

Statement

by

H.E Ato Seyoum Mesfin,

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Republic of Ethiopia,

at the Forum for Supporters of the CPA

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Washington

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is indeed an exceedingly important conference. I personally am convinced that it should have been convened much earlier. The successful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan people's Liberation Movement, is of critical importance, not only for peace and stability in Sudan, but also for the whole sub-region, and beyond. Sudan is not just a Horn of Africa country. It is also part of Central Africa, a country which shares borders with nine countries. Obviously, a lost opportunity for peace in Sudan would have enormous implications for millions and millions of Africans and, I might add, for the international Community as well.

I wish therefore to thank all those who are involved in the conception and in the organization of this Forum for Supporters of the CPA. I would like, in particular, to express appreciation to U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, General Scott Gration, for taking the lead in organizing this Forum, and, I should add, for the wisdom and farsightedness that he has

demonstrated since he took over this heavy responsibility. I wish to assure him, not only Ethiopia, but all members of IGAD, will be good partners to him.

I wish also to thank Senator John F. Kerry most sincerely for his key note address at last night's welcome dinner offered by Gen. Gration in honor of Heads of Delegation to our Forum. His message was characterized with vision, lucidity and commitment to peace and prosperity for the peoples of Sudan and our region. He raised high the voices of millions of Sudanese children born in the ashes of war and who want to have the opportunity to build their future in peace and prosperity.

Mr. Chairman,

It is perhaps appropriate to start out by admitting that a lot of time has been wasted since the signing of the CPA in January 2005. More or less two-thirds of the time allotted for the implementation of the CPA has been exhausted now while it is about a third of the tasks planned to be carried out during the interim period that have been accomplished. The Abyei boundaries need to be settled on the basis of the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the boundary demarcation between North-South has to be finalized, the nationwide elections now rescheduled for February 2010 have to be

carried out, and the referenda on Abyei and on self-determination of South Sudan should take place before the end of the interim period.

All these are tasks that ought to be carried out by the two parties in the next 18 months, which is in fact a very short time. There is no use now trying to apportion blame for the slow pace of the implementation of the CPA. What is important is what is done from now on, and this is indeed a Herculean task; not because the tasks are too difficult and complex, but because the lack of the requisite level of trust and confidence between the two parties makes them so.

There is no way that the CPA can be effectively implemented during the short remaining period unless there is far more enhanced readiness on the part of both parties to work together to ensure that the implementation of the CPA is speeded up. No doubt, there can be no progress in this regard unless the two parties take the lead. It is primarily their business.

But third parties have also a role; and this is perhaps to state the obvious. After all, the CPA is the result also of the concerted efforts of the international community, particularly of those who were involved in a very pro-active manner in the process of negotiation leading to the signing of the Agreement.

This Forum is also a confirmation of the conviction that third parties indeed have a role to play in ensuring that the implementation of the CPA does not falter, which no doubt, would be a tragedy of inconceivable proportion.

In our view, we all have heavy responsibility to help the two parties develop the capacity to work together in harmony so that they would be able to address the common challenge they are facing. None of them would be able to handle the challenge alone. Here, what is critical is, as I have already said, trust and confidence between the two parties. Not trust and confidence in the abstract, but in a concrete and tangible way related to each being ready, in good faith, to honour its responsibilities with respect to the implementation of the CPA.

I mentioned earlier how, much time was lost since the signing of the CPA. It would not be fair to ascribe the reason for this to the two parties alone. We, in the international Community, including we in the IGAD region, have not done enough to ensure that the CPA would not be denied the necessary attention. But it was, for some time. No doubt, Darfur is important, but it was not necessary, in order to pursue matters relating to Darfur, to neglect the CPA. We should draw the necessary lessons from this for what we have to do in the remaining period until the Referendum.

Mr. Chairman,

It is obvious that the reason we are here is partly because we are concerned about the situation in the Sudan during the period leading to the Referendum and the situation during the post-Referendum period. No doubt, it does not require to be an expert in Sudanese affairs to have the sense that risk is inherent in the Referendum. Accordingly, the great gift that the international community can give to the Sudanese people is assistance towards creating conditions for serious and effective discussions right away between the two parties on the post-Referendum situation. These discussions must be based on both possible outcomes of the Referendum and must lead to an agreement on a variety of issues --- some complex and some not so complex --- that are relevant to each of the two possible scenarios. Let me borrow the words of Senator Kerry. The 2011 Referendum is not a zero sum game and that the parties should not fix their gaze to 2011 but move beyond that.

I want to believe that there still exists a breathing space to make the unity of Sudan attractive. But, no matter what the outcome of the Referendum might be the notion of zero sum game has no place in the CPA.

The whole rationale in all this is to make sure that everything is done to reduce the risks associated with the Referendum and its outcome, and to facilitate a civilized handling of the situations no matter what the outcome of the Referendum.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by reiterating one or two points. There is absolutely no substitute for avoiding a catastrophe in the Horn of Africa and Central Africa and beyond, to ensuring a peaceful and effective implementation of the CPA and to handling the post-Referendum situation with wisdom and on the basis of prudent anticipation, well in advance, of potential problems that might, unless addressed in time, lead to cascading series of crises that once touched off, would be impossible to arrest, contain and reverse. For the Horn, of course, that would be unmitigated disaster. That is why we believe that we in IGAD have to do more and in a more consistent and systematic manner to help the two parties that own the CPA to develop the mutual trust and mutual confidence that they so critically need to be able to address jointly the common challenge they face. We want to be a lever which both can use to enhance confidence and trust between them. We believe that that is also what the rest of the international community can do on top of rendering other types of support which are also critical. It does not need emphasis that pledges made need to be respected. Some of these pledges of support to the DDR, reconstruction and

development assistance to war-affected areas are long overdue.
They mean a lot in terms of the prospects for peace.

I Thank You, Mr. Chairman, thank you all.