

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



A fishing trawler, with the Amistad ship in the background

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Wednesday, 24 September 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Awoko

Wednesday, 24 September 2008

Torture Trial Begins For Ex-Liberian Leader's Son

Jury selection begins this week in Miami in the torture trial of Liberian President Charles Taylor's son — the first test of a 1994 law that makes it a crime for U.S. citizens to commit human rights violations overseas.

Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr., also known as Charles McArthur Emmanuel, was born in Boston in 1977. When his father took power in Liberia in 1997, Taylor followed and became the head of the paramilitary Anti-Terrorist Unit, or "Demon Forces," which became notorious for abuses against civilians.

Elise Keppler, senior counsel with Human Rights Watch, says the landmark case is important not just for Liberia, but for the United States.

"This trial is very significant in sending a signal that the U.S. government is looking to ensure that alleged perpetrators do not escape justice for torture when committed abroad," Keppler says. "But what we'll be looking for is that this law is

applied much more actively in the future."

In 2006, federal authorities arrested Taylor as he tried to enter the U.S. from Trinidad a day after his father was arrested in Africa. He was initially held on a passport violation, but was later charged with torturing at least seven people in Liberia.

Taylor, 31, is accused of ordering the summary execution of four men and taking a direct hand in the torture of several others, according to the indictment. He allegedly took part in beatings and used molten plastic, scalding water and electric shocks to torture his victims.

Some of those men are expected to be among the witnesses slated to testify against Taylor. They are likely to speak from behind screens or in some other manner that will protect them from possible retaliation.

Taylor's lawyer, Miguel Caridad, told the Associated Press that he intends to challenge the witnesses' credibility.

"Might they exaggerate or

fabricate torture at the hands of the defendant in order to seek and obtain asylum in the West?" Caridad says. "The question answers itself."

In pre-trial motions, Caridad also sought access to a classified list of interrogation techniques approved and used by the CIA, saying he believes that some of the acts his client is charged with are similar to interrogation techniques approved by the United States. U.S. District Judge Cecilia Altonaga denied the request.

If convicted of the charges, Taylor may face life in prison. His trial also marks one of the first times anyone has been prosecuted for human rights violations in Liberia during Charles Taylor's regime.

During that time — and the several years of civil war that preceded it — tens of thousands of Liberians fled the country.

Many took refuge in the United States. Maryland lawyer Mohamedu Jones

was among them.

"The particular allegations against Chuckie Taylor are just so heinous. A lot of folks that I've talked to are just simply pleased he's going to

have to answer for his alleged crimes," Jones says.

As Taylor's trial begins in Miami, his father is standing trial thousands of

miles away at a U.N. tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands. Charles Taylor is charged with committing war crimes in neighboring Sierra Leone during that country's civil war.

C.J. urges Judiciary to preserve integrity

BY ALHAJISAIDU KAMARA

The Chief Justice, Hon. Justice UmuHawa Tejan-Jalloh has admonished staff of the judiciary to focus on trends that may protect and preserve the integrity of the Judiciary Department.

She revealed that the incidence of staff delaying cases on grounds of soliciting bribes from litigants did not augur well for the image of the service. She was speaking at the official opening of the Judicial

Year which was climaxed with a Muslim prayer at the Freetown Central Mosque and Christian Thanksgiving Service at the Cathedral Church. Justice UmuHawa Tejan-Jalloh pointed out that the unacceptable factors have contributed in no small measure to effectively deny litigants of their constitutional rights of trial. Speaking on the theme Uniting to ensure Better Working Condition and the Success of the Judicial Re-

form, she said that to save the situation, the first approach should be the attitude of staff to work.

Justice Tejan-Jalloh expressed the desire for all to change their attitudes and work as if their lives depended on the service.

She called on the attention of the staff to avoid corrupt practices and said that it was regrettable that some went to the extent of posing as lawyers and duping the public.

As the third arm of government, she said, the judiciary has an obligation to serve the general public at all times with truth. She said that in recent years, the motion of access to justice had attracted increasing attention, particularly in judicial reforms, adding that the proceeds of judicial reforms worldwide had strengthened the judiciary's role in enhancing transparency and accountability.

BBC World Service Trust
September 23 Script

Report From The Hague

By Joseph Cheeseman

The Former Radio France International Correspondent, now Professor of African Studies at the Duke University, Stephen Smith has ended his testimonies in The Hague with Taylor's defence team pointing fingers to other groups they claimed illegally intervened in the Sierra Leone conflict. The Defence Team also provided justification for the birth of Taylor's National Patriotic Front, NPFL and the uprising which led to President Samuel Doe's death. Joseph Cheeseman reports from The Hague.

CHEESEMAN: Taylor's Lawyer, Terry Munyard directed the court's attention to an article written in the Newsletter, Africa Confidential naming Sandline, a British Security Firm and the Executive Outcome of South Africa as the two alleged mercenary groups that intervened illegally in the Sierra Leone's conflict.

The Defence Lawyers alleged members of Executive Outcome and Sandline had the desire to exploit Sierra Leone's diamonds.

Mr. Charles Taylor, the client of the defence team is accused of aiding the RUF with arms and fighters to launch a rebel war in Sierra Leone which lasted more than a decade.

The Defence Team also provided justification for the uprising launched by Charles Taylor's NPFL against Former Liberian President, Samuel Doe's Government. Defence Lawyer Terry Munyard read to the witness an Africa Confidential article accusing Former Liberian President Samuel Doe of embezzling huge sum of money from international aid to Liberia.

MUNYARD: It's right, isn't it, that the (indistinct) invasion of Liberia arose in the context of huge popular dissent towards the government?

SMITH: This is perfectly correct, as it is correct to say that usually when a government in Africa is overthrown there is huge enthusiasm that usually, and I know that I generalize, doesn't last very long.

MUNYARD: A revolution led by someone, and it happened to be Charles Taylor, was almost bound to happen, would you agree?

SMITH: I would agree that under the prevailing circumstances it wouldn't come as a huge surprise, yes.

Professor Stephen Smith, the prosecution 42nd witness also quickly pointed out in his response that Charles Taylor too was accused of embezzling nearly one million dollars.

On re-direct examination, Prosecution Lawyer, Mohammed Bangura reviewed the witness' coverage of the civil wars in the Liberia and Sierra Leone. Mr. Bangura asked the witness to do a comparative analysis of the terrors that took place in the two neighbouring countries. Mr. Smith started with the shooting of a man in Monrovia by Taylor's NPFL.

SMITH: Not speaking the correct language that was expected from him, he was shot right in front of us journalists and photographers. Obviously for no reason at all he got shot, and things like this happened almost every day in Liberia, so there was outright terror. The idiom of terror that was used to express or to convey political messages in Sierra Leone became world wide know as (indistinct) amputations. In Sierra

Leone this specific uprising took the form of using the human body in sort of bio-politics to convey political messages that were messages of terror.

CHEESEMAN: The prosecution 43rd witness took the stand Tuesday afternoon and testified to the execution of six civilians by both AFRC and RUF. Mr. Adesanya Hyde, an Assistant Superintendent of Police in Sierra Leone also testified to the killing of 42 police officers by the Civil Defence Force known as Kamajors. The Kamajors were loyal to the government of Former Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabba. Mr. Hyde previously testified in the RUF trial in Freetown, so his previous testimonies were only handed to the defence team for cross-examination.

UN News Service (New York)

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

Sierra Leonean Refugees Move to New Homes After UN-Funded Repairs

Sixteen refugee families living in Liberia now have a place to call home thanks to the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which funded the rehabilitation of 32 houses for Sierra Leoneans who cannot go back to their homeland or are unwilling to repatriate.

During the height of Sierra Leone's civil conflict as many as two million of the country's six million citizens were displaced with some 490,000 fleeing to Liberia and Guinea.

With UNHCR's help more than 179,000 Sierra Leonean refugees returned home voluntarily between September 2000 and July 2004, while many others returned by their own means.

The renovations are part of a process to locally integrate some 3,500 Sierra Leonean refugees living in camps in Liberia. The first batch of 118 people moved into their new homes in Bensonville in Montserrado County last weekend, after making the 60-kilometre journey from the Banjor and Samukai camps.

Welcoming the group to their new community, UNHCR Senior Protection Officer Sharon Cooper told the Sierra Leoneans to no longer consider themselves as refugees. She said they were now on the road to becoming permanent Liberian citizens and should work in harmony with locals to develop their new community.

As part of the local integration process, a further 110 houses are under construction, including 50 in Bensonville and 60 in the nearby town of Memeh.

Last June, the agency announced that as of 31 December Sierra Leoneans who fled their country in the 1990s will no longer be considered refugees since the root causes of the refugee problem in their homeland no longer exist.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
23 September 2008

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

Newspaper Summary

OPIC Approves US\$112m loan for Electricity in Liberia

(Informer, The Analyst, Heritage, Daily Observer, The Inquirer)

- The media reports that Buchanan Renewables B.V. has announced that the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) approved a loan of up to US\$112,000,000 to Buchanan's subsidiary in Liberia, Buchanan Renewables (Monrovia) Power, Inc. for a 35-megawatt independent biomass power project that will provide electricity from renewable sources to Monrovia, Liberia and its surrounding area. The approval of the loan by OPIC is a key towards enabling planned construction to begin by January 2009.
- It comes two months after an agreement was signed between Buchanan and the Liberian Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, which provided the basic terms for the concession agreement with the Government of Liberia and the power purchase agreement with the Liberian Electricity Corporation. Buchanan plans to construct the 35-megawatt power generation near Kakata in Margibi County. The power plant will be fueled with woodchips from Liberian rubber trees that are beyond their useful life and must be removed to make way for new and productive rubber trees.

Police on Alert for Disgruntled Demonstrators

(New Democrat)

- Police say they remain on alert for disgruntled ex-military and security officers repeating demands that the government owes them benefits and therefore vowing street protests. Following reports they were preparing to demonstrate, security officials intervened and brought the situation under control. In a release, the disbanded security officers claimed Government has again agreed to settle their claimed arrears.
- But the Ministry of Justice, in a release, warned that it would not tolerate the disruption of peace from any quarters. The ex-security men have been in a seesaw battle with government for over a year now claiming benefits allegedly owed them. They claim their benefits for retirement have not been paid, but government has claimed the contrary.

"Cocaine Was Destroyed and Burnt" - First State Witness Says

(The Analyst, The Inquirer, Daily Observer, Heritage, National Chronicle)

- The government's first witness in the US\$500 million drugs case, yesterday, September 22, 2008, testified that 92 barrels of cocaine, reportedly burnt by State securities, were found with the nine Ghanaians who have been indicted for drugs trafficking.
- Sumo Akoi, a staff from the Criminal Investigation Division of the LNP Drugs Section told Criminal Court "C" that the 92 barrels that were destroyed or burnt were found in their possession and they were charged and sent to court for violation of section 41.23 of the Revised Penal of the Public Health Law of Liberia." On January 29, 2008, the nine Ghanaians were arrested with half a billion United States Dollars worth of cocaine.
- The cocaine suspects were indicted on September 9, 2008 by a grand jury in Montserrado County but were later released on a LD\$3,000 bail by the former assigned Judge Milton Taylor of the Monrovia City Court. The trial continued today with a cross examination of witness Akoi, as prosecution has already prayed the court to proceed with the trial because it

is ready to prosecute said case with both witnesses and materials as evidence against the defendants.

Central Bank Moves to Strengthen Banking System

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer)

- The Central Bank of Liberia(CBL) has announced a number of measures for reform, which it says are intended to strengthen and restore confidence in the banking sector of the country. A Liberian government official gazette published recently, said the CBL, pursuant to its authority under the Financial Institutions Act (FIA), of 1999, and its mandate under the CBL, Act of 1999, specifically consistent with section 39 of the Financial Institutions Act, which concern cooperate governance for financial institutions, is pursuant to the bank's policy statement which, it said was made available to the public earlier this year.
- According to the CBL, the regulation accentuates the obligation of the Board of Directors of banks operating in the country to establish adequate corporate governance practices to ensure the soundness and the integrity of the banking sector.

Senator Indicted for Aggravated Assault

(National Chronicle, The News, Heritage)

- Grand Bassa County Senator Nathaniel Innis has been finally been indicted for aggravated assault. He was indicted Monday by the grand jury of Montserrado County sitting at the Criminal Court "A" at the Temple of Justice in Monrovia. The Senator was accused this year of allegedly brutalizing his niece who, he claimed, was causing noise in the vicinity in which he lived. But the girl's mother denied the allegation saying her daughter was severely flogged by the Senator and that the girl sustained bruises on her body.
- The Grand Bassa County Legislator blamed the media for fuelling what he termed as a "family matter". Senator Innis indictment was read yesterday in his absence at the Criminal Court based on a true bail from the grand jury of Montserrado County. It can be recalled, in the aftermath of the girl's flogging, the Grand Bassa County Senator blamed "satan and the devil" for brutalizing the girl.

Kiteabo Citizens, Maryland Wood Company in Legal Battle

(The News)

- Citizens of Kiteabo District in Maryland County have reportedly filed a petition to the 15th Judicial Circuit Court in River Gee County to nullify a 20-year forest lease agreement between them and the Maryland Wood Processing Industry. In their petition the Kiteabo citizens want the court to cancel the agreement because the company has failed to adhere to its terms. The petitioners indicated that they signed a 20-year lease agreement with the company on January 1, 1998 for the company to exploit their forest, provide employment opportunities for the citizens and undertake other infrastructural development in the district.
- As part of the 20 years agreement, the citizens argued the that company should have paid L\$20,000 and US\$3,000 as rental fees for the first five years of the agreement but noted that since 2003 the company has failed to live up to the terms and stipulation of the agreement. The citizens claimed that the company has cut down over 60,000 cubic meters of logs and has not undertaken development projects that were part of the agreement.

Sierra Leoneans Receive Housing Village ...Over 2,000 Integrated

(Daily Observer)

- Sierra Leoneans who fled their homeland amid war in the 90s and sought refuge in Liberia have been provided a housing village. Over 2,000 Sierra Leoneans who opted to stay in Liberia and be integrated in the local community over the weekend had the housing units turned over to them. The Daily Observer reports that though it was not able to get the project cost, the venture was through the joint effort of the Liberian Government, the Liberia

Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR).

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 9:00 am)*

Buchanan Renewables gets US\$112m loan to supply electricity in Liberia

- The Overseas Board of Buchanan Renewables stationed in Grand Bassa County has approved a loan of US\$112m for the company's operations in Liberia.
- The Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, OPIC, said the loan is intended for the company's biomass project.
- The Vice President of OPIC, Mr. Jim Polan said Buchanan Renewables would build a 50-megawatt that will provide electricity to Monrovia and its surrounding areas.
- Under the funding, Buchanan plans to construct a 35-megawatt power generation plant near Kakata in Margibi County.
- The power plant will be fueled with wood chips from Liberian rubber trees that are beyond their useful life and must be removed to make way for re-planting.
- According to Mr. Polan, the approval reflects the quality of this project and its potential contribution to the economic recovery of Liberia.
- He said OPIC has identified Liberia as one of its highest priorities because of the great strides it has made to restoring democracy after a prolonged civil war.
- President Johnson-Sirleaf welcomed the loan for Buchanan Renewables and repeated the need for the speedy implementation of the project.
- The President reminded officials of the company in the United States that in all that we do, time factor remains crucial.

(Also reported on Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Former RFI , Reuters correspondent testifies against Taylor

- A former correspondent of Radio France International and Reuters has taken the stand against former detained President, Charles Taylor in The Hague.
- Mr. Stephen Smith said he was humiliated by Taylor's forces in 1990, and later expelled from Liberia by Taylor himself.
- Mr. Smith told the court he covered all sides of the Liberian Civil war from Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor and then to Prince Johnson.
- Mr. Smith is now a professor at the Duke University in America.
- The American Professor said the Sierra Leone civil war was an offspring of the Liberian Civil war.
- Mr. Smith interviewed the accused former Liberian President in Paris in November 2000.
- He said Mr. Taylor in that interview described the Sierra Leone Civil war as a war for diamonds.
- The retired journalist told the court Mr. Taylor blamed the war on the British's desire for diamonds.

UN News Service (New York)

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

UN Blue Helmets Help Spur Recent Progress, General Assembly Hears

The presence of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Liberia has been critical to the West African country's progress in revitalizing its economy, rebuilding basic infrastructure, tackling corruption and consolidating peace and security after years of civil war, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf told the General Assembly today.

Addressing the opening day of the Assembly's annual high-level debate, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf - the first democratically elected woman head of State in Africa - said the economic, political and social gains posted by Liberia since the war ended in 2003 are "truly a success story for a country coming out of so much destruction in so short a time."

She noted that Liberian gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 9 per cent last year, numerous schools and health clinics are re-opening or being built, and the once-despised security forces are rapidly modernizing.

Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf said that while the country's people deserved credit for these advances, the support of the international community, led by the UN, has also been vital.

She urged UN Member States to support the continuing mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission, known as UNMIL, "until the peace is properly consolidated, thereby removing the threat of the country relapsing into conflict again as some others before Liberia have experienced."

UNMIL was established by the Security Council in September 2003 to support the implementation of that year's ceasefire agreement, and the President said the ongoing presence of around 11,000 blue helmets contributes to national economic growth by signalling that peace is guaranteed.

"The presence of the UN Mission in Liberia has given hope to the people not to surrender to the threat to peace and development that are represented by the large percentage of unemployed youth who cannot be absorbed by an economy still too weak, in spite of the recorded growth; the large number of ex-combatants who were not properly re-integrated into society; and the resultant armed robberies and drug and arms-related crimes," the President said.

The current mandate of UNMIL, which had nearly 13,000 troops, police officers and military observers in place as of the end of July, expires on 30 September.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

Ex-child fighter explains cannibalism in ULIMO-K

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

A former child fighter has given account how fighters of the defunct ULIMO-K faction slaughtered and ate eight civilians in Lofa County in 1993.

The ex-child soldier told the truth commission following the group's capture of the area, the fighters divided the civilians into two groups and sent them to go hunt.

He recalled the civilians returned from the forest with only one group bringing animals to the fighters.

The former fighter whose identity was concealed to ensure protection, explained the ULIMO-K fighters ordered the slaughter of the group that did not succeed.

He told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission the civilians including his brother were slaughtered and cooked for consumption.

The former child testified under theme: "Children And The Conflict In Liberia: What Does The Future Hold?"

It is aimed at understanding the impact of the conflict and transitional justice mechanisms on the development of Liberian children and their future.

The Monrovia hearing brings to four regional public hearings for children and panel discussions between the commissioners and children.

The Inquirer

Monday, 22nd September 2008

Ex-Taylor Government Child Combatant Recounts Experience

A child soldier of the former Charles Taylor government has explained stories of how he was conscripted as a combatant in 2003 and used as an executioner.

Now 14 years old, the ex child combatant, name withheld explained that at age 9 he was recruited along with other children by former government militia commander Roland Duo around their 72nd, Somalia Drive residence to become bodyguards.

According to a TRC release, he said they were used by Duo and other commanders to execute captives and to loot stores in and around the Monrovia.

The child soldier was testifying Friday at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia Thematic Hearing for Children in the south eastern city of Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County.

He recounted stories of how during one of their looting spree, another unit of government militiamen engaged them into a fire fight at a store in downtown Monrovia resulting into the killing of his friend.

The ex-child combatant recalled in 2003 how Mr. Duo cut off the private part in his presence of an alleged rebel LURD combatant who was brought from the frontline in Lofa County.

He said they were given narcotic drugs by the government commander and he regularly maltreated them when he thought they were not following instructions.

In collecting children's experiences of the war and during the hearing, special mechanisms were used to ensure the protection of children throughout the process, one of which was concealing their identities.

Another child witness, now 17 explained how in 2003 his father was mutilated and beheaded in his presence when he refused to be recruited into Taylor government militia in Greenville, Sinoe County.

He recounted that after his father was beheaded he was disembowel and his intestines used as string to mount a gate by the fighters.

With blood streaming from his father's lifeless head, he said, he was threatened by the fighters with death and commanded to carry the head around the town.

"They chop, chop my father all over his body and then they cut off his head. I was crying and crying and then the man said I should take the head.

Blood was coming from the head, but I took it because I was scared before they killed me. Then they opened his stomach and took off his intestine and they used it to make their gate," he said.

A female witness now 18 explained how in 2003 following the capture of Pleebo, Maryland County, a commander of the defunct MODEL rebel group forcibly took her from the abode of her parents at the age 13 and made her his wife.

She said the commander only identified as “Bullet Dancer” singled her out from a crowd of local inhabitants ordered to come out of their homes following the captured of the town and he carried her to his residence where he regularly had sexual intercourse with her.

She explained that attempts by her parents to reclaim her from the commander led to threats on their lives.

The hearing under theme: “Children And The Conflict In Liberia: What Does The Future Hold?” is aimed at understanding the impact of the conflict and transitional justice mechanisms on the development of Liberian children and their future.

Already the commission has conducted three regional public hearings for children and three panel discussions between the commissioners and children in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, Tubmanburg, Bomi County and Friday in Zwedru.

During the hearing in Zwedru several children who were direct victims of the Liberian conflict testified followed by a panel discussion with commissioners of the TRC.

The hearing brought together hundreds of students, local residents and child protection agencies.

Witnesses testifying were drawn from Maryland, Grand Kru, Sinoe, River Gee and Grand Gedeh Counties.

To conform to international standards and to achieve its objectives the commission has been organizing and holding the children hearings in collaboration with UNICEF and the National Child Protection Network (NCPN), a consortium of Child Protection Agencies (CPA).

The TRC was agreed upon in the August 2003 peace agreement and created by the TRC Act of 2005.

The TRC was established to “promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation,” and at the same time make it possible to hold perpetrators accountable for gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law that occurred in Liberia between January 1979 and October 2003.

Voice of America

Wednesday, 24 September 2008

Paris May Support a Freeze of ICC Indictment of Sudan President Bashir

By Peter Clottey
Washington, D.C.

A possible International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir took another turn after French President Nicholas Sarkozy reportedly said Paris might support freezing the indictment. President Sarkozy reportedly told the United Nations General Assembly yesterday (Tuesday) that his country would support freezing the possible ICC indictment if Khartoum radically changes its policies over the troubled Darfur region. This comes after the ICC chief prosecutor Louis Moreno Ocampo seeks support from the United Nations and the African Union to put Sudan's President on trial for war crimes.

There is, however, a growing debate at the United Nations over whether the Security Council should defer the Sudan probe. Fouead Hikmat is the project director for the Horn of Africa of the International Crisis group. He tells reporter Peter Clottey from the Sudanese capital, Khartoum that it was about time that Sudan's government changes its approach on the Darfur crisis.

"I think starting with a working assumption here in response to what President Sarkozy said today, I think the assumption is that the government of Sudan and in particular the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) that it needs radical change by first of all to agree to engage with the International Criminal Court, which is very, very important, otherwise if they do refuse to engage the International Criminal Court then there is no foundation for a radical change as far as the policies regarding the settlement in Darfur," Hikmat noted.

He said Paris' announcement should be a catalyst for the ruling party to change its stance on the Darfur crisis.

"I could understand that if we unpack the question of President Sarkozy, it means that first of all the NCP should accept and engage the International Criminal Court, that is to respond legally to it and in other words to try to create the conditions for a sustainable settlement of the conflict of Darfur, which then creates an argument to invoke article 16," he said.

Article 16 of the International Criminal Court's statute permits the United Nations Security Council to freeze ICC indictments for up to one year.

Hikmat said the Darfur crisis and its ensuing controversy about a possible indictment of Sudan's President Bashir is a complicated issue to deal with.

"I don't think it is a very straight forward issue like that because the issues are complex. And I always do believe that when problems are complex you can't solve them by simple solutions. By definition, I think the solutions have to be complex so that they can address the multiple layers and the multiple factors make that problem," Hikmat pointed out.

He said there was a need for enthusiasm and confidence building measures among all the stakeholders in the Darfur crisis.

"At the moment if the two parties are to negotiate and find a settlement to the problem of Darfur, this means that there has to be genuine willingness from the government and the rebel groups to sit round the table and to start to negotiate. Now, what constitutes that willingness because I don't think the situation now in Sudan is about the simple willingness just to express your willingness to say that I would like to sit with others and I'm willing to. Unfortunately, the deep mistrust that is there among all the parties... that would first have to be operationalized through positive mechanisms," he said.

Hikmat said if Khartoum is able to avoid possible ICC indictment it would bode well for the entire Horn of African region.

"I wish the government would be able to succeed in doing so because that would avert serious consequences to Sudan and also to the region because the issue at hand is stability within Sudan and also the regional stability," Hikmat noted.