

Opening Remarks of Chairman Donald M. Payne
A Hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health
"Sudan: A Review of the Administration's New Policy and a Situation Update"
Thursday, December 3, 2009
10:00 AM in 2172 RHOB

Good morning and welcome to this very important hearing entitled "**Sudan: A Review of the Administration's New Policy and a Situation Update.**"

Let me also express my deep appreciation to the witnesses, who are certainly among the most knowledgeable people on Sudan.

Over the years, we have held so many hearings and briefings on Sudan to bring attention to the suffering of innocent civilians and in the hope of promoting a just peace for all.

Many believed and hoped that the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and/or the Darfur Peace Agreement would bring about much desired peace and stability in Sudan. Unfortunately, and despite multiple efforts, millions of Sudanese continue to suffer.

I sometimes wonder if we will ever get a just peace in Sudan as long as the el-Bashir regime is in power. For those who still believe that a peace agreement with this regime will bring an end to the suffering, I say look again at the situations in Darfur and in Abyei. Some of us saw first-hand the aftermath of the burning of Abyei by government and pro-government militia in May 2008, when more than 50,000 people were displaced from their homes.

As a Senator, President Obama stated: *"for years, the Government of Sudan has thwarted the will of the United States and the international community, and offended the standards of our common humanity. Before we improve our relationship with the Government of Sudan, conditions must improve for the Sudanese people. We cannot stand down, we must continue to stand up for peace and human rights."* I fully agree.

It was not long ago that we witnessed another horrific genocide in Africa. The international community, including the United States, turned a blind eye to the gruesome genocide in Rwanda in 1994. In Rwanda, an estimated one million people died in less than 100 days.

In Darfur, six years since the genocide began, the people of Darfur are still waiting for the suffering to end. A few years ago I stated, "If Rwanda was a black mark on our conscious, Darfur is a cancer that will destroy the moral fiber of our society." This is still the case.

I am not opposed to a policy of engagement. In fact, I always argue we should give peaceful dialogue a chance before we declare war. For some, our policy is too focused on punitive measures. I beg to differ.

The United States has been at the forefront when it comes to engagement. We never disengaged.

The United States has appointed more Special Envoys to Sudan than it has to any other country in Africa. Why? In order to secure a just peace. We have imposed punitive measures against this regime, but we have always helped the Sudanese people.

In October 2009, last month, the Obama Administration announced a new policy toward Sudan. The policy focuses on three priorities: an end to the conflict in Darfur; implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA); and ensuring Sudan does not become a safe haven for international terrorist groups.

The new policy clarifies a number of issues that surfaced in recent months and reaffirms the conflict in Darfur is genocide, stating that the United States' primary objective in Darfur is "a definitive end to conflict, gross human rights abuses, and genocide in Darfur."

The new Sudan policy also states that cooperation on counter-terrorism without verifiable progress on other issues will not lead to a normalization of relations.

The Administration also plans to enhance U.S. assistance to South Sudan and help prepare the country for a possible two-state outcome should the people choose independence in the 2011 referendum. I fully support the policy objectives.

The questions remains: what if the regime continues to obstruct these efforts? What are we doing to promote justice and accountability? The United States government supports a transparent, free, and fair election in Sudan.

Can these elections be free and fair while three million people are in displaced and refugee camps? By supporting the elections, with Bashir as a candidate, are we saying no to justice and accountability?

It is my hope that through the course of today's hearing we will gain greater insight into these critical issues.

Let me once again thank our distinguished witnesses. Before I introduce them, let me turn to the Subcommittee Ranking Member, Chris Smith, for opening remarks.