



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

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What exactly will the Secretary-General's referenda panel do?

The panel will play a good offices role to strengthen confidence in the referenda processes in Southern Sudan (on whether it remains united with the north or secedes) and in the Abyei Area (on whether it remains a part of the north or join the south).

The referenda are Sudanese-led, but the panel will encourage the parties as well as relevant authorities to resolve any significant problems or disputes as they emerge, and take corrective measures if necessary.

### Why was the panel set up?

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon formed the panel after a joint request from the parties to Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) -- the National Congress Party and Sudan People's Liberation Movement. The parties sought a UN monitoring body to help enhance credibility of the country's two self-determination referenda, and ensure acceptance of the results by their constituencies and the international community.

### Who is on the panel?

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

### Does the panel have any connection to the UN Mission in Sudan?

No, the panel operates completely independent of UNMIS. The mission is providing technical assistance to the referenda, so it cannot also monitor the process.

The panel reports directly to the Secretary-General.

### How often will the panel visit Sudan?

The panelists will make periodic visits -- about once a month -- in the lead-up to and during the referenda. Assisted by field staff across the country, they will then report back to the Secretary-General on their findings.

### Has the panel visited the country yet?

The panel made its first visit to Sudan from 10 to 15 October, when it spoke with Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, Government of Southern Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit and other senior officials from both governments.

It also met with representatives of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau, Abyei Administration, UN, diplomatic corps, donors, observer groups and civil society.

The panel's next visit will take place in November.

### What was the panel's initial assessment of the referenda process?

The panel said the referenda could still occur on schedule if all parties immediately stepped up efforts to ensure a credible vote, but it was deeply concerned about lack of progress on several fronts, including voter registration, funding, logistics and security.

Voter registration is yet to begin and the Southern

Sudan Referendum Commission and Bureau urgently need money to hire and train staff as well as pay for basic equipment and materials.

*\*For more details about the referenda, see Sudan's Referenda Q & A and the referenda section at [www.unmis.org](http://www.unmis.org)*

The panel also expressed concern about the situation in Abyei, where a referendum commission is yet to be formed. It was vital that a round of talks later this month to resolve the issue succeed, panels members said.

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