



# UN Press Release

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## UN Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan begins first visit

Members of the United Nations Secretary-General's panel tasked with monitoring the upcoming referenda on self-determination in Sudan have arrived today in Khartoum to begin their first visit to the country.

The three-member panel is scheduled to visit Khartoum, Juba and Abyei and will talk with senior officials from the Government of the Sudan, the Government of Southern Sudan, the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, the UN, the diplomatic corps, observer groups and civil society representatives. Their visit will conclude on 15 October.

The panel is chaired by Benjamin Mkapa, former President of Tanzania. Its other members are António Monteiro, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, and Bhojraj Pokharel, former Chairman of the Election Commission of Nepal.

"I am looking forward to this visit and the opportunity to meet with all the people who can help ensure that these referenda in Southern Sudan and the Abyei Area are successful," Mr. Mkapa said. "There are many challenges ahead of us in the next few months but we are determined to do our utmost to help the people of Sudan."

The panel will play a good offices role to strengthen confidence in the referenda process, which is Sudanese-led, and to encourage the parties and relevant authorities to resolve any significant problems or disputes as they emerge.

Two referenda are slated for 9 January 2011: one in which the people of Southern Sudan will vote for either unity or secession, and another in which the people of the Abyei Area will vote to remain in the north or become part of the south.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon formed the panel after a request from the parties to Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), who sought a UN monitoring body to help enhance the credibility of the referenda and therefore ensure the acceptance of their result by their constituencies and the international community.

The panellists will make periodic visits to Sudan in the lead-up to and during the referenda and report back to the Secretary-General on their findings, and will be assisted by field staff across the country.