

Sudan**US to lift sanctions on Sudan****fastFT**

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The US government has ended sanctions on Sudan after the north African country cut ties with North Korea.

A US state department representative said on Friday that the move, which will take effect October 12, was prompted by the “government of Sudan’s positive actions to maintain a cessation of hostilities in conflict areas in Sudan, improve humanitarian access throughout Sudan and maintain cooperation with the United States on addressing regional conflicts and the threat of terrorism.”

Nevertheless, “much more progress is needed” to achieve a sustainable peace and cooperate fully with the US on issues including human rights and making sure it implements the latest UN resolutions targetting North Korea.

“The United States will continue efforts to improve bilateral relations with Sudan,” state department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement. “Any further normalisation of ties will require continued progress by the government of Sudan.”

The US has been pushing to limit foreign engagement with North Korea as it attempts to starve Pyongyang of hard currency in an effort to curtail its nuclear ambitions and bring it to the negotiating table. Nevertheless, some human rights groups have opposed lifting the sanctions on Sudan.

Magnus Taylor, Sudan researcher for the International Crisis Group, said the lifting of US sanctions showed “Sudan is moving towards being reintegrated into the community of acceptable nations”.

“They’re on this ladder, albeit a low rung, but they are climbing.”

However, he said Washington’s move did not bring Khartoum in from the cold.

“There’s still going to be a stigma about doing business with Sudan while Omar al-

Bashir remains president. But Sudanese are feeling much more optimistic than they were, and rightly so.”

Mr Bashir was being helped “on his path towards normalisation” by the fact that there are “bigger fish to fry in the region”, notably Libya and South Sudan, Mr Taylor said.

“Western countries have realised there’s no possibility of any of the rebellions [in the country] succeeding or regime change so they need to work with Bashir.”

Mr Taylor said he did not think the lifting of US sanctions “would make a big difference to most people in the short term”, citing the ongoing “crippling lack of dollars” that handicaps many businesses.

“It’s a good achievement,” said Maowia Khalid, Sudan’s ambassador to the US. “It came through after a long tussle — we tried all different means. Lifting the sanctions is permanent but [US officials] are requesting that Sudan should sustain this longstanding commitment and we are looking forward to more cooperation and combating terrorism.”

Maddy Crowther at Waging Peace, one of a number of human rights groups who said they are disappointed the US had taken the step, noted that the conflict in Darfur continued.

“We didn’t think had achieved the pass grade,” she said. “We thought it was very wrongheaded to look at only offensive military activity between combatants rather than reprisal attacks against civilians,” she said, criticising the basis for the US lifting sanctions. “There needs to be proper democratic transformation extending freedoms without using threat of force to govern.”

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