

Why not keep those promises?

Anthony Poggo urges the Sudanese government to implement its peace agreement

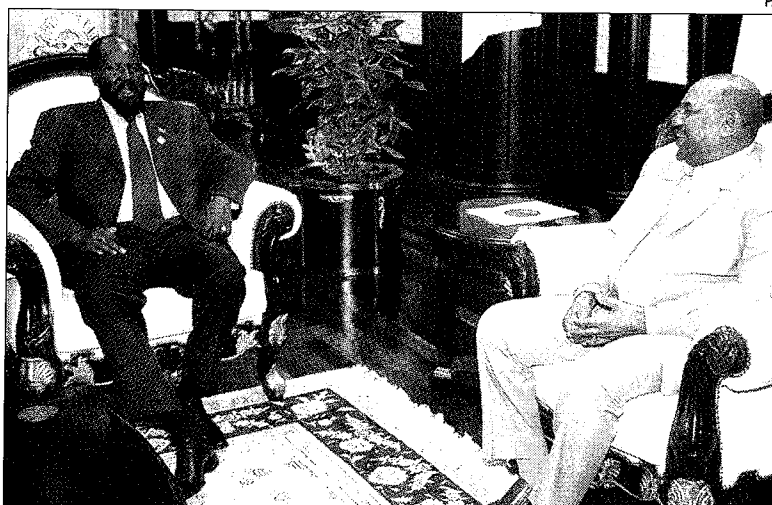
SINCE the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005 between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party to resolve the 21-year-old war, the people of Southern Sudan have seen many positive changes. It was because of the accord that, at long last, the guns are silent. There have been no aerial bombardments in Southern Sudan in the past two-and-a-half years, though there have been isolated killings in some places.

The people have enjoyed the freedom of movement from one part of the South to another, despite the lack of proper roads. Some families who were separated have met for the first time in years. Yet most of the refugees and displaced people have not yet returned to their original homes.

The changes are not as great as most Southern Sudanese would have expected. They had high expectations, but, three years on, they still face many challenges. There is no infrastructure to spur development, and most essential commodities and food come from outside the country from Northern Sudan. These are expensive beyond the reach of most Southern Sudanese.

At the beginning of October, the Sudan People's Liberation Army concluded its interim political bureau meeting in Juba, Southern Sudan. After the meeting, the SPLM announced that it was concerned about the failure by its partner, the National Congress Party, to implement parts of the peace agreement. As a result, the SPLM announced that it was suspending its participation in the government of National Unity, withdrawing its ministers and advisers until the issues were resolved.

ANY of these questions have been in the public domain since the peace agreement was signed. Among them are the failure both to implement the Abyei Protocol, or to redeploy the Sudan Armed Forces, who are still in



Keeping the peace: President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan (right) with First Vice President Salva Kiir discussing the agreement in October

Southern Sudan, and the lack of transparency in oil-sector operations.

The Abyei Protocol recognises an area needing special attention; the Abyei Border Commission was set up to look into it. It presented its report to the Sudanese president more than two years ago, but nothing more has been heard of it. The SPLM is accusing the National Congress Party of refusing to implement it. This leaves an administrative and political vacuum in the Abyei area.

There has also been a delay in the demarcation of the North-South borders, as stipulated in the peace agreement. This has implications for the oil revenues that the government of Southern Sudan can receive.

The peace agreement stipulates that 50 per cent of the revenue of the oil from Southern Sudan should go to its government. The peace agree-

ment created the National Petroleum Commission, drawing members from both the National Congress Party and the SPLM, but this has not yet been able to take its rightful place in the oversight of this vital source of revenue.

President Omar al-Bashir has met several times with First Vice President Salva Kiir, the chairman of the SPLM, to attempt to resolve these questions. Their most recent meeting was held on Monday this week, and was said to have been cordial. Press reports suggest that a committee has been formed to consider these questions, but nothing definite has emerged.

I WOULD URGE the two partners who signed the peace agreement to resolve these issues quickly, so that it is implemented wholly, and not selectively. The mechanism for re-

solving such an impasse, which was articulated in the agreement, should be used. The failure to implement the peace agreement, and the possibility of returning to war in Southern Sudan, are not in the interest of an Sudanese people.

International partners and other neutral bodies need to come in. The UN and representatives from various countries have raised concerns, but taken no definite action. The international community must exert pressure on the partners in the peace agreement. The National Congress Party should be requested to make a commitment to implement it fully and to abandon its delaying tactics which only create unnecessary tension.

Many Southern Sudanese are aware of the numerous previous agreements that have been signed and dishonoured by successive regimes in Khartoum. The former Vice-President of Sudan, Abel Alier has written a book outlining some of these: *Southern Sudan: Too many agreements dishonoured* (Paul & Co. Pub Consortium, 1992).

The peace agreement will be three years old on 9 January 2008. There should be a mid-term review of its progress. Such a mechanism would need the engagement of international partners. Over the past year or so, the attention of the international community, and especially the media, has focused on Darfur.

It is important that the conflict in Darfur is brought to an end. It is equally important, however, that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is implemented properly. It could act as a model for the resolution of the Darfur conflict. Further, the continuing failure to implement the peace agreement is undermining prospects for peace in both Darfur and east of Sudan. These are now matters of urgency, as Sudanese people continue to suffer.

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'The international community must exert pressure on the partners'

Why is gender abortion so shocking?



WHY ARE we so shocked at the news that women from Indian communities in Britain — as many as 1500 of them in the past 15 years, according to population researchers at Oxford — have been obtaining abortions when they discovered that the child they were carrying was a girl? That might

Paul Vallely unravels the thinking behind the abortion of female foetuses

between that and her wanting to decide what sex her next child should be?

Those in the pro-choice lobby have to shift the

endorses the norm in her culture that a family needs a boy-child, for dynastic but also economic reasons, dowries being expensive. Then the argument has to shift, and become an absolutist one that proclaims some cultural values — be they polygamy or female circumcision — to be inferior to others.

Most Christians would have no problem with that; nor would many secularist rationalists, who insist that Enlightenment values, such as democracy and individual freedom, transcend culture. But it is a standpoint that many others dispute.