

Sudan and South Sudan Cooperation Agreement are bad but

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By Isaiah Abraham

October 10, 2012 - On September 27, 2012, the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan signed several bilateral agreements in the Ethiopian's capital Addis Ababa. Both countries have had series of political engagements on the same matters of disagreement for the past three years. The matters in contention were border demarcation, security along their common borders, Abyei status, debts as well as the oil production fees disagreement. But other matters have overshadowed these areas for reason best known to stakeholders in the talks. These talks were under the auspices of the African Union. Former South African president Mr. Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki led an AU High-Level Implementation Panel on the same, with full backing from the United Nations Security Council particularly Resolution 2046 of May 2, 2012.

For many years after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of the 2005, there have been different levels of talks on unresolved matters of the same. Last year especially after independence of South Sudan negotiations were heading nowhere until December the same year when both sides couldn't talk good terms anymore. Earlier this year, talks broke down on oil charges and security incursions on both ends deteriorated. Each accuses the other for the break down of peaceful resolutions of disputes. On oil for instance, Khartoum confiscated South Sudan oil ships destined for the overseas markets, and issued threats of doing more unless their suggested oil transit fees are accepted. Earlier on and within the Interim Period there have been negative voices about lack of transparency in the oil production. Issues of trust override anything else, and there a stalemate.

Oil status triggered everything. The leaders in the South in January this year decided to close down oil production to avoid Khartoum pipe lines charges. They did it in protest and many people supported the decision including this little author. Though we then cheered up our leaders for closing the oil production, consequences are felt everywhere. Our banks dried up and so-called friends ran away when we badly needed their help. Majority of the people have different views against those in power. That is them, but this author will close with a lament line against leadership of this country.

Let's move on to our discussion. We are hearing the signing of many agreements between the two countries of the former Sudan, majority of them are economic materials, what do you make of the whole lot as a concern citizen or observer of the Sudanese affairs. Well, I for one don't want to reinvent the wheel, the agreements are sanctioned by our leader Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit; it was also negotiated and passed by people we are confidence of their ability. The Council of Minister on Friday moreover passed the text in toto; the ball has moved to its irreversible stage with Parliament on its way. Who cares again here if there are questions hanging over the so-called 'excellent' agreements? Remember Dr. Barmaba (South Sudan Information Minister) has become another Mohammed Said Al Sahhaf of this country; Mr. Al Sahhaf was the last Saddam's Information man in Iraq.

I wish this man goes away from that docket and Professor Dhieu Mathok Diing takes over. Dr. Dhieu is the man to watch, highly learned, civilized and humane. He could have been used more there or Labor Ministry than Dr. Marial whose sole purpose to divert, divert, deny, deny, defend, defend.

So, what agreements are we talking about so to speak? Just to refresh your memory, we are told that the agreements are: oil, certain financial matters, banking, trade, post service benefits and annex known as cooperation agreement. There are also nationals and security agreements. If you piece each agreement, you will find that 90% of its favors the Republic of the Sudan against South Sudan and hence a problem. Though it is too earlier to celebrate as the agreements are still 'work in progress', signs are that Khartoum and Juba are bound to make a rush and end up disadvantage one another. South Sudan will be disadvantaged!

Its not any secret that we still have long way to go or mediators of the Sudanese Peace Talks were virtually ambiguous about what concrete course of action to take on hot matters of Abyei, Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas, Kofi Kingi, Kaka and 14 Mile.

If the world is fair and if at all there was good faith on the side of Khartoum, why should anyone settle for soft parts of dispute leaving behind grave matters that are important to the two sides? No one was interested in economic matter before political settlement of the aforesaid real issues besetting the minds of our two nations.

Conspicuously, President Omar Al Bashir has got away once again before the watchful eyes of the so-called International Community? Didn't I hear them saying that anyone whom the African Union find guilty of rejecting the AU proposal shall be held accountable? Why don't these people go by their threats we have heard them propping then? What do the UN and the AU think they will be doing when one party violates its principle every now and then? May be the date line is still ahead for the UN and AU to react, but as usual there will be no action against President Omar Al Bashir!

Look, Khartoum was asked to stop bombing South Sudan, and they never stop it. No action was taken. The UN in South Sudan

even 2 weeks confirmed airdropping of military supplies to their militiamen deep inside South Sudan in Pibor County (Jonglei State), and with all glaring facts around, no one bothers to probe who is this Al Bashir that doesn't respect international engagements? To be exact, someone must keep watch against President Omar Al Bashir hawks to torpedo the process, especially security.

On Abyei however President Al Bashir was right on two points; the issue of an external Chair for Abyei Referendum and another law to repeal the current Abyei Legal Status. Re-called also that in Kadugli on June 20, 2011, there was some sort of an agreement for peace and administration of Abyei Area that reinforces the Abyei Peace and Administrative status. It would have been unfair to overlook previous arrangements, temporary as they may seem. To have a foreign Chairperson to oversee the Abyei Referendum would have been weird. Chair should be from within, either from the North or from the South.

I suggest that before the 20/10/2012, let's accept the Chairperson to be from the North surely that person will not interfere with the result. If framework is right, everything will be alright. The Abyei Referendum exercise will not be like the South Kordofan gubernatorial election, this But Misseriya tribe eligibility is out of the question. They aren't residence of Abyei and therefore have no any legal right to vote in that crucial. This is an international exercise and with this era of dotcom Ngok Dinka shall vote fairly though it might not be free.

On freedoms for nationals of Sudan and South, they are to be unpackaged. There is too much ambiguity. Northerners are allowed by this agreement for employment, because if they are to own and dispose property, what does that tell you about his/her employability rights. How could he/she get a property when unemployed? Employment isn't all about employers; one can employ himself/herself, right/wrong? The same is true with issues related to buffer zones or security arrangement as a whole. More work needs done. I didn't see any reason why should our forces be moving back from certain disputed areas, while Sudan Armed Forces are left untouched in some key strategic areas. Our forces on Mile 14 therefore must stay put! It is unfair if today we are force to leave this place when Arabs are firmly in Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas and others.

Though the agreement is generally not fair, let's not throw it away altogether. Our situation at the moment requires that we go by the agreement. To reverse it will worsen the situation. We earlier made some mistakes in our economic judgment. If the intention is to keep the viability and peace for the two nations, then let's go for it. That is what happens in negotiation when you are in a weaker position. However, our leaders must understand clear here that our people aren't happy with all the agreements except post service benefit agreement and oil production agreement.

But an overall, I fear for the country under our current leadership status. Even if people talk of aspired successes, I see nothing coming out from our men at the top. Government with such myopic mentality will certainly not deliver. The same people, the same brains! There are daily miasma news every turn you go in our land, and anytime South Sudan Al Sahhaf (Dr. Marial) comes out and open his mouth, you feel like cursing yourself. Mr. Marial, the agreements your government signs with the Sudan are bad, they aren't 'excellent'. For a short while yes, but in the long run, you will remember why they aren't nice. Sir, they rob me and you of our own mastery and the promise we made to own our affairs. Economy isn't anything small. If someone controls it, forget about any future for your own. Viability beta chunu? How did we get there in the first place? But for the sake of socio-economic meltdown, the very creation of our own, let's give a benefit of doubt and see what's next in 2013 about Kiir and his men. I want them out!

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