

**Testimony of**  
**Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Donald Booth**  
**before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global**  
**Health, Human Rights, and International Organizations**  
**“U.S. Policy Toward Sudan and South Sudan”**  
**February 26, 2014**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

This hearing comes at a tumultuous time for both Sudan and South Sudan. South Sudan continues to be mired in a devastating internal conflict that, while relatively recent in its emergence, has already caused widespread death and destruction, and threatens to unravel the social fabric of this young nation. With the interests of other regional neighbors so heavily in play, any increase in tensions has the potential to foment broader regional instability. To the north, Sudan continues to respond to the grievances of marginalized groups with violence, particularly in Darfur and the “Two Areas” of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States where government forces have routinely engaged in indiscriminate aerial bombardments. Linked by geography and resources, Sudan and South Sudan’s interdependence could be a source of stability, but recent steps towards resolving bilateral issues have been overshadowed by the conflict in South Sudan.

Speaking as someone who has been in the region almost continuously since December 22, working to bring an end to the fighting and to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table, I can assure you that the U.S. Government has and will be fully engaged to support the President’s goals of two countries, at peace internally, with each other, and with the

region. We stand ready to help both Sudan and South Sudan build a peaceful and prosperous future in which all Sudanese and South Sudanese citizens are respected, protected, and have a say in the governance of their respective countries.

## **SOUTH SUDAN**

Three years after South Sudan's historic referendum for independence and nine years since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, South Sudan is again riven by conflict – not with Khartoum, however, but with itself. It is devastating for the people of South Sudan, and for those of us in the U.S. government and broader international community, who have all made enormous investments in this country in the hope of seeing it escape the terrible cycles of violence that marked its past and that now threaten to destroy its future.

The cessation of hostilities that was signed by the parties on January 23 was a critical step. Unfortunately, hostilities and attacks against civilians continue. We are deeply concerned by reports of serious human rights abuses and violations that have been committed throughout South Sudan by both parties to the conflict, including those reported in the UN's first report on abuses committed since the conflict began. Both parties have continued to violate this agreement and commit abuses against civilians, most recently with the anti-government forces' assault on Malakal, and before that pro-government forces' attacks on Leer and Godiang. A true cessation of hostilities is our most pressing priority, and the United States Government is providing significant financial support to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led Monitoring and Verification Mechanism which will monitor and identify violators of the cessation of hostilities agreement.

In addition to getting both sides to adhere to the cessation of hostilities agreement, we are deeply focused on moving the parties to a meaningful and inclusive political dialogue. The roots of this crisis run deep. The government attempted to contain inter-communal violence without fully committing to the hard work of addressing its causes which include trauma from decades of war, economic disparity, historical grievances between communities, human rights abuses, and political grievances due to real or perceived underrepresentation. On top of this, the government had also progressively reduced the space for political competition, within and outside the ruling party, and for independent media and civil society voices to be heard.

The IGAD Mediators have proposed meaningful political dialogue, between the two sides with a broad representation of others in South Sudanese society. Their premise, one with which I agree, is that the government must not be given the space to return to business as usual with a quick fix and political accommodations for the main protagonists, for the simple reason that this will not bring about a sustainable peace. A number of other senior U.S. officials and I have made clear that we, too, are not engaged in business as usual; as one sign of this, I would note that our security assistance to South Sudan is not going forward at this time, and that some of it is being re-programmed to support the regional verification mechanism.

In parallel to these political negotiations, it will also be critical to start what could be a very long process of national reconciliation that allows multiple and diverse voices to be heard, and to encourage the development of a transparent mechanism for accountability for serious human rights abuses on all sides of the conflict. The African Union is

currently establishing a Commission of Inquiry for South Sudan, which we believe could serve as an important step towards ensuring accountability and preventing the recurrence of such abuses. We hope this mechanism will move forward expeditiously, and are looking for ways to support this and other initiatives to deliver justice to the people of South Sudan.

Finally, we are pressing all parties to permit immediate and unconditional humanitarian access to all in need, to the hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese men, women, and children who are the real victims of this violence. More than 883,000 have fled their homes including some 167,000 who have sought refuge in neighboring countries and tens of thousands who are sheltering at UNMISS facilities. Both parties bear the responsibility to begin creating the security conditions and confidence that will allow those who fled to return to their homes and communities. Given the essential role that UNMISS has played in protecting civilians, we are continuing our strong support for the mission, and have repeatedly demanded that all parties cease attacks and threats against the U.N. mission. Additionally, the conflict has disrupted agricultural cycles and will have lasting effects on food supplies. This humanitarian crisis will only intensify in the coming months with the return of the rainy season. To help stem the crisis, in fiscal year 2014 the United States has already committed an additional \$59.6 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance to help those affected by the recent violence in South Sudan.

## **SOUTH SUDAN-SUDAN RELATIONS**

South Sudan's relationship with neighboring Sudan is fragile. In months just prior to the conflict there were positive signs of an improving

relationship between Juba and Khartoum, and it appears that Sudan has so far played a constructive role with the IGAD-led mediation efforts to resolve South Sudan's internal conflict. However, we are concerned about the potential for Sudan's involvement, especially given their interest in South Sudan's oil fields, and we are urging Khartoum to continue demonstrating caution. Greater involvement by Sudan could cause friction with other regional actors as well as opposing sides in South Sudan, and we, along with other partners, will continue to press for restraint. We are also urging Sudan to allow international humanitarian agencies to provide assistance to the tens of thousands of South Sudanese refugees who have fled into Sudan.

Additionally, there are still unresolved issues between the two nations that cannot be allowed to fester indefinitely. Both nations need to work to implement the September 27, 2012 agreements, particularly on the disputed border regions, while also endeavoring to resolve the final status of Abyei. Unresolved these issues remain potential flash points for further violence – and indeed, there has been renewed tension in Abyei in recent days.

## **SUDAN**

Sudan also continues to suffer from internal strife and conflicts. In addition to multiple insurgencies, economic and social tensions escalated last fall as cuts to oil subsidies resulted in the largest protests seen under the National Congress Party's rule. Unfortunately, the government responded with a violent crackdown on the protestors, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries, as well as nearly 2,000 arrests and detentions.

In Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, despite the resumption of talks between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North and the Government of Sudan earlier this month, fighting continues. The fighting has taken an unacceptable toll on lives and livelihoods, with people unable to safely farm or access social services. Indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas continues. I will continue to work with both parties, and the umbrella opposition group of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, to urge them to take the necessary steps through the AU-led effort to achieve a cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access—the latter of which has been denied by the Sudanese government since the outbreak of the conflict over two and a half years ago, resulting in a serious humanitarian crisis.

In Darfur, peace remains elusive as violence and insecurity have increased, resulting in further deterioration in the humanitarian situation. Last year alone, more than half a million people were newly displaced, primarily by inter-tribal conflicts and lawlessness, though fighting between government forces and rebel movements also increased. The United States has provided \$7 billion to date in humanitarian, transition, and reconstruction assistance to help the people of Darfur. The United States continues to press the Sudanese government to allow greater humanitarian access in Darfur, and to engage with all parties for a comprehensive political solution.

Reversing the cycle of violence in Sudan will require accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations. The United States will continue to urge the regional and international community to call for Sudan to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court, as required by UN Security Council Resolution 1593.

Against the backdrop of continued conflict and the repressive response to public demonstrations in September, we took note of President Bashir's speech on January 27 in which he called for an inclusive process to redraft the constitution—a process that would include both armed and non-armed opposition groups and that would address issues of peace, economic development, political reform, and a dialogue about Sudanese identity. The world will be watching Sudan carefully to gauge the seriousness of this initiative, which, if truly holistic, inclusive, and comprehensive, offers an opportunity to address the underlying causes of Sudan's tragic history of war between its center and its periphery.

I strongly believe that one key instrument to engendering peaceful, democratic transformation in Sudan is strengthened engagement—by the entire international community but particularly the United States. Through sustained, deliberate dialogue with a range of actors—including the government, opposition groups, civil society, and the Sudanese people more broadly—the United States can reinforce its position of support for the Sudanese people in realizing an end to decades of violence and repressive governance. Sudan's conflicts are indicative of a widespread failure to govern equitably and inclusively, and the international community must not allow Khartoum to continue obscuring national issues by painting them as isolated regional conflicts, nor can we allow them to pass off as credible any superficial national process that does not include and empower representation and participation from all levels and regions of Sudanese society. As part of this engagement, it is critical that we unite the international community to show Khartoum that change is both necessary and beneficial.

To this end I, along with other senior U.S. government officials, have endeavored to coordinate and strengthen international messaging with

key partners such as China, the United Kingdom, Norway, the AU, Ethiopia, Egypt, Qatar, and others. While it is critical that we continue engagement with Sudan, improvement of our relations with the Government of Sudan will continue to be predicated on genuine and sustained improvements in how Sudan treats its citizens and adheres to its international obligations.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I said at the beginning, despite the horrendous conflicts that have continued and erupted over the past months, out of the turmoil lies opportunity for both Sudan and South Sudan. The Government of Sudan can make the choice to undertake a truly comprehensive and inclusive constitutional process and national dialogue on the country's future. Similarly, the Government of South Sudan has a crucial opening to establish an inclusive, peaceful nation, representative of all, the kind of nation that is worthy of all they sacrificed in its creation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for this opportunity and for your continued commitment to the people of Sudan and South Sudan. I look forward to your questions.