

Southern Sudan Referendum Was Timely, Fair, Peaceful, Credible,

Chair of Monitoring Panel Tells Security Council

Abyei, Popular Consultations in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan States among Outstanding Tasks, Head of United Nations Mission Says

The conduct of the referendum in Southern Sudan had been timely, fair, peaceful and credible in a way that no one could have predicted just a few months ago, Benjamin Mkapa, Chair of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, said this morning as the Security Council heard briefings on the event, which took place between 9 and 15 January.

"I can report on behalf of the Panel that we are satisfied that the process so far was conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner that allowed the people of Southern Sudan to express their will freely," said Mr. Mkapa, whose briefing was followed by that of Haile Menkerios, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS).

Mr. Mkapa said that when his Panel had begun its work a mere three months ago, such a timely and smooth conduct of the polling had been hard to imagine. He credited its success to the dedication of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and its Bureau, as well as to the efforts of registration, polling and security officers. However, in order for the outcome to be sustainable, a number of outstanding post-referendum issues must be resolved, he stressed. In addition, the Panel urged authorities to make every effort to keep citizens informed of progress towards the final results, and called on the media, as well as political forces, to report responsibly on such progress.

Mr. Menkerios said the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission would announce preliminary results on 2 February, the final results on 7 February and any appeals on 14 February. Senior officials of the National Congress Party in Khartoum had already announced that the referendum would most probably meet the standards needed for its outcome to be recognized and accepted, he added.

He concurred that much remained to be done in the final six months of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement interim period, noting that the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel was mediating negotiations on post-referendum arrangements. It was to be hoped that the successful completion of the referendum would help the parties make the compromises required to resolve the status of Abyei and other pending issues, as well as accelerate "popular consultations" in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

He said incidents in northern Abyei on 7 and 8 January had culminated in a significant confrontation between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. UNMIS had been denied access to the area and

could not confirm the estimated 20 to 60 casualties, he said, but the Mission had moved quickly to prevent an escalation of violence through intervention with political leaders and increased patrolling on the ground. UNMIS had also increased the size of its military deployment in Abyei.

Mr. Menkerios welcomed statements of commitment by both parties to protect the rights of Southerners in the North and of Northerners in the South, as well as the recent decision by the Government of Southern Sudan to promote return and reintegration, and the signing of a framework ceasefire agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and rebel Southern factions. With the conclusion of the referendum, the North and South would need new constitutional arrangements, which represented an opportunity to engage relevant stakeholders and consolidate peace and stability. The United Nations and the rest of the international community would need to support the parties through the rest of the peace process, while helping to maintain peace and consolidate democracy and stability.

Following those briefings, Council members congratulated all those who had contributed to organizing the referendum and stressed its landmark importance, with Nigeria's representative saying it "opened a new vista for Africa as a whole". At the same time speakers stressed the magnitude of the work involved in completing implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and, urged all parties to follow through on the referendum process in a peaceful manner, respecting all their obligations and pursuing earnest negotiations in pursuit of a sustainable solution to all outstanding issues.

Most speakers also expressed deep concern over the continuing violence in Darfur, including recent attacks and the abduction of three workers under contract with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Most urged the reinvigoration of the Doha peace talks on Darfur, with the participation of all parties, including rebel factions. The representative of the United States strongly condemned all attacks on civilians, including aerial bombardments.

Sudan's representative said the success of the referendum reflected the support and wisdom of the Sudanese leadership, adding that the country should be proud. President Omer al-Bashir had expressed his commitment to respect the results and to assist Southern Sudan in the event it opted for secession, he noted, saying he also looked forward to international assistance to both parties in the event of secession, including cancellation of debt. Emphasizing that the clashes in Abyei involved two communities and not the Government and SPLA, he also lamented that the focus of the United Nations in Darfur was on denouncing what was happening there rather than on action to find a durable solution to the conflict. "You have the ability to urge the insurgent movement to come to the negotiating table," he said.

Also speaking today were representatives of the United Kingdom, Gabon, South Africa, Portugal, Brazil, China, India, Russian Federation, France, Lebanon, Germany, Colombia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The meeting began at 10:32 a.m. and ended at 12:26 p.m.

Background

Meeting this morning to consider the situation in Sudan, the Security Council heard briefings on the referendum conducted from 9 to 15 January.

Briefings

BENJAMIN MKAPA, Chair of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, said voting procedures had been properly followed overall, with polling centres generally opening on time, staff carrying out their work in accordance with established procedures and ballots counted in the presence of observers. "The Panel has so far found no evidence to suggest that there was any systematic or widespread attempt to undermine the polling process," he added.

"I can report on behalf of the Panel that we are satisfied that the process so far was conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner that allowed the people of Southern Sudan to express their will freely," he said. The Panel was now closely following the aggregation of results, as they were transmitted from nearly 3,000 referendum centres to county subcommittees and state high committees, and then to Juba and Khartoum, he said, adding that it was his understanding that any errors or fraud would be thoroughly investigated and any results tainted by verified cases of error or fraud dealt with appropriately.

A mere three months ago, such a timely and smooth conduct of polling would have been hard to imagine, the Chairperson said, crediting the dedication and work of the Commissioners and staff of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, its Bureau, as well as registration, polling and security officers. He also recognized the "courage and leadership" demonstrated by President Omer al-Bashir and First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

He cautioned, however, that for the outcome of the exercise to be sustainable, it was essential to resolve a number of outstanding post-referendum issues. The Panel had urged the authorities to make every effort to keep citizens informed of progress towards the final results. It had also called on the media and political forces to report on progress in a responsible manner. Noting the assurances given by leaders of both parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, he said: "The positive momentum achieved can only be sustained by further demonstration of goodwill and political commitment from both sides."

HAILE MENKERIOS, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan, said the referendum had concluded as planned, with no significant security incidents and observer missions having deemed the polling free and fair. The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission would announce preliminary results on 2 February, the final results on 7 February and any appeals on 14 February. Senior officials of the National Congress Party in Khartoum had already announced that the referendum would most probably meet the standards required for recognition and acceptance of the outcome, he added.

Much remained to be done in the final six months of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement interim period, he said, noting that the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel was mediating negotiations on post-referendum arrangements. Hopefully the successful completion of the referendum would bolster confidence between the two parties and help them make the compromises needed to resolve the future status of Abyei and accelerate the popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, among other pending issues.

Uncertainty over Abyei continued to threaten peace and stability on the ground and the area remained tense and volatile, he said, citing incidents in northern Abyei on 7 and 8 January that had culminated in

significant confrontation between Ngok Dinka police forces and Misseriya communities. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) had been denied access to the area and could not confirm the estimated 20 to 60 casualties. However, UNMIS had moved quickly to prevent any escalation of violence, through political intervention with political leaders and increased patrolling on the ground.

An inter-communal conference had been quickly organized in Kadugli to address immediate concerns over the impending migration of the Missiriya, he continued, noting that a subsequent governmental meeting had been held yesterday to address outstanding security needs in Abyei, returning internally displaced persons, Southerners living in the North and Northerners living in the South. The parties had agreed to bolster security in Abyei, completely disarm all communities in the region, escort returnees to safe destinations and ensure security and freedom of movement for migrants and their cattle through Abyei and southwards into other grazing areas in Southern Sudan.

He went on to say that UNMIS had increased the size of its military deployment in Abyei, as well as the number of military and civilian personnel patrolling the area, to deter further attacks. Such efforts to reduce tensions and prevent violence could help contain the situation, but the continued absence of a final settlement of Abyei's status left open the possibility of future clashes on the ground. "I call on all parties to redouble their efforts to settle the Abyei dispute and display the same leadership and courage they have displayed regarding the Southern Sudan referendum," he said, welcoming statements of commitment by both parties to protect the rights of Southerners in the North and vice versa, and the recent decision by the Government of Southern Sudan to promote return and reintegration.

The Special Representative also welcomed the signing of the framework ceasefire agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and dissident commander Lieutenant General George Athor. The implementation of promises made by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) during the October all-party conference would be similarly critical to the consolidation of Southern stability in the post-referendum environment, he said, emphasizing that UNMIS stood ready to assist that process.

Describing the popular consultations as a key final benchmark of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, he said they required clarity and attention from the parties. With the accord's conclusion, the North and South would need new constitutional arrangements, he said, adding that it represented an opportunity for them to engage relevant stakeholders and consolidate peace and stability. The United Nations and the rest of the international community would need to support the parties through the rest of the peace process, while helping to maintain peace and consolidate democracy and stability.

Statements

MARK LYALL GRANT (United Kingdom) said he was "very encouraged" by the peaceful and credible referendum process, as witnessed by numerous observers. However, he deplored the clashes that had taken place in Abyei and urged all stakeholders to restore calm and observe recent agreements. He also called for the swift resumption of talks to secure long-term peace and stability, and urged the parties to show leadership in resolving all outstanding issues. Expressing deep concern over the situation in Darfur, including the latest abductions, he called on all parties there immediately to cease all hostilities and ensure the safety of all humanitarian and peacekeeping staff, and on all rebel groups to join the peace process without delay.

SUSAN RICE (United States), relaying anecdotes of voters going to extreme lengths to cast their ballots, congratulated the people and leaders of Sudan on the conduct of the referendum, saying the historic event followed up on the promises of peace issued in 2005 through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. She also conveyed President Barack Obama's congratulations to all organizers and enumerated the commendations from a variety of observer organizations.

She urged all parties to respect the results of the referendum and to negotiate a solution to the issue of Abyei and other outstanding issues as soon as possible. Any such solutions must respect the rights and needs of all parties and communities involved, she said, stressing that similar solutions, reflecting the will of the people, must also be found in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states. However, she expressed regret over the violence and arrests that had trampled on free expression, adding that the United States wished Sudan to choose peace and prosperity for all the Sudanese people.

Full freedom of access must be granted to humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, she emphasized, noting reports of aerial bombardments and blocking of access. The United States also urged the Government of Sudan to do its utmost to facilitate the return of recent abductees. She condemned in the strongest possible terms all attacks on civilians and called for the reinvigoration of the Darfur peace process. Welcoming the Council's continuing solidarity on the referendum, she urged the 15-member body to keep close watch so as to ensure full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

EMMANUEL ISSOZE-NGONDET (Gabon) called for restraint pending the announcement of the referendum's results, and thanked the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission for confirming that the polling process had been free and fair. UNMIS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners on the ground should all be commended for their efforts in that regard, he added. The Sudanese authorities would need the same clear-sightedness to address outstanding issues, such as border demarcation, citizenship, debt management and security arrangements, which were essential for peaceful arrangements between the North and South. The international community should encourage the parties to make the necessary concessions to resolve their differences, he said, stressing that they must also reach agreement on the question of Abyei.

Calling for bolstering UNMIS in the most sensitive areas of the North and South, he said the international community could not be blind to the impact on Darfur. Mobilizing the international community was extremely important, he said, emphasizing that it must support the peace process in the troubled region, which was slow to move forward. He stressed the need to address power-sharing, wealth and security matters, while expressing support for the efforts of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Gabon called on the authorities to lift restrictions on mission and humanitarian workers so they could have access to people in need. An inclusive peace agreement must be reached on Darfur, he stressed, encouraging the international community to become more invested in Sudan's economic development in order to guarantee durable peace and security regardless of the referendum's outcome.

BASO SANGQU (South Africa) said it was vital to maintain the peace and calm that had characterized the referendum process, emphasizing that observing the rule of law and the referendum's legislative framework was crucial. He called on the parties to maintain their close cooperation whatever the outcome of the referendum, and urged the international community to keep its focus on the many challenges still confronting Sudan. In that regard, the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel continued to play an important role in finding mutually agreed solutions to such issues as external debt, citizenship and border security, he said, adding that he remained confident that all issues, including those related to Abyei, could be resolved. He also expressed deep concern over the lack of political progress in

Darfur, and encouraged the launching of a Darfur-Darfur Conference with the objective of reaching a global political agreement.

JOSÉ FILIPE MORAES CABRAL ([Portugal](#)) called on all stakeholders to exercise the necessary restraint pending completion of the process, and on all parties to accept the outcome. Protecting the rights of all Sudanese was paramount, he stressed. Completing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement would require much more of both parties, working in a spirit of compromise, he said, adding that an agreement on Abyei was particularly crucial, as were timely and transparent popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. He expressed deep concern over continuing violence in Darfur and called for the immediate release of people abducted recently, as well as unhindered access for peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. Calling also for all parties to join the Darfur peace process, he said his country stood ready to play its part in that area and in supporting full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Southern Sudan.

MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI ([Brazil](#)) noted the positive indications that the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement acknowledged the fairness of the voting process and would accept and implement the results. Brazil had sent a team of observers to Sudan, which had reported not only the smooth proceeding of the voting, but also the enthusiasm, commitment, patience and determination shown by the Sudanese people. With collective attention now turning to the counting, she expressed hope that the process would be similarly orderly and effective, held in a calm and transparent environment. Emphasizing that only the Referendum Commission was entitled to announce results, she said there was no place with a greater need for calm than Abyei.

Expressing deep regret over the recent clashes there, she welcomed joint efforts by the local communities to ease tensions. Resolving the question of Abyei was key to sustainable peace in Sudan, she said, stressing that no efforts should be spared to address the issue “effectively and definitely as soon as possible”. Holding the popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states was also imperative. Given the key role of the United Nations in Sudan, she reiterated her call for all Sudanese fully to respect and cooperate with the Organization. She also condemned in the strongest terms the recent kidnapping of three United Nations humanitarian air service members.

LI BAODONG ([China](#)) hailed the smooth completion of the referendum and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as well as the contributions to the referendum by UNMIS, the African Union, Arab League and others. However, the referendum was not an end in itself, he cautioned, pointing out that the ultimate purpose of implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was to realize sustainable peace and stability in Sudan. It was also imperative to ensure long-term peace and stability in the region at large, he said, expressing hope that the North and South would continue to engage in dialogue aimed at reaching agreement on the question of Abyei, border demarcation and other post-referendum issues. Expressing support for a comprehensive peace and resolution of the Darfur issue, he said the situation there was very fragile, and the root cause was the lack of a strongly supported and widely accepted political agreement. He called on the international community to strengthen the peace process and on the rebels to join the process without conditions or delay.

HARDEEP SINGH PURI ([India](#)) said the fact that the referendum had been peaceful and without violence was remarkable. The pledge by the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to respect the referendum’s outcome was praiseworthy, he said, expressing hope that the same spirit of cooperation would be evident in resolving post-referendum issues. While the referendum had been held without violence, there had been violence in Abyei, he pointed out, urging leaders of the affected communities to show restraint and faithfully implement any agreement reached through mediation. Last week’s violence

in Abyei should remind the international community of the need to maintain vigilance on the ground as the situation remained fragile, he said, emphasizing, however, that all issues should be resolved through negotiation and dialogue. The situation in Darfur was also of concern, requiring dialogue and the participation of all groups, including civil society at large, he added.

VITALY CHURKIN (Russian Federation) said monitors from his country agreed that the polling had taken place in a credible manner and noted the significant work carried out by the United Nations as well as the involvement of Russian diplomacy. He urged patience on the part of all parties, as well as a willingness to settle outstanding points of contention. It was necessary to ensure there would be no more clashes during the transition period, he stressed, pointing out that full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remained crucial, whatever the results of the referendum. He expressed hope that the referendum would usher in a new era of progress on many fronts, both within Sudan and in the wider region.

GÉRARD ARAUD (France) commended all participants who had helped bring about the success of the referendum under very difficult conditions, but noted that the parties still had much to do. The priority was finding a durable solution to the question of Abyei, he said, adding that other outstanding issues included borders and citizenship. Concessions must be made for a lasting peace. Expressing concern over continuing violence in Darfur, he called the conflict there an “all-out war” between the Sudanese armed forces and rebel groups, and also against civilians. A negotiated solution must be found within the framework of the Doha process, which must be nurtured and adjusted as the only one that could end the violence. Progress was possible, but there could be no peace without justice, he stressed.

NAWAF SALAM (Lebanon) hailed the peaceful, impartial holding of the referendum as a clear result of the application of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, while also commending the efforts of the United Nations, African Union and Arab League. The pledge by the President of Sudan to accept the results of the referendum was a reason for optimism and a step in the right direction. Underlining the importance of the bonds between North and South, and of cooperation in serving their mutual interests within a new political framework, he called for efforts to resolve post-referendum issues such as citizenship, the distribution of wealth and revenue, as well as the question of Abyei. He also welcomed efforts by the Government of Qatar in pursuit of an agreement on Darfur, stressing that such an agreement would have a positive impact on the overall situation in Sudan.

PETER WITTIG (Germany) said the violence during the first days of the referendum showed the importance of a swift, durable solution to the question of Abyei. Germany urgently called on the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement also to reach an accord on other relevant issues, as well as on post-referendum issues such as citizenship, the rights of Northerners in the South and of Southerners in the North, wealth-sharing, border demarcation and security arrangements — all of which had the potential to undo the progress made so far. The positive news on the referendum must not divert attention from the situation in Darfur, particularly the continuing violence and displacement of thousands, he emphasized, calling on all parties fully to respect humanitarian principles, including humanitarian access. Germany was concerned about the abduction of three Bulgarian members of the United Nations humanitarian service in Darfur, he said, demanding their immediate release.

U. JOY OGWU (Nigeria) said the peaceful holding of the referendum “opened a new vista for Africa as a whole”, noting her country’s contribution as well as the critical role played by UNMIS and the united Security Council. She called on the parties to remain calm, respect their obligations to the integrity of the process and accept the outcome in good faith. Both parties should work tirelessly to complete outstanding tasks, including Abyei, borders and security cooperation, she said, urging progress also on

such issues as water assets, currency and economic cooperation. Acknowledging the magnitude of the work ahead, she said adequate attention must be paid to managing great expectations through good governance, and stressed the crucial importance of international solidarity and support. Nigeria urged the African Union, and other regional partners to remain engaged as well. Turning to Darfur, she expressed deep concern over the continuing violence and condemned the latest abductions.

NÉSTOR OSORIO ([Colombia](#)) said that while the referendum had not been without incident, it had been mainly peaceful, with wide participation. Colombia trusted that the reporting of final results would be smooth and without incidents that could jeopardize the peaceful conclusion of the process. Colombia supported the efforts of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel on Sudan and called on the parties to cooperate with it in defining a framework for governing relations between North and South, upon the expiry of the interim period established by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Meanwhile, special attention should be given to the situation in Abyei, which still held the potential for confrontation in the absence of concrete agreements on the region's status and management. Dialogue between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka was important for easing tensions on key issues in the two communities, he said, calling also for free, timely and transparent popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

Council President IVAN BARBALIĆ ([Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)), speaking in his national capacity, said he was encouraged by the smooth completion of the referendum and hoped its results would be respected. Only the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission was authorized to declare the final results, he emphasized, while calling for a redoubling of efforts to address outstanding issues such as border security, debt management and citizenship rights by the end of the interim period. Now was the right time for the international community to re-engage in Sudan, he said adding that extensive cooperation between North and South was crucial for long-term development.

UNMIS must continue to monitor the situation in Abyei closely and work to prevent a deterioration of the security situation, he said, welcoming the Mission's increased presence in hot spots in order to prevent a possible worsening of the security situation. He called on the Sudanese parties to ensure its freedom of movement and on all parties to end hostilities and give aid workers full access to those in need. On Darfur, he said it was imperative that all parties seize the opportunity offered by the Doha peace talks. The international community and the United Nations must continue to deliver humanitarian aid, monitor the humanitarian situation on the ground and respond to allegations of human rights abuses.

DAFFA-ALLA ELHAG ALI OSMAN ([Sudan](#)) thanked Mr. Menkerios and Mr. Mkapa for their efforts, noting that they had described the referendum process as free, fair and transparent. That was a sign of the extensive cooperation between the two parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which reflected the wisdom of the Sudanese leadership and commitment to its undertaking, he said, adding that Sudan should be proud of the referendum process.

During his visit to Southern Sudan, President al-Bashir had expressed his full commitment to respect the referendum's results and stated his willingness to assist Southern Sudan in the event it opted for secession, he recalled. The international community's most important contribution to both the South and the North would be the cancellation of the debt that had burdened Sudan and constrained its economic recovery, he said.

Noting that the clashes in Abyei had pitted members of the Misseriya ethnic group against the Ngok

Dinka, he recalled that the Sudanese Government had often warned the Council about the conflict between the two. Without an acceptable solution to the situation on the ground, there would be no peace in Abyei, he warned. He commended statements by Council members cautioning against unilateral action by either of the two communities. "I appeal to you to assist the two parties to the Agreement to find an acceptable solution so as to ensure the sustainability of peace in both Southern Sudan and Northern Sudan," he added.

While commending United Nations efforts to promote the peace process in Darfur, he lamented that the Organization's focus was on denouncing events there rather than action to find durable solutions to the conflict. "You have the ability to urge the insurgent movement to come to the negotiating table," he said, questioning why the international community had delayed doing so. Instead of spending \$3 billion annually on UNAMID, the world body should exert greater pressure on insurgent movements to come to the negotiating table under United Nations auspices, he stressed.

"We are willing to have a give-and-take to arrive at an acceptable solution," he said, adding that "just addressing the symptoms of the conflict in Darfur would be in vain", he said. Appealing to the Council to help address the root causes of the conflict, he said the Sudanese Government had adopted a comprehensive strategy to settle it. The strategy would proceed simultaneously with the Doha negotiating forum in a process that would seek to involve all parties in the peace process. Insurgents must not be kept out of the peace process, which must be inclusive of all those elected democratically, he stressed, adding that it was necessary to ensure a sustainable peace in Darfur and the region at large.