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“The North-South Sudan Conflict 2012”

Africa, Global Health and Human Rights Subcommittee

Excerpts of Remarks by Chairman Chris Smith

April 26, 2012

Good afternoon. Today’s hearing will examine the current conflict between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan and the policy options for forestalling a full-blown war that are available to the United States and the rest of the international community. As we meet here today, the two countries move ever closer to all-out war, and some strategy to avert this eventuality must be devised soon if it is not created already. Our hearing should reveal what such a strategy is or will be.

The United States is one of the guarantors of the peace process that ended the second North-South civil war in 2005, but it is not our responsibility alone to prevent what everyone believes would be disaster for two nations and their populations and likely for the welfare of their neighbors. The United Nations and the African Union certainly bear some responsibility for working to restore peace. However, no lasting peace will be likely if other interested parties fail to play a positive role in this crisis.

The Khartoum government is now talking about “the spirit of jihad” rising in the North. Jihad is often interpreted as a call for all true believers to help in the fight against one’s enemy. Sudan reportedly reached out to the Arab League to initiate discussions on the current crisis, and the Arab League might be able to convince Sudan’s leaders to calm down their rhetoric and help them see the negative end result of their war mongering. If Arab nations can support a workable plan to fulfill the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the second Sudan civil war, then they will have helped a nation led by people who consider themselves Arabs to create a sustainable future with peace and security.

China imports five percent of its oil from Sudan currently, and according to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, that total could rise soon to 10 percent due to regional tensions in the Persian Gulf. Oil shipments from Sudan depend on both the southern supply and the

northern pipelines. War between the two would have a significant impact on China's ability to continue importing Sudanese oil, and as a result, Beijing has been trying to mediate the current dispute. South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit has been in Beijing this week for discussions on ending the dispute between the two countries.

But while all nations must join in the effort to end the Sudan-South Sudan conflict, the difficulty of achieving a lasting peace is evident from the long history of North-South enmity, mistrust and war. During colonial times, the northerners and southerners were treated differently, and when independence finally came in 1956, the continuing estrangement of Muslim northerners and Christian and animist southerners was established.

The first civil war that began in 1955 was the result of an Arab-led government in Khartoum that broke promises of inclusion and marginalized southerners. The massacre of northerners in the South only exacerbated the growing hatred between them. After 11 years of relative peace, the second civil war broke out in 1983 when the Sudan People's Liberation Army fought for the independence of the South. The CPA not only ended the second civil war, it set the South on the road to independence, which was finally achieved in 2011.

Unfortunately, the peace agreement which laid out the path to a sustainable peace, was never fully implemented. The genocide in Darfur distracted the international community from fulfilling the CPA, and nearly a year after South Sudan became a nation, there is no agreed-upon border, the Abyei region remains in dispute, citizenship remains in dispute for those in border areas and there is no agreement on how oil revenues are to be divided. With all these unresolved issues, significant tensions, and even some form of conflict was inevitable, especially between antagonists with a long history of mistrust.

The animosity between leaders from both sides does not bode well for peace talks or a peace accord that will be sustainable. Both sides have taken actions that have made the situation we now face more difficult to resolve, but a false equivalency will not help us achieve a lasting peace. Whatever the international community thinks of the South's capture of the oil junction town of Heglig, no nation will allow an antagonist to use a location as a staging ground for repeated attacks without retaliation. Sudan's government has been brutally oppressing Darfur, and more recently has relentlessly attacked Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States for months. We have held multiple hearings on the destruction in Sudan since last August. To equate months of vicious attacks that have killed or displaced thousands with the short-term occupation of a strategic town will neither placate the North into ending its cruelty against its own citizens nor shame the South into withdrawing from the staging ground for assaults against it.

I have met both Sudan President Omar Bashir and South Sudan President Kiir. I found President Bashir to be obstinate and uncaring about the destruction his armed forces have unleashed on his own citizens. President Kiir has been single-minded in pursuing independence over Sudanese unity since he assumed leadership of South Sudan in 2005. There have been numerous cease-fires and peace accords between the North and South over the years – none of them enduring. If we cannot devise a means of achieving a lasting peace, we may gain a brief halt in the fighting, but the war will inevitably resume at some point.

Our witnesses today will provide Congress an update on what is happening on the ground in Sudan and South Sudan and help us understand more fully the situation we now face. Hopefully, they also will help suggest a way out of this crisis – once and for all.