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## AACC/SECAM UPDATE ON THE SUDAN REFERENDUM

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Thursday, January 13<sup>th</sup> 2011

**The International Interfaith Observer Mission coordinated by AACC is fielding 110 observers operating in both Southern Sudan and Northern Sudan as well as in Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. As we reach the mid-point in the voting period, the Mission would like to share its observations thus far:**

### **Turnout:**

- Voter turnout was generally good with significant number of voters turning up in Southern Sudan as well as in the Diaspora, especially on the first day of polling.

### **Security:**

- Security of the voters and the polling stations was well organized and provided for.

### **Efficiency of the Process:**

- All polling stations observed had signs clearly posted, Staff fully dressed for easy identification and were supplied with adequate polling materials.
- The speed of processing each vote gradually increased over the days.
- The ballot boxes were well secured and numbered in all polling centers visited.
- At closing time, only those on the queue were allowed to vote. Ballot boxes and polling materials were well secured for the following day.

### **Atmosphere:**

- The general atmosphere was calm: Voters were orderly and were highly anticipative.
- The presence of large numbers of the international observers, the media and dignitaries has ensured global coverage which has contributed to the level of transparency that the team has observed in the referendum process.

### **Referendum Observation:**

- In the polling centers visited in Khartoum and Juba the team noticed a strong presence of domestic observation teams, including observers from the Sudan Council of Churches who are deployed in about 228 polling centers across the country. There were also many international observers, especially in Khartoum State.
- Only a few anomalies were observed but the polling station chiefs were receptive whenever such anomalies were pointed out to them and corrections made.
- Some voters were not conversant with the voting procedure and did not know what to do with the ballot paper, a phenomenon that appears to indicate inadequate civic and voter education.
- The mission observed efficiency in the way the instructions on how to put the mark on the ballot were given. It is our hope that such efficiency will be maintained up to the last day of voting.
- Reports also indicate that the 60% threshold has been surpassed.

### **Diaspora:**

- Reports from the Diaspora indicate that the process went on smoothly and efficiently with the opening day being marked by intense prayers and a celebratory mood from assembled voters.
- In Toronto, Canada, approximately 77% of registered voters had cast their votes by Wednesday.

### **Media:**

- The interfaith observer team has received wide media coverage, from sources such as Al Jazeera Arabic, BBC Network Africa (Radio) & BBC Swahili service, South Sudan TV, Radio Miraya FM (Sudan), Citizen Radio (Kenya), and Al-Ahram Newspaper (Sudan).

## Concluding Remarks

- The Mission wishes to thank our hosts, the Sudan Council of Churches and congratulates the people of Sudan for putting up an impressive show and expresses the hope that the results of the referendum will be respected and upheld by the Government and by all Sudanese.

## Acknowledgements

The All Africa Conference of Churches expresses gratitude to the following participating organizations,

Act for Peace Australia	-
African Council of Religious Leaders	ACRL
Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in East Africa	AMECEA
Catholic Relief Services	CRS
Christian Aid	CA
Dan Church Aid	DCA
Denis Hurley Peace Institute	-
Ethiopia Episcopal Conference	-
Evangelical Mission in Germany	ELM
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Church Development Service)	EED
Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa	FECCLAHA
IKV PAX CHRISTI	-
KAIROS Canada	-
Kenya Episcopal Conference	KEC
Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus	-
MISEROR	-
National Council of Churches of Kenya	NCCK
Norwegian Church Aid	NCA
Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference	SACBC
Sudan Ecumenical Forum	SEF
Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar	SECAM
Tewahedo Ethiopian Orthodox Church	-
Uganda Joint Christian Council	UJCC
United Kingdom Anglican/Episcopal Church	-
World Council of Churches	WCC

Nairobi  
13<sup>th</sup> January 2011