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**“Africa’s Newest Nation:  
The Republic of Southern Sudan”**

*Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights Subcommittee  
Excerpts of Remarks by Chairman Chris Smith  
June 16, 2011*

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. We are holding today’s hearing for the purpose of expressing our profound support and solidarity with the newest nation on the African subcontinent and assessing its challenges in transitioning successfully to independence. Recent brutal attacks by the Khartoum government on disputed areas in the North-South border area have raised alarms about renewed violence in this country that already has suffered too much. For decades, the Government of Sudan in Khartoum has waged war against the people of Southern Sudan and facilitated the enslavement of its people. Even as we meet today, the regime of President Omar Al-Bashir is seizing territory, causing the displacement of more than 100,000 people and killing countless other black Sudanese.

Sudan, geographically the largest country in Africa, has been ravaged by civil war intermittently for four decades. The first civil war occurred during the period of 1955-1972, and the second ran from 1983-2005. More than two million people have died in Southern Sudan over the past two decades alone due to war-related causes and famine, and millions have been displaced from their homes.

Since 1989, the United States has maintained multiple sanctions against the Government of Sudan because of human rights concerns in Southern Sudan, as well as the western region of Darfur, and Sudan’s support for international terrorism. I have had a face-to-face meeting with General Bashir in Khartoum pushing for lasting peace and an end to the abuses of his government. Unfortunately, he was far more interested in discussing the end of U.S. sanctions than he was in discussing how to end the suffering that his government and the rebel groups it sponsors have inflicted on countless, innocent lives.

Beginning in 1995, human rights organizations have raised the issue of the kidnapping of African southerners by Arab elements from the North in conjunction with the second civil war between North and South. It is now estimated that between 11,000 and 35,000 Sudanese are being held against their will and subjected to vicious exploitation and violent abuse in the North.

The Khartoum government claims that slavery is the product of inter-tribal warfare, which is not under its control. However, credible sources indicate that the Government of Sudan was involved in

arming and otherwise backing numerous militia groups involved in kidnapping and enslaving these southerners.

Regardless of who initiated their enslavement, their freedom must be secured as part of the South's declaration of independence. One Sudanese slave, Simon Deng, escaped and is now living in freedom in the United States. Deng said that every night while he was in captivity, he would go to sleep thinking, "Maybe tomorrow, someone will come to rescue me." He now goes to sleep thinking of those fellow slaves he left behind, and knowing that they are thinking the same thought, living on the same hope – that tomorrow someone will come to rescue them.

These people enslaved in the North must not be forgotten in the celebration of the new country. The United States and the rest of the international community must not let their suffering continue.

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, South Sudan held a peaceful and transparent referendum on southern secession, as called for in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). According to the South Sudan Referendum Commission, 98.8% voted for secession. In early February, Sudanese President Bashir officially accepted the result of the referendum. The United States, the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations and others endorsed the result as well. On July 9, 2011, the Federal Republic of Southern Sudan will officially declare its independence.

Unfortunately, mutual military buildup, occasional clashes and unresolved issues from the CPA led to a tense atmosphere in the contentious Abyei region. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, according to a United Nations report, a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) Joint Integrated Unit convoy, accompanied by a U.N. peacekeeping force, was attacked by the SPLA outside Abyei. The northern military unit was being moved to a newly agreed-upon position. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) denied deliberately attacking the northern military unit as retaliation for an earlier SAF attack on an SPLA Joint Integrated Unit, but that May 19<sup>th</sup> attack took place in an area controlled by the Southern Sudan police force.

As usual, the Khartoum government has vastly overreacted. Northern military forces invaded Abyei, displacing as many as 100,000 people and began moving in Arabs from the Misseriya ethnic group. This ethnic cleansing of the Abyei area will have a far-reaching impact on the resolution to this dispute. The indiscriminate bombings in Southern Kordofan, attacks in the Nuba Mountains area and reported door-to-door murders of non-Arab Africans is creating a scene as horrific as at any time during the civil wars.

We are nearly on the eve of independence for Southern Sudan, yet many issues remain unresolved. There is the undefined border, citizenship questions regarding southerners living in the North, governance issues for the post-independence nation, equitable sharing of oil revenues, the question of the liberation and repatriation of Sudanese still held in bondage and, of course, the continuing northern military attacks.

The United States, one of the guarantors of the CPA, has a great deal at stake in the Southern Sudan's successful transition to independence. Since 2004, the United States has spent \$9.8 billion in humanitarian and other assistance. But that monetary investment is outweighed by the moral commitment to see this transition through to a successful conclusion.

Now we must do all we can to help this new nation come into being in peace and help its government to safeguard the life and liberty of its people.