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## Meeting Summary

# Building a Multi-Party System in South Sudan

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The speaker noted that the issue of multi-party system extends beyond the sole structure of political representation system to many other areas, not only that of politics. He observed that South Sudan, the youngest country in the world, has a unique opportunity to take lessons from other African countries that have gained independence earlier. This will help South Sudan not to repeat some of the mistakes that have been made previously.

To successfully consolidate the foundations of a newly independent state there needs to be a sound economic basis, which has always been a problem in Africa. This problem has been further bolstered by the Bretton Woods Institutions Structural Adjustment Programmes. In the context of promises that are being made during electoral processes, these structural reforms and general weakness of African states have led to rising frustrations within the societies and political elites. Such difficult economic situations have frequently favoured one party political system. Today, the terminology has changed and we no longer speak of Structural Adjustment but of Physical Adjustment Programmes. However, the reasoning remains the same and thus the lesson for South Sudan is that it should not over-rely on foreign economic policy programmes. National resources should be the basis of an independent economic structure that allows the promises made to the people to be met.

This issue is fundamentally important for the multi-party system, since failed reforms have frequently resulted in countries becoming single party political regimes. Currently, the party system in South Sudan is multi-party system, but it might not meet the standards of democracy that we are used to thinking about. The positive aspect of South Sudanese politics is that its leaders, unlike in many other African countries, have not entered politics straight from the jungle where they were previously organizing armed struggle against a colonial power, or other enemy.

In South Sudan, and as envisioned by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement from 2005, the leaders had six years to prepare themselves to enter more ordered, political structures – these six years of political experience are very important. The two main objectives of the CPA were peace and democratization. The 2007 Political Parties Act created a sensible basis for the creation of political parties. It required at least five hundred founding members of a party to be created, and if the party was to be recognized on the national and not only regional level, then these founding members should have been from at least three different states.

The act has been amended in 2012 after independence, and the document became a form of government control over parties. The amendment has

introduced new requirements regarding the number and provenience of party founding members, which the speaker called 'introducing single party system through the back door'. Current regulations require founding members to come from at least eight states with five hundred founding members in each of them, which raises the required number of founders to four thousand.

The speaker underlined the need for consensus to be built on the basis of unity, not single party system. The question of unity will become more important as South Sudan is entering a new stage in its development, when there is no more an external enemy to strengthen the unity. The South Sudanese will need to find a common purpose to replace the threat from the North. In this new context, the unity of the state should not be taken for granted. South Sudanese people need to identify fundamental issues and work on them.

The issue of diversity is a fundamental one. 'Unity in diversity' is a call for addressing the question of diversity in South Sudan and taking the lessons from policies of Khartoum. The recent division of the country was the effect of Khartoum being unable to address the issues of diversity with a unified Sudan. Another question is peace and its sustainability, which can be achieved and guaranteed only through effective democratic mechanisms. That is why building a more robust multi-party system in South Sudan is a priority.

Democracy is not only elections, it is also a 'way of life' that has to be internalized by citizens and applied in much more than only political behaviour during elections. Selective democracy will not suffice. Examples of Egyptian democratization, which has ultimately led to 70 per cent of citizens not having their representation in the Parliament, illustrated the speakers point. This is especially important given the fact that the current South Sudanese Government's legitimacy is based on the 2005 CPA accords.

In the speaker's opinion, the current government does not want 'new legitimacy for a new state'. In fact, many of the new Acts being adopted by the current government are copies of, or are very similar to the legislation implemented by Khartoum. For example, legislation regarding state security has initially been envisioned to allow the secret services to only collect information. However, now it has also been granted the right to make arrests and people in this case can be arrested without charges being presented. This might possibly be used against the opposition and raises fears. The speaker noted that before 2011 there was one country and two systems.

Today, because of the legislation being adopted in South Sudan, we have two countries and one system.

### **Question and Answer:**

#### *Question:*

The government is using the military to control the country. What are the chances that political means will foster democratization in the context of illiteracy and tribalism?

#### *Answer:*

From a historical perspective, democracy has never been achieved easily. The way that the UK has arrived at democracy is a clear example, and the problems are even greater in developing countries. There is no way of establishing democracy by other means than democracy itself. People must never get tired of dialogue. We must follow democratic ways. People think of military intervention as a short cut to democracy, but in fact it is very costly and rarely beneficial short cut.

#### *Question:*

What are the attitudes of GOSS and SPLM-DC regarding the naming of the newly established South Sudan Armed Forces which retain many symbolic and organizational relations with Sudan People's Liberation Army on which it is based and which in turn is strongly connected to the current government?

#### *Answer:*

I am not a member of GOSS so I will not comment on that. But I believe it is an international standard to refer to armed forces defending a country as 'national'. But at the same time SPLM has all the power to do whatever it is that they do.

#### *Question:*

Citing problems of the justice sector and media suppression, do you as an opposition find it difficult to operate?

*Answer:*

The concept of opposition is not settled down. In the opinion of many leaders, opposition is anti-state. They do not see it as a mirror for the government. Moreover, there have been instances of aggression against representatives of the opposition and confiscation of property.

*Question:*

In the absence of democracy and multi-party system, what is your assessment of the possibility of the current government finding a common enemy?

*Answer:*

There is nothing I can say about this.

*Question:*

In the area of Sudan – South Sudan relations, what is the SPLM-DC position on al-Bashir's threats to attack and topple the Government of South Sudan, as well as on the issue of Heglig?

*Answer:*

SPLM-DC has taken a clear position from the very beginning of the conflict – this conflict is a problem between SPLM and National Congress Party, it is not a conflict between Sudan and South Sudan. There is little I can say of Sudans plans regarding the South Sudan, however, the South Sudanese struggle for independence was not about regime change beyond the South. We do not want expansion, and we believe non-interference is the best solution.

Regarding the issue of Heglig, it was in our opinion messed up by SPLM. There were two instances where SPLM was presented with faulty maps in which Heglig was shown a part of Abyei. They have not protested. But it was clear for the arbitrators of the dispute that Heglig is not part of Abyei and definitely not part of the North. But this is not important in general; the problem is not about whom Heglig belongs to. The real issue is that you should never use force to change international borders. This is forbidden by international law, and whoever does it is viewed as the perpetrator and an entity without any rights. A good illustration is the case of Badme between

Ethiopia and Eritrea. Eritrea has rights to this border territory, which is currently occupied by Ethiopia. However, because it tried to use force to regain them, no one now is going to support it in trying to force Ethiopia to move military out of the disputed territory.

*Question:*

SPLM is trying to find a common enemy and achieve a rally 'round the flag effect'. How do you evaluate this policy? There also seems to be a programme of expulsion from the border areas based on ethnic affiliation. Do you believe we need some kind of *pax sudanica*?

*Answer:*

A search for a common enemy is not effective when the realities on the ground are harsh. It is a short lived resolution of a long term problem. Regarding the expulsions, this relates to the governments of both North and South. They should not overreact. The territories where expulsions take place are very multicultural and fluid. Things need time and wisdom to change.