

The Security Council is determined to ensure there is no impunity for anyone who has committed war crimes or crimes against humanity in Sudan's Darfur region, its President for February said today as he announced that the situation in Africa's largest country will be the focus of at least two Council meetings this month.

.Ambassador Joel W. Adechi of Benin, which holds the rotating presidency for this month, told reporters at a briefing that the 15-member body wants to deal with the situation in an "internationally recognized way."

.The panel also concluded that rebel forces in Darfur were responsible for possible war crimes, including murder of civilians and pillage, and recommended that the Council refer its dossier on the crimes to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Tens of thousands of people have been killed and up to 1.85 million others are internally displaced or have fled to neighbouring Chad since the conflict flared in early 2003.

Speaking to reporters today at UN Headquarters, Secretary-General Kofi Annan reiterated his support for the ICC option and for quick and decisive action by the Council. He also stressed that sanctions against the Khartoum Government must remain on the table.

.The Council will hold at least two meetings and possibly a third on Sudan this month, focusing on both the situation in Darfur - where violent clashes have been reported this week.

Jan Pronk, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Sudan, will brief the Council this Friday and again at a separate meeting next Tuesday on the proposal for the peace-support mission. Sudanese Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha and John Garang, leader of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), may brief the second meeting, along with representatives of the African Union.

Mr. Adechi said Council members could hold a third meeting on Sudan, this time focusing on the contents of the genocide inquiry report, as early as late next week.

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