

Implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan

BY ANDREW NATSIOS

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed on January 9, 2005, has the potential to change Sudan's future and lay the foundations for democracy and economic growth. By integrating groups that have been marginalized since Sudan's independence in 1956, the CPA can bring peace to a country that has been wracked by civil conflict for over twenty years. The hurdles are many and the international community must be fully engaged at this crucial historic moment.

While we celebrate a North-South peace agreement, we also bear witness to the ongoing tragedy in Darfur. The signing of the peace agreement does not diminish the need to address the situation in Darfur, which remains one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. Since February 2003 nearly 300,000 people have died and more than 2 million have been displaced from their homes. As we deal with this humanitarian emergency, we must stay fully engaged in southern Sudan to reintegrate this region into a whole and peaceful Sudan. It is a delicate balance. Each region of Sudan has its own dynamic, but successful implementation of the North-South peace process may provide a framework for resolving the crisis in Darfur and prevent emerging conflict in other parts of the country.

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There has been no shortage of peace processes in Sudan in the past. What has been lacking is the will to sustain those efforts. To prevent a repeat of past failures such as the 1972 Addis Ababa accords, we need a strategic approach that focuses on key challenges.

The Security Situation

As in most fragile states, the issue of security in Sudan is critical. Continuing conflict in Darfur and lingering violence in the South must

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end immediately if reconstruction is to proceed. The situation in Darfur deteriorates with each passing day, while in southern Sudan, government-aligned militias vie for dominance and territory in

the area around Akobo. Rumors have surfaced of a sustained military build-up in the Shilluk Kingdom in the Upper Nile region.

Equity issues and feelings of exclusion also cloud the situation. If groups in one region perceive that they are being marginalized, they may resort to armed insurrection to draw attention to their grievances and derail the current implementation process. In USAID-funded focus groups conducted by the National Democratic Institute, southern Sudanese expressed broad support for John Garang, chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), but some groups said they do not yet feel that the SPLM speaks for them. A sense of inclusion and equitable treatment is critical to winning the support of those groups.

In Kordofan and eastern Sudan the potential for an outbreak of hostilities is real and could jeopardize implementation of the peace agreement. Eastern Sudan could be at risk if simmering tensions there lead to armed confrontation. The transition zones—Southern Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains, and Abyei—are flashpoints where a tenuous peace holds at the moment. A renewal or outbreak of hostilities in any of these areas might quickly spread and unravel the tenuous commitment to peace.

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants from all sides—the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the government of Sudan, and the militias—will have to occur for the peace

agreement to be implemented and sustained. The fact that this was inadequately done in 1972 contributed to the failure of the Addis Ababa accords. USAID is actively assisting young men and women, many of whom have been active fighters their entire lives, to become productive members of southern Sudanese society. In the Upper Nile and Equatoria provinces, USAID has provided these young men and women with fishing and farming equipment that will allow them to pursue socially beneficial economic opportunities rather than a lifestyle of violence.

Much more needs to be done, however, for southern Sudan to regain security. All those who have supported hostilities must stop their assistance and be held accountable for their actions. The re-supplying of belligerents must end. The militias that have yet to lay down their weapons must be brought into the fold and convinced of the benefits of the peace agreement as an alternative to war.

Enforcement mechanisms that the southern Sudanese themselves implement must also be supported if they are to be actively engaged in bringing security to their own territory. The international community must assist the SPLA and the Sudan People's Democratic Front (SPDF) in demobilizing soldiers who cannot be integrated into the regular armed forces. In this regard, priority should be given to demilitarizing the southern capital of Juba. The new government of southern Sudan can then extend its authority more quickly and effectively. Professionalism must be brought to SPLA ranks and the Joint Integrated Units of combined government and SPLA troops must be made operational as soon as possible. A professional civilian police force must be established to bring law and order to daily life.

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Finally, the international bodies that were created to monitor security issues during the peace process must be integrated into the UN peacekeeping force that will now take the lead in providing security. The Joint Military Commission in the Nuba Mountains, the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team, and the Verification and Monitoring Team all monitored the cessation of hostilities in southern Sudan. The contributions these bodies can make by providing lo-

gistical support and sharing lessons learned are immeasurable and will allow the UN to assume its expanded tasks in monitoring the ceasefire.

IDPs and Refugees in Southern Sudan

There are more than 4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sudan as a result of the North-South conflict—the largest IDP population of any country in the world—and more than 700,000 Sudanese refugees in other countries. Many IDPs have been displaced for more than a decade, and many children of IDPs have never seen their families' homelands. Those displaced to Khartoum and other government garrison towns have acquired livelihood skills in an urban environment, and a good number of returnees will probably choose to live in urban centers in the South rather than their original rural homes. Because the government military remains in these urban garrison towns in the South, security for returnee groups is problematic. The sudden influx of new populations will strain the infrastructure and basic services of communities even more in settled areas.

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The potential for violent conflict among a mix of IDP groups and refugees competing over scarce resources is high. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there is a law-and-order vacuum throughout much of southern Sudan, including the absence of a credible police force. Decades of conflict have left an excess of guns, which has contributed to high levels of violence. As displaced people travel back home, they will be vulnerable to abuse and attack. Local administrators currently do not have the capacity or the resources to contend with these problems.

Conflict is likely between the southern Sudanese returning to their homes and those who now occupy the land. There are currently no laws in place to determine how land will be allocated among these groups, and there is no effective system to adjudicate competing property claims. The longevity of the war and the widespread dislocation of populations affect even traditionally nomadic groups. Migration back to traditional grazing and watering areas will provoke conflict over ownership of land, water access, and livestock grazing rights.

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To address these concerns, USAID is piloting a project on land tenure in the Nuba Mountains, where land issues have triggered conflict in the past, and is working to support local market systems for agricultural products. Local seed fairs and seed voucher programs are strengthening food production by building local capacity and training agricultural workers. USAID is also directing resources to conflict-affected areas to provide alternative livelihoods for former combatants. At the same time, USAID is supporting animal health activities by bringing disease control mechanisms to rural areas and training community animal health workers.

Managing Expectations

The signing of the peace agreement between the North and South has created high expectations for what peace will bring. This was made abundantly clear in USAID-funded focus groups involving southern Sudanese. These groups expressed little hesitation about ultimately returning to war if their claim for equitable access to services is denied. The government must communicate its plans and intentions to help keep expectations realistic. At the same time, the people must be able to see tangible benefits from a peace dividend. Information sharing between the people and government of southern Sudan must be a two-way process.

The legitimacy of the new government will be judged in part by its ability to deliver needed services to its people. The task for donors is to manage expectations while providing the resources and assistance that make a peace dividend credible. Aerial drops of seeds, tools, bags of food, and plastic sheeting have been critical facets of USAID humanitarian assistance in the past. In the new post-conflict environment, local communities must be brought into the reconstruction process as active participants. This is critical to the success of reconstruction, and those who are ready to take up that challenge will be the main beneficiaries.

On April 11-12, 2005, donors came together in Oslo to pledge their assistance to the reconstruction of southern Sudan. Despite some hesitancy to pledge significant resources because of the ongoing problems in Darfur, donors committed \$4.5 billion for humanitarian and reconstruction needs through 2007. The United States committed an immediate \$853 million for 2005, with another \$883 million already requested from Congress for the 2006 fiscal year. The role of the world

community is critical if peace in the South is to be consolidated, and if we are to demonstrate the benefits of negotiated solutions to other parts of Sudan, such as Darfur and the East. It is essential that international support be generous and strategically targeted.

Managing Resources

The newly formed government of southern Sudan will be handling huge increases in financial resources from oil revenues, aid flows, and new commercial activity. The risk of corruption is high. Extractive wealth in African countries with weak government institutions has frequently been misused. It is therefore essential that strong systems for accountability and transparency be established quickly.

Through the Joint Assessment Mission, a collaborative effort of the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank, USAID has been working with the SPLM to develop mechanisms that professionalize Sudan's Ministry of Finance. The proposal envisions the establishment of an agency run by a Western organization, such as a respected international accounting firm, that would manage the procurement and implementation of all government programs according to international standards. This would ensure delivery of goods and services to the people of southern Sudan while government functions are put in place and civil service capacity is built.

USAID, the World Bank, and other organizations are also working to help the government of southern Sudan develop financial management systems. For its part, USAID is helping the Ministry of Finance establish unified budgetary processes and systematized revenue collection and expenditure controls, including the introduction of a financial management information system to track resource spending. USAID is working with the southern Sudanese government to develop codes of conduct, including a policy mandating a declaration of assets by government officials. USAID is also working on strengthening the attorney general's office, as well as on forming an anti-corruption commission.

Implementation Capacity

The timelines outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement are ambitious. Some deadlines have already been missed. The U.S. government is watching closely to ensure this is not because of a lack of

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political will to implement the agreement, and we are working with other donors to enhance the SPLM's capacity to follow through on its commitments as quickly as possible. While much more remains to be done, USAID believes that there are signs that the SPLM has the political will to implement the agreement.

The first sign of progress is the formation of the Joint National Transition Team (JNTT). The JNTT represents the first formal joint body of the two parties, and it is a key step toward the formation of the government of national unity in July 2005. At a pre-Oslo donor meeting in Rome in March, the JNTT represented a unified Sudanese delegation rather than separate SPLM and Khartoum delegations. This was the first national entity that was acceptable to both the North and South, and it will also facilitate the flows of aid to Sudan.

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Second, the deployment of SPLM transition teams to garrison towns and Khartoum shows that there is a will to move forward in establishing a national unity government. That more than 30 percent of the personnel on these teams have gone to Khartoum demonstrates the seriousness of the SPLM in forming this new government. For the SPLM, this is also the beginning of the transition from a rebel movement to a government. Finally, more than 100 government officials, representing all regions in southern Sudan, have been selected for training in a variety of fields. These SPLM-selected officials will play significant roles in the new government of southern Sudan. This is but one indication of the broadening of major personnel decisions.

USAID is focusing on the areas where the nascent government of southern Sudan may still need assistance. It is providing technical advisors and technical assistance to the ministries of finance, justice, and social services. USAID is also supporting local government through various programs. Recognizing that a lack of governance structures impedes economic growth, USAID is assisting the new government of southern Sudan in establishing customs and trade promotion agencies. USAID is also strengthening the capacity of the southern Sudanese government to be responsive and inclusive, assisting the development of issue-based political parties and a consti-

tution that enshrines respect for human rights and freedom of speech, and strengthening the capacity of civil society to represent the interests of the Sudanese people.

These are only some of the major challenges that Sudan will face in the months to come. We should not underestimate the magnitude of the challenge at hand. This will be a long road and there will be setbacks. But change can happen, and there are several reasons why this deal might succeed.

Reasons for Cautious Optimism

The people of Sudan are ready for peace. They are exhausted by war, isolation, and lack of development. Though much remains to be done, the USAID-funded National Democratic Institute studies with southern Sudanese have shown a cautious optimism and support for the current peace process. When the SPLM made its first visit last year to Khartoum, tens of thousands of people met them at the airport in an overwhelming show of support for peace.

Another reason for optimism is that international attention is focused on Sudan. The combined efforts of the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, and other partners are bearing fruit. We have stayed the course during the negotiations and will continue to press the parties to implement the agreement. The president of the United States has been directly involved and has called negotiating parties on numerous occasions to press them to reach a final settlement. The Oslo donors' conference was vital to securing donor commitments and demonstrates continuing support for the implementation of the peace agreement.

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Finally, the agreement is truly a comprehensive peace agreement, unlike the failed Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. It should be remembered, though, that implementation of the agreement will not be quick or easy. In order to establish security in all of Sudan, it is important to show Sudanese citizens in Darfur and the East that this agreement will be honored and that it will benefit all Sudanese.



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For those of us who have been involved with Sudan over the years, this is a critical time. We see the promise of a new Sudan arising from the ability of the North and South to come to agreement on the way forward to peace and power sharing. We know that resolving the situation in Darfur is essential to a sustainable transition in Sudan. We know that there will be setbacks. But we also know that dramatic and lasting change can happen, as it has in Iraq and Afghanistan, when there is a concerted commitment to change, bold and forward-looking leadership, and a sustained effort. ■