

**The Elders congratulate South Sudan on first anniversary of independence
They urge Khartoum and Juba to resolve outstanding issues
and recommit to building two viable states**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders today congratulated the people of South Sudan on the first anniversary of their country's independence, and urged the Presidents of Sudan and South Sudan to mark this important moment with a public recommitment to building two viable states, living as neighbours in peace.

Concluding a five-day visit to the region, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Martti Ahtisaari and Mary Robinson called on President Salva Kiir of South Sudan and President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan to meet as soon as possible to break the current cycle of mistrust.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said:

"Peace, peace, peace is what the people of Sudan and South Sudan need most. Recent months have seen increased hardship and suffering in both countries. It is a fragile time and I hope that the leaders will do what their people need, which is to recommit to working together to build two viable states. The futures of Sudan and South Sudan are intertwined. If one fails, the other fails – one cannot prosper without the other."

In Juba on Friday 6 July, the three Elders met President Salva Kiir to discuss the daunting challenges facing South Sudan as a new country. On Sunday 8 July, on the eve of the independence anniversary, Archbishop Tutu delivered an address to assembled dignitaries, including the President, urging everyone to work for peace, reconciliation and national development.

The Elders also discussed women and girls' health, education and rights with representatives of women's groups, urging much greater representation of women in the peace process and future of their country. They also met Christian and Muslim faith leaders and were impressed by their commitment to working for peace within the South and between North and South.

On Saturday 7 July, the Elders travelled to the border region in Upper Nile state to meet refugees who had fled recent fighting in the Sudanese state of Blue Nile. They visited Yusuf Batil

refugee camp, temporary home to 35,000 people, many of whom had arrived dehydrated and malnourished after weeks of walking. The refugees represent a fraction of the several hundred thousand displaced in the past year by the conflict between the Sudanese army and the Sudanese rebel movement, SPLM-North, in Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

The Elders commended the aid workers from all over the world operating in the region for their commitment. They emphasised that more support is needed as humanitarian agencies struggle to cope with the rapid refugee inflow, made even more difficult by the start of the rainy season. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has received only a fifth of the USD 186 million it needs to address the refugee crisis in South Sudan in 2012; it has already exhausted existing donor contributions.

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

“Now is not the time for donor fatigue – it would be unconscionable for the world to turn away from the humanitarian tragedy resulting from the ongoing conflict in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. This crisis adds to the many other challenges faced by South Sudan and diverts scarce resources from efforts to address food insecurity and other humanitarian issues. On present trends, up to 4.7 million South Sudanese, around half the population, may be in need of food aid this year.

“At the same time, there must be a longer-term, concerted effort to build the capacity of South Sudan’s new government to deliver the services that their people want and deserve.”

While international donors will continue to play a huge role in South Sudan for some time, the Elders believe that restarting oil flows is essential. Juba shut down oil production in January following a dispute with Khartoum over transit fees, cutting off South Sudan’s only significant source of revenue.

This has contributed to rapid inflation and currency depreciation in both countries. In South Sudan, food prices in border areas have jumped by as much as 200 percent and have led the government to announce drastic austerity measures. In Sudan, the loss of oil income since independence, exacerbated by the production shut down in the South, has hit hard, leading to cuts in government spending and fuelling inflation; this has sparked popular protests.

Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland said:

“Oil should not be used by Sudan and South Sudan as a weapon against each other. It is imperative that oil can start flowing again, in the interests of both countries. We urge leaders in Juba and Khartoum to show responsible leadership and reach an agreement acceptable to both parties as soon as possible. Oil revenues are essential for both Sudan and South Sudan’s prosperity and the negotiations should not be tied to other issues.”

The Elders' visit to South Sudan was part of a two-stage Elders' mission to the region as tensions have escalated. In late May, [Jimmy Carter and Lakhdar Brahimi travelled to Khartoum for talks with President al-Bashir](#); the current visit was primarily focused on South Sudan and Addis Ababa, where the African Union has been mediating talks between the two sides.

In Addis Ababa, the Elders met Thabo Mbeki, former South African President and Chairperson of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), and Panel member, Pierre Buyoya, former President of Burundi. They also met Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

This Elders' delegation had hoped to visit Khartoum following their visit to Juba, but it was not possible to do so. They will continue to monitor events in South Sudan and Sudan, and anticipate continuing their engagement with both countries in support of AU and UN efforts. By 2 August, the AUHIP is due to report to the UN Security Council on progress made in the bilateral talks.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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The Elders' work on Sudan and South Sudan

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

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

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

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



Desmond Tutu – delegation leader

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



Martti Ahtisaari

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



Mary Robinson

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

About The Elders

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

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

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

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