



UN Press Release

18 January 2011

Statement to the Security Council by the Chairperson of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in Sudan

Mr. President,

I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to brief the Council once again on the Southern Sudan referendum. My statement will be brief, since I do not have much more to add to the statement of the Panel issued two days ago.

During the week of polling, the Panel members and I visited referendum centres in eight states, and the Panel's staff monitored the process in all Southern states and across the North. Based on our own observations, and those of our staff in the field, as well as from accounts conveyed by various interlocutors in Sudan, I can report on behalf of the Panel that we are satisfied that the process so far has been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner that allowed the people of Southern Sudan to express their will freely.

Preliminary statements issued by international observer groups have made similar assessments of the process as ours.

Our reports indicate that polling procedures were properly followed overall. Polling centres generally opened on time and were well-staffed and well-stocked. Referendum staff carried out their work in accordance with established procedures, and security was maintained at all locations monitored. Referendum staff appeared to be well-trained on counting and result aggregation procedures, including security and transparency requirements. Ballots were counted in the presence of observers and results posted at referendum centres. The Panel has so far found no evidence to suggest that there was any systematic or widespread attempt to undermine the polling process.

We are now closely following the aggregation of results. The process of transmitting the results from nearly 3,000 referendum centres to county Sub-Committees and the State High Committees, and then to Juba and Khartoum, is proceeding. We understand that any alleged errors or fraud will be thoroughly investigated and that any results tainted by verified cases of error or fraud will be dealt with appropriately.

Mr President, a mere three months ago, when the Panel undertook its first visit to Sudan, the timely, orderly and smooth conduct of polling was hard to imagine. The dedication and work of the Commissioners and staff of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and its Bureau, the registration and polling officers, and security officers involved are to be commended.

As we stated on 16 January, we would like to recognize the courage and leadership demonstrated by President Omar al-Bashir and First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit, for their commitment to implement a major milestone of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In order for the outcome of the referendum to be sustainable, it is essential that a number of outstanding post-referendum issues between the parties be resolved.

The Panel has urged Governmental authorities and the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission to make every effort to ensure that all citizens are kept well-informed of the progress towards the final results. The Panel also called on the media and political forces to report on this process in a responsible manner.

Both parties have given important and unequivocal public assurances about respecting the outcome of the referendum. Leaders of both parties have also given assurances about the rights and safety of the Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South; early clarity on citizenship could ease some of the anxiety felt by these communities. The positive momentum achieved can only be sustained by further demonstration of good will and political commitment from both sides.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The Panel is comprised of Benjamin Mkapa, a former President of Tanzania; António Monteiro, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal; and Bhojraj Pokharel, a former Chairman of the Election Commission of Nepal.