failed to abide by a demand in the resolution for aid access to the disputed Sudanese border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile and a negotiated settlement to be reached on the areas.

The council "reiterated their grave concern about the situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, especially the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation."

Khartoum accuses Juba of supporting rebels in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Juba denies the charge.

While the council again welcomed the withdrawal of security forces by both countries from another disputed border territory, Abyei, "they called on the government of Sudan to complete the withdrawal of its forces by redeploying all oil police."

South Sudan has accused its northern neighbor of keeping dozens of troops in the region dressed as oil police. Sudan seized Abyei a year ago after an attack on a military convoy, blamed by the United Nations on southern forces.