China is prepared to mediate between North and South Sudan in order to bridge difference in views regarding outstanding post-secession issues, a visiting official said today.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi speaks to the press as Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Karti (R) listens on following their meeting in Khartoum on August 8, 2011 (AFP)The Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi made the offer at the conclusion of his two-day visit which took him to Khartoum and Juba.

Sudanese foreign minister Ali Karti speaking to reporters along with Jiechi at Khartoum airport welcomed China’s initiative saying that Beijing is qualified to play this role given the acceptance and appreciation it enjoys from both sides.

This is the first visit by a senior Chinese official to the region since South Sudan became an independent state in early July. The people of Southern Sudan voted last January almost unanimously in favor of splitting from the North.

China owns multi-billion dollar investments in Sudan that are mainly concentrated in the oil sector. Sudan is one of China’s main oil suppliers.

The breakup of Sudan presents a dilemma for China as most of the oil reserves lie in the South while the pipelines, refineries and related infrastructure are in the North.

Khartoum and Juba are still negotiating the oil transit fees that should be assessed. Last week the North blocked an oil shipment belonging to the South and would not let it sail unless custom duties are paid. It was released a day later.

The Chinese top diplomat vowed to help both in developing their economies.

"Our two economies are there for each other and we want to see good cooperation in such areas like agriculture, infrastructure construction, oil production," Jiechi told reporters after meeting South Sudan President Salva Kiir.

"And we will give aid to the Sudanese people within our capacity to help uplift their living standards," he added, without being specific.

In an interview with South Sudan’s Al-Masier newspaper, posted on the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s website on Tuesday, Jiechi said his visit "gives testimony to the importance China attaches to cultivating friendship and cooperation with South Sudan".

He said that he conveyed an invitation from President Hu Jintao to Kiir to visit China in the near future.

Asked by Al-Masier how China would balance its relationship with the two, Jiechi said it has consistently supported and contributed to the peace process.

"We have always believed that the north and the south are interdependent, and we hope to see that - proceeding from the fundamental interests of their peoples and the stability of the region - they stick to the peace option and address the issues through dialogue," he said.

During the visit, Sudan and China signed an agreement for constructing of a railway line linking Sudan and Chad and Central African Republic (CAR).

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