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Written Ministerial Statement

15 June 2011

Situation in Sudan

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (William Hague): In January this year, the people of South Sudan voted in a referendum in favour of secession from the Republic of Sudan, as was their right under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the Government of the Republic of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2005. The South plans to secede on 9 July. Since the referendum, progress against the remaining areas of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which will expire on 9 July, has been insufficient. There are also a number of "post CPA issues" on which agreement needs to be reached urgently. The violence witnessed in recent weeks in Abyei and Southern Kordofan regions is cause for great concern and risks prejudicing all that has been achieved since the CPA was signed in 2005.

On 19 May, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forces attacked an UNMIS convoy escorting Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) elements of a Joint Integrated Unit. In a disproportionate response, Sudanese Armed Forces took control of the area in and around Abyei town on 21 May. I immediately condemned this action. Since then, the lawlessness and violence has continued, with approximately 100,000 civilians displaced internally. When I met Foreign Minister Karti in London on 6 June, I made clear that there must be a durable and peaceful resolution to the status of Abyei and that Sudanese Armed Forces must withdraw from the region. I encouraged the Foreign Minister to accept offers of a UN mandated third-party peacekeeping force in Abyei so that Sudanese forces can withdraw quickly and those who have been displaced can return to their homes. I received assurances that the Government of Sudan intended to withdraw its forces.

On 6 June, fighting broke out between SPLA and SAF in Kadugli, the state capital of South Kordofan. Since then we have seen a worrying escalation of violence, including aerial bombardments and reports of ethnically motivated assassinations and attacks on individuals. Such actions are wholly unacceptable and I condemn them. The violence has already displaced some 60,000 civilians. I am greatly concerned by the lack of access being granted to humanitarian agencies and I call on all forces in the state immediately to grant access for humanitarian agencies to help the people most affected by this violence. I remind the

Government of Sudan of its responsibility to protect civilians. Reports of human rights violations should also be fully investigated.

These conflicts endanger the hard-won progress that has been achieved through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. This week the AU High Level Implementation Panel, chaired by former President Mbeki, is facilitating talks in Addis Ababa between the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan, aimed at urgently finding a peaceful solution to the situations in Abyei and South Kordofan. I discussed the prospects for these talks with President Mbeki on 9 June and assured him of our support for his and his team's efforts. Today I again urge all parties involved in those talks quickly to agree a solution to the current crisis and to bring to an end the violence that has already affected so many lives.

The UK Special Envoy for Sudan, Michael Ryder, travelled to Addis Ababa to support the AU talks, working closely with his US counterpart. The UK Ambassador in Khartoum and Consul-General in Juba are speaking regularly to representatives of the Government of Sudan and South Sudan to seek a way out of this crisis, as well as leading the co-ordination between our international partners locally to press both parties to reach a solution. We have been public and loud in our condemnations. The British Defence Attaché based in Khartoum has been supporting the military talks on this issue and representatives from the Department for International Development are working closely with their UN colleagues on the humanitarian response. The UK funded the pre-positioning of supplies which allowed the UN promptly to start the humanitarian response in Southern Kordofan. We are working hard with Security Council partners to ensure the UN remains able to protect civilians and provide humanitarian support.

The UK has pledged £560 million over the next four years to support humanitarian and development projects in Sudan. My right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development visited Sudan last month, along with his counterparts from the US and Norway, to meet with key partners in both north and south Sudan and reiterate UK support. The UK remains committed to seeing two peaceful, stable and economically viable states after 9 July and we will remain engaged until a lasting and sustainable peace is achieved.