

**A COHERENT INTERNATIONAL APPROACH TO PROMOTE SOUTH
SUDAN'S PEACEFUL FUTURE**

1. Let me start by expressing my deepest gratitude to Friedrich Ebert Foundation for an opportunity to speak to this august gathering. This is an opportunity I treasure so much, not only for the privilege of meeting with old colleagues and making new friends, but also for the passion with which I hold the subject matter and my esteemed regards for all of you who have worked tirelessly to give a good life to despondent people around the world and especially in Africa.

2. I could claim limited familiarity with the challenges of South Sudan haven by virtue of my stint in Darfur operated closely with the region and interacted widely with its stake holders. I, as an African as do every other person here, take great pride in the recent course of events in South Sudan; I am by this, referring to the free and transparent process that gave a voice to the overwhelming desire for self determination by the people of the South and in similar vein, the gracious and honourable acceptance of that desire by the North. It is therefore easy to feel the excitement and the joy with which the independence was received by the people of South Sudan. I couldn't therefore agree more with President Kiir when at independence he declared the day to be most important day for the people of South Sudan, as I earnestly prayed for the crystallisation of this vision.

3. We should in this euphoria however not be lost to the frailty of this feat and not be blinded to the phenomenal challenges posed to this new nation. I hold the conviction that as we share in the glory of their accomplishment, we collectively also bear a responsibility to help the people of this new nation live their dreams. This becomes more so when we look at what Paul Collier "The Bottom Billion"

talked about countries with low or negative growth. The traps he stated are; poverty, bad governance, conflict (or post-conflicts) and land-locked.

4. Poverty. Poor countries are more likely to fall into civil war or relapsed into it than rich countries. Groups in such country could see the opportunity to buy some weapons, raise an army and loot the treasury. From my experience in Sierra Leone it is easy, because of poverty and unemployment for one to easily hire a small army with \$10,000. Natural resources could tempt would be rebels and that may be the reason why there is generally instability in countries with natural resources. More challenging is the “Dutch Disease”. i.e. stopping activities in other sectors, especially, the labour intensive sectors such as agriculture/manufacturing.

5. Bad Governance. When government is an active player and “not a hindrance” in creating economic development such country can still develop even if the governance is poor. But when government cannot provide basic services to its people and fail politically and economically then the outcome could be civil war. Note that any economy that over depend on natural resources will become increasingly corrupt and uncompetitive. Collier suggested targeted military intervention as it happened in Sierra Leone during the country’s crisis. I have my great fear on this because it seems to me that he did not have the complete picture of the development in Sierra Leone. The move into Makeni the rebel headquarters and the complete disarmament in the country including Kono the diamond producing province was by the United Nations forces which I was the Deputy Force Commander.

6. Conflict. Poverty and bad governance could lead to conflict and if we are not careful it could become a vicious cycle because of weak

State institutions can lead to deficient socio-economic performance and reform process which can lead to power politics. The spillover effects to all these are refugees/IDPs, increase in military spending, illegal migration, brain drain, capital flight, negative economic growth, extremism, ethnic and sectarian tensions. These can easily destroy a country economic development.

7. Land-locked. Land-locked countries often lag behind their maritime neighbours in overall development and external trade; because of distances from the coast. The dependence on sound cross-border politics of its neighbour country(s), dependence on neighbour(s) infrastructures, dependence on neighbour(s) peace and stability, or dependence on neighbour(s) administrative practices. Collier went on to suggest that land-locked countries should not allow themselves to be “air-locked” or “e-Locked”. They can only do that if they have the eco capacity to provide the necessary infrastructures or power to stop that from happening. However, the real contradiction is his suggestion that they should not have been countries in the first place. After all, most of the land-locked countries in Africa are creation of Europe’s colonial carve-up. Yet, when we African blame our colonial past for most of our predicaments we are told it is long since we gained our independence and should have overcome that by now. Forgetting that any house built on a faulty foundation cannot last long.

8. The real challenge here is that all the factors stated above are all applicable to South Sudan. It is now left to the South Sudanese to prove the theory wrong. The tag of the newest nation to the Republic of South Sudan is well deserved but as we can see the challenges confronting this new nation goes beyond teething problems as some commentators have chosen to describe it. Very

few nations had attained independence harbouring 7 fractious and internecine armed groups as South Sudan, and fewer nations had progressed with the pathetic development indices that South Sudan now present. Essentially, South Sudan at birth is confronted by challenges that would prove overwhelming for any new nation. It would seem that independence is but the first of many hurdles that South Sudan needs to surmount to truly make the transition to statehood.

9. The war may have been over for Sudan (even if formally) but it has left in its place ruins and dilapidation and worse perhaps is the fact that it had not been replaced by peace. Every facet of the South Sudan society still bears the mark of war. Reconstruction could over time make up for the ruins in infrastructure or the lack of it - if you will, but much more will be needed to mend the mindset and psychology of war that still pervades the minds in South Sudan.

10. The independent state of South Sudan is in the face of all parameters at best tenuous and must be supported by the international community to defile the ghost of its past that is set to haunt it. The world must urgently come together even more than it did in midwifing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Disturbingly, every sign of the very same dynamics that fuelled the war between the North and the South exists within the new South Sudan State itself with potentials to reincarnate the same orgy of violence within the new nation. Averting this threat calls for much more than the traditional financial dole-out that international assistance often connotes. The prevailing scenario in South Sudan, presents a fundamental two pronged problem, firstly the internal mechanism and fractious equation within the new nation itself and

the military threat posed by conflicting interest with its northern neighbour magnified by the Blue Nile and the contention of Abyei.

11. I consider the internal threat within South Sudan just as in most African countries the most potent because it possesses the greatest potentials to fracture the very fabric of the new nation and presents the most difficult challenge for external intervention. The most incendiary of these threats is the imbalance in the ethnic demographics of the South, a factor that has within Africa often proven to be a recipe for chaos when not prudently managed. The dominance of the Dinka and the Nuer ethnic groups accord them overwhelming majority as much as it stirs real or imagined apprehension of marginalisation amongst the minority tribes. The adoption of a one-party transition constitution perceived to stymied dissension has done little to assuage this fear of the minority. The dominance of political influence and access to resources by the majority has spurred resentments quite reminiscent of the North-South dichotomy. The upsurge of insurgencies in some States premised on this contention tells an ominous story for the new nation. Wider spread military defections and activities of renegade militia groups have created an atmosphere conducive for crime which in turn motivates the clamour for fire arms with adverse consequence to the DDR process. The spiralling tempo of inter-communal conflicts within South Sudan presents clear threats to national cohesion. Frequent Lord Resistance Army (LRA) incursions add to the security dilemma the government is grappling. The overall implication to security and safety of lives could wane public confidence in the ability of the authorities to protect its citizens.

12. The SPLA which is in the process of transforming to a national army is practically still a guerrilla force. With an estimated strength

put varyingly at about 230,000 it faces a monumental challenges at being re-crafted into a professional army that could provided needed security for the new nation. The government's preoccupation with checking mating aggression from the North impedes its capacity to focus on internal security challenges. Building the SPLA's capacity to provide adequate, responsible and affordable security to the people is vital in ensuring a safe and secure environment vital for national development. With the integrated historical relationship between the SPLA and the ruling SPLM and the liberator status they assume in the new nation, it will be of little surprise if excesses are not recorded by troops. Like in other African countries where veterans of the "liberation war" arrogate extra judicial powers to themselves as liberators the military justice system therefore needs to be sufficiently strengthened to prevent or curtail similar excesses that could possibly destabilise South Sudan. There is an urgent need to provide the veterans some skills before they are demobilised.

13. To engender a South-South reconciliation and harmony the international community would need to encourage an inclusive policy that guarantees every citizen civil and political rights and the opportunity to participate equitably in national government. The government of South Sudan must be accountable to the people.

14. The economic and development equation in South Sudan also present a grave challenge to the future of the new nation. The endemic poverty in the South attributable to years of civil war is rated to be among the highest in the world. Only 15 percent of the population is reported to be literate making it difficult to raise the human capital required to stimulate the economy. The government is moving in the right direction in providing communication by collaborating with partners in constructing highways in Juba and linking South Sudan with Ugandan and Kenya. However, more needs

to be done urgently for this infrastructure to stimulate economic activities. Currently, South Sudan depends on the oil industry for 98% which gives a picture of poor state of other sectors of the economy. Increased investment and economic diversification are vital to South Sudan's economic stability. This will not only encourage greater and a sustained revenue for the government, but would also create employment and income generating opportunities for the population; boost food security and help enthrone comparative advantage by industrialization and human capital development. However, several factors presently militate against the country's economic advancement that requires attention. The ability to improve food production is hindered by a dearth of skilled manpower, poor infrastructure, limited improved technologies, inadequate inputs and little to no agricultural/livestock extension services. Other significant barriers to growth include a lack of financial/market infrastructure and services, the lack of adequate government and legal infrastructure and continued often unpredictable violence.

15. On the international front, the anticipation of a military confrontation with the Republic of Sudan continues to dominate the South Sudan's military strategy. The apprehension over possible war diverts much of the government effort towards military build up. Currently it is reported that about 40 per cent of the national budget is allocated to defence an arrangement that hardly support rapid development as is needed in the country.

16. This goes to prove that as there remains a potent military threat from the northern borders of the South Sudan the ability of the government to concentrate on building local developmental capacities would be limited. Both the Republics of Sudan and South Sudan must be made to realise that their future is inextricably linked. The international community should encourage both nations to find common grounds for harmonious relations.

17. Above all the international community should in rendering assistance to South Sudan be cautious not to impose its vision and expectation on the new nation. Rather efforts should be concentrated in assisting it to the actualization and development of home grown ideas and vision of the people. I must also state that as there are bountiful challenges for the nation there are also ample opportunities that could be exploited by the new nation and international partners to create a prosperous South Sudan.

18. South Sudan itself should note that the world is in a new epoch, one dominated by a mantra of social justice, ecological balance, sustainable economic systems, and spiritual evolution. Nations, have as a result sought to reflect these principles in their relations with other states. There is now a greater proclivity for states to portray their actions in humanitarian terms than ever before. Students of international politics however argue that it is difficult for humanitarian consideration to define a nation's course of actions in her relation with other states except when such acts of humanitarianism serve both national interests.

19. Some donor nations' foreign policy gives the impression that Africa does not matter and is dispensable. One just needs to follow the way many African countries are pressured to adopt Western values regarding human rights and democracy; Western laws are enforced extraterritorially; Western corporate interests are promoted under the slogans of free trade and open markets. When it comes to African conflicts most developed countries will only intervene where they have interests.

20. Another defining moment in Western world and African relations is the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001. This again brought to light the strategic importance of Africa. It came with the

sudden realization of the grave danger an impoverished or an adversarial Africa could pose to the security of Western nations and could greatly undermine US fight against terrorism. However, interwoven with the desire to fight terrorism is the quest for access of Africa's vast resources, this is more so with the uncertainty surrounding the Middle East. Today, Africa is a crucial source of energy, strategic and ordinary minerals, including precious gems.

21. The expectations of South Sudanese, African and the rest of the world at independence may become hopelessly hopeful. But let us remember that democracy, capitalism and the nation-state has emerged hand in hand over centuries in Europe and America, carefully balancing and complementing each other; we should not expect South Sudan to adopt to these radical changes overnight. Even though it had far longer to adjust and develop, Europe had suffered numerous upheavals, revolutions, coups and conflicts – including two world wars. The east-west partition of the entire continent over several decades, and the persistently periodic fighting in the Balkans – in the 20th century alone; yet Africa including South Sudan at independence was somehow expected to progress peacefully. The US had experienced serious trouble with corruption and a full blown Civil War during the early decades of its own independence. It is not realistic to expect South Sudan or Africa for that matter to run clearly and smoothly from the word go.

22. The first contact of Africa and Europe was through trade before colonization or the 3Cs – commerce, Christianity and civilization. The development, reduction in poverty, disease and corruption will also be through trade. The developed nations should remove the tariffs imposed on foreign goods; this will enable Africa including South Sudan to compete in the local developed world market. If US

can reduce or stop subsidizing some of her industries that will allow more African commodities to be sold, the African farmer can make more income to enable him feed his family. Or the subsidies of every cow at \$3 per day in Europe is given to the over 300 million Africans that live on about \$1 a day. This will definitely reduce the poverty. It is true that weak rule of law, corruption, poor infrastructure, lack of capacity and many more are responsible for Africa's lack of trade progress. However, as Giles Bolton stated that economic growth is as a travelling circus: while it is the responsibility of African countries to get to the show on the road, it's the developed world's responsibility to ensure there is a road to travel down, because it is the developed countries with the most desirable markets that get to determine most of the trade rules. The rules are crucial and any large fluctuation in global prices have great implications for most developing African countries because they are poor and have only few goods to export.

23. I am very optimistic that South Sudan will join the rest of Africa and will soon come of age. You only have to consider where Africa is coming from especially in the 1970 and 1980s and the history of South Sudan and you will see where my hope is coming from. We are seeing decline in the number of civil wars, coups and dictatorship. The growing stability is now allowing the people to make demands of their government and debate among themselves on national and not sectional issues. If trade can be increased, aid harnessed effectively, and AIDS controlled, we will see Africa including South Sudan beginning to have a real chance to move forward. Most Africans as well as South Sudanese know that it is only them who can develop their vision, and change the reality on the ground. However, whatever the developed nations do especially

in term of trade, economic development and loans or debts will matter and have effect on the entire continent of Africa.

ALL THAT SOUTH SUDAN IS REQUESTING IS LET THE DONORS CO-ORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITIES FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS AND TREAT THEM AS PARTNERS AND NEITHER DICTATING ON THE TERM OF THE RELATIONSHIP.

24. Finally, let me end with the words of President Kennedy, “My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man”. John F Kennedy 20 Jan 61.

25. Thank you.

ML AGWAI

Gen (rtd)