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Transcript

Perspectives on the Sudan, South Sudan Crisis

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Republic of South Sudan

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Alex Vines OBE:

We are very lucky to have His Excellency Pa'gan Amum, the SPLM's [Sudan People's Liberation Movement] secretary general and chief negotiator of the Republic of South Sudan talking to us today about perspectives on the Sudan-South Sudan crisis and the issues coming out of that. It is very much in the news. And... I think I will just hand over to you, Excellency.

HE Pa'gan Amum:

Well, thank you, Alex, for this opportunity. Good morning, everybody. We are here in London for meetings with the government of the United Kingdom. We will be proceeding to New York for meetings also there. We are coming from Brussels, where we had meetings with the European Union, and also Oslo, where we had meetings with the government of Norway.

Thank you for your interest on what is happening in our newborn country, South Sudan, and between our country and our neighbour, the Republic of Sudan. As a newborn country, we are less than a year since we joined the free humanity, or independent nation-states. We are emerging out of a very long, devastating war of occupation, marginalisation, colonisation, and oppression. Our people, the people of South Sudan, suffered a great deal; we lost millions of lives. In just the last 60 years, when the Anglo-Egyptian condominium colonialism left Sudan after having jammed us into that artificial country, we lost nearly 5 million lives. And... having achieved our freedom, really our vision is that of a South Sudan that is free, peaceful, and prosperous.

We want to use this new opportunity of having become free to build peace, we want to use this opportunity to rebuild our broken lives, and to release our creative energies, create wealth, and achieve prosperity for all our people. That is our vision. For this vision, instability and wars are things that we would want to consign to our past. We see a vision... we see a future of peaceful relations with all our neighbours. We want to have peace with all our neighbours, particularly the Republic of Sudan with whom we divided and created these two countries.

We as the government of South Sudan, and as the SPLM, the ruling party, we are ready to open a new page with the Republic of Sudan, and develop new relations based on respect, mutual respect of our sovereignty and our territorial integrity, and to develop cooperation in all fields in pursuit of the best interests of the South Sudanese and Sudanese people. In this way, we engaged with the Republic of Sudan in resolving all the outstanding issues

arising from the independence of South Sudan, and also that remain from the CPA, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that we have signed.

The government of South Sudan has been forward leaning in reaching an agreement with the Republic of Sudan. Unfortunately, the leadership in the Republic of Sudan – maybe not to talk of the whole leadership, but a large section of the leadership – are stuck in the past, are bitter of all the developments, and are not able to see the future, are not able to turn the page. And today, they are bent on re-creating the past of hostilities and conflict.

If you have followed the developments between our two countries, we... in July, the South Sudanese agreed to establish new relations with the Republic of Sudan, including to provide financial assistance to the Republic of Sudan, to help the Republic of Sudan to manage its economic crisis resulting from the loss of oil revenue as a result of the separation of South Sudan. In November, we accepted a compromise proposal by the African Union High [Level] Implementation Panel, and the proposal precisely was that South Sudan assume one third of the physical gap of the Republic of Sudan as calculated by the International Monetary Fund, and the gap is calculated at \$7.7billion over a period of 5 years. The mediators proposed that South Sudan would assume to contribute \$2.6 [billion] – that is one third – of that gap to assist the Republic of Sudan.

Unfortunately, the Republic of Sudan rejected the offer we have made on two counts. The first count is that they are not ready to accept assistance from South Sudan because they feel superior to the South Sudanese. Again, this is a problem of a mindset of the past. They are failing to realize that South Sudan is an independent, sovereign state... a neighbour, an equal neighbour to them, and they are in need, and South Sudan is offering this assistance. But, because they are stuck in the past they cannot imagine themselves accepting assistance from South Sudan. That is the first reason they rejected this offer.

The second reason they rejected the offer is that South Sudan is only meeting one third of their gap, the other one third is by the international community. And they say they do not trust the international community because they are isolated by the international community, the international community is against them, and they cannot... they will not be able to receive the other one third. Therefore, this other one third must be borne by South Sudan. And it is actually from here that we developed serious problems.

From November, when they rejected, I mean the National Congress government of Khartoum, when it suggested the offer of assistance by South Sudan and the international community, they proceeded to take very abnormal and strange decisions; to divert and seize South Sudanese oil in transit to the buyers. So, in December, South Sudan sold oil, about 5 million barrels, and that oil was intercepted by the government of Sudan, who diverted it to their refineries and the buyers of South Sudanese crude ended up receiving not a single barrel, with South Sudan forced to return or cancel the letter of credit or the monies that it has received. So, South Sudan lost all its revenue in December, again in January South Sudan exported its oil through Sudan, and South Sudan lost 100% of its revenue that was to come to it from the sale of its oil because the Republic of Sudan seized those quantities again.

The same thing happened for the first two weeks of February, forcing South Sudan to shut down the production because it is not able to sell its oil to buyers in the international community... in the international market, I mean. And from February, the Republic of Sudan, having taken by force... actually the right word is having *stolen* the oil from South Sudan, and also *robbed* the oil of South Sudan using force, because they used military force forcing the foreign oil companies operating the pipeline and the facilities to take South Sudan's entitlement. South Sudan then was forced to shut down the production because it is not safe to sell the oil of South Sudan through Sudan because of insecurity and behaviour of the government of Sudan, taking oil before it reaches the buyers.

Now, this is a continuation of a policy of trade embargo. Sudan has imposed a trade embargo on South Sudan from May [2011], before the independence of South Sudan. And these days the government of Sudan has also even taken draconian measures to shoot to kill Sudanese citizens who want to do trade with South Sudan... shoot to kill. And that was a statement of...and articulation of a policy by the first vice president of the Republic of Sudan, which is Taha Ali Osman. That is tightening and closing the entire border, that is from May [2011], it is now completing a year of trade embargo from Sudan against South Sudan. In fact, this trade embargo was benefitting the Republic of Sudan, because South Sudan was now selling any goods to Northern Sudanese traders who were selling goods to South Sudan and making profits, whether goods Sudan, or goods imported from outside by these traders to sell in the market of South Sudan. It is actually a net loss to Sudan, as they are forced now... they have lost the entire market of South Sudan, which was traditionally a market monopolized by Sudanese traders, historically.

President [Omar Hassan al-] Bashir also announced that he will not allow the flow of the oil of South Sudan through Sudan even if South Sudan were to give them more than 50%. And from February, Sudan unleashed [an] aerial bombardment of South Sudan. South Sudan has been subjected to aerial bombing of more than 87... I don't know today whether there is going to be bombing, but more than 87 aerial bombardments of South Sudan in the last two months alone. The international community was silent about this bombardment, unfortunately. South Sudan was also subject to ground attacks, particularly from Heglig... to respond or retaliate by occupying Heglig.

Now, you have followed all this, 'what is the way forward?' is the question that you should ask. As South Sudanese, we see the way forward in the two countries returning to negotiations immediately. And South Sudan is ready to return to negotiations immediately. The way forward is to cease hostilities, to stop this fighting... meaningless fighting. And South Sudan is ready, not only to cease hostilities, but to sign the agreement of cessation of hostilities that was proposed by the African Union High [Level] Implementation Panel on 4 April; we were ready to sign it then, we are ready to sign it now.

We have accepted the roadmap by the African Union Peace & Security Council, we are ready to implement it. We are ready to discuss all the four issues that remain. Obviously the first issue, which is oil, we have a difficulty there because the government of Sudan, President Bashir, has decided that they will not allow the flow of our oil through Sudan, and that they consider trade with South Sudan as a crime that makes them to even impose capital punishment on their own citizens. For trade, you need two willing parties; Sudan is clearly not willing to do trade with us.

So we are ready, to cease hostilities, to also take all the disputed areas into international arbitration... in the borders. We are also calling on the African Union, the UN, the EU and others to help us demarcate the border between the two countries. We are even calling for a UN mandated force to be deployed along the border between the two countries to avoid further conflict, and for the two peoples and the two countries really to develop themselves peacefully. South Sudan has challenges in state building, we are just a new baby who was just born and we have serious issues to deal with. We want to focus our energies and limited resources in building our country, and we want peace with all our neighbours, including Sudan.

Can the international community help us? At least deploy a UN force in between the two countries until the government of Sudan changes its mind and discovers there is a peaceful, better future instead of dragging us back to

war. Is that possible? Is it too big to demand, to ask? This is really the question. Thank you.