

# Post-conflict south Sudan appeals for foreign investment

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**NAIROBI -- The government of south Sudan on Tuesday appealed for foreign investments to spur growth in the region that is struggling to emerge from more than two decades of conflict, officials said.**

"Despite our history of war, investors should not be over-cautious when bringing their monies to our country," south Sudan's energy and mining minister Albino Akol Akol told an investor conference in Nairobi.

"We have been creating investment framework, which will see us having laws being brought to the international standards," Akol said.

He made the appeal a day after the oil-rich Gulf emirate of Kuwait became the first Arab country to invest in south Sudan, pledging to build a port along River Nile worth \$70 million (€59 million), a five-star hotel in Juba, expected to be the first in the region at an estimated cost of \$40 million and to start up a \$10-million fisheries industry.

The south Sudan conflict with Khartoum government, which ended with the signing of a peace agreement in January 2005, opened up opportunities to develop one of the world's poorest region, but rich in natural resources.

The war, which erupted in 1983, claimed 1.5 million people and displaced 4 million others.

After an international donor conference last year, an estimated \$4.5 billion was pledged in aid for the region over the next three years as foreign investors scrambled for opportunities in several sectors.

Donors have now threatened to withhold development funds pending the resolution of a separate conflict in Darfur, where around 300,000 people have been killed and 2 million others displaced since fighting erupted there in February 2003.

However, the Arab League, anxious about the prospect of a break-up of a member state when southerners vote in a referendum at the end of a six-year interim period that commenced in July 2005, has been encouraging its members to assist.

The 22-member body says that response has been negligible so far and only a handful have put money into a special Arab League fund for south Sudan, earmarked for development projects aimed at making "unity attractive" come referendum day.

Egypt has floated the idea of opening a branch of its Alexandria University in Juba, the capital of south Sudan, and carrying out water and electricity projects that have yet to materialize while state-run Kenya Commercial Bank is working on details to open a branch the region

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