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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study is on the implications and ramifications of the referendum in Sudan. We'll commence.

I want to thank our guests for coming back again today. It's great to have you. We're looking forward to hearing from you about your travels.

Also on the line, via teleconference from Khartoum, Sudan, we have Sarah Johnson.

Hi, Sarah.

Ms. Sarah Johnson (Assistant Director and Program Manager for Sudan, The Carter Center): Hello.

The Chair: She's the assistant director and program manager for Sudan for the Carter Center.

We also have Sanne van den Bergh, a field office director with the Carter Center as well.

Hello.

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh (Field Office Director, The Carter Center): Hello.

The Chair: Very good. I love it when technology works. It's a wonderful thing.

I assume it's about 11:30 at night where you are?

A witness: That is correct.

The Chair: Thank you very much for taking the time to come.

We also have, from our Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Donald Bobiash, director general of the Africa Bureau. Welcome back, sir.

We have Douglas Scott Proudfoot, director of the Sudan Task Force. Welcome back.

And then from CIDA, we have Philip Baker, acting regional director general for southern and eastern Africa. Welcome to you, sir, as well.

I think we'll start with the Carter Center, since they're the furthest away. We'll give them a chance to make some opening comments. I believe, Ms. Johnson, you both have comments, so why don't you start. Then if you want to pass it to your colleague, we can have

those comments. Then we'll have comments from our members here, our witnesses here, and then start, as we normally do, with questions.

As long as you guys can stay on the phone, that will be great. I know that probably at some point you'll want to retire for the evening, but we appreciate you taking the time in Khartoum to meet with us via phone today.

I'll turn it over to you, Ms. Johnson. If you have some opening remarks, we'd love to hear from you.

Ms. Sarah Johnson: Sure. Thank you for that introduction.

We appreciate your support and the support of the Canadian government. As you may know, the Carter Center has been the recipient of support from CIDA. CIDA has been a key donor for some of our election standards projects and election observation projects over the last several years, and I'd like to start out by thanking you for the support you have afforded our mission in Sudan and for the projects of the Carter Center.

You've asked us to present a bit on our observation of the referendum, but first I'd like to start by giving you a little bit more detail about the Carter Center's presence here in Sudan.

The democracy program has had an office here since 2008, when we opened offices in both Juba and Khartoum, in order to serve the elections that were held last April. We have further been invited by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission to observe the referendum that is scheduled for January, and we have signed a memorandum of understanding with both the commission and the ministry of foreign affairs here in Khartoum.

We have a fairly large presence on the ground at the moment. We ramped up our observation activities in the fall and the deployment of several core field staff and long-term observers in September. We have 16 long-term observers deployed out to the field, with four teams in the south, one team in Abyei, and three teams deployed in the north.

We currently have additional observers on the ground for the voter registration that has started, with an additional 30 observers, for a total of 46 observers on the ground right now during the voter registration period and the complaints process following that.

We are also supporting observation activities in the eight out-of-country registration locations, including Canada, in Calgary and Toronto, with an additional 26 observers across the eight countries.

Over the referendum we intend to deploy 50 observers, plus our long-term observers and core staff. This will take place in early January, most likely from about January 2 through January 20 or January 21.

Thanks to the Canadian government, we are able to deploy the observers. Your support is helping us to deploy the short-term mission and support the core field out on the ground. So I'd like to thank you for your support.

I'll pass you over to Sanne van den Bergh to give you more details about what we're seeing on the ground at the current moment, with the preparations for the referendum as well as the voter registration.

● (1535)

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: Thank you, Sarah.

I would like to start with general observations before the voter registration started, since we've been here in August.

On October 29 we released a comprehensive statement expressing some concern about a number of issues, including the lack of funds available to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau. We had some concerns about lack of vehicles to move materials from the states to the referendum centres; the vague eligibility criteria; the lack of clarity over the appointment of identifiers in the process; and a huge lack of information in the public sphere about the process. We also urged the parties to conclude agreements on citizenship in Abyei. Those are the main points in our statement.

Prior to the voter registration that started on Monday, we observed that preparations were slow moving on the ground in September and into October, but the pace has picked up dramatically in the last few weeks. Another observation we documented is that the commission's decision-making is heavily centralized. There are some communication gaps between the commission chair and the international technical advisers. They have stalled approval of a number of important documents, including the voter registration manual and observer regulations. Even though the campaign period started officially on November 7, there are still no regulations for campaigning.

Prior to voter registration in the south, we noticed very little voter education in the public sphere. There's very little discussion of the unity option publicly in the south. There are reports that proponents of unity feel intimidated, but we have no concrete reports to substantiate that. Those reports were given to our observers.

We were worried about the delivery of materials and the recruitment and training of staff. That was very problematic, haphazard, and delayed in the last election. We are fairly impressed that training has happened on time. Most of the materials seem to have arrived at the county level and at the centres—at the last minute, but it seems in a majority of cases they have arrived.

Prior to voter registration, there was a lot of uncertainty among southerners living in the north about their fate during and after a referendum. That is creating some confusion, and in some cases they are afraid to register. There's a huge lack of voter education in the north among southerners, and many people are not clear whether they are even eligible to register. A large number of southerners are

moving to the south, either spontaneously or organized, so there's a large repatriation happening.

In the north, campaigning for unity is very apparent and campaigning for separation is rare.

We mentioned the citizenship issue in our statement. We feel that there's fear and confusion coming from the southerners in the north, in particular, but also from the northerners in the south. It's one of the key post-referendum issues that need to be addressed prior to the referendum, to enable people to make informed choices. We feel that the presidents of both the central government and southern Sudan need to clarify the status of the people and prohibit their own officials from making damaging statements.

● (1540)

In terms of what we've seen in the first few days, I can give you a very short snapshot. I have to qualify that it's not indicative of the larger process, because it deals with the first few days, and it is a process of 17 days.

As of now, in the north, we've seen very low turnouts in every state. This could be due to the Eid holiday. It is very quiet at the moment in the north.

We did find that the centres had opened on time, in general, and that materials had arrived in a timely manner. Again, civic education is poor or non-existent throughout the north.

In general, so far, the security situation has been calm. With some exceptions, police and plainclothes officers have been outside the centres.

There are no consideration committees at all in the north. The consideration committees are the ones that determine whether someone who is rejected has the right to appeal. People appeal to the consideration committees, but we haven't seen any of those committees in place yet. That's a concern.

In the south, we have had a much better turnout. There has been a steady stream of people. The materials have arrived on time. Again, there is low awareness of the actual process, and there are no consideration committees.

Those are very preliminary observations on voter registration.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to move over to Mr. Bobiash.

I believe you are splitting your time with Mr. Proudfoot. Perfect.

Mr. Donald Bobiash (Director General, Africa Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the committee for inviting us to provide a brief overview of our recent trip to North and South Sudan.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the committee for inviting us to provide you with an overview of our recent trip to North and South Sudan.

• (1545)

[*English*]

I will give a brief overview of approximately five or six minutes, and then I'll ask my colleague, Mr. Proudfoot, to provide more details on some of his diplomatic initiatives in meetings he's attended.

From November 7 to 11, I had the pleasure of leading a whole-of-government mission to Sudan to gather insights on the ground at this crucial time and to witness Canada's contribution to peace and stability in this important country. Along with colleagues from CIDA and DND, we undertook a field project visit and engaged in a series of meetings with key UN, donor, and international stakeholders, as well as with government officials in the capitals of North and South Sudan.

We also held a "heads of missions" meeting with representatives from various Canadian embassies in the region. This meeting allowed us to ensure that we are engaging in a collective Canadian approach to Sudan within the wider region, as it is clear that Sudan's problems are larger than its borders and require positive engagement with all of its neighbours.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian whole-of-government mission to Sudan was timely, given the extent of political manoeuvring taking place within a very short timeframe.

Considerable international attention is being focused on the Southern Sudan referendum as you have seen from the latest headlines about Senator Kerry's recent visit, the AU's Mbeki-led negotiations, and high-level UN meetings on the situation. South Sudan's upcoming referendum is indeed an important and historic process that was a key issue for our visit.

However, we also spent considerable time focusing on other ongoing developments that will have a significant impact on the country's future.

[*English*]

The CPA, whose structures and processes have governed the north and the south for the last five years, is in its final stages. Negotiations are presently ongoing on post-referendum arrangements, which will shape the future governance and direction of both the north and the south beyond the result of the referendum. In addition, attention is starting to focus on a new UNMIS, the UN peacekeeping mission, which has focused primarily on supporting and monitoring the implementation of the CPA since its creation, as it will very likely require a significantly revised mandate when its current one ends in April 2011.

Finally, as we all know, we must not let the tragic situation in Darfur be overshadowed by other developments in the country. Accordingly, during our trip, we reinforced the importance of the Government of Sudan taking concrete steps to create an environment favourable for peace. We also underscored our support for the Darfur peace process under way in Doha and our hope that all rebel movements will return to the negotiating table. Canada has been a stalwart supporter of the peace process, which needs international support now more than ever before.

Our recent trip was an important opportunity to engage with key stakeholders on the ground and to communicate Canada's position and contributions related to critical developments in the peace processes.

Secondly, this mission provided us with the opportunity to get a 360-degree view of the current context in Sudan. By speaking with a range of interlocutors, we were able to get a feel from the people themselves about the ongoing situation. We heard a lot of frustrations expressed at the political level, as well as unmet expectations of peace dividends that have still not arrived to most communities in South Sudan. However, I came away from this trip feeling generally less pessimistic about Sudan's future than before we left.

[*Translation*]

During my week in Sudan, I was leading a Whole-of-Government delegation, with representatives from CIDA, National Defence, and the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force within DFAIT, known as START, as well as the Sudan Task Force.

The purpose of this Whole-of-Government presence was to extend into the field the coordination done at headquarters between these departments and others through the regular meetings chaired by my colleague.

It was the third such Whole-of-Government visit in recent years, and we find that the shared experience contributes to greater coherence and collective decision-making on policy and operational issues.

The visit began in Khartoum, where we held a regional Heads of Mission meeting on November 7. As you know, Sudan is the largest country in Africa, bordering nine others, and events in Sudan have significant implications for regional security. Part of DFAIT's contribution to the Whole-of-Government effort is our network of diplomatic missions around the world, which project Canada's influence and information-gathering capacity.

The purpose of this meeting was to hear regional perspectives from Canadian Heads of Mission based in neighbouring countries, and to mobilize those ambassadors and their embassies to report on Sudan-relevant developments, and to advocate Canadian positions in their countries of accreditation.

We have had occasion as well to discuss operational issues pertaining to programs covering Sudan based in adjacent countries, and to logistical support for Canada's presence in Sudan. The regional Heads of Mission also had a chance to interact with Sudanese diplomats responsible for neighbouring countries and with those countries' and regional organizations' representatives in Sudan.

The Whole-of-Government mission met a selection of Sudanese and international interlocutors in Khartoum, including the Chairman of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, senior representatives of the National Congress Party and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the Special Representatives of the United Nations Secretary General and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We also met a range of NGO representatives, academics, political actors and diplomats, along with Canadians living and working in Sudan, mainly in UN or NGO capacities.

• (1550)

[English]

The group travelled to Malakal, the capital of Upper Nile State in southern Sudan, where we met the governor and the minister of health. We also visited a CIDA-supported youth project and the hospital in that city. A major focus of this visit and of discussions in Juba was Canada's G-8 initiative in maternal and child health and how it will be implemented in southern Sudan, which has among the worst maternal and child health indicators in the world. We were accompanied on this visit to Malakal by the chairperson of the southern Sudan legislative assembly's health and HIV committee, who is an MP from Upper Nile and also a Canadian citizen.

In Juba, the capital of southern Sudan, we met the minister of health, the minister of information, the vice-president, and senior representatives of the United Nations mission in Sudan, UNMIS. We also had a round table discussion with local and international NGO representatives and met a wide range of local political figures, civil society actors, and international workers. In addition, we visited the new police training centre at Rajaf, just outside Juba, and witnessed the work being done to provide basic police training for new recruits to the southern Sudan police force.

The deputy inspector general of police, who briefed us on the police training program, is a Canadian, and Canadian police from the RCMP and OPP are involved in police training activities in southern Sudan through the United Nations. The genesis of this project is important. The Government of South Sudan officials realized that their original police force, formed largely of illiterate ex-guerrilla fighters, would not be able to apply the rule of law fairly. Appealing to the international community, including Canada, a new police recruitment and training program was established. The quality of the recruits was remarkable, and we watched hundreds of enthusiastic young prospective officers march past us during our review. We also toured the southern Sudan police service communications base station, another activity START is supporting to bolster the capacity of the government of southern Sudan to promote the rule of law.

I would now like to report on recent developments in planning for the referendum. Through an heroic effort over the last few weeks by UN officials and the Sudanese themselves, preparations for the referendum are making remarkable progress. Registration materials

for the referendum have been printed and have arrived in most of the designated locations in North and South Sudan. Registration itself began on Monday and will continue through until December 1. International observation missions have been deployed, including both the Carter Center, with whom we're in contact, and EU observer missions, to which Canada has made significant contributions.

Another important ground for optimism is that we came away with the distinct impression that neither side wants to return to war. It is true that both sides have been building up their military presence on the border and are currently engaged in political brinkmanship on the Abyei issue, but both sides have gained considerably during these past five years of peace and stand to benefit from maintaining stability in the north and in the south.

• (1555)

[Translation]

While it is important to focus on the positive in a country that has seen so much conflict and suffering, we do realize that Sudan faces a complex and unpredictable situation that could rapidly deteriorate. The international community has a responsibility to continue to help the Sudanese people carve out a better future through the fulfillment of the CPA.

The opportunity for self-determination for the people of South Sudan and Abyei through their referenda is indeed the culmination of the CPA, an agreement that, while fragile, has withstood a number of crises throughout its five-year history. While these self-determination votes are pivotal steps within the CPA, perhaps even more important to Sudan's future is that these processes are undertaken peacefully and credibly.

These referenda are important steps in a long-term relationship between the North and the South, and we must continue to ensure that the fragile peace continues throughout this time of transition.

[English]

One of the most pressing challenges currently to maintaining this fragile peace remains the referendum in Abyei. According to the CPA, this small area on the border between the north and the south should hold a referendum simultaneously with the referendum in southern Sudan to decide whether it should remain governed by the north or join South Sudan. Preparations have still not begun to hold this separate referendum, and the matter has now been referred to the presidency to decide.

Given the tension building in Abyei as it becomes increasingly unlikely that its referendum can feasibly begin on January 9, there are fears that violence could erupt in this area and spark a larger conflict. Both the north and the south appear relatively entrenched in their positions, even though Abyei, in and of itself, is not really that politically or economically important for either side. For the north, Abyei is being used as a card to extract more concessions from the post-referendum negotiations, while for the south, Abyei is home to key members of the SPLM and is seen as the heart of the south's liberation struggle.

Another striking reality that confronted us on this trip was the great need for development and basic services in the south. Simply put, development indicators in South Sudan are among the lowest in the world. Access to basic health care, potable water, and roads is virtually non-existent for the majority of South Sudan's communities. Disease outbreaks, such as the latest outbreak of a form of sleeping sickness called kala-azar, remain common.

As long as it continues to access its oil wealth, the great challenge for South Sudan will remain translating its revenue and international assistance into sustainable services for a better life for its people, many of whom live in remote areas across a vast territory.

From what we saw, Canada's contributions to long-term peace and stability are having a positive impact. It was also impressive to see how many Canadian Sudanese have returned to their home country to work in key positions in both the north and the south. Furthermore, Canada's timely contribution to the referendum basket fund has helped to ensure that the necessary funds are being provided in a coordinated way to support this massive democratic undertaking. Canada's contributions to two international referendum observer missions that have already deployed will help to ensure these processes are credible and fair.

I was also proud to hear about the contributions the Canadian military is making toward enhancing community security, humanitarian access, and security sector reform within UNAMID and UNMIS, the two peacekeeping missions in Sudan.

Finally, our diplomats in North and South Sudan, as well as in the region, are engaging both parties and members of the international community to advance recommendations and actions that will promote peace and stability throughout this tense period.

Ladies and gentlemen, Canada is clearly making a difference at a crucial time in Sudan's history, and we are well-placed to continue to do so. As I mentioned before, while this is the climax period of the CPA, it should be seen as a step in a long-term sustained effort to cultivate a positive, peaceful relationship between North and South Sudan.

Thank you.

I would now ask my colleague, Mr. Proudfoot, to add a few words on his work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot (Director, Sudan Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Mr. Bobiash has already updated you on developments in Sudan and the impressions and findings of the Whole-of-Government mission, I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on other activities I undertook during this trip, thereby giving you a picture of how Canadian diplomacy is engaged on Sudan as an issue of international significance. I will also elaborate on certain themes which we touched upon during the October 19 session but which time did not permit us to elucidate fully.

Prior to joining the Whole-of-Government group in Khartoum, I travelled to Cairo for meetings with officials in the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the Secretariat of the League of Arab States. The purpose of these meetings was not only to exchange views and information with counterparts, but also to advocate Canadian positions with international actors with considerable interest and influence in Sudan. These meetings are an example of the diplomatic effort which Canadian officials are undertaking on a continuous basis with countries in the region and beyond, and in multilateral forums in support of our security and humanitarian objectives in Sudan.

While in Cairo, I also participated in a Canada-Arab League seminar and in a workshop organized by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on security in the Horn of Africa, where I had occasion to meet knowledgeable academics as well as senior SPLM representatives, including the Chairman of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly's Security Committee.

I also briefly visited Addis Abeba, where I convened and chaired an informal meeting of likeminded countries at the Canadian embassy to compare notes and coordinate positions; most were in Addis for the meeting of the Sudan Consultative Forum at the headquarters of the African Union on November 6. The Consultative Forum is a group which meets under joint UN and African auspices to consult major players on approaches to Sudan, and grew out of the work of Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa, who heads the AU High-Level Implementation Panel on Sudan. The AUHIP's work has broadened beyond Darfur, and is now leading efforts to broker north-south agreement on outstanding questions related to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including the status of Abyei, and on post-referendum issues, including citizenship, oil, water resources, assets and liabilities, currency and economic cooperation.

President Mbeki briefed the group on his plans to secure a framework document, through a negotiation he launched the following day in Khartoum, and which has established principles for future peaceful relations within which the details of post-2011 arrangements can be negotiated. Negotiations, including on the thorny issue of the Abyei enclave, are expected to resume later this week, after the Eid holiday. The Sudanese Foreign Minister and the Southern Sudanese Minister of Peace and CPA Implementation were both present.

• (1600)

While it was encouraging to hear their commitments to sustained north-south peace, to a peaceful and credible referendum, and to respecting the outcome of the referendum, the Forum was an opportunity to impress upon them the international community's concern about outstanding issues, the need for urgent action to resolve these issues, and the need to be ready to accept compromises in the interests of peaceful coexistence.

The Consultative Forum also considered the ongoing conflict in Darfur and encouraged redoubling efforts to conclude an agreement in Doha, with a view to then broadening discussions through an inclusive process within Darfur, providing a conducive environment has been created.

• (1605)

[English]

Gentlemen, you have seen in the press that voter registration for the referendum began on Monday. We heard more about that from the Carter Center just now.

It began despite numerous logistical and political challenges and delays. This is an encouraging start. Canadian embassy representatives in Juba have been present to observe and report on it. It's important that this process go smoothly in order to make a credible referendum, beginning on January 9, possible.

The referendum is an important moment in Sudan's history, but far more important is what happens afterwards. It's for this reason that Canada is bending its efforts to support not just the referendum itself but a stable Sudan in which development can take place regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

The real significance of the referendum, I would say, is not so much that it will determine independence or unity, but that it represents the culmination of the comprehensive peace agreement. This is therefore a critical phase in the CPA, perhaps the most dangerous the CPA has faced.

The agreement has proven resilient in the past; it has withstood many challenges, including the death of John Garang, the leader of the SPLM and one of the authors of the CPA, who died only months after the agreement was concluded. It has withstood the withdrawal of the SPLM from the Government of National Unity in Khartoum in 2007. They returned a couple of months later.

Canada's strategy is to support the CPA through its conclusion in 2011 and to enhance efforts to ensure stability and development throughout Sudan thereafter. A crucial element of our strategy is to build the capacity of the Government of South Sudan to fulfil its duties to its people, through training and the provision of outside

expertise. Such capacity-building will be necessary and relevant regardless of the outcome of the referendum, whether southern Sudan remains an autonomous, self-governing region, as it is today, or whether it chooses to become fully sovereign and formally independent. An example of that capacity-building is the police training, which Mr. Bobiash spoke of earlier.

I would be happy to answer committee members' questions in the official language of their choice.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I also want to thank our friends from the Carter Center, Ms. Johnson and Ms. van den Bergh.

Ms. Johnson and Ms. van den Berg, we're going to start the questions. We're going to have a couple of rounds of questions. The first round will be seven minutes, and each party will have a chance to ask some questions and get some answers.

I'm going to ask the members here, since we're dealing with a teleconference, if they are addressing a question to either Ms. Johnson or Ms. van den Bergh to please state that so they know who the question is for. They are not able to see our facial expressions here. Also, I would ask that when the ladies from the Carter Center respond, they identify themselves so that we can make sure we have a record of that.

I'm going to start with Mr. Pearson, who is part of the Liberal Party.

Sir, the floor is yours. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank our witnesses, especially those from far away, for joining us today.

Mr. Bobiash, I think it's fair to say that, with regard to Sudan, it's a huge task. I appreciate the hopeful tone in your message. I also appreciate the fact that Canada is making a difference in that region.

The last time the witnesses were here, I brought up certain issues that I had concerns about, and I still have a few, given what you said. I understand that the peace dividend actually didn't get out into the regions very well. We've talked about that before. I was concerned about that.

You were talking about, now that the referendum is taking place, what is going to happen around development. You brought up that there are significant challenges there in the south. I know there are in the north, too, especially with regard to women's groups and others.

In my time in Sudan I have seen that expectations are raised just because people are able to vote and have a referendum. However, the CPA also raised their expectations significantly, but they did not see much of a payoff from it in the outlying regions. In many of those regions, a lot of the conflict and other things have taken place.

As a result of this referendum, expectations are going to be raised significantly again, and people are going to expect a referendum dividend from that as well.

Is it your sense that the capacities are in place so that when that takes place, the regions out there—and I'm not talking about Juba—in which so many of the challenges around development and other things are found, will have the systems and the networks in place to be able to keep those things from breaking apart, if indeed the resources don't get through?

• (1610)

Mr. Donald Bobiash: From the general impression I got in discussions with political figures and government people in the south, I think they're clearly aware of these expectations. They are seriously committed to trying to improve the structures of government, such that they will be able, over the long term, to deliver the kinds of services that people are expecting.

I'll give you one example of this, and perhaps my colleague from CIDA can give you more details. We had a meeting with the minister of health from South Sudan, and he was very anxious to demonstrate to us that his government wanted a plan for health care for South Sudan. We had almost an hour and a half meeting with him. I think this is an important *prise de conscience*, a realization by the governing people in the south that the pressure is on them to deliver.

Having said that, and as I hope I made clear in my remarks, the basic development indicators are very low in the region, as you know—in fact, probably one of the lowest I've seen almost anywhere in Africa. This has always been a neglected frontier region of the continent, and, quite frankly, there's almost no government presence. I'm sure in 90% of South Sudan there are no roads, no schools, there's no health, no government representation and what have you, no police, nothing, so they really have a long way to go in a short period of time.

My slightly optimistic tone, I think, was based on the fact that in both the north and the south there was a genuine desire for peace, regardless of what happens in the referendum. Secondly, I think there's a realization amongst many of the political figures and the government figures that they really have to at least try to deliver for their people.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Mr. Baker, do you have anything you want to add to that, because development is kind of your field?

Mr. Philip Baker (Acting Regional Director General, Southern and Eastern Africa, Canadian International Development Agency): Thanks, if I may.

Your observations are bang on. We had a meeting with NGOs in Juba. I was really thrilled to be a part of this trip actually. It was my first chance—two months into my new role—to be able to join the whole government team heading out on this visit and take a look for myself in Sudan.

When we met with NGOs, one of the comments they made was that there's going to be a huge expectation the moment the referendum is done that they're going to see roads, jobs, education, health, all in place miraculously overnight. Couple that with the observation we heard that over 50% of the public servants in the Government of South Sudan have less than a primary school level education and only 5% have a university degree. You also have a government emerging from a military government to a civilian government. You have capacity issues right across the whole region. Couple that with the challenges of reach in a place with perhaps 100

kilometres of paved roads. There are massive challenges here, as well as that slight disconnect between expectations and reality.

The issue then becomes one for the government, for donors, and for NGOs to work together to try to get set for building that capacity for the longer term, but being ready for that short-term rush to fill that gap between expectations and reality.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Thanks for your efforts.

Could I share my time with Mr. Patry?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you.

I have a question to either Ms. Johnson or Ms. van den Bergh.

The registration started last Monday. Are you satisfied with the results of this first week of registration? Is this turnout for registration about the same in every province? I mean mainly in the border provinces. And is it on schedule? That's my first question, please.

A witness: Is that for the Carter Center?

The Chair: Yes. Either one of you would be fine.

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: In terms of the turnout, it's too early to say exactly which regions are having which turnout numbers, but in general, because it's in the south, there's a steady stream of about 100 to 200 a day, and we're still getting reports in from some of the more rural areas. In the transitional areas, again it's very low, but slightly higher than in Khartoum, in the capital. The capital has been extremely low.

As I said before, one of the reasons is that it was the Eid holiday and it's extremely quiet. Everyone has gone back to their villages. Combine that with the lack of voter education and some of the southerners who are going back to the south to repatriate and they don't want to skew.... By registering in the north and not being able to vote, it might affect the actual 60% turnout requirement.

So there are various factors that are withholding people from registering at the moment. Again, this is only the first week. After the holiday is finished on Sunday, things might change slightly.

• (1615)

Mr. Bernard Patry: Concerning the population of the north, did you notice in the last few weeks or months an increase in the flow of people coming mainly from the north, from the Darfur area, going to the south for the purpose of living there mainly for registration?

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: An increase of Darfurians moving to the south to register? Is that what you asked?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes.

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: There have been movements, but we have no indication that it's to register in the south. There has been movement either because of insecurity or for economic reasons. We have no firm evidence of what the reasons are for this movement.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. van den Bergh.

We're now going to move over to Mr. Dorion, sir. The time is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): I want to thank the witnesses for coming here to shed some light on these issues.

Mr. Bobiash, you met with representatives of the Arab League. Obviously we know that unlike the South, the North is predominantly Muslim.

Is it your impression that the Arab League intends to play a positive role in the referendum process? Does the Arab League intend to take an active role to ensure that the referendum takes place properly? If so, what exactly could it do?

Mr. Donald Bobiash: Perhaps my colleague Mr. Proudfoot, who is just back from meetings in Cairo, can answer those questions.

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: Thank you, Mr. Dorion.

I met with representatives of the Arab league at their headquarters in Cairo. I have to say the discussions focused primarily on the situation in Darfur. In my view, the Arab League's approach is generally very positive and constructive. The organization is heavily involved in the Darfur issue and promotes an approach in line with the peace process negotiated in Doha.

As far as the referendum itself goes, we exchanged views. The representatives of the Arab League have some influence in Khartoum. I for one believe that they can press the Sudanese government to uphold its commitments under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. So then, in answer to your question, yes.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you. I'll yield the floor to my colleague Ms. Deschamps.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you.

I might talk later about the situation of women. Several witnesses spoke to us about the fears that women living in North Sudan are experiencing. They are still forced to follow certain religious diktats, such as wearing a veil. They have a number of concerns.

A referendum would give each side its own territory. Do you discuss this matter during the course of your forums and meetings? Do you expect a kind of mass migration back to the south of southern Sudanese currently living in the north of the country?

There is an issue that women are concerned about. They are worried because their safety is threatened. They also feel that they have been left out in some respects of the discussions surrounding

the current referendum process and its repercussions. Does this question ever come up in your discussions?

• (1620)

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: In fact it does. The question of human rights, including women's rights, is a key part of our commitment in Sudan. It is an issue that we have raised with Sudanese authorities and with NGOs as well. During our visit, we had occasion to meet with NGOs that specialize in human rights and with some that focus specifically on women's rights. This problem is prevalent throughout the country, not just in North Sudan. We're dealing with long-standing social problems.

As far as the referendum goes, we've observed a disturbing trend since Monday. At least two-thirds, and maybe even more, of the people who are registering to vote are men. We hope that more women will be registering in the weeks to come but for now, it is mostly men.

As for the southern Sudanese currently living in the north moving back to the south, we are already beginning to see this migration. Thousands have returned to the south in the past several weeks or months, but we're talking about thousands out of a total population of one and half million. To date, it has been difficult to gauge the extent of this movement, but the UN and the NGOs are making arrangements in the event a mass migration occurs.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: It could potentially create problems and lead to conflicts.

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: Yes, it could.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Which projects top CIDA's priority list at the present time? You mentioned projects that focus on maternal health. Are other projects in the works, especially in rural areas, given the population movement? Another witness told us that there are concerns about China's buying up large tracts of land, thereby eliminating the possibility of peasant farmers being able to buy land to farm.

Mr. Philip Baker: I'm sorry, but I only recently moved back to Canada from Mozambique. I went three years without speaking any French.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: We have translation available.

Mr. Philip Baker: If you don't mind, I will answer in English, to make myself clearer.

[*English*]

I was going to say a little bit on the first part of your question.

CIDA is doing work, first of all, right across the country. Our programming is in all of Sudan. Within that, there are a number of different ways we have of supporting the roles for women in society.

The first thing I want to talk about a little bit is one initiative we have, for instance, that has 19 different projects for supporting NGOs to enhance the roles for women in Sudanese society. And that's right across the country. It's also for women and girls.

Also, I met with two representatives, Rachel Gouin and Eric Chaurette, from Inter Pares, a team we're supporting in Sudan. They're two Canadians who are working with Inter Pares. They're leading on a project that nurtures "action to transform structural obstacles to equitable and sustainable development". The objective of their project is to promote articulated citizen voice and influence in favour of global justice and peace based on mutual respect, reciprocity, and interdependent diversity. But the main drive is giving a voice to women. On that front, it's been very successful.

They're operating in Sudan through the Gender Centre for Research and Training, which is a research, training, and advocacy institution working to promote gender equality and socio-economic change in Sudan. It's an important point, because within Sudan we have noticed that as an early development country, the notion of advocacy from NGOs is still quite weak. You have basic services being provided through NGOs quite a bit, but the advocacy side, especially on gender issues, still has a way to go. So programs like this one that CIDA has in place are quite strong.

The notion of all of Sudan, I think, is important. You mentioned that there's an awful lot of movement and migration. We want to make it clear that CIDA programming is not solely in Khartoum and Juba. It is spread out right across the region. It is also in the east, for example, and in the north of the country.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Baker.

Colleagues of the Carter Center, that was the Bloc Québécois, who are part of the opposition. Now we're moving over to the government side and Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you for coming to give a brief here, and my thanks to the Carter Center from Khartoum.

I am well aware of the situation. The key element at this stage is a credible and transparent referendum that produces results acceptable to both parties. If that happens, then we go to the next stage, to see, after the referendum is done, what other steps Canada would take in building capacity. Can you give us a little brief on that?

For the Carter Center, let me throw in a different question. Mr. Bashir happens to be under indictment from the ICC. He is isolated, unable to travel, and his vice-president, Mr. Taha, seems to be doing everything on the international stage. This is a major impact, a major thing for a country. Politically speaking, is his isolation playing negatively in Sudan?

It's my understanding that when they made the CP Agreement, Mr. Bashir would get some legitimacy as a leader. But here you have a leader who, to be blunt, is not welcome in the international community. How does that play? Is this having an influence on the referendum? It's a tough question.

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: You're asking whether the isolation of the central government, of Mr. Bashir, will have an impact on the referendum?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes. I'm asking whether this isolation is having an effect on the political climate for the referendum. We're looking for a credible referendum. You're on the ground there, and I'm just trying to see what your view is.

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: At the moment, a lot of the negotiations are about what will happen after the referendum. These negotiations involve both the AU panel and the special envoy. We understand that some of these discussions include issues such as the state of the north in case the south wishes to secede.

So it's not only about what will happen in the south, which has up until now been a major issue. Currently, there's a focus on the relationship between the north and the international community, as well as on future diplomatic relations if sanctions are imposed in the event of secession.

It's an important issue for all sides. I believe it has become more prominent in the last few months, largely because of interventions on the part of the mediators.

• (1630)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

What about Mr. Proudfoot and Mr. Bobiash? What's our role?

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: Mr. Obhrai asked about post-referendum issues. I would focus on a number of issues, and how Canada can contribute to that. I think the Carter Center speaker has mentioned the issue of citizenship. I think this is possibly the most important single post-2011 issue. There are approximately one and a half million southerners living in northern Sudan and several hundred thousand northerners living in southern Sudan. Their status after independence, if independence is what happens, is something that has to be resolved, because it can become a source of violence. It has to be resolved because their personal security and livelihoods are at stake.

On these and similar issues, Canada has been encouraging both sides through diplomatic means to negotiate in good faith, but also providing them some of the means to do so. For example, we commissioned research on the citizenship issue and have shared that with the north and south. We assembled a library of documents on citizenship but also other issues that arise in the case of a referendum, and we have shared that with both north and south. We're providing technical expertise on loan to the Government of South Sudan post-2011 task force to assist them in dealing with some of these post-2011 issues. We've also seconded an officer into the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, which is the commission that oversees and monitors the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement but is also providing the secretariat for the negotiations President Mbeki is presiding over on post-2011 issues.

So those are some of the examples of what we're doing to try to ensure a stable outcome based on a resolution of those post-referendum issues.

Mr. Donald Bobiash: Could I just add a couple of remarks? I think one of our teams has had discussions in both the north and south that, yes, we realize the referendum is a historic decision point for the people of North and South Sudan. All parties, especially those in government or politics, have to focus on the medium to long term regardless of the results. These two areas will be living together more or less with each other, and the governments still have to respond to the needs of their citizens. They have to think of very practical issues: health care, education, and so on.

Another one of the themes of our messages in the meetings was that Canada is here to help. We have a massive aid program, as do many other western countries in the UN system, but in the long term, this is not a poor region. It is a country rich in resources, and politically you have to develop policies to tap the benefits of these resources so that over the long term you are not dependent on aid; you are truly independent and autonomous.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll come back to you guys in the next round.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Dewar, sir, who, just for our colleagues at the Carter Center, is part of the NDP and part of the opposition as well.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our guests both here and in Khartoum.

I'm going to start with our friends in the Carter Center.

I noted from your presentation documents that you had 50 registered observers for the registration process. I just wanted to get an idea of scope. What are you looking at in terms of...? If you've got LTOs and STOs, how many of both will you have for the actual referendum, or has that been finalized yet?

Ms. Sarah Johnson: We currently have 16 long-term observers on the ground who will be in the country from September through the end of the referendum and into February. We currently have an additional 30 medium-term observers for the voter registration. They arrived last week, and they will be in the country until approximately December 19. Over the immediate voting period during the referendum, we intend to have another 50 short-term observers

who will join our long-term observers and core staff. So there will be approximately 70 to 80 observers on the ground during the actual referendum. Then we have also deployed observers in the eight out-of-country registration and voting locations. That includes Australia, Canada, the U.S., Egypt, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and....

• (1635)

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's okay. I read your notes.

Ms. Sarah Johnson: We currently have 26 observers deployed across those eight countries, with four observers in Canada—two in Toronto and two in Calgary—for the out-of-country registration. They will be on the ground this month and then again during the referendum.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you for that.

I'm just curious if perhaps they'll stick with their friends in Khartoum. On the whole issue around Abyei, Ban Ki-moon was expressing concern yesterday about it. We have in this area people who are on their southern migration at this point, and there are concerns around conflict.

Do you have anything new to tell us about the Permanent Court of Arbitration? Is it actually going to deal with this boundary issue in a timely fashion? Is that something that still has to be negotiated with Mbeki and the rest, or will it be decided in the short term? Do you know?

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: At the moment, the PCA ruling is still accepted by both parties. There hasn't been any official diversion from that. However, in the first negotiations and now in the pre-negotiations for the second item there have been several other proposals floated. None of them have been accepted or outright rejected by either side.

Some of them do not coincide directly with the PCA ruling, and some of them have different directions. At the moment, the PCA ruling still stands and the Abyei Referendum Act still calls for a commission to be set up and the referendum to be carried out simultaneously with the southern Sudan referendum.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Obhrai said there was some suggestion that negotiations will take place on a deal to get this moving. It will have to do with lifting of sanctions and conditions that we put in place for revenue sharing within this area, to ensure they get revenue that flows from oil revenue in the south.

Is that something you're hearing?

Ms. Sanne van den Bergh: There have been several different proposals, including the one you described. Again this is all unconfirmed because they are proposals. There have been proposals on dual citizenship for mens rea if Abyei were to go to the south, or splitting Abyei in half along the river.

• (1640)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you very much for that.

I'd like to go back to our friends here in Canada, perhaps to DFAIT.

My understanding is that we have three people presently posted in Darfur for the UN commitment, Operation SATURN. In the south, for the SAFARI mission, we have 30 people right now on the ground. Is that correct? I'm just going by data that was provided by the department.

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: That's approximately right. There are three or four in Operation SATURN. I've heard there are up to 39 in SAFARI, but it varies from day to day. That's the ballpark figure.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm thinking of concerns that have been expressed by people in the south and the UN Secretary General. Mr. Bobiash was kind of hinting at this as well. There will be a need for further support for UNMIS. Has Canada been asked for more? Are we planning to provide more support for security at this point?

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: We have not been asked for more.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay.

How is that working at this point? We're hearing, certainly from New York and Juba generally, that there is going to be a need. Are we offering or are we waiting to be asked? If there is an ask, is there any timeline or calendar on when that ask will be formally sent out?

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: The force, as it's currently mandated, would not change dramatically in size or composition. However, the UNMIS force is intimately linked with the CPA. Come next year, the Security Council is going to have to reconsider the form that UNMIS takes, or some of UNMIS for that matter. At that time, they may be approaching prospective troop-contributing countries.

Mr. Paul Dewar: In other words, you don't perceive that there is any need or ask at this point, between now and the referendum.

Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot: As I understand from UNMIS, they are pre-positioning some forces in potential flashpoints, but the UNMIS command itself does not see putting in additional forces...its role is not an inter-position force. It's role has a civilian protection mandate, but it principally has a monitoring mandate. It doesn't really see that a significant increase in the force levels would really make much of a difference. They could use a few more, perhaps, but it's going to be the same order of magnitude as currently.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start our second round of questioning and move back over to the government side, with Mr. Goldring for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is for Sarah.

First, I'd like to make the comment that from the statistics I'm looking at here, the optimism for the future doesn't look that great either. At present we're looking at \$4 billion total annual income from both foreign assistance and oil revenues. However, there's some question on the oil revenue as to whether even that could be maintained consistently, because some of those areas are part of the disputed border areas.

Given that the food possibilities and the farmland are controlled by foreign ownership, the prospects don't look very good to even get beyond the possibilities, with no corruption and all the money being channelled through to the citizenry at a dollar-a-day existence level.

You're monitoring the election. I, too, have monitored elections on 12 different issues in a number of different countries, and I'm somewhat familiar with how they do it with general elections. A referendum should not be that much different at the monitoring level, from your aspect.

How are these expectations being manifested? Is it through the media, through campaign promises, or through promises from different areas? In your assessment, will you be putting forward a full reporting on how you feel the whole issue of separation is being characterized? Is it being characterized from a positive aspect? How is that being done, and who is putting forward those expectations that are leading people to head down that road?

As a second question, you mentioned that you have an acceptance level of a 60% turnout for voters. What is the level of acceptance of the vote itself? Is it a fifty plus one percent, or is it a higher percentage? I ask that because if you take a 60% turnout level with a fifty plus one percent, you can literally have a vote for separation of 30% of the population.

Another element that should be considered, too, is the component of women. In my understanding, from what you said, the component of women being accepted or coming forward to register for the vote is very, very low. You could effectively have, maybe, a 10% level of women on a successful referendum.

Could you tell me what the level is on the percentage of acceptance of the vote, and maybe comment on how you'll be reporting on some of the other elements that seem to be guiding people in specific directions of support?

• (1645)

Ms. Sarah Johnson: Sure.

As we know, monitoring an election is not very different from monitoring a referendum. We're still looking at many similar issues with regard to the civic and political rights of citizens to participate in a referendum, and at many of the human rights that go along with a referendum, and people's ability to participate in civic and political rights in their country.

With regard to the threshold and the percentages needed in order for the referendum to pass, it is a 50-plus-one vote for either unity or secession, but the threshold for turnout among registered voters is 60%. So of all the eligible voters who do register now, there needs to be a 60% turnout during the referendum for the vote to be considered valid.

You touched a bit on the participation of women in the registration. We are starting to track data from our observers. We do not as yet have firm data to really be able to comment on that aspect of it.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Just on that aspect, if I could interrupt, how are we going to look at this sometime in the future? They're obviously agreeing to have this vote on separation, knowing full well that the involvement of women will be at a very low level. How are we going to view this sometime in the future? Is this not going to be a question? We're in an enlightened era ourselves, in which we certainly want to encourage far more equality and participation, and yet we know going into this that it's at a very low level. How are we going to view that in the future?

The Chair: Please answer very quickly. We're almost out of time, but we'll let you answer the question.

Ms. Sarah Johnson: Looking forward, not only in terms of women, but also in terms of general outreach to the population, what the Carter Center has noted in its observations, both during the elections and during the referendum thus far, is that the levels of voter information and voter education have been extremely low. There does need to be increased voter information, perhaps through women's groups, targeted at communities in both the north and the south. As far as we have noted thus far, there's little understanding of the eligibility requirements in the north for both men and women, and we'd really like to see a fair increase in voter education across the board.

As part of the observation, we are also tracking statistics on the number of women who are part of the registration staff. We noticed during the election that a fair number of the registration and polling staff were men, particularly those with the senior positions within the registration and voting authorities. We'd like to see an increase in the representation of women in those local bodies and regional authorities, and we are tracking numbers on that through the referendum as our observers are in the registration sites.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move back over to the opposition, to Ms. Neville, and then we're going to finish up with the Conservatives. And then that will be it for all our questions.

Ms. Neville, you have five minutes.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I don't know whether I need the five minutes, because my line of questioning is very similar to that of the previous questioner, but I would like to follow up a little bit on the issue of women and women voting.

I'm interested in knowing the proportion of men to women, particularly in the south, and the percentages, accordingly, of who's voting. Do we have a disproportionate number of women, yet a disproportionate number of male voters? Again, what further outreach can be done to bring women in to vote?

Ms. Sarah Johnson: You make a very valid point about the importance of women participating in the process. At this point, given that we're four days into the 17-day registration period, it's hard to tell what those figures are from a reliable perspective. But we certainly share your interest in the representation of women in the vote.

If you look at the registration statistics during the elections, there were some regions where there were more women registered than men. We're hoping that the referendum authorities also release detailed information, as they did during the elections, on the gender breakdown of the registrants. We don't really have good data as yet to share with you on the representation of women in registration. However, I can't underscore enough the importance of voter education and voter information, for the general public overall, but also for women in the population.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

That's fine, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there no more questions on the other side?

Mr. Dewar, you can have one quick one.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I just wanted to go back to our friends in Khartoum. You have people who are going to be in the north. That will be for both pre-registration and post-registration, I am assuming. How many will you have there?

Ms. Sarah Johnson: We have three teams of long-term observers deployed in the north that are each covering a number of states. We also have, during voter registration, a total of 19 to cross the north, which is fairly large coverage. We hope to hit nearly all of the registration sites in the north during the registration period. We are covering both the north and the south.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm sorry, did you say that it is 19 in just the north?

Ms. Sarah Johnson: It is 19.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

Ms. Sarah Johnson: You're welcome.

The Chair: I just want to take this time to thank our friends from the Carter Center in Khartoum for staying up so late. It is approaching one o'clock in the morning there. Thank you very much for that, Ms. Johnson and Ms. van den Bergh.

I also want to thank our friends from the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA. Thank you again for coming back after getting back from your trip to let us know how things are on the ground.

I am going to suspend the meeting for one minute to thank our guests again, if you want. Then we will come back in camera. We have not a lot of business but just a little to deal with.

We will suspend for one minute and go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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