

**UNMIS SRSG statement on the occasion of the commemoration of
Sudan's 55th Independence day.**

On this day of commemoration of the 55th anniversary of Sudan's Independence, I would like first to wish all Sudanese a happy Independence day. They can all be proud of having achieved liberation from colonial rule in 1956 and I am happy to join them in celebrating this great moment of their history.

I also want to congratulate all Sudanese for the achievements of the peace process in 2010. 2010 has been a remarkable year for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. A year ago, considerable national and international skepticism and a degree of pessimism remained over the last stages of the peace process. The electoral and referendum laws had just been passed, but significant concerns existed on the country's ability and commitment to meet the operational and political requirements for the organization of both the National elections and the Southern Sudan Self-Determination Referendum.

Today, not only have the elections been held with a fair degree of success, and most significantly without jeopardizing the peace process, but everything is ready for Southern Sudan referendum polling to start on 9 January 2011 as provided by the CPA, despite the extremely short time that was available. These are considerable achievements. The Southern Sudan referendum in particular is the capstone measure of the implementation of the CPA. I would like to commend all those - members of Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, representatives of the Government of Sudan and of the Government of Southern Sudan, leaders of the National Congress Party and of the Sudan's People Liberation Movement, national and international staff of the United Nations, international cooperation

agencies and other national and international organizations - who have worked tirelessly for the past six months to reach this goal.

2010 was also a remarkable year as it passed without any major security incidents putting the CPA at risk. Tensions related to legitimate apprehensions on the future of the country, and a degree of continuing mistrust between the CPA parties did lead to a number of accusations and few regrettable incidents. At no point however, did these tensions escalate or threaten the peace process.

Both the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan's People Liberation Army exercised restraint in the face of perceived threats and provocations, and made adequate use of the ceasefire agreement joint mechanisms to manage these tensions and avoid significant outbreaks of violence. I wish to take this opportunity to commend the political and military leadership of both the National Government (GoS) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), for showing their countrymen and their international partners, that they are firmly determined to manage together common security challenges, and not to go back to war as a possible option in the future.

The failure so far to implement the referendum in Abyei, or to find a solution to the issue in a way that satisfies the aspirations of all concerned, is a sore point that still has to be addressed. Whilst I encourage the parties who remained engaged to find a solution with the facilitation of the AUHIP, and the support of international partners, UNMIS among them, to do so in the shortest possible time, I want to specifically express appreciation to communities in Abyei for their patience and restraint in the face of the legitimate anxiety about their future and that of their children. The situation in Abyei is tense and the settlement of the dispute over the territory's future is complex, but it is not impossible to solve and much progress has been made by the parties so far in that direction.

The populations of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, have not been forgotten by the CPA parties, or their regional and international partners. Their current and future welfare is a centre piece of the on-going post-referendum negotiations. We in UNMIS are daily engaged to support them, and are ready to support the peaceful management of the upcoming migrations, which should once again illustrate the ability of the Sudanese people from both North and South to live together and support peacefully one another's different livelihoods, despite the challenges.

Last, 2010 was also remarkable as it probably never saw the CPA signatories work as closely together as they have in its last few months, to design and shape a prosperous and stable future for both North and South Sudan. President Bashir and GoSS President Kiir, should both personally get greater credit for the above mentioned 2010 CPA achievements, for the political leadership, courage and determination that taking such a correct but difficult route entails. I personally commend them for their leadership, for the committed implementation of the peace process the two parties so boldly charted in 2005, and I call on all international partners of Sudan to join me in encouraging both leaders and all Sudanese to continue on this path, and for these partners to increase their support to both sides so that there is stability in both North and South, in unity or separation, and so that all the gains made by the CPA in 2010 are consolidated and lead to its successful conclusion in 2011 and beyond.

Happy Independence day to all Sudanese, and happy new year to all concerned.

Haile Menkerios,
SRSG, UNMIS, 01.01.2011