

Press Statement on Sudan: Under Silence

Today the members of the Council heard a briefing from Special Representative Haile Menkerios and President Benjamin Mkapa, head of the Secretary General's Panel for the Referenda. The members of the Security Council welcome the conclusion of a largely peaceful and orderly voting period for the Southern Sudan referendum, and strongly support timely and transparent Popular Consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States. They commend the leadership shown by the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and the work of the the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau for this important step towards full implementation of the CPA, and congratulate the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for the support that it has provided.

The members of the Council welcome the work of the Secretary General's Panel led by Benjamin Mkapa and its statement of January 16 which concluded that the voting process allowed the people of Southern Sudan to express their will freely. The members also welcome the work of domestic and other international observers. The members of the Council look forward to the announcement by the SSRC of the results of the referendum in line with the timelines it has set out. The members of the Council call on all parties to respect the outcome of the referendum, and appreciate, in this regard, the commitments made by President Omar al Bashir and by Vice President Salva Kiir.

The members of the Council deplore the violence that occurred in Abyei during the polling period. The members reiterate their deep concern about the absence of an agreement on Abyei. They stress the utmost importance of continued implementation of the CPA and urge the parties to reach quickly an agreement on Abyei and other critical issues, including border demarcation, security arrangements, citizenship, debts, assets, currency and natural resource arrangements. The members urge all parties to refrain from unilateral action. In this respect, Council members encouraged the Parties to continue to extend the necessary cooperation to the African Union High Level Implementation Panel led by former President Mbeki. The members of the Council welcome the efforts undertaken by SRSG Menkerios, the parties, and local leaders in Abyei to calm tensions. The members of the Council are pleased that the leaders of the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities are working cooperatively to reduce tensions and resolve outstanding issues. Council members hope that this spirit of cooperation will help move forward on-going negotiations on the future of the Abyei region.

The members of the Council underline the need for the CPA parties to promote calm, including by providing immediate and ongoing reassurance to people of all nationalities in Sudan, including Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South, that their rights, safety and property will continue to be respected. They urge the CPA parties to respect their obligations.

The members of the Security Council remain deeply concerned by the increase in violence and insecurity in Darfur, including the kidnapping on 13 January of three

members of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, and its impact on civilians. The members of the Council urge all parties to cease hostilities immediately and to ensure full and unhindered access for UNAMID throughout the mission area, and to allow humanitarian workers to provide assistance to all populations in need. The members of the Security Council recall the importance of ending impunity, and of justice for crimes committed in Darfur.

The members of the Security Council reaffirm support for the AU-UN led peace process for Darfur, hosted by the Government of Qatar and urge all groups to join the process without further delay or preconditions.

The members of the Security Council will continue to follow events in Sudan closely.