

United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Sudan Experience Project

Interview # 51 –Executive Summary

Interviewed by: W. Haven North
Initial interview date: November 16, 2006
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The Interviewee had a long association with Sudan as a research scholar, manager of a peacekeeping unit in Sudan, and a reporter on conditions in the Nuba Mountains and Eastern Sudan. She is also a strong resource on the “three areas” for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and an observer for the Italian Government. The position as a resource person supported the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) negotiations.

The CPA came out of ten years of IGAD engagement on peace issues. The Declaration of Principles of 1997 was the key underpinning of the negotiation process. There was recognition by the two sides that neither would win the war; pressure from the international community also helped move the process along. The chief motivation for the North to negotiate came with a change in government in 2000 - hardliners to reformists – after 9/11 with a more constructive engagement with the U.S., i.e., until Darfur. For the South — the Southern Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM), the recognition that they were not going to win the war and that the potential for a Northern military build-up from increase in oil revenues would make the war harder to fight.

In the negotiation process, General Sumbeiywo was a respected and balanced mediator. However, on some issues such as the “three areas,” he did not know the issues nor follow the methodology used in defining and addressing them. The methodology was to agree on criteria for defining root causes, list all the grievances, sift through them to identify root causes, and ultimately agree on the criteria for finding solutions. This process was scrapped because it stalled the negotiations. The negotiations became one-on-one between Taha and Garang with support from committees that would work on technical issues and solutions.

The “three areas” include the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and Abyei. The first two areas ended in a unilateral, imposed decision to expand South Kordofan to include West Kordofan and scrap the name Nuba Mountains; a unsatisfactory process to the people in these two areas. Current problems with the two areas link to the process of the negotiations. Abyei is a bigger problem. The agreement was based on a document from the U.S. observer, not the IGAD secretariat; this document was accepted but not negotiated – a *fait accompli*. The Government was uncomfortable with the protocol and the outcome of the Abyei Commission was unsatisfactory.

In the beginning, the international community engaged incredibly through the key role of the resources people in the development of the Machakos Protocol. But the role changed after Nakuru; they were gradually excluded from the negotiation rooms and called on solely for the need of an explanation or clarification. Some pressure arose when seniors in the U.S., or other capitals, called leaders of the negotiations at critical points. The relationship of respect between the two leaders, Taha and Garang, began to emerge. The implementation is particularly difficult because only two people, Garang and Taha, understood how to implement the agreement, despite the hundreds of pages written on implementation arrangements. Some implementation of the CPA occurred in the south with structures and institutions; but no productive use of resources transferred. Yet, some revenue is flowing to the south. Also the Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is looking at rearming.

On monitoring arrangements, the United Nations (UN) mission is key, but its attention diverts to Darfur. The Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) is not particularly vocal or useful on denouncing the lack of CPA implementation; the membership is not particularly energetic.

Regarding the implementation prospects, CPA implementation is not going well; lots of discouragement, people demoralized, security deteriorated, and the space for civil society has decreased. Tremendous change is evident in the South with more ownership and involvement in governance; however, there are many unresolved issues such as corruption, ineffective structures, and ethnic tensions.

At the national level, implementation is deficient in every respect. There is no Petroleum Commission, no Land Commission, and no reexamination of concessions given for oil. The status of the National Constitutional Commission is uncertain and the SPLM are excluded from key positions and have no power in other positions. The loss of Garang is a huge blow to the CPA; the loss of a vision for a New Sudan via the CPA, a view not shared by the vice president from the South. Additionally, little has been done to prepare for elections. The international community should push for the elections, a key attribute for a resolution, and help the Sudanese society prepare.

On lessons, one key factor was the application of one mediator with authority and respect complemented with the international community coordinating messages. Also, if we keep focusing resources on Darfur without strengthening the implementation of the CPA, another Darfur will result. The focus should be on the country as a whole. The focus should be on helping the Sudanese prepare for elections so they can hope for a change; the preparation should start now.

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Q: What has been your association with Sudan and particularly with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)?

A: I have been working on Sudan for the last thirteen and a half years. My academic work is focused on Sudan. My first degree and most of my PhD research were on various aspects of Sudan. I worked in the Sudan for about eight years. I was in charge of United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) peacekeeping unit. I also went to the Nuba Mountains and eastern Sudan and authored many reports and academic publications on those two areas. For the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), I was a resource person for the "three areas," particularly the Nuba Mountains, also looking at Abyei and southern Blue Nile. In the late Eighties, I was the observer for the Italian government.

Q: Let us turn to the precursors to the CPA, what were the conditions that brought about having negotiations that led to the CPA? What was the situation that triggered the two sides getting together?

A: The CPA came out of an engagement that started ten years earlier; just at different phases. IGAD and the partners had different phases of the work and of greater enthusiasm and more promising than others which were particularly unhelpful. Obviously, there had been the Declaration of Principles back in 1997, a key moment in underpinning the process that then developed in Naivasha. There was also at that point a recognition that neither of the two sides were going to win the war; there was a need to engage in a more constructive effort towards finding a solution, as well as more sustained, concerted pressure by the international community to actually help the parties move forward on a possible agreement.

Q: What were the chief motivations of each side to change their approach?

A: On the side of the government, there had obviously been a split in the government. There was ongoing tension, since the late Nineties, after the ousting of Tarabi, with differences in the government, the hardliners and the more reformist side of the government trying to advance different agendas. At the beginning of 2000 the reformists took the upper hand for some time, until Darfur developed at least, and were successful in discussing the opportunity to renew the dialogue with the SPLM. It was also a different

atmosphere after 9/11, which brought particularly constructive engagement, specifically about the U.S. with the Sudanese government. They started to cooperate on the security agenda. So there was a change of relations, as well as a change in government. Much of what happened in 2002 was linked to the immediate aftermath of 9/11, because you had a positive, propulsive sort of push in terms of getting the government to negotiate with the SPLM. There was more pressure felt by the government after 9/11 and events in Afghanistan and later in Iraq. That is interesting to see now, how the quagmire in Iraq conversely has meant that the same stick is much more ineffectual, because the bluff has been called. They probably feel there will never be an intervention in Darfur after what happened in Iraq and therefore they are less sensitive to pressure.

Does it surprise me? No, it does not surprise me at all; but obviously it is interesting to analyze the way in which the War on Terror has been fought. Particularly the invasion of Iraq has become a deterrent to protecting civilians where they really need to be protected.

Q: And the motivation from the South side?

A: The SPLM was aware that there was no way they possibly could win the war. They also felt with the government getting stronger and stronger, getting more and more resources, particularly through the oil, their position was being increasingly weakened. Potentially, in the long term, they could stand to lose. So it was a good opportunity to negotiate at that point in time. They were looking at alternative strategies, including support to the insurgents in Darfur, to try and create more fronts for the government. They knew that with the build-up of resources from the oil eventually the type of equipment and the armaments and so forth the government was in a position to acquire; this meant that it would become much harder to fight the war.

Q: Turning to the CPA process itself, keeping in mind that the objective of these interviews is related to lessons learned from the experience: how do you view the process of the CPA negotiation and what were some of the key features that made it work?

A: The mediator was an interesting choice. For all the faults of the IGAD secretariat, General Sumbeiywo himself was actually quite respected by the parties. Even though he made mistakes at times and even though it was not always the best moves during the three years of the negotiations, he was very good at maintaining his authority in the process, commanding the respect of the parties, and being perceived as balanced.

Q: You say he made some mistakes. Is there something we can learn from that?

A: On some issues, particularly the “three areas,” he was less conversant with that. For some of the areas he was less comfortable with, he was not able to distinguish between the various issues that were advanced. The lesson there is we need to be as detailed as possible.

Q: What was an example of that?

A: In the first sessions around the “three areas” definitely, the parties were not really prepared to negotiate, but he could not understand the issues brought to the table. I remember this particular one, in terms of the methodology, that the main resource person, Professor Hayson, suggested he did not know the issues or understand the methodology and he ended up snapping at one of the parties in a way that was not necessary and appropriate. But it was largely out of this frustration about the issues being discussed. He clearly could not follow the discussion. Had he prepared better and tried to engage with the methodology Professor Hayson suggested in a more useful way, it probably would have worked quite well. Same things were happening in the southern Blue Nile committee. They made a lot more progress, largely because some of the issues advanced by the parties were less contentious and the parties were less antagonistic. But he had a problem engaging with the Nuba Mountains committee.

Q: Can you elaborate on the methodology?

A: For that particular meeting, Hayson suggested the parties analyze the root causes of the conflict, agree to criteria for defining a root cause, and then agree on the criteria on how to find solutions. He tried to have the parties list all the grievances, come up with whatever they wanted, use the criteria to sift through the roots of the grievances listed, and come up with agreed root causes. The problem was that General Sumbeiywo could not understand the difference between listing the grievances and then moving to define the criteria for the root causes. So the Southern Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) mentioned things like Arabization or forced Islamization and the government of Sudan would say, “This is not a root cause.” The methodology would have implied that you just listed it, and when you came to the two parties agreeing on what was an objective root cause, you could have discussed the merits of that particular grievance. But General Sumbeiywo unilaterally decided that Arabization and Islamization were not legitimate grievances and had to be removed from the list. Therefore, the SPLM decided not to continue the discussion, until this conclusion was removed.

Q: Did they not come to some agreement on root causes?

A: Eventually the process was completely scrapped, because that did not move forward; it stalled the negotiations. Then they went back to having a discussion two-by-two and eventually the process changed completely after that particular session. After the process moved to Nakuru and they drafted the famous Nakuru document, it was an attempt to close the negotiations. Similar to the DPA, the Darfur Peace Agreement, only the government unilaterally rejected the document very strongly and almost stopped the process leading to an agreement to take up the process at much higher levels. From that moment on, the international community had a much more limited role in the discussions. The negotiations became one-to-one between Taha and Garang, with support from their committees that would work on technical issues and propose solutions to the two supremos, who would then decide.

But for the “three areas,” in particular, that meant the two areas, Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, were not the priority ... (Abyei was a different case for Garang, in particular.)

The two areas were dealt with in a way, which was not satisfactory for many of the people from the two areas. Had the process been different, we probably would have a different agreement for the two areas, or at least something which was not as imposed, as unsatisfactory, as people feel for the current agreement. Because the proposal the committee for the two areas {eventually put to Garang} was substantially different from what we have in the agreement now, there was no engagement of the international community, no openness, no process that really analyzed what happened in the two areas. You had a unilateral decision to expand South Kordofan to incorporate West Kordofan, to scrap the name Nuba Mountains. All the problems we are facing with the two areas now are in a way to be linked to the process through which the agreement was negotiated.

Q: And then there was Abyei, which was a bigger problem?

A: Abyei was a bigger problem. What happened there was that technical people from the State Department or Harvard drafted the agreement. It came through the U.S. observer at the talks. It was not produced by the IGAD secretariat. Once again, it was a document that the parties accepted, but it was not negotiated. It was almost a *fait accompli*, take it or leave it and they took it, but it was seen to be sacrosanct. Not that there weren't problems in other areas where they actually agreed. But Abyei was particularly bad, because, again, the government never really felt comfortable with that protocol. The outcome of the Abyei Border Commission analysis and the report was not, in their opinion, satisfactory.

Q: What was the role of the international community in the process of the negotiation?

A: In the beginning, they were incredibly engaged. I remember General Sumbeiywo mentioning the Machakos Protocol several times; he said it was the product of a couple resource persons, who played a key role in sealing the development of the protocol. There was the really central engagement of the international community. And the resource persons were involved in a number of the sessions, as well as the observers, who would always triangulate with the parties about what was happening and apply pressure when needed, raising issues to the capitals. They sustained pressure to make sure that the process came to an end. But the parties were strong enough to resist the pressure when they felt it was inappropriate. I remember at one point, Colin Powell came to Naivasha; and an effort was made to try to get the agreement ready for his visit, to at least have the security protocol ready and the parties said, "Look, we're not ready. We do not care who comes. We just do not have an agreement yet." This is very different from what happened in Darfur, where the pressure with the Darfur Peace Agreement meant the agreement is very limited and partial in the buy-in of all the parties that should have subscribed to it.

Also the role of the international community changed substantially after Nakuru, because the parties negotiated the agreement eye-to-eye. We were all roaming around Naivasha and drinking tea and looking at the hippos but the amount of work we could do was limited. We were always trying to chase various people from the SPLM or the government and ask them about follow-up and check what was happening, what they were discussing, try to get an up-date, but we were not allowed into the rooms where the

discussion was being held. That, again, was a change after Nakuru, because at the beginning the observers and the resource persons were allowed and everyone worked very closely. Soon it was only the resource persons and then it was nobody. There were the exceptions such as the wealth sharing protocol; the parties would actively seek to engage resource people from the World Bank on certain issues to obtain an explanation or clarification; same with the IMF.

Q: You mentioned the international community providing pressure. What is the process of providing pressure?

A: Some are based on personal relations. For instance, Hilde Johnson knew Garang very well and every now and then her regional representative would call her to request to speak with Garang on advancing a specific point. Likewise, the U.S. representative occasionally would talk to more senior people in the U.S. administration, to make sure that they would call either Garang or somebody in the government. I guess the tone of the conversation would be different than the one between Hilde Johnson and Garang. It would be a call from the capitals, that is how you would prefer to apply pressure.

Q: Those calls made a difference?

A: Yes, in the process, sometimes the results from the call would be, “No, this is really a stumbling block and we cannot move” and so you just keep pushing and calling. Other times you would be able to unblock the issue easily, depending on the issue.

Q: Were the leaders sensitive to international pressure from high levels?

A: Yes, there was a lot of engagement at high levels, providing pressure at key moments in the process.

Q: I gather the relationship between Garang and Taha was particularly important to the negotiations. Is that right?

A: Definitely. It developed over the three years. They were not the best of friends at first, but they eventually began to understand each other, and an element of respect emerged between the two. Interestingly, towards the end, Ghazi, who was the first one to mediate the Machakos Protocol; went back to Khartoum and was strongly criticized and sidelined for the Machakos Protocol. With Taha we had a similar process. He was not sidelined but he definitely lost prominence, because people felt he gave up too much.

Q: So the chemistry between the two leaders just began to gel, and they developed trust in each other?

A: This is why the CPA implementation is particularly difficult, because in the end it became something in their two minds. Notwithstanding all the hundreds of pages written for the implementation arrangements, only the two people knew what they meant about how to implement this or that.

Q: Could you talk about each of the protocols you mentioned, such as power sharing, wealth sharing, etc.? How did those emerge from this and what was their critical role?

A: The developed starting with the negotiation of the Machakos Protocol, which eventually was linked to the power sharing protocol, but elements of wealth sharing and security are in the Machakos Protocol as well. It is a bit of a protocol in itself. And then the other protocols focused on specific issues related to sharing the political responsibilities: on power sharing, wealth sharing, and security, which are the three traditional areas focused in the peace agreement. The “three areas” were always a bit of a difficult issue, and they were dealt with separately and that is why we have these other protocols. Normally, it would be wealth, power and security, but in this peace agreement, we also have Machakos and the “three areas.” Machakos was the first one; it was the biggest. People then realized there was much more, starting from the “three areas”, because when they agreed on the Machakos Protocol, the first reaction from within the SPLM was “Where does this leave the ‘three areas?’ You talk about a referendum; you talk about the 1956 border. Where does this leave the people in the ‘three areas,’ who has been fighting with the Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA)?”

Q: Did the security protocol, wealth sharing, and oil, emerge separately? There were no major issues?

A: There were major issues with all of them, which we could talk for about a week, if you want!

Q: What were some of the key issues?

A: The SPLM was quite determined and systematic in trying to make sure that all aspects and all issues were covered. They stretched it to a level where they do not even have the capacity to fill all the roles required to implement the agreement. We see this, along with the lack of willingness of the National Congress to make sure the agreement is implemented, to be leaving us where we are today. So you have key elements of the protocols like the Petroleum Commission, the Land Commission, they are not even set up. Not to mention the fact that the Abyei Border Commission report has not been adopted, there has been no follow up.

That was supposed to happen six months after the signing of the agreement by the presidency. So the protocols tried to cover as much as they could in as much detail as possible, but there was a lack of implementation of the agreement. The international community is not fulfilling its role. The Assessment and Evaluation Commission, which was the mechanism designed to monitor the implementation of the protocols, has no teeth and is not making itself heard in terms of the lack of adherence to the original agreement.

Q: Let us turn to the monitoring. What were the monitoring arrangements set up in these agreements?

A: A number of them. The UN mission is the key one. That was on security, but, of course, when you have an integrated mission, they also have a civil affairs section and a political affairs section involved in that. The problem with the UN mission is that its attention has been almost totally diverted to Darfur. And so the UN group that was supposed to be in Khartoum to look after the implementation of the North-South peace agreement and work on the transition in the South, spent eighty per cent of its time on Darfur and that weakened implementation of this agreement tremendously. In addition the parties agreed to the UN mechanism.

The other element was IGAD; the Assessment and Evaluation Commission was headed by Ambassador Vraalsen. Have you ever heard anything out of the AEC? The first thing they finally accomplished was nearly two years later... the only practical thing we had was this legal paper about whether the report of the Abyei Border Commission should or should not be adopted, which, of course, should be adopted. Again, it is very low key; not much has been said about it and so the Abyei report has not been adopted. The Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) is not particularly vocal, useful, or forceful in denouncing the lack of implementation of the CPA.

Q: Do you have any understanding why they are not more effective?

A: It is because of the way the AEC is set up. The membership of the AEC is not particularly energetic. It is as simple as that. And also Darfur is diverting everybody's attention; that is the reality.

Q: Let us turn back to implementation. How do you see that moving, if at all, in terms of the various components of the agreement?

A: There is some level of implementation within the South. The government is actually in place and a number of the provisions have been taken on board. Even though the resources have started to flow, we have a huge problem in terms of corruption in the South. We do have institutions and structures in the field according to the provisions of the CPA, but we do not have productive use of the resources transferred yet, because everybody is talking about how these resources have been diverted. From what I understand, from a security perspective, the government of the non-SPLM group is in the hands of the SPLM more than the UN forces, which are passively looking at what the SPLA is doing. Actually the SPLA, everybody says, is constantly looking at rearming itself, because they feel that is the best guarantee they have.

Q: Is the security protocol progressing at all?

A: The government has not completely demobilized from the South. The SPLA finally redeployed from the east, with enormous delay, but the redeployment of the government from the garrisons in the South is far from complete. In terms of disarmament of the SPLA, all I am hearing is that the UN forces in the South are particularly ineffective in overseeing that disarmament. Because implementation of the CPA at the national level is

not progressing at all as it should obviously, the best guarantee for the SPLA is to make sure that they are still armed, in case things turn for the worse.

You have some implementation at the level of the South, but the national level implementation of the CPA is deficient in every aspect. The Petroleum Commission is not there; nor is the Land Commission. We have a cabinet, which is extraordinarily dominated by the National Congress. The SPLM did not manage to get any of the key positions they wanted. Even in those ministries where there is an SPLM representative, the apparatus is still National Congress and so you have a minister at the top with no power to actually push things in any direction that he or she wants.

Q: Is there a will in the North to implement the CPA?

A: Particularly with the Darfur crisis becoming more prominent, the hardliners have become the winning side. They were opposed to the CPA and to giving so much power to the SPLM from the beginning, and they are the winning side. I witnessed the progressive sidelining of the reformists, of the key people that had brokered Naivasha within the government in Khartoum. They have increasingly taken a low profile role, or else they had to become more hard-line to survive.

Q: And that affects all of the protocols?

A: Of course.

Q: Is anything moving on any of the other protocols?

A: The two “areas” are extraordinarily delayed, particularly in the Nuba Mountains. It has been really difficult to agree on a state-level government. We finally have it, nearly two years later. On the wealth sharing, some resources have started to move, but how they will be used and the mechanism to monitor the transfer of these resources are a long way from being satisfactory. On the power sharing, while at the state level – the South Sudan level – the level the agreement is being implemented; at the national level, the Khartoum level, the SPLM has no power to speak and that is why many key people left.

There are a lot of issues inside the SPLM as well. We have to remember that the death of Garang has been a huge blow to the CPA, but it also reflects a clash of visions within the SPLM. Obviously Garang always had the New Sudan vision of transforming the entire country and using the CPA as well as a tool for the transformation of the country. Now you have a vice president in Khartoum, who does not believe in the same vision and has never subscribed to the same vision, because that is what was agreed in the CPA. He would rather just be focusing on the South.

Q: Is anything happening on the wealth sharing?

A: Not in terms of the Land Commission, that has definitely not been established. There has been no discussion about the redistribution of land. There has been no reexamination

of the concessions given for the oil. There is still a lot that has not been done on that one, either.

Q: There is no revenue flowing to the South?

A: The revenues have just started to flow. I understand that over the last three months finally some money has been transferred. I have seen some figures recently; but it looks like it is going in directions other than it should.

Q: There is another commission called the National Constitutional Review. Is that happening or functioning?

A: There was an interim constitution developed. The commission has been set up, but I am not sure whether it is functioning or doing anything.

Q: Part of the program was to move towards elections and then a referendum. Is anything being done to prepare either side for those?

A: The National Congress is preparing, very carefully. We had this discussion with many other Sudan analysts, whether or not there will ever be free and fair elections in the Sudan or whether there will ever be elections in the Sudan. A lot of people feel that the National Congress would not allow the elections to go ahead. I disagree. The elections will go ahead and the reason is the National Congress is actually preparing for it, very actively. They are buying support everywhere. Now whether the elections will be free and fair is a completely different story. It will be very interesting to see what role the international community will play in the elections; and what they will negotiate with the National Congress in terms of the role to play.

Q: Is anything being done to educate the population about what the CPA is about and about the forthcoming elections?

A: Very little.

Q: By either side?

A: The political structure of the SPLM is non-existent. Even the little bit that was in place is nowhere today. That is one of the biggest problems, because even in the South, we have a National Congress office in Rumbek now and we have rallies in Rumbek that are attended by many people. This is the heart of the SPLM and the National Congress is able to rally people in Rumbek and it is happening more and more everywhere. In eastern Sudan, you have rallies of the National Congress which are attended by lots of people. They have been paid to be there, but you can be sure that in the same way they will be paid to vote.

Q: Associated with the election is the question that there were only two parties at these negotiations. A lot of parties were left out of the process. Is that right?

A: It is very true and that is why we have Darfur and the East. But the politicians at every level and also the international community have failed to build on the idea that the process was exclusive and was focused on the two sides. And it still provided the tools for an overall transformation of the country, if the country really focused on managing the transition until the elections.

Q: Was it clear that these other parties could not be included in the original negotiations or were not wanted?

A: They could have been included. It could have been a more inclusive process and not just the two armed opposition groups but also the broader civil society. There could have been a hearing for civil society groups. There could have been more discussion with a wider number of stakeholders. Having said that, it is always very difficult in a negotiation to make it too broad and so for me it is a starting point. It is not clear that the key turning point is the elections and this is what people have to be ready for. That is the instrument to effect change in the Sudan. That is the biggest achievement of the CPA.

Q: Does the CPA have any specific provision about other parties being included at some point?

A: For the CPA, it is free and fair elections with as many parties as people would like to present. It is not between the National Congress and the SPLM. And it is clear from the CPA that the government structures emerging from these general elections will be the new government structures. It is not going to be the percentages we have today.

Q: And then down the road is the referendum.

A: If the elections do not prove the strength of the SPLM, we are not going to see the referendum.

Q: We are not going to see it?

A: The elections are the key point. If the SPLA comes out weakened by the elections, as is possible, they are not going to have the strength to argue for the referendum or get the referendum. And I do not see an overwhelming desire among the regional players or international community at large to push for a separatist referendum, for a variety of political reasons, unless the SPLM has enough strength to command it politically within the country.

Q: What about in the North, are they preparing for elections?

A: The North, absolutely, very systematically; the North knows, the National Congress Party knows, that even if they have to cope with free and fair elections and monitors and everything, there is never going to be enough qualified people with understanding of the country to be able to monitor the elections properly, given the vastness of the country.

They are preparing. They are preparing with the communities, with the people, buying their support, creating local power structures that they already have in place and are strengthening even more, so that eventually they can control the vote.

Q: Looking ahead, what do you see as the prospects for the success for the CPA agreement?

A: At the moment it is not going very well at all. The implementation is not progressing as it should. There is a lot of discouragement. The security situation has deteriorated. There is less freedom of association, freedom of speech than there was three years ago. People are very demoralized. The space for civil society has definitely decreased. I am talking at the general level, both in the North and in the South and in the “three areas.” In the South, we have seen a tremendous change, but that is in the South only and even in the South we need to qualify that. Definitely, you see more ownership and more involvement of the southerners themselves in the governance of the region, but you have a lot of unresolved issues within the South, in terms of corruption, in terms of ineffectiveness of the structures, as well as the ethnic tensions between the Equatorians and the Dinka.

Q: Is there anything new that the international community can do to push this CPA forward?

A: The international community needs to help the groups, the various protest movements existing in Sudan, including Darfur, the East, and all of the groups we have, to turn into political parties, because there are no political parties. The only chance that Sudan really has to transform and not descend into total chaos, anarchy and another, much more brutal, civil war is to have elections that function as an element of change. But to get to that, there is no structure that can lead people to a successful transition.

Q: The international community's role is to try to push for the elections?

A: Push the elections and help these groups prepare for the elections. Provide the backing, the exposure – I want to call it training, but engage with these groups so they understand what needs to happen. If the elections are less than three years away, there is not much time to organize a political party, to rally, to develop a program, to explain. Yes, the southerners are quite a significant number of people, but the northerners are a lot more, and these are the ones you need to persuade. There is no obvious political party in the North that can really gather a consensus.

Q: Is there a role for the international community in helping to provide a vision or a support to where the CPA process should go and Sudan should be going?

A: It is really difficult because, again, the attention of the international community is all focused on Darfur and the North-South process is slipping off the agenda, which is a fundamental mistake, because the tensions in the South and the rest of the country have not gone away. Darfur is not an expression of dissatisfaction in one region only; it is the

expression of a much wider problem, which is characteristic of the whole of Sudan, in terms of inadequate governance, in terms of unequal distribution of resources and so forth. So the strategy has to be to engage around all the issues and see them as an overall problem, not something, which is looked at according to the different regions, because this is leading to a lot of polarization at the regional level. We see that in all these political movements that are emerging, or rather protest movements, on a regional basis.

So we have a return to ethnic politics in the Sudan, completely. The National Congress was an interesting change, in certain ways, because it had a national platform. Whether that was right or wrong is a different story, but, at least, it tried to break with the tradition of the *tarikas*, these religious affiliated parties like the UMMA and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and, on the other hand, the parties which were linked to a specific group, like the Beja Congress or in Darfur. It was an interesting new way of catalyzing some of the youth resentment and desire for change in the Eighties through national-level structures that would link to Islam, a much broader, much more country-wide than the others.

Q: Is Darfur the big stumbling block in moving ahead?

A: A stumbling block, but again the international community made this huge mistake in butchering the way the process had been negotiated and have chosen to focus particularly on deployment of the UN troops. It has just polarized attention around this deployment, rather than trying to continue by engaging with all those who have not signed the agreement, to reopening the political process to try and broker an effective peace agreement, which we clearly do not have in Darfur.

Q: Involve Darfur and other regions into a political process...

A: Definitely. The whole discussion around Darfur has been, after the DPA, “Oh, we have a peace agreement and just a small number of “they have been called the holdouts, the spoilers,” whatever name has been used “who have not signed.” This was a distortion of reality. The agreement, the process behind Abuja was profoundly flawed, the way the agreement was negotiated precluded the success of the result. Instead of admitting the mistake immediately, the international community has continued to push ahead with the implementation, fooling itself and the Darfurians that there was an agreement and everything was fine; while all of us who watch Sudan carefully and closely knew absolutely well that this was a disaster waiting to explode, even farther, because it was clear what was happening. Only now they are starting to say, “Oh, well, yes, maybe we should ...”

Q: Is there a political leadership group in Darfur that can be effective in negotiating?

A: There are a number of elements in Darfur. There is obviously the National Redemption Front that has come together. You have a variety of military groups that have come together and that is an element, whether we like it or not, to reckon with and there is a group of commanders in the field, the G-19, that we also need to engage with.

There are others, loosely; but I would say the G-19 and the NRF are the two main groups, with the possible addition of elements of the SLM. It is not clear to what extent they are linked to the NRF, like Abdelwahib and Abdulshafi. I would say these are the main elements.

Q: Are they somehow coming together to represent a common approach?

A: They are working on it right now. There is a huge amount of consultations going on at different levels, both in Asmara and in the field. There are other elements, which are not completely on board but as long as there is a critical mass who you can work with you can manage the rest. The problem now is more difficult, because, in a way, the opportunity has been lost in Abuja in May to immediately continue this process. What you have is, on one hand, the African Union (AU) that is trying to renew a process with no credibility, because none of the insurgents wants to be engaging with the AU. They feel that the role they played in Abuja was not that of an honest broker and they were too close to the government. On the other hand, you have Eritrea that is becoming the new kind of peace broker in Sudan, which is quite amazing. It is obviously dealing with its own approach in a very unorthodox way, to say the least, by keeping some of the commanders almost hostage in Asmara, to make sure that they cannot reach an agreement with the Sudanese government.

Q: What about leadership in the eastern rebel groups?

A: In the east, we have a peace agreement that, again, the Eritreans have negotiated and the eastern front really did not have much voice in the matter, because it was an agreement between the Government of Eritrea and the Government of Sudan, actually, the government and the National Congress. But to be honest, part of the problem was that the eastern front was extremely weak; it could not have negotiated anything for itself, very divided, very corrupt, did not have a clear political agenda and did not have enough forces on the ground to command much more than was obtained, anyway. And even what they have obtained, at the moment they are spoiling it, because they are just so focused on their internal power struggle, who should go to which position, and they are consumed in the power struggle without looking at the opportunities of the agreement.

Q: Is there some aspect of the CPA process that we have not touched on that you want to emphasize?

A: Nothing that comes to mind immediately, to be honest.

Q: Let us turn to what you would see as principal lessons learned that could be instructive in future situations like this; what would be helpful both in what should be done differently or what worked very well?

A: One lesson from the CPA was the fact that there was one mediator with authority and respect, which was critical in ensuring that he would be the point of dialogue with the parties. He was complemented by an international community, which was informed,

followed the issues carefully, coordinated the messages being sent out almost always well harmonized. There was clarity of intent and there was support on both sides. You had the regional elements, with Kenya playing its role in advancing the peace process, with the support of the other regional countries. People like the ambassadors from Eritrea and Uganda, were very useful in discussing certain issues with the parties and raising the concerns of the neighboring countries.

At the same time, there were other countries, not a huge number, as well as the odd person from the UN Department of Peacekeeping that prepared for the transition; but it was largely the four observer countries which coordinated very well and sent messages that were checked, discussed, and rehearsed, particularly the famous troika. Italy was always the minor partner; but Italy was not getting in anybody's way. If anything was helping, it was perceived as being probably the most neutral of the four in supporting certain arguments and taking them forward with the parties.

Q: You said earlier that the chief mediator needed to be well briefed on all the issues?

A: General Sumbeiywo knew the Sudan; he knew the SPLM; he understood the situation in southern Sudan. He was clearly less comfortable around the "three areas" and he said so openly. But he knew what he was talking about with southern Sudan.

Q: Anything related to getting an implementation of the agreement?

A: Sumbeiywo was hoping to become involved in the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. He wanted to be the Chair and he said the Chair is going to muscle around some. But Kenya, he got {disinvolved} in some way. There has not been the same degree of involvement and constant attention and follow-up. It needs to have some teeth, because it is the one instrument that is in the CPA. There has not been the same level of resources and personnel, either, because the other members of the AEC tend to be the serving ambassadors in Khartoum. So there are not dedicated personnel for the AEC.

Q: Is there anything that the international community and their headquarters can do?

A: The AEC is one point that can be the political level that engages with the government, with both sides, with the National Congress and the SPLM, to push on certain issues.

Q: Because that would seem to be key.

A: And the other element is the new UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, because the UN's primary mandate is the South, it is not Darfur. You can have an additional one for Darfur. You can think of how to expand UNMIS for Darfur. You can have a division of responsibilities within UNMIS, assign one of the deputies to focus on Darfur. But UNMIS has been precisely created to focus on the South, not on Darfur. Until August it did not even have a mandate for Darfur.

Q: Are there some other lessons that stand out in your mind in more practical ways, of what worked or didn't work?

A: The lesson that stands out in my mind is that in Sudan things keep repeating themselves and obviously now everybody's attention is focused on Darfur. If we keep focusing resources on Darfur without strengthening implementation of the CPA, starting from the Nuba Mountains, we are going to have another call it "Darfur" or repeat what the Nuba Mountains has already been, very soon.

Q: So we need to shift the focus of the international community?

A: Absolutely. The focus is not one region. It is the country as a whole; it is the government of the country as a whole. And the only instrument we have right now to change that government without a lot of bloodshed, without a military intervention that will never come.... We know that. We are never going to see British or American forces being deployed to Sudan without the consent of the government of Sudan after what has happened with Iraq. The only instrument we have is the elections, but this should be the focus: helping the Sudanese prepare for the elections, so that they can hope for a change.

Q: And so a major effort from the international community is to get this election carried out?

A: But the effort should start now. It cannot start two months before the elections. Starting from the census. Where is the census?

Q: That is key to the elections?

A: Yes, and that is delayed and who is complaining because there has been no census? Who is raising the issue? Nobody.

Q: Are there any other lessons that come to mind?

A: We have enough lessons to start with. I keep writing about lessons from the Sudan. I wish one day I could be writing about how lessons have been learned.

Q: That is the point of USIP, to try to teach people and educate them on the lessons of experience.

A: That is a great initiative; a great idea and I really hope that they take some of the lessons on board.