The Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi arrived to Khartoum on Sunday on a two-day visit that will take him to South Sudan’s capital of Juba.

Jiechi’s discussions will likely focus on pressing the two countries on resolving the post-secession issues through the talks that have been dragging on without any breakthroughs.

China is mainly concerned about preserving stability in the newly split country for the sake of preserving its multi-billion dollar investments particularly in the oil sector.

The rising world power relied on Sudan as its sixth largest source of oil imports in 2010, and has been keen to build a relationship with leaders in the south, which became the world’s newest country last month.

Khartoum and Juba are at odds over how much should be assessed in fees for using the pipelines that transport the oil from the landlocked South Sudan to the Red Sea coastal city of Port Sudan.

This week Port Sudan authorities refused to allow an oil shipment to leave unless the South Sudan government pays custom fees. It was later released after South Sudan president Salva Kiir reportedly called his Northern counterpart Omer Hassan al-Bashir.

Khartoum has proposed at least $22.8 per barrel which was labeled as "daylight robbery" by Juba. The latter said afterwards that Sudan dropped this figure.

Last month, Sudan’s parliament approved an alternative 2011 budget that lawmakers said included an annual income of $2.6 billion for transit fees — the same amount expected for the loss of South Sudan’s oil production.

The Chinese top diplomat was quoted as saying by the government sponsored Sudanese Media Center (SMC) website that North and South Sudan "will lose the peace equation" by not cooperating on the joint and controversial issues.

He also affirmed that Beijing’s policy towards Khartoum will not change regardless of the pressures, internal and external variables adding that China will continue its support for infrastructure projects in the fields of economy and development.

On Darfur, Jiechi’s stressed that the ultimate solution to the conflict in the restive region lies in development and eliminating the causes of the conflict. He said that the recent Doha accord signed between the Sudanese government and one rebel group is an important achievement for the continuation of the peace and political process in Darfur with everybody’s will.

China has been one of the main backers of Sudan in recent years despite criticism from rights groups who allege that the Asian nation is turning a blind eye to gross human right violations committed by Khartoum. It recently received president Bashir who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on ten counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Darfur.

However some observers questioned whether China will remain as staunch in supporting Bashir’s government following the secession of the South which contains most of the oil reserves.

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