

## Fears for collapse of the Sudanese talks in Ethiopia

Wednesday 1 August 2012

By Isaiah Abraham

August 1, 2012 - The Sudanese delegations from the Republic of the Sudan and that of its Southern counter part, the Republic of South Sudan are meeting for the past few weeks in the Federal Republic of Ethiopian city of Bhar El Dar. The African Union/United Nations road map, in one of its resolution for the conflict between the two countries, called for unconditional resumption of peace negotiations. There have been diplomatic furors for the past three months after border skirmishes between the two countries in June 2012. But signs are that we might arrive at half baked or no agreement at all.

Everyone has done everything for peace talks to produce anything. President Thabo Mbeki of the African Union High Implementation Panel has done a commendable job to shuttle between the two countries on the same. The United States of America, Britain, France, China, the East African leaders, Ethiopia of course and Eritrea have all played an important role to bring the two warring sides to the table. May their efforts be rewarded!

Internally, the two leaders for the two countries of Sudan and South Sudan, President Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir and President Salva Kiir Mayardit, met on the sideline of the 9th Session African Union Security Council Meeting in Addis Ababa on June 17, 2012 to shore up support for peaceful settlement of disputes between their two countries. It was a bold step on the side of the two leaders to come face to face. The two presidents discussed no details however about what they have proposed to be agreed, but President Kiir appeared to have gone a bit further to show commitment of his team to find amicable solutions to each pending issue. Kiir was specific and President Al Bashir seemed to have acknowledged and appreciate their role in pushing forward for an agreement.

But as it has always been the case with the Sudan, there is no need for much optimism about that intention to agree or honoring agreement. Khartoum problem about agreements is their slow pace of agreeing and then lack of implementation of the agreements they have agreed to apply. Even if they agreed with Juba today, they will drag their feet later for no clear reasons at all. The International Community and peace brokers at the moment for Sudans must exert pressure, and ensure that there are clear mechanisms to force Khartoum to abide by the work of their own hands (agreement).

The current round of peace talks at Bahr El Dar (Ethiopia) might produce a compromise agreement especially on oil production, but agreement on others such demarcation of the border for status of the disputed areas and Abyei will pose a challenge. Look, Khartoum isn't at this point interested in discussing in good faith the border demarcation issue. They go around through what they called security. They will prefer sanction than give in to any pressure. To them they are right that the said areas (Hofra Al Nahas, Kafia Kingi, Panthou, South of Joda, Jau, Abyei and Kiir) belong to the North.

Diplomatically, the majority of international bodies are behind Khartoum and that militarily they are holding these areas, chances are that the National Congress Party (NCP) will stick out their necks not to budge whether the threat of sanction is real or not. The world hasn't understood the South on the areas in dispute. On the side of South Sudan, there is no question about these areas not belonging to it, but there is this question about international community bias when the later accepted Khartoum side of the story on face value, about these areas. These lands are 100% Southern, historically or otherwise. When South Sudan took over its occupied territory at Panthou, the world was breath deaths on our leader as if he was an aggressor.

President Kiir accepted world opinion on the ground that he will be listened to. He is shock, as do his people. The fact that Khartoum illegally has been on another territory after forcefully entered the place in 2008 speaks volumes about the world body's (UN) double standard.

This unfair treatment of South Sudan by the white men is unbecoming and unacceptable! South Sudan has every right to finish the job to returning its territories with or without the blessing of the so-called international community, once the diplomatic processes are heading nowhere. People of South Sudan will not give an inch to the North under any circumstance.

The two sides therefore are likely going to stick to their guns on this matter of the disputed areas. By extension, chances for oil resumption through the Republic of the Sudan are getting narrower unless Khartoum drops its claim over the territories they have occupied through the barrel of the guns.

Look at this: if the current rounds of talks failed as they likely going to be so, Khartoum not Juba will be hard hit by unrest and springs such as that in the Arab World. Khartoum wish to see South Sudan gone to the wind or failed will not happen. People here are behind stories and are aware about Khartoum policies or failing South Sudan. They are less bothered about Khartoum lies that this group is better and this or that will happen. South Sudanese are behind their president in every way and will not be intimidated by any short term economic hardship. Dr. Lam and the group waiting for the collapse of the Juba system shall have a long wait. It is not about Kiir but about South Sudan.

Interestingly, South Sudan looks more focus, contrary to what the SPLM-DC is painting out there. Remember these people have defied conventional wisdom to accept the National Congress Party lies that the system in Juba must be changed. Juba in this situation should not bank on the Ethiopian talks alone. The country should device other plans, and happy the country is heading that way. If peace talks faltered we must not be caught unprepared. That is the nature of things, it always either ways!

Let us assume also the possibilities of peace settlement delayed. If that scenario happened, the current economic status will worsen but let's not be despair. Our leader (Kiir) put it then that the 'day' will surely come. The Security Council hopefully might extend the deadline, and but that is just hope, they might since the body don't care these days about South Sudan welfare. Sudan will not be affected much, but South Sudan. It is important here that the leaders in the South Sudan start lobby hard now; sanction is deadly.

Our president ought to establish a slim government; he promised to cut government expenditure through downsizing his huge government. The president must honor his own words. Measures to trim the government are overdue. Time to walk the talk is here. The country is under siege from myriad socio- economic challenges imposed largely by Khartoum on our people. Khartoum doesn't want the people of the Republic of South Sudan to pick up pieces of their shattered lives unfortunately, but such a tendency isn't new. People of South Sudan must rise up and challenge Khartoum under these circumstances. President Omar Al Bahsir is a good man, but his hawks are doing everything in the book to wipe off our people on the face of the earth. Let's stand solid behind our leadership, shortcoming not withstanding.

People of South Sudan must not let allow Khartoum to laugh last or fulfill its then remark that the South would be a failed State. If we care not be name of a failed state, we got to response firmly; we must be responsible government and people. I have lectured much and would love now to pray: Allah, stop the enemies of peace from failing peace agreement in Ethiopia! Deliver peace to the North and the South of the Sudan! Amen!

Separately, this author was pleased the way the organizers (Gen. J. Juma in particular) of the Martyr Day did their part. Our leaders did an excellent show of care through arts, and the show of solidarity to the widows and orphans of our right cause. God bless President Kiir, His able Assistant and everyone in leadership.

*Isaiah Abraham lives in Juba; Isaiah\_abraham@yahoo.co.uk*