

Egypt to chair UN peace initiative

Fri, 2021-02-05 00:40

CAIRO: Egypt has been elected to chair the 15th session of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for the first time, succeeding Canada, according to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

The election took place during an official commission meeting at the UN'S headquarters in New York.

Egypt's election to chair the session came after the UN African group chose the country to represent Africa, and follows its reelection as a member of the PBC with the highest number of votes in December 2020.

Mohammed Idris, Egypt's permanent representative to the UN, said that Egypt's election is the culmination of diplomatic efforts since the commission was founded in 2005.

The election demonstrates the international and African confidence in Egypt's ability to continue its effective contribution to strengthening the role of the peacebuilding system at the UN, he added.

Idris said that the meeting had witnessed a review of the priorities of the Egyptian chairing of the PBC, adding that the interventions of the committee members showed appreciation for Egypt's pioneering role in peace efforts.

Egypt's chairing committee will continue to work on mobilizing international support and attention to support peace initiatives in countries emerging from or affected by conflicts. Efforts will be based on the principle of national ownership and leadership, especially in Africa, which occupies the largest share of the committee's work program.

Egypt is keen to maximize the benefit from this advisory role to the Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, as well as the committee's role in building bridges and enhancing the consistency of roles within the UN system.

Idris said that the committee's role in researching options for providing adequate, sustainable and predictable financing for peace initiatives and programs is the most urgent challenge, especially in light of the coronavirus pandemic.



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Egypt says commercial routes that threaten Suez Canal will not affect revenues

[Yemeni government fights to alleviate impact of UN report on banking sector](#)

Fri, 2021-02-05 00:32

AL-MUKALLA: The internationally recognized government of Yemen will try to mitigate the impact of the latest UN report on the central bank's reputation and the country's banking system in general, a senior government official told Arab News.

"After reading the report, we feel concerned about the reputation of the central bank and the report's impact on currency rates, the citizens and the economy," the government official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters.

The UN panel of experts who monitor international sanctions in war-torn Yemen said in their latest report that the Aden-based Central Bank of Yemen misused millions of dollars from the Saudi deposit meant for buying food and diverted millions of dollars to a group of local traders.

On Wednesday, Yemeni government officials held a virtual meeting with members of the UN panel with the aim of correcting some points in their report, the official news agency SABA reported.

The Yemeni officials told the UN experts that their report included "inaccurate information and conclusions" about the disbursement of the Saudi deposit, reprimanding the UN officials for not meeting the relevant Yemeni authorities before releasing the report, SABA said.

The central bank officials also held another virtual meeting with the UN experts for the same purpose. During the meeting, the bank's officials voiced reservations about corruption and money laundering accusations that were included in the report, and demanded the UN experts correct any misinformation.

According to official media, both sides agreed to hold more meetings and review the report based on the responses and clarifications from the Yemeni side.

In an eight-page report seen by Arab News, the central bank said that several Yemeni and Saudi institutes were aware of the bank's "transparent" procedures for spending the Saudi deposit, adding that the bank was forced into giving some "incentives" to local traders to boost their trust in the central bank.

The bank noted that the Iran-backed Houthis banned banks in areas under their control from dealing with the Saudi deposit and imposed taxes on essential commodities that crossed into their territories from government-controlled areas, which pushed up their prices.

"All financial transactions that took place from the Saudi deposit were based on a clear, transparent and fair mechanism that applied all foreign banking and trade standards," according to the bank's report.

Headed by the chairman of the Arab Parliament Economic Commission, Insaf Mayo, the Yemeni parliament recently formed a committee of several Yemeni economists to investigate UN corruption allegations about the central bank in Aden.

At the same time, Yemen's government has said that the World Bank allocated \$20 million for repairing roads and basic infrastructures across Yemen.

According to the official news agency, the dean of executive directors board of the World Bank Group, Merza Hasan, told Yemeni minister of planning, Waed Bathib, that the World Bank would support the Yemeni central bank and the banking system in Yemen by disbursing the WB's grants through the central bank in Aden.



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Yemen Central Bank denies UN accusations of money-laundering, corruption
Yemen central bank shuts firms linked to currency crash

[Sudan appoints key rebel leaders to interim government](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-02-04 23:14

CAIRO: Sudan has appointed three representatives of armed rebel groups to top posts in the country's interim government as part of a peace deal signed last year, the state news agency reported Thursday.

Sudan is transitioning to democratic rule after a mass uprising forced the military to remove longtime dictator Omar Al-Bashir in 2019 and trying to quell years of conflict in its rebellious regions.

The country's governing body, the Sovereign Council, said in a statement released by Sudan's state news agency that it had appointed Alhadi Idris Yehia, a leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement, Malik Agar, head of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North faction in the Blue Nile state, and Al-Taher Abu Bakr Hagar, president of Sudan Liberation Forces, as new members.

All fall under the umbrella of the larger Sudan Revolutionary Front, an alliance of armed groups centered in the western Darfur, South Kordofan and

Blue Nile regions with whom the government signed a peace deal last year. The three rebel leaders will be joining the other 11 members of the ruling Sovereign Council, formed in 2019 following a power-sharing agreement between military commanders and civilian protesters, who spearheaded the five-month-long uprising that led to Al-Bashir's ouster. Reaching a negotiated settlement with rebels in Sudan's far-flung provinces has been a crucial goal for the transitional government. The deal was hailed as step toward reviving Sudan's battered economy and rejoining the international community after years of isolation. But the government failed to reach similar peace pacts with two other key armed factions, including Sudan's largest single rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement-North led by Abdel-Aziz Al-Hilu, and the Sudan Liberation Movement- Army, which is led by Abdel-Wahid Nour. The peace deal, signed in October in Juba after months of negotiations, granted self-rule for the southern provinces of Blue Nile, South Kordofan and West Kordofan and stipulated that that rebel forces should be integrated into Sudan's armed forces. Under the same deal, rebels were also promised cabinet positions and 75 legislative seats in a yet-to-be-formed transitional parliament. A cabinet reshuffle is expected to be announced next week, the state's official news agency SUNA reported late Wednesday.



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Reports of an 'Israeli aggression' south of Syria's Quneitra

Wed, 2021-02-03 23:57

CAIRO: Syria's air defense systems confronted Israeli missiles in the southern region late on Wednesday, state news agency SANA said. The Israeli military declined to comment. State media said the "Israeli aggression" targeted the southern region of Quneitra.



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Syrian monitor says Iran continues military recruitment operations

Sisi bid to end Lebanon crisis

Author:

Wed, 2021-02-03 23:01

CAIRO/BEIRUT: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi launched an effort on Wednesday to end the political stalemate that has left Lebanon without a government for six months.

El-Sisi held talks in Cairo with Saad Hariri, who was named prime minister last year after the previous administration quit following the Beirut port explosion. Hariri has been unable to appoint a cabinet because of squabbling over the distribution of ministerial portfolios among Lebanon's sectarian factions.

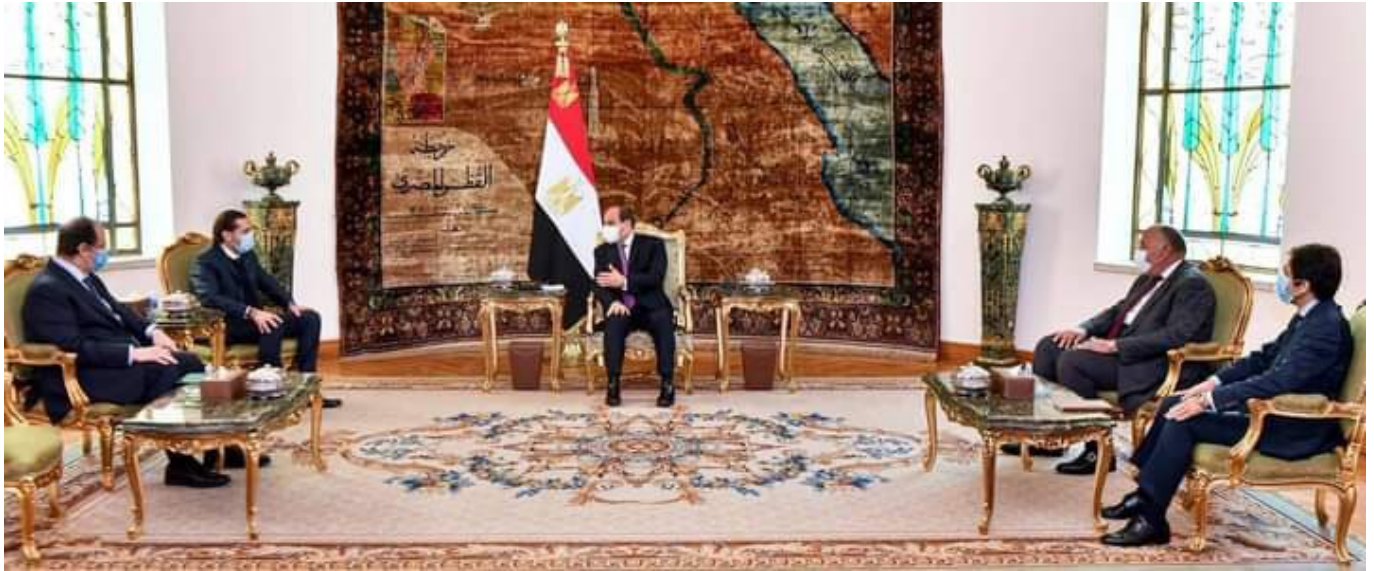
"In order to pull Lebanon out from its crisis, all political leaders must put the national interest first, settle their disputes and form an independent government," El-Sisi said.

His spokesman Bassam Radi added: "President El-Sisi ... wishes Hariri to form a new government that meets the aspirations of the Lebanese people. Egypt is ready to provide support and aid for Lebanon to overcome the crises, especially those created by the Beirut blast and the coronavirus."

Hariri will now visit Paris for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, who has proposed a non-sectarian Lebanese government of experts and technocrats to launch political and economic reforms.

Former MP Mustafa Allouch, a member of the Future Movement led by Hariri, told Arab News attempts to form a government were being blocked by Gebran Bassil, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement. "There is an explicit insistence ... on including members of the FPM in the new government, and a total rejection of independents."

He said Hariri "does not mind making concessions if this would lead to an effective government, but the government Bassil has in mind will be worse than all the ones before."



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Hariri urges Arabs: 'Do not give up on Lebanon' El-Sisi warns Arab intelligence officials over 'foreign intervention'