

NEWS

THE
CARTER CENTER



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2011

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Carter Center Urges Political Parties and Blue Nile Popular Consultation Commission to Ensure Genuine Dialogue on Key Issues in Blue Nile State

In a statement issued today, The Carter Center reports that the first phase of the popular consultation in Blue Nile produced notable accomplishments, but that state legislative assembly members, political parties, and consultation authorities should work collaboratively to ensure a more transparent and genuine dialogue on the key issues in remaining phases of the process in Blue Nile. The positive aspects of the hearings, such as wide participation across the state and a strong turnout by women, and the Blue Nile Popular Consultation Commission's strong administration, particularly in Damazine, should serve as models for the citizen hearings for the popular consultation in South Kordofan. Despite these successes, the Center believes that instead of a rich dialogue on the breadth of issues evoked in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the process was largely marked by a contest between two party-endorsed systems of governance. While political parties are clearly entitled to be involved in the process, party pressure on members to voice these poorly-understood responses in the citizen hearings appears to have inhibited a more meaningful debate on key issues. Moreover, the focus of the public hearings has concentrated too narrowly on systems of governance, to the exclusion of other critical topics such as security in the state or power and wealth-sharing.

Under the CPA, the citizen hearings are the first phase of the Blue Nile Popular Consultation's mandated process and are intended to ascertain the views of the state's citizens on whether the CPA has met their aspirations. From a technical standpoint, the commission implemented the citizen hearings in a manner largely consistent with the CPA, the Interim National Constitution (INC), the Popular Consultation Act (PCA), and other state obligations by providing citizens the opportunity to exercise freedom of speech and assembly¹ and facilitating the participation of thousands of Blue Nile residents. Overwhelmingly, residents of Blue Nile used this opportunity to call for more development in the state and express disappointment that the CPA failed to improve living conditions.

The commission, state authorities, and international technical advisors contributed to a well-run process. Observers reported that, overall, citizen hearings took place according to schedule and design, providing a forum for 69,429 participants in 108 different locations across the state over 20 days. Commission staff followed procedures, registering all attendees and recording the views expressed, and few issues arose regarding eligibility. Individuals spoke in at least five local languages when they preferred to do so, and translation was often available, especially in rural areas where non-Arabic speakers are more prevalent. Security personnel acted in an appropriate

¹ Article 21, UN, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 21 and 22, UN, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 10 and 11, AU, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

capacity and police only intervened in the hearings when necessary to address an incident. Although eight of the 116 hearings were canceled due to security incidents of varying severity, the hearings were generally conducted in a peaceful atmosphere.

In spite of these achievements, the Center believes that the involvement of the dominant political parties appears to have inhibited a fully open hearing of citizens' responses during the hearings. Carter Center observers reported that, at many hearings, it appeared as though the two parties had coached citizens to give short statements supporting their party-endorsed system of government, rather than express their own views directly. To the extent that parties' actions curtail unfiltered expressions of citizen's views, such action, while not contrary to law, undermine the overall goal and spirit of the popular consultations to gauge citizens' views. To limit such political influence, the commission should take steps to guarantee impartial civic education and facilitate more substantive dialogue and understanding of the popular consultations amongst citizens on issues.

Commissioners from both major parties should work to ensure cooperation throughout the coming stages of the popular consultation process. Most immediately they should focus on compiling the data from citizen hearings as well as initiating the thematic hearings in which various experts from around the state will come together to debate the issues that arose in the citizen hearings.

When devising the format and length of the thematic hearings, the commission should consider fostering dialogue on topics covered by the popular consultations' mandate that received little attention, such as security, accountability, and power-sharing, which are of vital concern to the citizens of Blue Nile. All political stakeholders, especially the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and National Congress Party (NCP), should work toward supporting a climate conducive to the discussion of these other essential topics. Only by discussing of all of these areas can the popular consultation process achieve its goal of determining whether citizens of Blue Nile believe the CPA, in all its provisions, has met their aspirations. Furthermore, the Center also recommends that the commission provide adequate time for the thematic hearings and that they include a range of voices from across the state.

Moving forward, it is important that the commission ensures that all issues discussed during the citizen and thematic hearings will be adequately reflected in their final report to the Blue Nile State Legislative Assembly, which is to determine whether the CPA met the aspirations of the people of Blue Nile, or whether to engage in further negotiations with the central government in Khartoum.

Finally, the Center notes that the commission welcomed the Center's observation and provided for timely accreditation. However, on occasion the commission's staff prevented Carter Center observers at the citizen hearings from speaking with participants or anyone outside the hearings venues. Observation relies on direct interaction with the population and such restrictions ran counter to their commitment to allow observers to all stages of the process and the otherwise cooperative spirit between the commission and observers.²

Background on the Carter Center Mission

Upon invitation from the Blue Nile Popular Consultation Commission, The Carter Center deployed observers to monitor and report on the entirety of the popular consultation process in Blue Nile. In all, three Carter Center observer teams deployed across Blue Nile and attended 32 of 108 citizen hearings held. The Center assesses the popular consultation process based on the CPA, INC, PCA, and Sudan's obligations for democratic processes and

² Popular Consultation Act (2010), Art. 13, mandates that observers be invited to observe the process.

human rights contained in regional and international agreements.³ The objectives of the Carter Center's observation mission in Sudan are to provide an impartial assessment of the overall quality of the popular consultation process, promote an inclusive process for all residents of Blue Nile, and demonstrate international interest in Sudan's transition processes. In addition to the observers' deployed to Blue Nile, the Center currently has a presence in South Kordofan and in Southern Sudan to report on the elections in South Kordofan and post-referendum issues, with 12 observers deployed in total throughout Sudan. The Carter Center conducts observation activities in accordance with the Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation and Code of Conduct that was adopted at the United Nations in 2005 and endorsed by 35 election observation groups.⁴ The Center will release periodic public statements on popular consultation findings, elections in South Kordofan, and the interim period, available on its website: www.cartercenter.org.

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³ Sudan ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Feb. 18, 1986. The ACHPR came into force Oct. 21, 1986. Sudan acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on March 18, 1986. The ICCPR came into force on March 23, 1976.

⁴ The Declaration of Principles can be read at http://cartercenter.org/peace/democracy/des_declaration.html



Statement on Citizen Hearings Phase of Blue Nile Popular Consultations

March 21, 2011

Popular Consultations

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) mandated popular consultations for the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, as a “democratic right and mechanism to ascertain the views of the people . . . on the [CPA].”⁵ In essence, the purpose of the popular consultations is to establish how the people of Blue Nile view the CPA, and where shortcomings are identified in the states’ governance (its constitutional, political, economic, and administrative structures), to allow for renegotiation of these arrangements with the central government in Khartoum. In its mandate to determine citizens’ views on implementation of the CPA, the popular consultations necessarily reviews all six protocols of the agreement, including the provisions on wealth-sharing, power-sharing, and security arrangements.

The 2010 Popular Consultation Act prescribes additional aspects of the popular consultations process. According to the Act, the popular consultations are intended to ascertain the views of the people, to serve as a final settlement of the political conflict and as a restoration of peace, and to rectify any deficiencies in the governance arrangements provided for by the CPA.⁶

Following national elections in April 2010, the Blue Nile Parliamentary Commission for Popular Consultation was established in October 2010, as mandated by the CPA.⁷ The Commission is comprised of 21 members, with 13 commissioners from the National Congress Party (NCP) and eight commissioners from the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), all hailing from the state legislative assembly.⁸ Despite facing significant challenges of poor infrastructure and few resources, the commission committed to the task of planning the popular consultations, a novel and unknown process in Sudan. Soon after its establishment, the commission formally invited The Carter Center to observe the popular consultation process⁹ and has provided access and assistance where requested.

Neither the CPA nor the Popular Consultation Act provide detailed guidance or instruction on *how* to consult the people of Blue Nile regarding CPA arrangements.¹⁰ Beyond the general parameters sketched in the act, the commission received no further instruction or guidance on how to do its work. The choice presented to the people

⁵ CPA, Chapter V, Article 3.1. Also The Interim National Constitution, Article 182(2)

⁶ Popular Consultation Act (2010), Art. 5(a)-(c).

⁷ Popular Consultation Act (2010), Art. 6.

⁸ Popular Consultation Act (2010), Art. 9.

⁹ Popular Consultation Act (2010), Art. 13, mandates that observers be invited to observe the process.

¹⁰ The Popular Consultation Act Article 15 (2)(a) merely tasks the Commission with, *inter alia*, “taking into account the views expressed by the people of the state, political parties and civil society through conferences and public meetings in the concerned state.” In Article 16(2)(a) the act enumerates the Commission’s functions and powers: “Meet with the people of the concerned state to discuss with them and get to know their viewpoints through opinion polls on the Agreement or its implementation.”

of Blue Nile by the popular consultations is to approve and endorse the CPA and consider it a resolution to political conflict in the state, or not.¹¹

In order to fulfill its duties, the commission designed and executed a plan of widespread and public citizen hearings throughout the state. At these hearings, any resident of Blue Nile could speak on the question of whether and how the CPA has met his/her aspirations. In addition to the citizen hearings, the Center understands that the commission plans to hold thematic hearings that will target what many refer to as the elite segment of the Blue Nile population, primarily government authorities, political party representatives, union representatives, educated specialists, CSO representatives, and community leaders. Although exact plans for the thematic hearings remain undefined, the commission has suggested the content will focus on four of the critical areas of the CPA: constitutional, political, administrative, and economic issues. Further clarity on the topics of the hearings will be provided by the commission prior to the start of hearings, expected to begin in late-March. Accounting for input from the citizen and thematic hearings, the commission will then prepare a report for the Blue Nile Legislative Assembly. The legislature will consider this report in conjunction with a report from the Government of Blue Nile and another report from the Presidential Assessment and Evaluation Commission. Finally, the legislature will then determine whether to embrace the CPA as meeting the aspirations of the people of Blue Nile, or to engage in further negotiations with the central government in Khartoum. While there is not yet a publicly disseminated timeline for each step of the process, the CPA determines that the Blue Nile popular consultation process, as well as its counterpart process in South Kordofan, should conclude by the end of the agreement on July 9, 2011, unless legislation is enacted by the parties to extend the interim period.

Recent developments suggest that there is growing discord on procedural matters within the Commission amongst its NCP and SPLM members, a worrying trend that may hurt the chances for efficient and timely administration of the remaining steps of the process. The Center hopes that the Commission can achieve consensus on procedural matters expeditiously so as to ensure subsequent stages of the popular consultation can begin as soon as possible.

Citizen Hearings

Influence and Impact of Political Parties

While the Center praises the commission for conducting efficient, well-attended citizen hearings, it is worrying that what appears to be coaching by the NCP and SPLM undermined the overall goal and spirit of the popular consultations. Based on observer reports, after roughly five to six days of hearings, participants began to give a rote, basic statement of ‘autonomy’ or ‘self-governance’ and ‘development,’ rather than the more wide-ranging remarks heard in the initial days of the hearings. Shortly thereafter, observers reported that many began to counter the calls for autonomy or self-governance in support of ‘federalism’ or ‘current government,’ and within a few days adding development to their statements.

To an increasing degree as the hearings progressed, rather than express unique views on the four designated themes of the popular consultations, many participants resorted to offering only brief statements in support of either ‘autonomy/self-governance’ or ‘federalism,’ which emerged as the respective positions of the SPLM and the NCP. This occurred frequently and across the state. A considerable number of participants could not properly pronounce the terms they used, and some could not explain what they wanted or why.

There have been reports that the parties’ campaigning amounted to coaching, pressure, or intimidation. In some areas, this reportedly included bringing individuals to a nearby location for a last-minute information session before taking them to a hearing. In other areas, Carter Center observers heard accusations of bribery and threats, though none could be verified. Both major parties accuse the other of manipulating the process and

¹¹ Popular Consultation Act (2010), Art. 15(1).

inappropriately influencing participants. At the very least, the parties' mobilization calls into question the popular nature of the views expressed during the hearings.

The SPLM and NCP's apparent orchestration of people's statements in the popular consultations undermines the intent of the process, which is to ascertain the views of the people of Blue Nile in the widest possible sense. The Center highlights these flaws in the hopes that similar practices will not be replicated in the upcoming thematic hearings in Blue Nile or the popular consultations in South Kordofan. The commission in Blue Nile, and the as-of-yet unformed commission in South Kordofan, can take a significant step toward achieving this by facilitating broad civic education that highlights the purpose of the popular consultations and its scope for open dialogue.

Structure and Participation

Following two pilot citizen hearings in December, the commission scheduled 116 public hearings from Jan. 14-Feb. 2, covering six geographical circuits around the state. One hearing was held on each circuit each day, conducted by two to four commissioners each. In general, the citizen hearings ran according to schedule and plan. Across the state, procedures were standardized. Participation numbers were extraordinarily high, with hundreds – sometimes over 1,000 – participants speaking at a single hearing. In total, 69,429 residents of Blue Nile shared views either verbally or in written form. Such high participation speaks to effective civic education and public information campaigns regarding the significance and location of the hearings. Carter Center observers also noted high participation of women, representing roughly more than half of all those present at the hearings and actively contributing in the process. Notably, it seems very few people who attended were excluded from the process and the few cases mainly involved those who had attempted to attend a hearing which was not in the area they resided. The Center commends the commissioners for their consistent attendance and non-interference in the hearings.

Security

Of the 116 scheduled hearings, eight were suspended or cancelled due to security incidents – two in Kurmuk locality, one in Baw locality, and five in Roseiris locality, where an incident at the hearing in Wad al Mahi resulted in the cancellation of the circuit's remaining four hearings.¹² While the commission's cancellation of hearings where security incidents occurred was understandable, individuals anticipating the popular consultations in those eight areas were not able to participate.¹³ Consistent with Sudan's fundamental obligations as stipulated in regional and international instruments, the Carter Center encourages the commission to try to include these excluded citizens to whatever extent possible, by rescheduling the hearings or designing an alternate method.¹⁴

With the increased politicization of the citizen hearings process, there are risks that existing ethnic and tribal fault lines in the state will be exacerbated. While support for both parties is not uniform amongst the different groups in Blue Nile, observers noted a certain correlation between a person's tribe and their support to either federalism or autonomy. The Center calls on both parties to work toward decreasing tensions in the state, and to support the

¹² In Kurmuk, two hearings were canceled due to unconfirmed reports of SPLA involvement in the disruption of the hearings. On Jan. 29, during the last hearing on the Baw circuit, Carter Center observers were present when outside the tent a fight broke out involving several members of the local community, some of them members of the SPLM and NCP. The entire tent (about 500 people) cleared and gathered outside in two groups roughly split along tribal lines. One person, an NCP member was seriously wounded and later passed away. In Wad al Mahi, on January 30, a personal disagreement within the hearing tent escalated into a wider fight with ultimately one man stabbed and 4-8 injured. The fight destroyed much of the hearing equipment and the actual tent. All remaining hearings on the circuit were canceled.

¹³ As the hearings are designed, residents can only attend the hearing scheduled to cover their neighborhood; in effect, it is a one-shot deal. Blue Nile residents cannot attend hearings in other neighborhoods or on other days.

¹⁴ UN, ICCPR, Article 25 (a); AU, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 13(1). According to the commission, as of March 21, there was still a possibility to reschedule the hearings canceled in Wad al Mahi, but not Baw and Kurmuk.

integrity of the popular consultations process as one that solicits all political views from residents of Blue Nile, regardless of tribe or ethnicity.¹⁵

Civic Education

By all accounts, civic education was pervasive throughout Blue Nile in the months, weeks, and days leading up to the citizen hearings. The commission carried out urban and rural civic education in November and December 2010, from which mobile teams conducted information sessions in villages on the citizen hearing circuit. Further in advance, civic education activities were conducted by various CSOs, some of which organized under the umbrella Forum for Civic Education (FCE), and as the hearings drew near, political parties – both the two CPA parties and opposition parties – contributed as well. Support from international technical advisors during this process, including AECOM and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), played an important role during different phases of the process. Across the board, the population was aware of the popular consultations, as a phenomenon involving democratic participation and the specifics of when and where to attend individual hearings. Particularly beneficial given the roving nature of the hearings, one CSO employed cars with loudspeakers to announce upcoming or current hearings. The huge participation turnout attests to the success of such civic education activities, which accords with the state's obligation to take measures in ensuring public awareness and everyone's right to seek and receive information.¹⁶

Where the civic education seems to have failed, however, is in communicating the underlying purpose of the popular consultations, and creating an ongoing dialogue about the substantive topics at issue. Few participants that Carter Center observers spoke with could explain or elaborate on the choice or views they expressed in the hearings. Likewise, few seemed able to speak knowledgeably about the CPA and its implications for the governance and administration of Blue Nile. Most troubling, perhaps, has been the failure to manage expectations, with participants' views on the possible outcomes of the popular consultation varying dramatically.

Views Expressed

During the citizen hearings, the people of Blue Nile overwhelmingly spoke out on the need for development in the state, specifically improved services such as water, electricity, schools, and healthcare, and the need for better management of the state's natural resources. Given this widespread consensus across geography and political parties, the commission should emphasize development in its report to the state legislature.

After development, the most prominent topic was Blue Nile's governance structure. Across the state, and often within a hearing, views were split between 'federal government,' 'self-governance,' and 'current government.' Few participants could explain what they meant by these terms and, as mentioned above, many were likely instructed by the two main parties. Even within political parties, who conducted civic education and reportedly campaigned for these options, explanations as to what the terms mean vary or remain ambiguous. In this context, the terms 'federal government' and 'current government' seem to endorse the status quo in terms of the governance relationship between Khartoum and Blue Nile. In contrast, 'self-governance' seems to advocate for a much greater decentralization of power to the state of Blue Nile in its relationship with the central government in Khartoum.

¹⁵ With considerable support from the Ethiopian army the SPLA invaded the southern part of Blue Nile State on three occasions, the last in 1997. Given the ideological emphasis of the SPLM on 'marginalization' the SPLM focused on mobilizing and controlling the territory of the indigenous tribes of the state who largely live in the south and who were most receptive to the appeal of marginalization. Meanwhile successive Khartoum governments have primarily drawn their support from "non-indigenous" tribes in the north, both Arab and African.

¹⁶ Article 19, UN, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Political Environment

The popular consultation process in Blue Nile is occurring amidst a tense political atmosphere in the state. The process thus far has been dominated by the two CPA-signatory parties, the NCP and the SPLM. In large part, this is because the state legislature, from which the commission is drawn, solely consists of representatives from the two parties. Minority parties are present and engaged in the popular consultations, most prominently as the “Group of 12” registered parties in the state (including the NCP and the SPLM), but their views have been relegated to the sidelines. Although they conducted some civic education activities, in part funded by the Governor of Blue Nile and international partners, opposition party members complain of a lack of resources. They were most visible in more urban popular consultation hearing centers as party observers, alongside NCP and SPLM observers.

The two main parties, in contrast, conducted state-wide civic education activities and campaigning on a large-scale basis. Further, the two parties provided transportation to the hearings for many participants. To some extent, the NCP and SPLM should be credited for raising awareness of and interest in the popular consultations. But the line between civic education and mobilization of party supporters was blurred, and this may have confused the public. Moreover, Carter Center observers found representatives of the parties did not readily disclose information and were evasive when describing the extent and purpose of their civic education and mobilization activities. For instance, party members frequently denied that the civic education activities they were conducting involved coaching supporters on responses to give in the hearings. This lack of transparency is troubling, and does little to dispel fears of possible manipulation of the process.

Next Steps

The popular consultation process in Blue Nile is far from finished, and as it embarks on the coming phases, the commission should aim for successful, inclusive, and transparent work. The Center hopes that the commission will continue to provide information to citizens of Blue Nile on the data entry of citizen hearings, the thematic hearings in Damazine, and finally the compilation of the commission’s report that will be submitted to the state legislative assembly.

Data Processing

With the assistance of technical advisory groups AECOM and the Peace Research Institute (PRI) of Khartoum University, the commission has devised a plan on how to process the information recorded at citizen hearings. In mid-February, 26 data clerks were trained, half from the NCP and half from the SPLM. At a basic level, it is unclear why such clerical work has to be carried out by members of only the two main parties, as including other parties or independent clerks would add to the process’s credibility. The Center hopes the data entry process, like the citizen hearings, will be transparent and open to observation by domestic and international observers.

A great deal of information arose from the citizen hearings, with views expressed by the 69,429 participants and data analysis should be as comprehensive as feasible. If it is not possible to enter and analyze all of the views expressed throughout the hearings, the sampling should be random and representative. The Carter Center understands that the data processing will no doubt be a lengthy process, but cautions the commission not to sacrifice quality for speed. As a credit to the transparency of the citizen hearing phase, and due to the fact that many observers, along with the commission’s staff, kept copious notes, it would be difficult to manipulate the data to a significant degree that would not be widely apparent. Of primary importance, the commission should ensure the product of the data processing contributes to and is reflected in the report so it can affect later negotiations. This will help ensure the entire citizen hearings process does not raise false expectations.

Thematic Hearings

After the commission begins processing the data from citizen hearings, it plans to hold thematic hearings focused on specific topics and comprised of representatives of various groups within society with specialized knowledge

of the relevant subjects. The composition of attendance at these hearings, while necessarily restricted, should nonetheless be as inclusive as possible and welcome diverse perspectives. To the extent attendees are representatives of political parties, they should represent all political parties in the state and not only the NCP and SPLM, as this will help prevent replication of the pattern of party influence during the citizen hearings. Finally, given the specialized knowledge of the participants, these hearings should be constructive and offer solutions and suggestions for the state's future.

Report-Writing and Negotiations

For the popular consultations to be a success and viewed as legitimate, Blue Nile representatives must truly represent the wishes and best interests of the people of Blue Nile, ensuring their views are fully reflected in the final report. The commission and members of the state legislature should work cooperatively and refrain from political polarization. In particular, given the overwhelming consensus in Blue Nile observed during the citizen hearings, the people's representatives should advocate for development in the state. Although the commission's report-writing and the subsequent negotiations are less participatory stages of the popular consultations, they should still be as transparent and inclusive as possible. The Carter Center hopes that the onward phases of the popular consultations will be transparent and open to observation as much as possible.

Outstanding Security Concerns

As noted above, while civic education for the hearings was effective in informing people about the technical points of the process, there was insufficient explanation on the objectives of the popular consultations and the broader issues of governance and security that underpinned it. In addition to constitutional, political, administrative, and economic issues, the commission should consider focusing in detail on security concerns as they are very pertinent to the governance of Blue Nile. The narrow focus on systems of governance precluded consideration of this issue, which is of vital interest to the citizens of Blue Nile. Security is undoubtedly a sensitive topic, but with the high number of demobilized soldiers and problems of arms proliferation still unresolved, it is clearly an issue that cannot be overlooked. The SPLM and NCP should take steps to initiate a dialogue on security concerns and given their very limited discussion during the citizen hearings, the commission should consider addressing this in the thematic hearings. This will require that both sides summon the political will to discuss an issue deeply connected to their historic support within the state, and one where both sides may be asked to make concessions.

Lessons for South Kordofan

Given that South Kordofan will soon begin its own popular consultations after elections are completed in May, Blue Nile and its Popular Consultation Commission could serve as an important precedent. Although the contexts in each state differ, valuable lessons can be gathered from Blue Nile's experience.

First and foremost, an eventual commission in South Kordofan should benefit from Blue Nile's example and the efficient functioning of the commission so as to act swiftly in implementing the popular consultations. To achieve this, the state and any external partners should empower the South Kordofan Commission immediately with resources, manpower, and infrastructure that will allow it to administer well-attended citizen hearings in a state several times larger than Blue Nile.

Beyond the logistics and procedures of citizen hearings, South Kordofan should increase civic education efforts on the underlying purposes of the popular consultations, the meaning and implications of the CPA for the state, the feasible choices for the future of the state, and the way forward for the process after the citizen hearings.

Political parties should refrain from manipulating the process of collecting public views, and if they choose to campaign for their perspectives, do so in a transparent way that does not prevent participants from taking

advantage of the opportunity to speak more broadly about the challenges facing the state. The parties should take steps to encourage an inclusive process for all involved, regardless of the tribal or ethnic lines dividing the state.

Further, the entire process – civic education, design of the popular consultations, and implementation – should be inclusive of opposition political parties, including possible membership on the Commission, so as not to be dominated by the NCP and SPLM. Ideally, the public dialogue before and during the citizen hearings in South Kordofan will reflect more substantive and varied discussion on the crucial issues at stake.

Finally, popular expectations need to be managed if popular participation is sought. The popular consultation process is long, and the people of both Blue Nile and South Kordofan need to understand that it does not end with citizen hearings, but that the hearings are just one piece of a multi-faceted process. Even while the commissions in Blue Nile and South Kordofan and state authorities are in the process of defining the upcoming phases of the popular consultations in each state, they should share as much as information as possible with citizens.

Background on the Carter Center's Mission

The Carter Center's Democracy Program has been present in Sudan since February 2008, first to observe the April 2010 national elections, and subsequently to observe the referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan. Upon invitation from the Blue Nile Popular Consultation Commission in September 2010, The Carter Center deployed observers to monitor and report on the entirety of the popular consultation process in Blue Nile. During the phase for public hearings, three Carter Center observer teams deployed across Blue Nile and attended 32 of 108 citizen hearings held.

In addition to its work in Blue Nile, the Center has observers present in South Kordofan to observe the postponed state elections as well as observers in Southern Sudan to report on the constitutional reform process and the interim period. Overall, 12 long-term observers remain in Sudan to report on these processes, and along with core staff in Khartoum and Juba, represent a diverse group hailing from 14 countries.¹⁷

The Center assesses the popular consultation process based on the CPA, Interim National Constitution, Popular Consultation Act, and Sudan's obligations for democratic processes and human rights contained in regional and international agreements. The Center conducts observation activities in accordance with the Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation and Code of Conduct that was adopted at the United Nations in 2005 and endorsed by 35 election observation groups. The objectives of The Carter Center's observation mission in Sudan are to provide an impartial assessment of the overall quality of the popular consultation process, promote an inclusive process for all residents of Blue Nile, and demonstrate international interest in Sudan's transition processes. Read the Center's other reports on Sudan: www.cartercenter.org.

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¹⁷ These countries include: Argentina, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kenya, Norway, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, and Zimbabwe.