

The Sudan - South Sudan Reconciliation: More Patience and Efforts Needed

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The Sudan - South Sudan issue is one of Africa's longest, toughest problems with profound and lasting significance. Due to the multiple factors such as complicated history, mixed races, and religious conflicts, two civil wars broke out between the Northern and the Southern Sudan in the last century, lasting almost 40 years. In 2005, under the mediation of the international community, the two parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), ending the longest civil war in the history of the African continent. A referendum was held in early 2011 in accordance with the CPA to determine if the Southern Sudan should declare its independence from Sudan, with 98.83% of the population voting for separation. On July 9th of the same year, the Government of Southern Sudan declared its independence as the Republic of South Sudan. The now two countries have paid a tremendous cost for this hard-won peaceful separation. However, the shadow of conflicts resulting from the decades-long civil wars is still hanging over the two countries. The road towards enduring peace is still full of twists and turns. Because of the boundary demarcation disputes and differences over oil revenues sharing and the status of the Abyei region, frictions have never stopped between the two countries and sometimes erupted into fierce border conflicts.

In order to ease the tension, the international community made a collective response and concerted efforts at a critical moment. This April, the African Union, as the major mediator, initiated a "Road Map" solution and afterwards convened a number of negotiations between the two sides. In support of the African Union's "Road Map", the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 2046 and 2047 in this May and held consultations and reviews on the Sudan – South Sudan issue on a regular basis. On September 27th, coordinated under the African Union and witnessed by the international community, the two countries, after a number of intensive meetings, signed in Addis Ababa the Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of South Sudan and Republic of Sudan, including a string of agreements concerning oil revenues sharing, fiscal arrangements, and status of nationals of

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other state, etc. These agreements will definitely play a positive role in easing the two sides' relations, stabilizing their domestic situations, and maintaining regional stability at large.

At present, the Sudan - South Sudan reconciliation issue is moving in the direction of peaceful solution and the two sides are given a favorable opportunity for a 'real' start of peace and a new era of cooperation and mutual benefit. How to enlarge consensus, promote negotiations, maintain and solidify the current proactive momentum, and speed up the appropriate settlement of the remaining issues between the two sides have become the international community's common challenge and mission. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and true friend of both Sudan and South Sudan, China has consistently supported and contributed to the peace process between the two countries. Both in bilateral relations with the two countries and on multilateral occasions such as in Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, Chinese leaders always tried to persuade the two sides to settle relevant issues through peaceful negotiations. Since appointed as the Chinese Government's Special Representative on African Affairs, I have visited the two countries for several times and kept regular contacts with relevant sides. The diplomatic efforts made by China in solving the Sudan – South Sudan issue have been productive, not only easing the regional tension and promoting the two sides' reaching an agreement on oil revenues sharing, but also consolidating China's relations with both countries.

As an African saying goes, to be without a friend is to be poor indeed. China always thinks that as neighboring countries indispensable to each other, Sudan and South Sudan should be friends living in harmony and partners that develop themselves hand in hand. This is also a wish shared by the international community. In the next stage, the two countries will have negotiations on the implementation of the agreements and other unsettled issues. The international community is supposed to keep its patience and take good care of the seed of peace that has been planted between the two sides, cultivating it into a luxuriant tree of happiness that shelters the two countries' people and the people in surrounding areas.