

Assessment from the President's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

April 21, 2003

It has now been more than 19 months since I was appointed the Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, and was asked to explore whether the United States might play a useful role in bringing a just peace to that country. During that time, the United States has been actively engaged in an attempt to move the parties toward peace, with results that have been positive, although spotty and disappointingly slow.

On the day I was assigned to this mission, September 6, 2001, I stated that the United States would not develop its own peace plan for Sudan, as peace plans and even agreements have long abounded in that country. Rather, the United States would work with other interested countries in Africa and Europe, in an effort to perform a catalytic role. That is how we have proceeded. In addition to my four trips to Sudan, I have visited neighboring African countries and Europe, where I have found a consistent interest in working together to further the peace process.

The positive results in Sudan include the response of both sides to the four initial proposals we put forth in late 2002 to test their interest in moving toward peace:

1. In the Nuba Mountains, a ceasefire was initiated and has held, allowing humanitarian relief and the initial development of what had been one of the most war torn areas of the country, and providing a model of peace for the rest of Sudan.
2. A Civilian Protection and Monitoring Team (CPMT), under the leadership of a retired American general, was created to investigate alleged instances of military attacks on civilians. Recently, both sides have agreed to renew the mandate of the CPMT and allow an expansion of its capabilities.
3. An Eminent Persons group investigated the problem of slavery and forced abductions, contributing to a reduction in reports of these practices, though additional monitoring may be needed.
4. A "Days of Tranquility" program permitted the nationwide inoculation of the people of Sudan against Polio.

Subsequent to agreements on the four test initiatives, the parties commenced a round of negotiations under the exceptionally able leadership of Kenya's General Lazaro Sumbeiywo with the support of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), several European countries and the United States. These negotiations culminated in the Machakos Protocol, signed on July 20, 2002, in which the parties reached agreement on two issues at the heart of the conflict: the relationship between the state and religion and the right of self-determination by southern Sudanese.

Since signing the Machakos Protocol, the parties have held several rounds of talks on issues remaining between them. These issues include the nature of power sharing in a new government, with specific respect to wealth sharing, the status of sharia law in the capital, and the status of three areas in Central Sudan (Nuba, Southern Blue Nile and Abyei). These talks have narrowed several substantive gaps, but final agreements have not yet been made.

In October, 2002 the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the cessation of military hostilities and for unimpeded humanitarian access to the entire country. The parties renewed the Memorandum of Understanding in March, 2003 and signed an addendum outlining the pullback of troops to pre-October locations. However, as has been historically the case in Sudan, written commitments are periodically broken. Notwithstanding agreements to cease military hostilities, there have been instances of resumed fighting, primarily but not exclusively by the GOS, and restricted humanitarian access to parts of the country. It is my understanding that, recently, fighting has greatly diminished, and humanitarian access has improved throughout Sudan.

On April 2, 2003, President Bashir of Sudan and SPLM leader John Garang held a summit meeting under the auspices of Kenya's President Kibaki, the second face to face meeting of the two leaders during the current peace process. In the Communiqué issued after this meeting, the two leaders "jointly expressed hope on reaching a final peace agreement by the end of June, 2003." I believe that this statement represents the sincere hope of both President Bashir and Dr. Garang that the time for peace is at hand.

Further, I believe that the parties understand the issues, have discussed them sufficiently to close the remaining differences, and have ideas of how to maintain the support of their constituencies to complete and implement a final agreement.

At this point, I think it would be a tragedy for the United States to abandon the catalytic role it has played in the peace process, and I hope the Determination will state that the peace process does have a reasonable prospect for success. At the same time, I think that our own position should reflect the urgency with respect to time suggested in the Communiqué of President Bashir and Dr. Garang.

The next three months should be a time for the United States to intensify its efforts. In January, when I was last in the region, both sides asked that the United States be more forthcoming in advancing possible resolutions of the remaining issues. I responded, and I still believe, that we should work through General Sumbeiywo. He, in turn, told me that he would welcome our more specific suggestions for resolving the remaining issues.

Should the sides reach an agreement, it will be critical that the United States remain engaged to support the implementation of the terms of the accord. To that end, the United States will be expected to provide leadership among donors in providing a significant peace dividend to consolidate the peace through humanitarian and development assistance.

I think our position should be that the United States continues to want to be helpful, that time is of the essence, that we have no interest in endless discussions that stifle progress, that the United States will intensify its efforts in the next three months, and that the efficacy of our involvement will be determined by the two sides within that time frame.

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