

The Elders visit South Sudan in sombre mood and urge continued dialogue with Khartoum

“Dialogue is the only way to resolve differences and to build two viable states; military force is a dead-end, promising nothing but suffering and misery” – Desmond Tutu

6 July 2012, Juba, South Sudan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his fellow Elders Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, and Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, met President Salva Kiir in Juba today to discuss the challenges faced by South Sudan as the people prepare to celebrate their first year of independence.

At this crucial moment for the world’s newest country, the Elders are deeply concerned about the unresolved issues between Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the humanitarian crisis resulting from the ongoing hostilities in Blue Nile and South Kordofan in Sudan.

The Elders raised a wide range of issues with President Kiir, placing special emphasis on the importance of resolving disagreements and conflict through dialogue, and building a viable state in South Sudan.

Archbishop Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said:

“A year ago we joined the rest of the world in celebrating the birth of the new nation of South Sudan. Today in Juba, my mood is rather more sombre. The economy is in dire straits due in part to the government’s decision to shut down oil production. The President’s own estimation of losses due to corruption is truly shocking. And the relationship with Khartoum is acrimonious and mistrustful.

“There is still time to turn things around. Important talks between Sudan and South Sudan are getting underway in Addis Ababa again, under the aegis of the AUHIP chaired by President Thabo Mbeki. We as Elders will do our utmost to persuade the leaders in both Juba and Khartoum to accept that they will always be neighbours and will always be interdependent. Dialogue is the only way to resolve their differences and to build two viable states; military force is a dead-end, promising nothing but suffering and misery to their people.”

The Elders arrived in Juba today from Addis Ababa, where the African Union-chaired talks between Sudan and South Sudan have just resumed. They met former South African President Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the African Union's High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and former President of Burundi Pierre Buyoya, and commended the Panel's efforts to bring the parties back to the negotiating table.

The Elders urge Sudan and South Sudan to make decisive progress during this new round of talks, as a deadline for an agreement of 2 August set by the UN Security Council approaches.

Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, said:

"The differences between Juba and Khartoum are based on mistrust, which needs to be overcome by confidence-building measures. I hope both parties will make the most of these talks and reach agreement before the 2 August deadline. As Elders, we strongly encourage President Kiir and President al-Bashir to meet in person as soon as possible. The first responsibility of any government is for the welfare of its people – and that cannot be delivered in Sudan or South Sudan unless their leaders work together as partners, not enemies."

"Here in Juba, ahead of the first anniversary of independence, I want to emphasise this country's enormous potential. Its situation would be transformed by peace. Sustained dialogue with Sudan – and sound, inclusive government within – is the only way for South Sudan's citizens to reap the benefits of their hard-earned sovereignty."

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

"We are particularly concerned about the human impact of tensions between the North and South. The conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile have pushed 200,000 refugees to neighbouring Ethiopia and South Sudan. Another 500,000 people of South Sudanese origin living in Sudan are in a state of legal limbo after having lost their Sudanese citizenship. Moreover, up to 4.7 million South Sudanese will be in need of food aid this year, according to the World Food Programme."

"We came to Juba today, and intend to visit Khartoum next week, to urge the leaders of both countries to realise their interdependence and put the welfare of their people first, particularly women and children, who are most vulnerable in times of economic hardship and war. I am especially worried for the millions of young people in Sudan and South Sudan whose futures are at stake."

Following their visit to South Sudan, the three Elders plan to travel to Khartoum. This visit is part of a two-phase initiative by The Elders, following [Jimmy Carter and Lakhdar Brahimi's meeting with President Omar al-Bashir](#) in Khartoum in May 2012.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Friday 6 July Juba, South Sudan

18:00 Press conference (time to be confirmed)
Venue: Home and Away Restaurant, Juba

Sunday 8 July Juba, South Sudan

14:00-16:00 Ecumenical church service organised by the Sudan Council of Churches with the participation of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and fellow Elders
Venue: Nyakuron Cultural Centre, Juba (to be confirmed)

Tuesday 10 July Khartoum, Sudan

12:00 Press conference (time to be confirmed)
Venue: Corinthia Hotel, Khartoum

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Important note for journalists wishing to cover the visit: please note the Elders' schedule is subject to change – for updates please email media@theElders.org, including your mobile phone number. We will keep you updated by SMS.

For more information about the Elders' visit to South Sudan and Sudan, please contact: media@theElders.org

The Elders' work on Sudan and South Sudan

Peace in Sudan has been a priority for The Elders since the group's formation. In October 2007, shortly after The Elders' launch by Nelson Mandela, they visited Sudan to highlight the human impact of the conflict. They travelled to Khartoum and Juba to meet political leaders, including President Omar al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir, UN and African Union officials and diplomats. In Darfur, they spoke to tribal leaders, women's groups, civil society leaders and internally displaced persons.

Since then, The Elders have conducted private diplomacy and advocacy, speaking out at key moments, and supporting the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in its efforts to facilitate the resolution of outstanding issues between North and South. Members of The Elders visited Sudan in January 2011 as part of the Carter Center's observation mission of the South Sudan Referendum.

In view of the deteriorating security and economic situation in Sudan and South Sudan and the human impact of the conflicts in Blue Nile and South Kordofan in particular, The Elders are stepping up their engagement in the region and seek to offer their collective experience and support to help tackle these urgent challenges.

In May 2012, [former US President Jimmy Carter and former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi travelled to Khartoum where they met President Omar al-Bashir](#), encouraging his government to address the outstanding issues with South Sudan, and the need for a peaceful resolution to internal problems.

Members of The Elders travelling to South Sudan and Sudan in July 2012



Desmond Tutu – delegation leader

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is often described as ‘South Africa’s moral conscience’ and is a global champion for human rights. A passionate and compelling speaker, Tutu took the anti-apartheid struggle to the world. In his own country, he led thousands of people in demonstrations, always preaching non-violence. In 1984 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and later chaired South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine apartheid-era crimes.



Martti Ahtisaari

Martti Ahtisaari is former President of the Republic of Finland. A distinguished statesman, he is also a globally respected diplomat and mediator who has played a key role in ending conflicts in Aceh, Kosovo and Northern Ireland. As a senior diplomat he helped Namibia to achieve independence and was made an honorary citizen. In recognition of “his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts,” he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2008. He is Chair of CMI (Crisis Management Initiative).



Mary Robinson

Mary Robinson was the first woman President of Ireland and is a former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. As an academic, legislator and barrister, she sought to use law as an instrument for social change. A tireless advocate for justice, she was President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative from 2002-10, and now leads efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable populations in the world do not disproportionately suffer the effects of climate change. She is Chair of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice.

About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) (Chair). [Kofi Annan](#) has temporarily recused himself following his appointment as UN/Arab League Joint Special Envoy on the Syrian crisis. [Nelson Mandela](#) is an honorary Elder.

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to www.theElders.org.

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