

Testimony by

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Christopher H. Smith, New Jersey, Chairman**

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I. Introduction

Thank you, Chairman Smith, for calling this very important and timely hearing concerning the Sudan and for giving me the opportunity to testify before this committee. I also would like to thank the Ranking Member, Mr. Payne. Mr. Smith, I appreciate the longstanding commitment to the welfare of my people you have demonstrated for years. Mr. Payne, I thank you for your steadfast leadership, tireless travel, and deep concern for the peace and security of my country.

My name is Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala, I am the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Tombura Yambio in southwestern Sudan. I am very grateful to have come from my native Sudan to share with you the gratitude, hopes, and concerns of our new nation.

In my testimony, after providing a brief background and context, I will explain the role of the Catholic Church in responding to needs, alleviating human suffering, and providing hope to millions of Sudanese people. I will summarize what we see as the principal threats to these efforts and to the peace and security of Sudan and her neighbors. Finally, I will conclude my remarks with seven recommendations for the U.S. government to consider.

II. Background

In a few weeks time the world's newest nation will be born – the Republic of South Sudan - with its independence marked in a ceremony in its capital, Juba, on July 9. The journey to this point has been long and difficult. Millions have died along this long walk to freedom. Millions more were driven from their homes, and many, like me, were driven from their country.

But due to the tireless efforts and sacrifices of countless people, undeniably including the support and leadership of the U.S. government, the people of southern Sudan will celebrate a peaceful and historic achievement next month. I was born into this war. I was made an orphan and a refugee in the decades of its bloody conduct. Mindful of all this war has cost us, I find it difficult to adequately express to you how profoundly grateful and proud I am to see Sudan at the brink of peace.

We in the Church have tried to bring people at every level of society together – from cattle herders and subsistence farmers to diplomats and presidents – building the bridges needed on this journey to peace. Supported by many international organizations like Catholic Relief Services, Solidarity for Southern Sudan, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we continue this work, charting the way and laying the foundation for the road to peace and prosperity.

Next month's ceremony is just the beginning of a new journey. This new country needs our attention, our support, and our continued prayers. Decades of war and neglect devastated southern Sudan and her people. Access to clean water and good sanitation is limited. Medical care is rudimentary. Educational opportunities are scarce. But progress, while slow, is being steadily made. Peace is possible, and development is another name for peace.

Enormous threats to that peace and progress are emerging. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 will end in 2011 and the Sudanese Church is concerned that many of the key provisions within this historic agreement have not been implemented.

There are flashpoints along the north/south border, most recently in Abyei and the Nuba Mountains of Southern Kordofan. People across southern Sudan call out for security and justice, as do their brothers and sisters in Darfur.

III. The Role of the Church

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is at the core of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. Our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

Our Church teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good. Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met, “The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*). The Church is a teacher of truth for humanity and has the right and duty to speak on political and social issues that affect the people. These duties will be essential in promoting an inclusive and responsive Government of South Sudan.

The Sudanese Church in her prophetic role has accompanied the Sudanese people in times of peace and war. The Church has been building peace, providing basic services and serving millions of Sudanese people across the generations, as international aid actors have come and gone. It is an indigenous Church, sharing the hopes and suffering of the people, giving voice to those who often are not heard.

IV. The Way Forward

Although we’ve come a long way, and are within reach of our independence, major obstacles to our peace and prosperity remain. The Church in Sudan is concerned that four issues in particular hold the potential for a return to violence if they are not resolved.

First, the Sudanese Church recognizes the need for the full and timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). We are encouraged to note that the CPA signatories have created structures to negotiate post-referendum arrangements that will be crucial to a peaceful future. However we are concerned at the late establishment of these structures, and the absence of Church, civil society and other actor’s participation in them, which could lead to a lack of transparency and inclusiveness. The US government and international community must assist in resolving the technical, logistical and political obstacles to resolving the remaining issues. We place our trust in you, and others like you who have accompanied the peace process so far, particularly the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and friends of

IGAD (USA, UK, Italy and Norway); the African Union; the United Nations; and the Arab League to continue to encourage the signatories of the CPA to honor their agreement and to act in the best interests of the people of Sudan.

Secondly, the violence and suffering along the north-south border must be addressed and cannot be allowed to obstruct the promise of Sudan's peaceful referendum. The border states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile will remain potential flashpoints until the legitimate aspirations of the people of these two states are met. These communities have repeatedly endured violence and displacement during the war and through this interim period due to the fighting between different clusters of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Despite previous agreements including binding international arbitration, there have been long standing difficulties in resolving the status of Abyei and conducting popular consultations in Southern Kordofan. But there is no excuse whatsoever for allowing these political difficulties to take a military toll on innocent people. We demand that our governments make an urgent and concerted effort to agree to an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of troops to allow for a neutral security force, unobstructed humanitarian access and the flow of humanitarian supplies to those in need, and guarantees for the safety and resettlement for those displaced.

Thirdly, the Church in Sudan is appalled by the increasing number of inter-ethnic clashes in southern Sudan, most prominently in Jonglei, Upper Nile, Lakes and Warrap States; the ongoing attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Western Equatoria; and the continuing insecurity in Darfur. We are particularly alarmed by the increase of abuse, rape and killing of women, elderly and children, aimed at destroying the social fabric within and between communities. We strongly condemn these atrocities and any other form of violence and urge both the NCP Government in Khartoum and the Government of South Sudan in Juba to fulfill their obligations to protect their citizens and bring to justice those responsible for committing and encouraging such attacks.

Finally, the rights of minorities, particularly the religious and ethnic minorities historically marginalized, must be protected throughout Sudan and South Sudan. It is important to create a climate of security and protection, and respect of basic human rights, in accordance with Sudan's obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The new constitutions of these two nations must reflect the full rights and dignity of all its citizenry. Sudan's war of visions and identities must end. The people of Sudan will not overcome our history of division and violence until we all recognize and accept our broad diversity and common dignity. True peace and prosperity will come when we overcome the temptation to oppose or oppress others based on different ethnic, cultural, or religious affiliations.

IV. Recommendations for the U.S. Government

In light of these concerns, the Church in Sudan urges the United States Government to undertake the following:

1. Deploy every diplomatic resource, employ every incentive, and apply every consequence necessary to ensure the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan bring an end to the fighting in the three transitional areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile; and that the parties negotiate and observe a full separation of military forces and the deployment of international buffer forces such as those proposed by IGAD and the African Union.
2. As signatories to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, continue to work intensively with the international community to ensure the parties fully uphold their obligations within that agreement and urgently resolve key outstanding issues including issues of citizenship, border demarcation, trans-boundary rights, international treaties and conventions, foreign debt, and shared natural resource management including oil production and water usage.
3. Urge the UN Security Council to continue support for peace keeping missions in Darfur, Sudan and South Sudan with adequate funding, appropriate logistical support, and sufficient mandate to provide civil protection.
4. Ensure that humanitarian assistance is timely and sufficient; that humanitarian access to vulnerable populations across all of Sudan, in particular Darfur, and South Sudan is secured; and that the security and rights of minorities, including the right to movement, are protected.
5. Provide robust and long-term support to programs promoting good governance, civic education, and citizen participation in the constitutional drafting process which will contribute to the capacity of the Government of South Sudan and South Sudanese civil society to establish an accountable, inclusive, and representative government; an independent judiciary; and a free media.
6. Increase long-term development assistance to South Sudan that focuses on building a diverse economy and on lifting people out of poverty. Special emphasis should be placed on health, education, agriculture, micro-finance, and infrastructure development.
7. Contribute technical and financial assistance to programs that promote peacebuilding, community reconciliation, and conflict early warning systems. Substantial peacebuilding assistance should include South Sudanese civil society and in particular reflect the historical contribution of faith-based communities.

V. Summary/Conclusion

I conclude with expressing my sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the United States for the generous assistance to the hungry, the poor, and the displaced of Sudan. Our Church has helped distribute that assistance, but more importantly, our people have benefited from that assistance. I, my Church, and my country are truly grateful for your solidarity.

For most of our history and much of my life, it seemed unlikely the people of southern Sudan would have the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination. That such an exercise

was possible, let alone as successful and peaceful as it was, is a testament to the hard work and dedication of your government and others of goodwill.

As you have heard, much remains to be negotiated and resolved as we approach the end of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Resolving these issues will be critical to Sudan's future, as will concerns for minorities remaining in the north, and conflict in the border areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile. Likewise, the people of Darfur still suffer, and this suffering and insecurity must be resolved to bring peace and development to the region.

The people of Sudan have made great strides in avoiding a return to conflict that had seemed all but inevitable. Significant and sustained humanitarian and development assistance would help consolidate that progress, and provide tangible encouragement that Sudan's civil war is truly over. It is crucial that the United States remain actively engaged in Sudan and South Sudan through these critical initial years. We have suffered too much and suffered too long to believe our full freedom will be easily or quickly achieved. There have been too many lives lost and too many agreements dishonored to believe these freedoms will be easily defended.

Having ended Africa's longest war, Africa's largest country is at a crossroads. The road out of the violence and suffering of its past has been a long one. But with your continued support and ongoing commitment, we can all help bring this new nation of South Sudan a chance to enjoy the hope and the freedom, the justice and peace, it so richly deserves and has long awaited.