



UN Press Release

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UN Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan briefs Security Council on its role and recent developments

Below is the statement delivered today by President Benjamin Mkapa, Chairperson of the UN Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, to the Security Council at UN Headquarters in New York.

"Madam President,

I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to brief the Council on the Southern Sudan referendum as well as to provide clarification on the role of the United Nations Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan.

I was present in Nairobi when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, and it is remarkable that we are about to witness one of the Agreement's key milestones, the holding of the Southern Sudan referendum, in less than a month's time. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought about peace to a great many people in Sudan, and allowed for development of the country. Moreover, the Agreement brought about relief to the countries and people of the region which were also affected by the North-South conflict in the Sudan. This is no small achievement.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the presence of the representatives of the CPA parties who are with us this morning, on whose shoulders rest the responsibility for the successful conclusion of the implementation of the Agreement.

The registration of voters ahead of next month's referendum on the self-determination of Southern Sudan concluded eight days ago, (with the exception of a few centres out of country), as Under-Secretary-General Le Roy just stated. The registration process was conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, despite time constraints and limitations in communications infrastructure and financial resources. The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and its Bureau based in Juba are to be highly commended in overcoming the many difficulties they faced to conduct the voter registration exercise.

Our field reporting officers on the ground, and we ourselves found the process to be generally transparent, with very few cases of rejections reported. No discernable pattern of irregularities were reported either. This should help prepare the ground for a credible referendum on 9 January 2011.

Both parties to the CPA have given important and unequivocal public assurances about respecting the outcome of the referendum. Leaders of both parties have also given assurances about the status of the southerners in the North and northerners in the South, that their rights and safety

will be protected. Such messaging by political leaders in both the north and the south should be reiterated, as the campaign period gathers momentum, to assuage anxiety amongst the population regarding uncertainty of their future, regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

There has not been progress with regard to the holding of the Abyei referendum. The Abyei issue has become part of the larger post-referendum negotiations led by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel. We commend the patience shown by the people of Abyei, and we urge the Parties to redouble their efforts to find a lasting solution to this difficult issue.

Let me conclude by sharing some views on how the Panel sees its role in the lead up to the referenda.

As the Secretary-General conveyed to the Council in September, the Panel's role is to monitor and assess the referenda processes for Southern Sudan and the Abyei Area, including the political and security situation on the ground. The Panel will also engage the parties at the appropriate level to take corrective measures and, in close consultation with the Secretary-General, issue public statements on the referenda.

In our encounters with our interlocutors, we have stressed that we do not have a certification mandate. The Panel will focus on playing a good offices role on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Panel will liaise closely with international and national observer groups to ensure we share as much valuable information as possible.

I thank you, Madam President.”

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