

Statement by Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, to the IGAD Special Summit on Sudan: Addis Ababa, 23 November 2010.

Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen:

The African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan would like to thank the Government of Kenya for extending an invitation to this Summit Meeting of IGAD, and to the Government of Ethiopia for hosting the Summit.

This Summit comes at a critical time for Sudan, for the IGAD region and for Africa as a whole. In less than fifty days, the people of southern Sudan will be voting in an historic referendum which will determine their future, and also the fate of the Sudanese nation, and by extension, the African continent.

There is no greater decision that a people can take than the exercise of self-determination in this way. Just ten days ago, the long awaited exercise in registering to vote in the Referendum began. We extend our profound congratulations to the southern Sudanese people for the journey they have undertaken to reach this point.

We also extend our congratulations to the Government of Sudan and the people of northern Sudan. There is no greater burden to assume than extending the right of self-determination to one part of the country, in the knowledge that the people of that part may choose to secede. National unity is a precious inheritance and a great and honourable aspiration. For the leader of a country, a ruling party, and a people to recognize this right, and to cooperate so readily in its realisation, is an act of magnanimity that deserves our recognition and appreciation.

As the Heads of State and Government of IGAD are aware, Sudan faces three urgent challenges. These are:

1. the implementation of the CPA;
2. negotiating the Post Referendum Arrangements; and,
3. achieving a just and lasting peace in Darfur.

The African Union High-Level Panel is engaged with each of these challenges.

With regard to the Referendum in southern Sudan, we helped to ensure that the South Sudan Referendum Commission became operational. We have assisted in drawing up a Code of Conduct for political parties, which binds them to ensure free and fair Referenda and Popular Consultations. At the same time the Parties have committed themselves to respect the outcome of the referendum. We shall remain closely in contact with the South Sudan Referendum Commission, the parties, UNMIS and the UN Monitoring Panel led by President Benjamin Mkapa.

Also of great importance is the necessity to resolve the issue of Abyei. Immediately following this Summit, the Panel will facilitate negotiations involving Their Excellencies President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit to address this issue. These Principals have agreed that with the assistance of our Panel they will do everything possible to reach an agreement on this issue as a matter of urgency.

I am glad to report that one of the outcomes of the recent negotiations on outstanding CPA issues that we have a clear way forward on the issue of the north-south border. The Ad-hoc Border Committee will begin immediately to demarcate the North-South border, while the Political Committee of the NCP and the SPLM is ready to begin discussions on the five disputed areas along this border.

Also of great significance is that the Parties remain committed to maintain peace and to respect the termination of hostilities that was agreed as one of the key elements of the CPA. The Parties are using the ceasefire and security structures established by the CPA, including UNMIS, to address any problems or fears that may arise concerning security.

An issue close to our hearts as Africans, is the Sudanese tradition of hospitality and embrace of diversity. Historically, Sudan's borders have been open to Africans from all corners of the continent, creating in Sudan a true melting pot that represents Africa in all its magnificent diversity. We are certain the sister Sudanese people will continue to cherish and continue this tradition.

Your Excellencies:

With regard to the Post Referendum Arrangements, as you know the AUHIP was asked by the Parties to facilitate negotiations on these issues, which process was launched in July. The negotiations are being conducted in four baskets, namely security, economic issues (which in turn includes oil, water, currency, debts and assets), citizenship, and international treaties and agreements.

Over the last four months, negotiations have taken place on all of these issues. However, we are concerned that the pace at which these issues are being addressed and resolved has not been commensurate with the urgency of the task at hand. Therefore, in the days following this Summit, we have proposed to the Parties to convene a meeting of the lead negotiators from both sides, with a view to accelerating the negotiations in a way that will ensure significant progress before the Referendum in January.

To address both the outstanding issues in the CPA and the main Post-Referendum Arrangements, the Panel convened a meeting of the Parties in Khartoum between 7 and 13 November. This meeting resulted in a Framework Agreement, which provides the basis for the ongoing negotiations.

This Agreement contains a framework of principles which will guide the work of the Parties on all issues and inform the relations between northern and southern Sudan regardless of the outcome of the southern Sudan referendum. It also contains decisions on security, the borders and the Popular Consultations in Blue Nile and South Kordofan, which are necessary in order to complete the CPA. Lastly, it also contains specific decisions on some Post-Referendum issues, within the context of a joint commitment to "two viable states" in the event of the southern Sudanese choosing secession.

The document, entitled the "Framework for Resolving Outstanding Issues Relating to the Implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Future Relations of North and South Sudan", will be completed, signed and published once the negotiations on Abyei, which I have mentioned, have been concluded.

Your Excellencies:

The third main element of our work in Sudan relates to Darfur. We are aware that this does not fall within the remit of IGAD.

However we thought it advisable to make some brief comments on this issue since it has some impact on the work of IGAD.

As the meeting is aware, as yet a comprehensive and inclusive political agreement to resolve the issue of Darfur has not been concluded.

When it met here in Addis Ababa on 6 November the Sudan International Consultative Forum, which includes all the members of IGAD, made the important decision further to energise the effort to achieve the comprehensive Darfur settlement which I have mentioned.

I refer here specifically to the decision that our Panel and UNAMID, supported by the Government of Qatar, should, during December, and ahead of the southern Sudan referendum, initiate a political process in Darfur which would lead to the convening of an inclusive Darfur-Darfur Conference, the DDC.

The DDC will base its discussions on the outcomes of the Doha negotiations, as well as other relevant documents, such as the Report of the AU Panel on Darfur. It will take the necessary decisions which would contribute to the earliest possible conclusion of a Darfur Global Political Agreement.

We have also agreed with the Government of Sudan that in the meantime it should take all necessary action, in cooperation with UNAMID, to improve the security situation in Darfur, to facilitate the voluntary return of the refugees and IDPs to their places of origin, and therefore begin to address issues of recovery and development, and to address the issue of justice and reconciliation.

It is important that, in the coming months, the issue of Darfur should not be treated in isolation from the rest of Sudan. Rather, the political process in Darfur should enable the Darfurian people to feel the required sense of enfranchisement and belonging within the Sudanese political order.

Your Excellencies:

We are pleased to report that both President Omar al Bashir and First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit have continued to extend full cooperation to our Panel, driven by a shared determination to do everything possible and necessary to address the various Sudanese challenges, and determined above all to prevent a return to war.

It is this determination and leadership that is most necessary for Sudan at this critical hour of its history.

We are confident that the leaders of the IGAD region will continue to sustain their solidarity with the Sudanese people and their leaders during the months ahead. The challenges facing Sudan are challenges that confront Africa as a whole. If Sudan can successfully navigate the closing months of the CPA, it will demonstrate to Africa and the world that it is truly able to rise above its legacy of conflict and division, and build a future of peace and development for the Sudanese people, whether as one country or two.

We are also confident that just as the signing of CPA was a landmark in Africa's efforts to end one of the continent's most intractable conflicts, the successful completion of the process of the implementation of the CPA will present Africa with an opportunity to make further strides towards her renewal. Thank you.