

TROIKA STATEMENT ON THE SOUTHERN SUDAN REFERENDUM

We congratulate the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission for the ongoing registration process in Sudan, as an essential milestone towards the 9 January Referendum and full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We welcome the peaceful and orderly conduct of registration to date at nearly 3,000 registration centers. We note the recent visit by the United Nations Secretary General's Monitoring Panel to Sudan and its recognition of encouraging signs of progress.

We welcome the commitment to the timely conduct of the Referendum and respect for its outcome, as reaffirmed by both parties to the CPA at the IGAD Summit on 23 November. We underline the importance of ensuring that the referendum reflects the will of the people of Southern Sudan, and the responsibility of both parties to address outstanding challenges, ensuring that their public commitments are underpinned by practical action.

To that end, we recognize the vital importance of the ongoing work of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, and urge the parties to ensure the Commission is properly supported and to respect the hard work and integrity of the Commission as it carries out its historic tasks. In particular, we urge both parties to ensure measures taken by the Commission in pursuit of a timely referendum are approved as necessary through presidential or legislative action, and publicly endorsed by the parties.

We call upon both parties, and the Governments of Sudan and Southern Sudan, to take all necessary steps to ensure a campaigning environment for the referendum free from intimidation and obstruction. We urge both parties and governments to make clear that the rights and safety of southerners living in the north and northerners living in the south are fully protected throughout the referendum process and beyond.

Our governments reaffirm their abiding commitment to completion of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We welcome the role of President Mbeki in the ongoing political talks on the CPA and post-CPA issues and the progress that has been made to date, and we encourage further work to finalize the Framework Agreement. We remain very concerned by the lack of agreement on Abyei. We welcome the forthcoming resumption of talks between President Bashir and First Vice President Kiir and we urge both parties to reach urgent agreement on Abyei in a manner that reassures communities on the ground that their rights will be protected and maintains peace and stability in the area.

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Jonas Gahr Støre
Foreign Minister
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Foreign Secretary
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