



# From Prolonged Crisis to **Sustainable Peace**

A joint seminar about South Sudan | Brussels, 17 November 2015

On 17 November, Crisis Group and the Embassy of Japan in Belgium jointly organised a half day seminar to discuss security and development challenges for South Sudan. The event aimed to take stock of the situation in South Sudan after the signing of the IGAD Plus Peace Agreement in August. A group of 80 representatives from governments, the EU and civil society and several members of the Belgian and international press attended and contributed to the debates around two panel discussions. In this short paper, we aim to highlight the main outcomes of the seminar.

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*Casie Copeland (Crisis Group); Mitsuaki Furukawa (JICA); EJ Hogendoorn (Crisis Group); and Fulgencio Garrido Ruiz (European Commission) debate development challenges that will accompany any successful South Sudan peace deal.*



Left: Jean-Marie Guéhenno (Crisis Group) and Foreign Minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin (South Sudan) meet ahead of the discussions; Middle: Masahiko Kiya (Embassy of Japan in South Sudan) shares his views with Crisis Group's communications team; Right: Jean-Marie Guéhenno (Crisis Group) stresses the importance of the implementation of the peace agreement in his opening remarks.

## Opening Remarks

International Crisis Group's President & CEO **Jean-Marie Guéhenno** said the joint Crisis Group-Japan seminar was being held at a historical moment for South Sudan. The IGAD-Plus mechanism, he said, was vital to support the peace agreement signed in August 2015 to end the conflict in progress since December 2013. "To build peace is as difficult as to end a war", he pointed out.

**Masafumi Ishii**, Japanese ambassador to Belgium, spoke of Japan's determination to support South Sudan through development assistance and the presence of 350 Japanese peacekeepers in the UN force; that the EU had an interest in strengthening the government of South Sudan, a significant source of refugee flows; and that South Sudan was an area in which China and Japan had showed a rare ability to cooperate.

*\* As of 15 December, South Sudan's central bank moved to a floating market driven exchange rate.*

## Keynote address

The minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of South Sudan, **Dr Barnaba Marial Benjamin**, noted that South Sudan's landmass was the same size as that of France and is endowed with enormous resources: fertile, unpolluted agricultural land suitable for ecological farming, extensive oil reserves and other minerals, as well as Africa's largest headcount of livestock, particularly cattle. He pledged the government would unify the country's various exchange rates to improve the investment climate\*.

Benjamin underlined the 93 per cent public voter support for South Sudan's independence in 2011, how the country had to start from scratch to build schools, roads and hospitals, and accommodated large numbers of returning refugees.

To turn the August 2015 peace deal into a lasting ceasefire, the foreign minister said, it would require not just the transition to civilian life of one of the world's largest guerrilla armies but the removal of vast numbers of guns from the population.

Then, Dr Barnaba Marial Benjamin said, "in the history of liberation struggles, always after liberation there is crisis ... this is the nature of things".

## Panel 1

### Challenges Ahead for the Implementation of the IGAD-Plus Peace Agreement

**Masahiko Kiya**, Japan's ambassador to South Sudan, urged the South Sudanese to take ownership of the new peace agreement and not to waste time. Without establishing security, he said, there could be no progress on macro-economic development, infrastructure, agriculture, vocational training and service delivery. "The focus should be on capacity building", he said. "A good government will get the economic support it needs. The donor community will follow".

**Emmanuel LoWilla**, South Sudan's ambassador to the EU, noted that while it could take seconds to destroy some-

thing, it could take years to build it back up. He also urged all parties to move away from tools of coercion, threat or sanction, and to use different tools, of peace, encouragement and dialogue.

Addressing the outstanding question of accountability for past war crimes through a hybrid local-international court, LoWilla pointed to the indigenous approach to justice in South Sudanese culture and said that should play the lead role in the peace and reconciliation process.

**Casie Copeland**, Crisis Group's South Sudan Analyst, noted that the court was a "giant global experiment": the judges will be from neighbouring African countries, there will be reconciliation processes as well as a mechanism for reparations, and Western donors will be called upon to fund the court while having limited influence over it.

**Hugh Pope**, Crisis Group's Director of Communications & Outreach, pointed out that a ceasefire has still not fully taken hold after nearly two years of conflict that has killed more than 100,000 people and driven more than 1.5 million from

their homes. He recognised one signal achievement of the August ceasefire, the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from South Sudan, but noted that Crisis Group remains concerned about lack of progress on other fronts.

Copeland pointed out that instability in South Sudan breeds instability in the region and that the recent South Sudan peace deal was in effect also a regional compromise, “a good example of African solutions to African problems”. Still,

she said, South Sudanese should take charge of the implementation process and that confidence-building measures were needed to bring the parties closer together to move the transitional process forward.

On the issue of inclusivity, Copeland pointed out that both parties have had women on their negotiating teams who played a significant role in pushing peace forward and, at other times, representing their parties’ staunchest, uncompromis-

ing positions. Copeland said she admired South Sudan’s “sheer sense of will and almost stubbornness to refuse to accept the outcome that you believe is not right”, and praised an attitude toward former military enemies that “you do not have to like or respect someone to work together”.

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## Panel 2

### From Humanitarian Assistance to Resilience and Development

**Dr Mitsuaki Furukawa**, chief representative in South Sudan of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), said his agency’s support was based on four pillars: infrastructure (such as making drinking water safe, building bridges and improving a river port in the capital, Juba); alternative livelihoods (through master plans on agriculture & development, and irrigation); basic livelihood needs (by improving education and training); and better governance and security (by developing institutional capacity, peacebuilding projects and sports).

**Fulgencio Garrido Ruiz**, Sudan/South Sudan aid & cooperation officer for the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation, noted that the Juba government was running a 70 per cent budget deficit, mostly because of spending on security, and that perhaps

two-thirds of teachers and health workers were paid by donors.

Ruiz worried that government spending may not be well prioritised, that revenues have been hit by low oil prices and that procurement tenders could be inflated. More attention needs to be paid to promoting self-reliance, he said, for instance by linking farmers to markets. Meanwhile, he noted that the government is covering the deficit by heavy borrowing from the central bank, which is cutting traders’ access to foreign currency and leading to shortages, the spread of black markets and business closures. Ruiz said that budgetary reform, a freer exchange rate and spending cuts will be painful, but essential, if inflation is not to soar.

Casie Copeland made a plea for more humanitarian assistance, an end to warring parties’ abuse of hospitals and med-

ical staff, and better donor focus on the country’s underlying challenges. “President Kiir’s creation of 28 new states was something the people wanted, though perhaps in different ways. But the international community’s first response was to condemn it. This is unhealthy”, she said. Outsiders “cannot answer all the questions in South Sudan. Sometimes it’s going to take longer, sometimes we will not like it, but it’s not our country”.

**EJ Hogendoorn**, Crisis Group’s Deputy Africa Program Director, noted that \$900 million has been spent by international community this year. But, he asked, what could be made of President Kiir’s

*Left: Masafumi Ishii (Embassy of Japan Brussels) outlines his country’s and the international community’s support for the peace agreement in South Sudan; Right: Barnaba Marial Benjamin (South Sudan) takes part in the Q&A following the panel discussions.*



announcement that \$4 billion had been stolen by politicians?

Dr Furukawa suggested that transparency was a key issue, and that master plans and better public financial management would help in more efficient spending. “There is no magic bullet”, he said. Ruiz said another aspect was to manage natural resources like oil “for the many, not just the few”, and called for more accountability. Copeland saw a need for a “fundamental rethinking of how the political system works, to separate positions and perks. An endless cycle of dissatisfaction is enabling a culture of corruption”.

Foreign Minister Benjamin said corruption was a “bad evil” and that his young state had to learn more professional public accounting to see it off. Ambassador LoWilla noted that South Sudan had set up several institutions to monitor corruption and “in Juba people were arrested and are being tried. The government is actively doing something about it ... it may take a while, we recognise that there is a problem and we want to solve it”.

Benjamin called for the EU to push forward on its commitments to aid, which have not yet been signed, and that development would pave the way to stability and peace.

Copeland, noting the paradox that South Sudan is a country rich in resources but whose people are poor, said she believed that “as we transition from humanitarian to development aid, the political process will determine when we can take those development steps and they cannot be rushed or uniform across the country. We have got to focus on getting the politics and stability right. Development will definitely come alongside that”.

*Below from left: Casie Copeland (Crisis Group); Emmanuel LoWilla (South Sudan Embassy Brussels); Hugh Pope (Crisis Group); and Masahiko Kiya (Embassy of Japan Juba) discuss the implementation of the IGAD Plus Peace Agreement.*

## Recommendations

Macro-economic stability is crucial to South Sudan’s long-term prospects for peace and development. Greater efforts must be made, following the exchange rate normalisation, to stabilise South Sudan’s economy to avoid worst-case scenarios.

Rebuilding relationships within South Sudan and between the government of South Sudan and the international community are necessary to move from war to peace.

Despite the peace agreement, war continues in many areas and the devastation means that the transition from humanitarian to development will take place on different timelines in different areas. The development imperative must be balanced with ensuring the needs of the most desperate are met.



International Crisis Group analysts really go to the heart of problems found in various parts of the world, including my own country ... we always read your [South Sudan analyst’s] articles, even if we wish you were not always hitting us on the head. **Barnaba Marial Benjamin, South Sudan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, November 2015**